

Support “Fake Democracy” Abroad, If All Else Fails Resort to Violence

Part 19 of 'Elephants in the Room' series

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

“We didn’t give a hoot about democracy... and I don’t think it means a thing today” (Philip Agee, former CIA agent(1))

“For Washington a consistent element is that democracy and the rule of law are acceptable if and only if they serve official strategic and economic objectives.” (Noam Chomsky(2))

Many years ago the colonial powers, such as Britain and France, made sure that ordinary people in the colonies did not have much say in running their own countries. Britain and France worked with local elites to run their countries in the interests of the colonial powers, and the elites themselves.

Colonial powers were worried that those colonies might want their independence, as the US did in 1776. In more recent times America has become the world’s dominant power. The US has spent the last 75 years trying to make sure that countries do not pursue their own independent development strategies. One way to achieve this is to work with leaders in other countries who appear to have been chosen by their people. US and British politicians therefore proclaim that they want to pursue democracy in other countries. However, this turns out to be an excellent example of propaganda. Just as with politics in Britain and the US, what they prefer is not genuine democracy, it is the illusion of democracy, as discussed in the previous two posts. Research has shown that the US has interfered in 81 foreign elections since 1950 to get their favoured candidates into power.(3)

US and British leaders encourage this illusion of democracy so that poor people will not feel compelled to resort to violence to make their voices heard. The appearance of political progress is a cheap substitute for genuine economic progress. The voters believe that their lives will be better in the future. What these countries end up with is a leadership that has connections to US decision-makers, and that has little control of key parts of the economic system. Foreign businesses have control of trade and resources. This has been described by Matt Kennard, one of the leading experts on this system, as “tamper-proof democracy.”(4)

Manipulating democracy in poor countries is even easier than manipulating it in rich countries. Voters will tend to vote for candidates that they have heard of. If the richest candidates can pay for large amounts of promotional advertising, they have a big advantage. If these same people control most of the media then they can make sure that their own coverage is positive, whilst their opponents will be repeatedly criticised.

To convince voters to choose the ‘right’ leaders (pro-US and pro-corporate) the US interferes with politics in other countries in a number of ways. They fund groups who support their

chosen candidate, and other groups who protest against other politicians and policies. They fund journalists who will write articles supportive of certain candidates, and supportive of the 'right' policies. They provide technical training, educational materials, conferences and overseas trips to non-government organizations (NGOs), student groups, publishers and unions.(5) The US also uses its own personnel based overseas to make economic threats, about withdrawing funds or aid, or blocking access to trade opportunities. If the electorate choose the 'wrong' candidate, the US will often attempt to change the result, either peacefully or violently. (Discussed in detail in earlier posts).

The National Endowment for (Undermining) Democracy



The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is a US organisation that spends large sums of money supporting some candidates in foreign elections. It presents itself as an organisation for helping to promote democracy. In practice it focuses on helping US clients. Some readers will have heard about the Rose revolution in Georgia (2003), the Orange revolution in the Ukraine (2005) and the Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan (2005).

These were presented by the mainstream media as countries discovering democracy and overthrowing their old leaders. What was not explained was that these countries already had democracy, and events were manipulated by the US government via the NED to try to get the pro-US candidate into power. It successfully manipulated elections in Nicaragua (1990), Mongolia (1996) and Slovakia (2002). Similarly, in Bulgaria (1991) and Albania (1992) US leaders were not happy with the winner of the elections, so the NED funded protests and eventually the elected politicians were forced to resign. It has a long history of corruption and failing to obey laws in many countries where it has operated, being involved in scandals in Venezuela, Iraq and Ukraine.

The NED was formed in 1983 after hearings exposed the crimes of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). In 1991 the President of the NED admitted that "A lot of what we do today was done covertly [secretly] 25 years ago by the CIA."(6) One critical US politician asked "How would people in America or Britain feel if the Chinese turned up with millions of dollars to support candidates deemed friendly to China?".(7) This would obviously be considered inappropriate, yet when the NED manipulates politics overseas, the US and British media provide little criticism. Despite claiming to be more open than the CIA, many of the NEDs early activities were kept secret. It even tried to manipulate events in France.

If All Else Fails, Resort To Violence

The following are examples of some of the democratically-elected leaders who tried to

pursue their own policies. In each case, the US overthrew them and replaced them with a brutal ruler who committed widespread atrocities.(8)

In Iran (1953), Mossadegh was replaced by the Shah (1953-1979). He set up the notorious SAVAK secret police who tortured thousands of political prisoners.

In Guatemala Jacobo Arbenz (1954) was replaced by Castillo Armas (1954-57) who arrested and killed thousands of people.

In Indonesia Sukarno (1965) was replaced by Suharto (1967-1998), who committed genocide, twice! He slaughtered at least half a million people in the 60s, and hundreds of thousands in East Timor from 1975 onwards.

In the Republic of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba (1961) was replaced by Mobutu Sese Seku (1965-1997) who committed widespread torture and public executions.

In Chile, Salvador Allende (1973) was replaced by Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990) who committed widespread murder and torture.

More recently, the US helped to overthrow the democratically-elected leader of Haiti in 2004.(9) In Venezuela the population repeatedly elected Hugo Chavez, who objected to US corporations and local elites exploiting Venezuela, so the local elites worked with US decision-makers and tried to overthrow him.(10) They are still trying to overthrow his successor, Nicolas Maduro.

Western Democracy is Overrated

US and British politicians repeatedly complain about a lack of democracy in some other countries. The US particularly complains about Cuba. However, they rarely mention that in many other South American countries which are recognised as democracies, the standard of living for the poorest people is far worse.(11) Cuba provides excellent education and healthcare to all of its citizens, however poor they are(12). In some South American democracies, the poorest people get inadequate education and no healthcare.

During the last seventy-five years, the governments of many of these other countries have murdered and tortured large numbers of citizens. Compared to them, Cuba has a much better human rights record. If Cuba were to change to a system of US-style democracy, where politics can be bought by wealthy donors, it is highly likely that life for the poorest people would get worse. The US press is repeatedly telling its readers that Cuba is a terrible place, but Cuba's real crime is demonstrating that poor countries can develop in ways that do not allow US corporations to control the economy and exploit the poor. Western observers who have visited Cuba explain that people in Cuba have much more say about how their country is run than poor people in the US and Britain, due to much more complex networks of grassroots discussions about policy.(13)

Elections in warzones under occupation by US soldiers are also meaningless. Whoever wins the election, the country is still under US control. We can re-phrase the earlier question and ask: "Imagine the Chinese army occupying Britain or America, then holding elections between two pro-Chinese candidates. Would that be democracy?" Obviously not. The elections just add a "democratic cloak to the US's chosen leader".(14)

Another issue that is rarely mentioned by the mainstream media is the fact that the countries that have developed most spectacularly since 1945 were not democracies. “South Korea and Taiwan were a mix of one-party states and military dictatorships until the late 1980s.”(15) If we compare China and India, China’s sustained progress has been faster than any other nation in history, yet it is not a democracy. India is a democracy, but it has failed to lift many of its poorest people out of poverty. It may actually be the case that a US-style democracy is not the best form of government for rapid development in poor countries. This is a point of view that is almost unmentionable in polite circles in Britain and the US.

Double Standards in the Mainstream Media

The double standards of the mainstream US and British media in relation to foreign interference in elections has been particularly obvious since 2016. They repeatedly complained about alleged Russian interference in the 2016 US elections (known as Russiagate). Even after a US judge ruled in 2019 that there was no evidence of interference,(16) the media still discuss the allegations as if they are true. US foreign policy, through the CIA and the NED, involves major interference in many countries, yet the media rarely mention it.

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Rod Driver is a part-time academic who is particularly interested in de-bunking modern-day US and British propaganda. This is the nineteenth in a series entitled *Elephants In The Room*, which attempts to provide a beginners guide to understanding what’s really going on in relation to war, terrorism, economics and poverty, without the nonsense in the mainstream media.

Notes

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2) Noam Chomsky, ‘The US says it is fighting for democracy but is deaf to the cries of the iraqis’, 11 Feb, 2007, at <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/noam-chomsky-the-us-says-it-is-fighting-for-democracy-but-is-deaf-to-the-cries-of-the-iraqis-435864.html>

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Martin Williams, ‘America’s long history of meddling in other countries’ elections’, 23 Nov 2017, Channel4 Factcheck, at <https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/americas-long-history-of-meddling-in-other-countries-elections>

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- 4) Matt Kennard, *The Racket: A Rogue Reporter vs The Masters of The Universe*, 2015, p.316
- 5) Martin Pastor, 'National Endowment for Destabilization? CIA funds for Latin America in 2018', 4 April 2019, at <https://www.telesurenglish.net/analysis/National-Endowment-for-Destabilization-CIA-Funds-for-Latin-America-in-2018-20190403-0042.html>
- 6) Allen Weinstein, cited in James Bovard, 'The National Endowment for Democracy's Forgotten Sordid History', 15 Oct 2009, at <http://jimbovard.com/blog/2009/10/15/the-national-endowment-for-democracys-forgotten-sordid-history/>
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- 7) Ron Paul, US Senator, 'National Endowment For Democracy: Paying To Make Enemies of America', Oct 11, 2003, at www.antiwar.com/paul/?articleid=1526
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- 9) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_Haitian_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat
- 10) John Pilger, 'The War On Democracy', 2007, at <http://johnpilger.com/videos/the-war-on-democracy>
- 11) Jonathan Glennie, 'Cuba: A development model that proved the doubters wrong', Guardian Poverty Matters Blog, 5 Aug 2011, at <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/aug/05/cuban-development-model>
- 12) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Healthcare_in_Cuba
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Cuba
- 13) Helen Yaffe, *We Are Cuba: How a Revolutionary People Have Survived in a Post-Soviet World*, 2020
- 14) Greg Palast, *Armed Madhouse*, p.52
- 15) Robert H. Wade, 'Escaping the periphery: The East-Asian 'mystery' solved', UNU-WIDER working paper 2018/101, Sep 2018, at <https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/Publications/Working-paper/PDF/wp2018-101.pdf>
- 16) Craig Murray, 'In the world of truth and fact, Russiagate is dead. In the World of the political establishment, it is still the new 42', 4 Aug 2019, at <https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2019/08/in-the-world-of-truth-and-fact-russiagate-is-dead-in-the-world-of-the-political-establishment-it-is-still-the-new-42/>

Featured image: Since the cutting off of electricity, food and water inside the embassy has not been enough to force the collective to leave, late Tuesday afternoon, the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police handed out a trespassing notice that was printed without letterhead or signature from any U.S. government official. (Photo: CodePink)

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