

Huawei Ban Undermines Canadian and World Security

The prohibition against Huawei dangerously aligns Canada with the NSA and other members of the Five Eyes spy network

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On May 19, the Canadian government formally announced that it would prohibit products and services of Chinese corporations Huawei and ZTE from being used in Canadian high-speed telecommunications systems.

The long-anticipated ban is far reaching. According to the government’s [policy statement](#) released last week, all Huawei and ZTE equipment are prohibited from use in the 5G network and previously installed work has to be removed by 2024. The same applies to the 4G network. Telecommunications companies must cease purchasing Huawei and ZTE equipment by September 1, 2022. During the transition periods, Canada’s spy agency, the Communications Security Establishment (CSE) will monitor any use of Huawei or ZTE equipment or services.

The government further intends to impose restrictions on Gigabit Passive Optical Network (GPON) equipment used in fibre-optic networks. According to the policy statement, “During these transition periods, telecommunications service providers that use this equipment and managed services would be required to comply with any assurance requirements prescribed by the government, building from the CSE’s Security Review Program.”

“Our government will always protect the safety and security of Canadians and will take any actions necessary to safeguard our critical telecommunications infrastructure,” [stated](#) Liberal minister **François-Philippe Champagne** in announcing the ban.

But do such measures really protect Canadians?

Far from it. In fact, the ban on Huawei actually imperils Canadians, not to mention the rest of the world, for a number of reasons.

Reinforcing the Five Eyes, global settler-colonialism

Joining Champagne in announcing the government's ban on Huawei was **Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino**. He stated the prohibition was the result of an extensive review by the government, but declined to make the review public.

Instead, Mendicino simply asserted the “decision reflects the values of Canadians and is in line with our closest allies, including our Five Eyes Partners,” referring to the spy alliance comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

After an extensive review, we are taking the necessary steps to protect Canadians and our telecommunications infrastructure.

This decision reflects the values of Canadians and is in line with our closest allies, including our Five Eyes partners.

— Marco Mendicino (@marcomendicino) [May 19, 2022](#)

The values of this coalition include the illegal hacking of anyone, or any corporation, they fear, from former German Chancellor Angela Merkel to the headquarters of Huawei itself, as Edward Snowden exposed in his 2013 revelations regarding the National Security Agency (NSA) global spy network to filmmaker Laura Poitras, columnist Glenn Greenwald, and *The Guardian* intelligence reporter Ewen MacAskill.

The Snowden revelations about STELLARWIND and other spy programs remain significant. Films such as Laura Poitras' Oscar-winning *Citizenfour* (available on Prime) and Oliver Stone's [Snowden](#) (available on Netflix) help capture the scale and scope of global surveillance.

Snowden's whistleblowing also exposed extensive Canadian involvement in the global spy ring. The leaked materials [showed](#) that Canada's CSE used airport wi-fi to track Canadian travellers; that Canada set up spy posts at the request of the NSA; that Canada allowed the NSA to spy on the G8 and G20 summits held in this country, and used its embassies to eavesdrop on citizens abroad.

In reporting the Huawei decision, however, the mainstream media completely ignores this history of Five Eyes spying, that included breaking into Huawei headquarters in China nearly a decade ago. Instead the media simply parrots government statements, even though the Huawei decision is nothing more than mimicry of a US [report](#) issued ten years ago that stated Huawei and ZTE “provision of equipment to US critical infrastructure could undermine core US national security interests.” That report provided no evidence either, but the report was at least made public.

In this light, Huawei Vice President **Alykhan Velshi's** statement in response to the Canadian prohibition rings true:

“This is a political decision,” he stated in an [interview](#), “It's for the government to provide evidence that Huawei is a national security threat as they claim. They have not done so.”

Far from ensuring the safety of Canadians, the government's prohibition against Huawei and ZTE dangerously aligns Canada with the NSA and other members of the Five Eyes spy network. This coalition of settler-colonial states—which arose out of the ashes of the Second World War—may parade as the epitome of liberal democracy, but in fact it is based on the ongoing sagas of Indigenous dispossession and the imposition of empire on subject peoples in the Global South.[1]

Targeting Asian Canadians, restricting research

As [reported previously](#), Canada's spy agencies are known as havens of Islamophobia and racism and have illegally spied on Indigenous groups and environmentalists opposing pipeline expansion in British Columbia.

The government's anti-China campaign has resulted in further repressive activities. Last year the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) imposed self-screening for researchers who want to apply for research grants under the NSERC alliance program. The government prohibition against Huawei can only intensify surveillance regarding cybersecurity, measures that in fact date back to 2018.

That's when the CSE first targeted Huawei as part of its "[Security Review Program](#)." This program, like CSIS's national research guidelines, affects telecommunications providers but also wields the real threat of cyber-attacks to impose its agenda: "CSE, through its Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, will continue to work in collaboration with all relevant TSPs vendors, service providers, laboratories, and allies to help deliver secure and resilient Canadian systems."

Now the government wants to ramp up surveillance to "build on the success of the Security Review Program, led by the CSE in partnership with Canadian telecommunications service providers." The Huawei policy statement states the government plans to expand the program "to consider risks from all key suppliers and apply more broadly to help industry improve the cyber security and resilience in Canada's telecommunications networks."

Researchers of Chinese or Asian heritage in Canada are increasingly standing up and speaking out against the racial profiling and unjustifiable surveillance associated with such programs.

In support, UBC professor Paul Evans and Senator Yuen Pau Woo spoke out a year ago in an [article](#) that illustrated the close tie between anti-China propaganda and racial profiling. Victor Ramraj, director of the Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives at the University of Victoria, has also highlighted the dangers of racial profiling, as have UBC law professors s Carol Liao and Jie Cheng.

Local groups in Ottawa, Toronto and other cities have sponsored numerous sessions highlighting the dangers of racial profiling. And last year, UBC and Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson) sponsored two national forums on anti-Asian racism.

Instead of heeding these warnings, however, the Canadian government is doubling down, intensifying its anti-China policies, extending its surveillance powers, and further aligning Canada with the United States. The fear that CSIS's national security guidelines were but the thin edge of a wedge is becoming a reality.

Emboldening US aggression

The Trudeau government would have Canadians believe that closer ties with the United States and other Five Eyes countries will increase Canadian security, but in fact the opposite is true—the more that Canada endorses the Five Eyes, the more aggressive the US and its allies are becoming.

For example, in his recent visit to Asia, US President Joe Biden boldly declared that the US would go to war in support of Taiwan's independence, repudiating its previous approach of 'strategic ambiguity.' This, even though most countries of the world, including India and Canada, affirmed that Taiwan was part of China at the end of the Second World War and have embraced a "one China" policy.

Biden went on to state that "he does not expect China will use force to attempt to take Taiwan, especially if the world stands up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine." In this, Biden has revealed how it is using the Russian invasion of Ukraine to justify its increased military posture not only in Europe through NATO but also in the Asia Pacific.

US national security advisor Jake Sullivan carefully explained how the US administration viewed global strategy in a recent White House [briefing](#) prior to Biden's departure for Asia: "We actually don't regard this as a tension between investing time, energy, and attention in Europe and time, energy, and attention in the Indo-Pacific. We regard this as mutually reinforcing."

Sullivan pointed to how US allies in Asia were supporting sanctions against Russia, how Europeans were increasingly investing in Asia, how the UK, Australia and the US had formed AUKUS, and how the European Union had adopted an "Indo-Pacific strategy, Sullivan concluded: "So, for us, there is a certain level of integration and a symbiosis in the strategy we are pursuing in Europe and the strategy we're pursuing in the Indo-Pacific. And President Biden's unique capacity to actually stitch those two together is, I think, going to be a hallmark of his foreign policy presidency."

Biden's meetings with South Korea and Japan aimed to reinforce those countries role as cannon fodder in a confrontation with China. So too, the meetings of the Quad (US, Japan, Australia, and India) at the end of his visit, [aimed to tighten the screws against China](#).

Biden's visit to Asia represents sabre-rattling of the highest order, [provoking](#) China and Russia to send out strategic bombers in response. This type of brinkmanship points to the extreme danger the world now faces.

The US, with the support of its Five Eyes partners and others, is increasingly "trapped in the death spiral of unchecked militarism," as Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Chris Hedges puts it in a [recent article](#). The US ambition to "cripple Russia" and curb the growing economic and military clout of China amount to "demented and dangerous fantasies, perpetrated by a ruling class that has severed itself from reality. No longer able to salvage their own society and economy, they seek to destroy those of their global competitors, especially Russia and China."

Abandoning any pretence of Canada as a peacekeeper or honest broker, the Trudeau government has now become a full-fledged member of the fantasy club, embracing the Five Eyes, opening negotiations with Lockheed Martin to purchase the once-spurned F-35,

bolstering NATO, and banning Huawei.

The last piece of this dangerous game will be the enunciation of Canada's own "Indo-Pacific" strategy, anticipated in the coming months after Trudeau defined it as a priority for **Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly** last fall.

Where will it end?

Enveloped in the Eurocentric cocoon of Canadian news, the power of the Five Eyes can seem insurmountable. Indeed, the danger of war, including nuclear war, is becoming frighteningly real.

But as the Global North continues to beat the drums of war, many in the world see this for what it really is: the dying throws of an outdated settler empire.

As Aanu Adeoye, a specialist in Africa-Russia relations, [reports](#) no African country has joined the sanctions regime being pushed by the Five Eyes. This is reinforced in Stephen Kinzer's recent global round-up [published in iAffairs](#).

Health officials around the world are astounded and deeply concerned about the Biden administration's [reported vetoing](#) of a global plan to allow countries to ignore patents unless China is excluded from the plan.

"Given a choice between prolonging the pandemic and the possibility that it might get easier to cure diseases in China, the US government chooses to side with death," said Tobita Chow, Chicago-based director of Justice is Global.

And around the world, Indigenous peoples continue to fight to regain their lands and prevent the climate disaster associated with environmental racism.

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Note

[1] Sources on the role of the settler-colonial states included the research by Australian authors Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, my *Orienting Canada: Race, Empire and the Transpacific*, and, more recently, David R. Thomas and Veldon Coburn, [Capitalism and Dispossession](#), and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's *Not a Nation of Immigrants*.

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