

# Spy agency-instigated anti-China furor within Canada's political establishment intensifies after rapporteur's report

Keith Jones  
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Much of Canada's corporate media and political establishment have reacted with anger and frustration to the interim report that the Independent Special Rapporteur on Foreign Interference, David Johnston, issued Tuesday.

Dozens of indignant editorials and op-ed columns have trashed Johnston's report, as have the Conservative Official Opposition and the Bloc Québécois. They are incensed that Johnston has opposed their months-long demand for a public inquiry into the intelligence agencies' claims that China is interfering in Canadian politics, grooming candidates and seeking to manipulate election outcomes.

This envenomed response is bound up with Washington's Canadian-backed, ever-accelerating preparations for war with China. In military and other elite circles there is open discussion of the inevitability of a clash with nuclear-armed China, starting as early as 2025.

Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau appointed Johnston, a former Governor-General, as Special Rapporteur in March amidst a political furor fueled by a series of illegal leaks from high-level operatives in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and possibly other parts of the national-security apparatus. In the preceding weeks, the *Globe and Mail*, the traditional voice of Canada's financial elite, and to a lesser extent Global News had published a series of "exposés," based on a steady stream of CSIS leaks, that made lurid claims of Chinese interference. They included that Beijing pulled strings behind the scenes to ensure that the Conservatives were defeated in the 2021 federal election and the Liberals restricted to a minority government, an outcome that neatly matched the election result.

The *Globe and Mail*, which has spearheaded the campaign for a public inquiry, has made clear that its focus should not be on investigating the allegations of Chinese influence—which it claims, on the say so of the illegally leaked CSIS documents, have been incontrovertibly proven. Rather its aim should be to establish why the Liberal government failed to act. "What we need a public inquiry to look into" is not foreign election interference, wrote the *Globe's* lead political commentator Andrew Coyne at the beginning of March, but rather "domestic complicity in foreign interference." The Conservatives—led by the strident advocate of the far-right "Freedom" Convoy, Pierre Poilievre—have gone even further. They charge that Trudeau and his big business Liberal government have enabled and covered up Chinese "interference" for their own gain.

In his response to the interim report, Poilievre accused Johnston—who was appointed Governor-General by the Conservative Stephen Harper and only after he whitewashed the corrupt dealings of Brian Mulroney, another Tory prime minister—of "shamefully helping the Prime Minister cover up Beijing's attacks on our democracy."

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has previously explained, the intelligence agency-instigated, corporate media-promoted China election

interference furor has a double purpose. First and foremost, it is aimed at whipping up animosity against China, so as to facilitate Canada's even more comprehensive and complete integration into Washington's preparations for war with China.

Over the past three months, while Beijing has been lambasted by Canada's media and political establishment on a daily basis, the US has ratcheted up its all-sided campaign of economic, military-strategic and diplomatic pressure against China, including by repudiating the "one-China policy" in respect to Taiwan in all but name. In Australia, powerful sections of the corporate media are publicly campaigning for sweeping changes, such as imposing conscription and massively hiking military spending, to prepare the country to play its allotted role as a frontline state in any US conflict with China.

A second purpose of the China election interference furor has been to push the Liberal government further to the right and pave the way for Trudeau's replacement by the likes of Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland or a Poilievre-led Conservative government. Revealingly, many of the same forces that promoted the far-right Freedom Convoy and sought to weaponize it as a means to destabilize, if not bring down, the government have also been spearheading the anti-China interference furor.

In the public, 55-page part of his interim report, Johnston endorses the reactionary false narrative being peddled by the entire political establishment, including the Trudeau Liberal government, the union-sponsored NDP, and the Greens, that "Canadian democracy" is under attack by malicious authoritarian powers, above all China. This narrative—which was exemplified by a recent *Globe* editorial-page cartoon, with racist early 20th century "Yellow Peril" overtones, depicting a giant dragon with its claws extended descending upon a tiny beaver—inverts reality. It portrays Canadian imperialism as a small, benign force threatened by a Chinese colossus. In reality, Canada is a predatory power, that in league with US imperialism and other Western allies, bullies and invades countries around the world, interferes in their elections and works to frustrate the democratic and social aspirations of their populace.

In his interim report, Johnston announced that he will hold public hearings in the coming months on how election interference can be countered. This will no doubt be used to further promote the prowar anti-China narrative. But to the consternation of the *Globe*, Postmedia, Poilievre and his Conservatives and various former national security and foreign affairs officials, Johnston took issue with their claims that the valiant efforts of CSIS to "defend Canada" have been willfully ignored by the current Liberal government.

He reported that on investigation many of the claims made in the press reports based on the CSIS leaks had proven false or unsubstantiated.

Others had been misconstrued because the journalists were not aware of the broader context. Many of the specific instances of interference “are less concerning than some media might have suggested,” Johnston found.

He also found the claim that the government has ignored the warnings of the intelligence agencies to be false. Rather, there are structural inadequacies in the way in which the intelligence agencies communicate their findings to the government.

Johnston also refuted several much-publicized claims from the CSIS leaks. Among them was the claim that Liberal MP Han Dong had told a Chinese diplomat the two Canadians arrested by Beijing as part of its efforts to force the release of a Huawei executive seized by Canada at Washington’s behest should not be freed until Ottawa let Meng Wangzhou go. Johnston also said it was reasonable the Liberals had not dropped Dong as a candidate based on a CSIS briefing that identified him as a security risk.

A central, albeit unstated, tenet of the anti-China election furor promoted by the corporate media and the Conservatives has been that CSIS-supplied intelligence should be treated as almost gospel truth. No matter that the intelligence agencies of the imperialist states are infamous for their role as centres of reaction and anti-democratic conspiracies and that CSIS itself has frequently been caught lying to the courts.

In his report Johnston also deplored the fact that “national security” has become a partisan political issue. He urged the opposition leaders to read the secret sections of his report, which outline the evidence on which his conclusions are based. Both Poilievre and BQ leader Yves-François Blanchet have rejected this offer. They are calling it a government trap, since they would have to be sworn to secrecy and could not speak thereafter about the specific details of what they learned about the purported instances of Chinese interference.

Johnston’s rejection of a public inquiry was also based on the fact that it would duplicate his own inquiry and for security reasons would have to be held largely in camera. He noted that two other bodies that work in secret and report to the government, the “watchdog” National Security and Intelligence Review Agency and the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, will review his findings.

As part of this explanation, Johnston briefly lifted the veil on the massive surveillance being conducted by Canada’s intelligence agencies, including of elected politicians when they interact with representatives of “hostile” powers. “Now that I have reviewed” the matter, wrote Johnston, “I understand why it is treated so sensitively: Foreign adversaries would readily discern sources and methods from this information. It could endanger people.”

Given what has happened to date—and even more significantly the crisis and reactionary political forces and motivations fueling the claims of a Chinese threat to Canadian democracy—further CSIS “leaks” and lurid claims of government complicity with Beijing can be expected.

The Trudeau government is a government of war and reaction, one moreover that is moving rapidly to the right. Under it, Canada played a major role in preparing, instigating and now waging the US-NATO war on Russia; has massively increased military spending; elaborated an anti-China Indo-Pacific strategy in close consultation with the Biden White House; and routinely deploys Canadian warships in provocative US-led “freedom of navigation” exercises in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait. Having presided over the Canadian ruling class’ ruinous profit-before-lives response to the pandemic, the Trudeau government has pivoted to imposing “post-pandemic” austerity and inflation-driven real wage cuts.

However, powerful sections of the ruling class have soured on the union-NDP supported minority Liberal government. They want a government that will ensure the global position of Canadian imperialism by more rapidly expanding Canada’s military prowess and intensifying the assault on the working class. The current government has been widely denounced

by the media and military-security establishment for failing to boost military spending by the approximately \$20 billion a year needed to reach NATO’s 2 percent of GDP benchmark and for not securing Canada’s participation in the anti-China AUKUS (Australia/UK/US) military alliance. Under the sell-out agreements the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) negotiated with the Trudeau government, 155,000 federal workers will suffer a huge cut in their real wages. Yet numerous big business representatives have denounced the deal as lavish and excessive.

Workers must emphatically oppose the prowar anti-China furor. The real threat to the democratic rights of working people comes from the Canadian ruling class. Like its imperialist counterparts in the US and Europe, it is increasingly turning to authoritarian methods of rule, criminalizing strikes and social protests, and mobilizing the far right to impose its agenda of war and austerity.

To oppose war and defend its democratic and social rights, the working class must oppose all factions of the ruling elite and develop an industrial and political counteroffensive with the aim of securing workers’ power and the socialist reorganization of economic life.

Not a step in this direction can be taken without workers breaking free of the paralyzing political and organizational grip of the pro-capitalist trade unions. For decades the unions have systematically suppressed the class struggle and integrated themselves into corporate management and the state.

Currently, the unions and their NDP allies are propping up the right-wing Trudeau government on the grounds that it is a “progressive” bulwark against the Conservatives, who like the US Republicans and British Conservatives, are increasingly evolving into a far-right, fascistic political formation. Since March 2022 the NDP, at the unions’ urging, has been in a formal governmental alliance with Trudeau and his Liberals, an alliance they have pledged to uphold at least until June 2025, in the name of providing the ruling class with “political stability.”

The union-NDP-Liberal alliance is a double threat to working people, and its repudiation is an essential element in developing a working class counter-offensive. It is the mechanism whereby the Trudeau government is advancing the ruling class war agenda of war and austerity, and it is gifting the Poilievre-led Conservatives the opportunity to present themselves as the only opposition and to cynically appeal to growing popular anger over falling living standards and dilapidated public services.



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