

Targeting Cuba and China: Disinformation and the “Fear of Communism”

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[USA](#)

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*[I was the CIA director. We lied, we cheated, we stole.](#) — **Mike Pompeo**, former US secretary of state on how the United States conducts its business*

*One of the filters in the Propaganda Model propounded by professors **Edward Herman** and **Noam Chomsky** was stoking a fear of communism. [1] The establishment’s anti-communism has never abated in the United States. The elitists require a populace fearful of communism to protect their own misbegotten wealth accumulation. Thus, the bugaboo of communism must be opposed wherever it arises. At its worst, the US would wage war against communist countries such as North Korea, Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Yugoslavia. When not militarily attacked, communist governments will be demonized by a relentless campaign of disinformation designed to bring about the fall of the government and its replacement by a government amenable to the US establishment, as happened in the Soviet Union. That is the nature of imperialism and predatory capitalism.*

The establishment’s anti-communism is alive and kicking in *The Diplomat*, a current-affairs magazine for the Asia-Pacific region. This one can readily glean from its [article](#) titled “How China Helps the Cuban Regime Stay Afloat and Shut [sic] Down Protests.” [2]

How China Helps the Cuban Regime Stay Afloat and Shut Down Protests

Chinese companies have played a key part in building Cuba’s telecommunications infrastructure, a system the regime uses to control its people, just as the CCP does within its own borders.

By [Leland Lazarus and Evan Ellis](#)
August 03, 2021



Screenshot from [The Diplomat](#)

The in-one’s-face bias of the article’s heading and the subheading (“Chinese companies

have played a key part in building Cuba's telecommunications infrastructure, a system the *regime* uses to *control* its people, just as the CCP does within its own borders.") immediately gives pause to the discerning reader. First, [regime](#) is a tendentious term meant to delegitimize a government. Second, the subheading asserts Chinese governmental *control*. While it points at the means, it does not provide any evidence that the assertion holds true.

The leaning of the writers is apparent from their bios: Leland Lazarus is a speechwriter to US Southern Command's admiral Craig Faller, and Dr Evan Ellis is a research professor of Latin American Studies at the US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute. They write, "[July 11](#), thousands of people across Cuba took to the streets, fed up with the lack of food, basic products, medicine, and vaccines to combat COVID-19."

This flash-in-the-pan, minor protest was allegedly [orchestrated by the NED and US AID](#). Furthermore, the monopoly media narrative has been undermined by its use of fake and doctored images. [3]

The writers complain, "Protesters used social media to broadcast to the world what was happening, but the communist *regime* shut off the internet and telephone services, [pulling the plug](#) on their connection outside the island."

A question: If your government is targeted by a barrage of disinformation from outside actors, would you allow for the disinformation to continue? Disinformation is hailed by many to be a [crime against humanity and a crime against peace](#). And the disinformation campaigns of the US are myriad. Among them are the [phantom missile attack in the Gulf of Tonkin](#), the [non-existent WMDs in Iraq](#), the [Viagra-fueled rapes in Libya](#), the Syrian government [chemical-weapon attacks](#), and the [current allegation](#) of a [genocide in Xinjiang](#), China. Millions of people died as a result of such disinformation.

It is clear that Lazarus and Ellis would like to knock down two communist governments that US capitalism finds antithetical, with one article. What is the crime of Cuba? The State Department Policy Planning Staff pointed to the "primary danger" the US faces, "The simple fact is that [former Cuban leader Fidel] Castro represents a successful defiance of the US..." [4] a slap in the face to the imperialist Monroe doctrine.

The writers turned to the [old-school Cuba policy advocacy](#) of US senator **Marco Rubio** who [tweeted](#):

"Expect the *regime* in #Cuba to block internet & cell phone service soon to prevent videos about what is happening to get out to the world... By the way, they use a system made, sold & installed by #China to control and block access to the internet in #Cuba."

I warned about this earlier today.

It is happening and will continue.

By the way, they use a system made, sold & installed by [#China](#) to control and block access to the internet in [#Cuba](#). [#SOSCuba](#) [#PatriaYVida](#)
<https://t.co/d3a3DkGR59>

— Marco Rubio (@marcorubio) [July 12, 2021](#)

Again, [monopoly media undermines itself and senator Rubio](#):

“... Fox News, however, included a small detail that went largely unnoticed. As he [Rubio] was speaking about ‘*brutal oppression*’ by the Cuban government and hailing the protesters, the footage shown by the cable station depicted a rally by Cuban government supporters. Fox News apparently knew exactly what it was airing, since it was careful to blur the slogans that some of the activists were carrying.”

Lazarus and Ellis see a sinister hand: “China’s role in helping the *regime* cut off communications during the protests has exposed one of the many ways Beijing helps keep the Cuban communist *regime* afloat.”

Meanwhile the *capitalist* [5] government in the US is trying its damndest to sink the communist government in Cuba. The US has long had an adversarial relationship with Cuba, starting with launching the Spanish-American War based on [a lie concocted by US media](#). After the successful Cuban Revolution, the US has kept in place an economic blockade of the island. And seldom discussed is the fact that the US continues to occupy Guantánamo Bay, which Cuba has often demanded be returned to its sovereignty.

Since the article never mentions otherwise, it is assumed to be predicated upon the US and its Occidental allies not engaging in monitoring telecommunications and digital surveillance, which Edward Snowden has revealed to be patently false. This is not whataboutism because there is [no evidence of a Chinese backdoor](#) to Huawei and the company has pledged to not insert spying devices in its products; to do otherwise would be a bad business decision.

China’s Interests in Cuba

Lazarus and Ellis envision nefarious Chinese stratagems underlying their trade with Cuba:

China recognizes Cuba’s geostrategic importance. Due to its position in the Caribbean, Cuba *can* exert influence over the southeastern maritime approach to the United States, which contains vital sea lanes leading to ports in Miami, New Orleans, and Houston. Author George Friedman has [argued that](#), with an increased presence in Cuba, China *could potentially* “block American ports without actually blocking them,” just like U.S. naval bases and installations pose a similar challenge to China around the first island chain and Straits of Malacca. Cuba’s influence in the Caribbean also makes it a useful proxy through which Beijing *can* pressure the four countries in the region (out of the 15 total globally) that recognize Taiwan to switch recognition.

The entire article is speculative. It is littered with words like “possible,” “can,” and “could.” The writers do not elaborate on how China might pressure the Caribbean countries. Usually countries switch allegiance to China from Taiwan based on financial inducements and not from [hegemonic pressure](#).

Economic Support versus Economic Sanctions

The Diplomat writers argue that “China helps sustain the [Cuban] *regime* through economic engagement.”

What exactly do the writers intend to imply by economic engagement sustaining a regime? The logical corollary is that economic sanctions are aimed at “regime change.” Stemming

from this logic, the US uses economic measures to sustain the theocratic [criminality and corruption in Saudi Arabia](#) and economic sanctions to try and change socialistic governments in, among others, Venezuela, Cuba, and China. Nonetheless, trade is what countries do to build their economies.

Regarding the US favored method of applying pressure, American academics John Mueller and Karl Mueller [wrote](#):

“economic sanctions ... may have contributed to more deaths during the post-Cold War era than all weapons of mass destruction throughout history.”

The academics further noted,

It is interesting that this loss of human life has failed to make a great impression in the United States....

Some of the inattention may derive from a lack of concern about foreign lives. Although Americans are extremely sensitive to American casualties, they - like others - often seem quite insensitive to casualties suffered by those on the opposing side, whether military or civilian.

The world views economic sanctions in a different light from the US. This was illuminated by the UN General Assembly vote demanding an end to the US economic blockade on Cuba for the 29th year in a row. Aside from two negative votes cast by the US and its Israeli ally, 184 countries voted in favor of the resolution.

Perplexingly, the writers pointed out that “China has not, however, sold Cuba any significant weapons systems, as it has done with other states in the [region](#) such as Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia.”

To the extent that selling armaments is a legitimate business, then why shouldn't China sell armaments? Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia are not warring with other countries. Regarding the morality of selling weapons, consider that the US sells weapons to Saudi Arabia, a country committing genocide against Yemen and to Israel, a country that serially aggresses and economically strangulates Palestine. Are the writers not aware that the US pokes China in the eye by selling armaments to its renegade province, Taiwan, in contravention of the One-China policy to which the US shook hands?

“Digital Authoritarianism”

The writers complain about “China exporting ‘[digital authoritarianism](#)’ to illiberal regimes across the region. In Venezuela, Chinese telecommunication firm ZTE helped the Maduro *regime* establish the ‘[fatherland ID card](#)’ system, which it used to *control* not only voting, but the distribution of scarce food packages.”

As for the ID cards, the link provided by the writers notes that the “system *could* lead to abuses of privacy by Venezuela’s government.” Besides, which country does not require ID in order to cast a vote?

Why are the food packages scarce? What would one expect when the US has sanctions against Venezuela? It is quite disingenuous to criticize a government for food packages being scarce when that scarcity is caused by the writers’ own government. Moreover, the

writers continue to use the word *control* pejoratively. Are the voting systems and economic distribution networks not a function of government implementation everywhere? If the writers want to insist that voting and the results are manipulated, then provide the evidence. Contrariwise, [US observers endorsed](#) the legitimacy of Venezuela's May 2020 election; also, [international observers were](#) "unanimous in concluding that the elections were conducted fairly." The [link](#) supplied by the writers is now dead, but the [title](#) reads: "For poor Venezuelans, a box of food *may* sway vote for Maduro." While in Venezuela, a group of us visited the *mercals* — where food was being made affordable for the masses — where we were [informed](#): "The Chavez administration does not want Venezuela's food needs to be dependent on outside sources, so a concerted effort has been made to produce all foods locally." Obviously that food independence is still a work in progress. Such progress is not made easier by being targeted by economic sanctions.

The writers make clear their anti-leftist and their anti-democracy views:

Leftist authoritarian regimes are consolidating control in [Venezuela](#) and [Nicaragua](#). The populist left has returned to power in [Bolivia](#) in the form of the MAS party, in [Argentina](#) with the Peronists, and in [Mexico](#) with Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and the Morena movement. In [Peru](#), the recent election of Pedro Castillo, a teacher from Cajamarca with a radical left agenda, similarly raises alarm bells. Upcoming elections in the region raise the prospects for an even broader spread of the populist left, including the prospect of victory by Xiomara Castro in November 2021 elections in [Honduras](#), a President Petro emerging from [Colombia's](#) 2022 elections, or the return of Lula da Silva and his Workers' Party in [Brazil's](#) October 2022 elections.

Yikes! Democracy can be such a pain in the butt. As the anarchist professor Noam Chomsky wrote, "In the real world, elite dislike of democracy is the norm." [6] For American elitists, "the United States supports democracy if, and only if, the outcomes accord with its strategic and economic objectives." [7] That the US did and would seek "regime change" in Latin America is borne out by its [Operation Condor](#).

Lazarus and Ellis attempt to justify the US' machinations against Cuba and China:

China's continued efforts to prop up the Cuban *regime* matters to U.S. national security. For both good and bad, Cuba is connected to the United States through geographic proximity, historical connections, and family ties. The U.S. government has [long focused on](#) violations of the freedoms and human rights of the Cuban people.

The language of Lazarus and Ellis is oleaginous. Having a *focus on human rights violations* is qualitatively different from *opposing human rights violations* and quantitatively different from *supporting human rights violations*, as the US did when it supported the Fulgencio Batista "regime" (to use the parlance of Lazarus and Ellis) in Cuba, which served American corporate and military interests while [massacring his own people](#). How does the occupation of Guantánamo Bay, where prisoners of war languish in what Amnesty International called the "gulag of our time"; the Bay of Pigs fiasco; Operation Northwoods; and economic sanctions speak for American fidelity to human rights?

The writers with ties to the US military accuse China of a "malign intent against the U.S. in cyberspace." They reason that "Cuba *could* also be an area from which China could gather [intelligence](#) and conduct cyberattacks against the United States."

The writers speculate about a malign Chinese intent. Malign intent is evidenced by the [Stuxnet virus](#) that the USA and Israel inserted into the Iranian nuclear program. The authors write as if the US is not guilty of the malignity they assert that China is guilty of.

How the United States Can Respond

Lazarus and Ellis argue that the US “should concentrate on helping partners in the region to engage with China in the most healthy, productive ways. For example, an emphasis on transparency inhibits the ability to engage in corrupt backroom deals with the Chinese that benefit the elites signing the deals rather than the country as a whole.”

Helping partners and advocating for transparency is great. Is this what the US does? It would be foolish to deny that the US does not engage with corrupt rulers, rulers who siphon off the loans meant for the people of the country who are then held responsible for the odious debt to the financial lenders? [8]

Lazarus and Ellis write, “With respect to cybersecurity, the United States should similarly look to increase support to partners in protecting their citizens’ privacy and security from malign actors like China.”

Let’s leave aside the unsupported allegation that China might be a malign actor. Instead, let’s ask what kind of actor is the US? Is it a benevolent actor? This is the actor that just recently ended a two-decade war in impoverished Afghanistan — a country where the US engaged in a [cycle of war crimes](#). Ask yourself: is it a benevolent actor who engages in disinformation campaigns against countries like China that have eradicated absolute poverty (while in the US a 2019 measure of poverty showed a [rate of 10.5%](#)) and accuse it of the scurrilous and easily debunked [allegation of committing genocide in Xinjiang](#)? Is it an upstanding country that pursues the locking away of [Julian Assange for exposing US war crimes](#) in Iraq and elsewhere?

The writers suggest part of the solution for escaping Chinese spying is cybersecurity training by the US.

Is that a good idea — trusting Uncle Sam? If you get trained by the US and use US technology, then you might end up being surveilled by the US. Ask German chancellor [Angela Merkel](#) and dozens of [other world leaders](#).

Lazarus and Ellis persist:

While recent events in Cuba show China’s growing [influence](#) in the region, the CCP’s emphatic [support](#) of the Cuban regime’s repressive acts also highlights that it is on the wrong side of history. The U.S. must deepen partnerships with Latin American countries and Caribbean friends.

Was the US on the right side of history in Korea, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos, historical Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Haiti, Chile, Grenada, etc? How should countries like Guatemala, Honduras, Chile, Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia and the other Latin American countries targeted by Operation Condor feel about a deepened partnership? And how would the peoples of Caribbean countries — e.g., Haiti, Grenada, Puerto Rico, etc — feel about a deepened partnership with the US?

Lazarus and Ellis proffer the haggard imperialist platitudes of partnership based on shared

values, security, prosperity, and freedom. Which populations would they like to tempt with such an offer? To the people who experienced US-supported coups in Nicaragua, Honduras, Haiti, Bolivia, Brazil, or the masses in Venezuela subjected to unceasing American-government intrigues against their country? There is a reason why Latin Americans and Caribbean countries are leftists or turning leftward.

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Notes

1. See Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (Pantheon Books, 2002 edition).
2. Throughout the article all emphases within quotations have been added by this writer.
3. See [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
4. Cited in Noam Chomsky, *Who Rules the World?* Metropolitan Books, 2014: 100.
5. Since the writers deem it important to identify the governments in China and Cuba as *communist*, it would seem appropriate and balanced to identify other governments by their ideology.
6. Chomsky, 45.
7. Chomsky, 74.
8. See Noam Chomsky, *Profit over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* (Seven Stories Press, 1999). Chomsky describes how neoliberalism and financial institutions like the IMF and its structural adjustments have plunged the masses in developing countries into despair.

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