

China's "Influence Ops" in the USA. "Long March through US Institutions"

Blowback From Decades of US Ops against China?

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The United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission alleged that Beijing is running a massive influence operation inside of America's institutions.

The [recently released report](#) raises the alarm about what its authors claim are China's clandestine efforts "to outsource its messaging in part because it believes foreigners are more likely to accept propaganda if it appears to come from non-Chinese sources", which has [supposedly](#) taken the form of an extensive campaign to, as **Josh Rogin** from the Washington Post puts in the passage that he's cited in, "influence the influencers" and "get Americans to carry [China's] message to other Americans". Some of the mentioned examples include its purported financing of various Beltway think tanks and also the creation of socio-cultural NGOs that are accused of being intelligence fronts.

Although not openly stated, it's strongly alluded that China is partaking in a so-called "long march through the institutions" in order to change American policies and perceptions from within. This notion was infamously abused during the McCarthyite witch hunts when the US "deep state" publicly purged a rival faction and its suspected civil society supporters on the basis that they were treasonously plotting to undermine the country. Something similar might be happening nowadays as well if the Trump Administration uses the commission's findings to take action against its institutional foes and simultaneously send a signal to Beijing during the ongoing so-called "[trade war](#)".

Even in the event that the accusations levelled against the People's Republic are true, whether in whole or in part, it wouldn't really be anything groundbreaking because the US has been practicing these sorts of influence operations against other countries for decades now. That's not to dismiss the potential significance of this through "whataboutism", but just to make the point that the US might be experiencing blowback after opening up Pandora's Box and losing its erstwhile monopoly over these perception management tactics. In fact, the proactive desire to safeguard itself from this scenario might even explain why the country secretly started turning into a "national security state" years ago.

Today's interconnected society provides fertile ground for influencing foreign audiences through the indirect means described in the report and previously mastered by the US, and the only way for the American "deep state" to protect its interests and retain control of the domestic narrative is to paradoxically go against its publicly stated values of openness, free speech, and the marketplace of ideas. Most countries such as Russia acknowledge taking

preventative measures against these tactics, but the US is in a dilemma because one of the foundations of its soft power is that it would never do such a thing that it previously attacked others for.

Snowden exposed its double standards in this respect and the irreparable harm that his factual revelations inflicted on America's reputational standing abroad is one of the reasons why he could be executed by his government if he was ever captured. Now, however, the US can attempt to "justify" the extensive surveillance that it carries out against its citizens on the grounds that it's necessary for protecting them from shadowy influence operations. Should it opportunistically go forward with that narrative, then the stunning reversal on this issue could signal that the country is also prepared to shift its position on other soft power topics as Trump continues to lastingly redefine America's global image.

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