

A Case Study Of Corporate Media Disinformation

Disinformation

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Above photo: From [Jazziz.com](#).

Some alternative media have exposed the US government and its corporate media fake news reporting on Russian ?election interference,? on Venezuela, the war on Syria, China's Xinjiang and Hong Kong, Nicaragua, Palestine, among others. One of the longest running media disinformation campaigns has been directed at Cuba, well covered in Keith Bolender's *Manufacturing the Enemy: The Media War Against Cuba*.¹ This thoroughly documented work is a good antidote to the constant anti-Cuba disinformation we are subjected to, which inevitably influences all of us. According to well-known Goebbels quote, ?If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it? ? true, but actually a lie that Goebbels ever said this.

In early 1960 Robert Kennedy spelled out the US' Cuba project: the overthrow of Castro ?is the top priority of the US government, all else is secondary, no time, money, effort or manpower is to be spared.? (p. 76) Washington clearly understood the revolution opened a future that didn't exist before, still doesn't today in most countries, and consequently imposed a blockade similar to a full military blockade in war. The US sought to undermine the Cuban Revolution by making people suffer, with the hope that they would blame and overturn their government.

The US government engineers the ?regime change? attempts, while the ?media's role is not to examine Cuba's society fairly: it is to validate regime change?² The media's function is to win public support for overthrowing another country's government, not question Washington's right to interfere in the internal affairs of that nation. It re-packages counterrevolution as saving the freedoms and human rights of the targeted nation's people. With its control over information available to the US population, the corporate media has been able to convince most US people that Cuba is not a model to follow. The media consistently holds Cuba up to a higher standard that f

Over the 60 years of the Cuban revolution, the corporate media has implanted in us a negative image of Cuba through their distortions of the country's political and economic system, their discounting the revolution's achievements, and their denial of the impact the blockade and US terrorism have had on the country. The media has been especially effective in not addressing the endless complex problems a developing nation faces once it has decided to establish its genuine sovereignty while trying to survive the relentless hostility of the world's superpower.

few other nations, including the United States itself, are subjected to.

The corporate media remains the gatekeeper of information, with five corporations [controlling 90% of the media business](#). They have effectively promoted that its news can be confidently trusted. Bolender notes that while overall trust in the media has decreased, he points out, using the examples of Fox News and CNN, ?it is mostly based on the consumer not believing in the media that presents opposing information to his own opinions in a specific issue? (p. 34). On Cuba, however, the corporate media present no opposing information, and are free to [feed us fake news](#).

Fake News on Cuba]

Bolender's book can be called a short version history of fake news about Cuba. We present a sampling here:

The media claimed that Castro and his allies executed hundreds of Batista regime enemies in kangaroo courts after taking power. In fact, Batista's repressive forces and police had killed 20,000 and some of them were captured and brought to justice for their crimes.

The media has presented the Cuban government's nationalization of US properties as illegal and without any compensation. In fact, Cuba offered reparation payments based on 20 year bonds at 4.5% interest rates based on October 1958 property assessments. This offer, accepted by other countries, was refused by the US. That compensation and that negotiations were offered and repeatedly refused by the US was rarely reported by corporate media.

The media has claimed the US blockade was a response to Cuban seizure of US properties without compensation, yet Washington's eliminating the Cuban sugar quota occurred more than a year before the US refused negotiations.

New York Times fake news campaigning did not begin with its Russiagate anti-Trump story. On January 3, 1961, four months before the Bay of Pigs invasion, it

claimed "It is incredible to us that the Cubans can believe we are about to invade their island? It is difficult for Americans to understand that others can honestly believe things about us that we know to be false?". (p. 87)

Bolender reviews some media coverage during the invasion: the Wall Street Journal, for instance, reported claims that the invaders had cut the country in two, had taken Santiago de Cuba and captured Raul Castro.

The corporate media painted Cuba's installing nuclear missiles in 1962 as an act of war, even though their purpose was to forestall a new US invasion in the works. In fact, Cuba had as much right to point missiles at the US as the US had to point them at Cuba. Nevertheless, that the US almost went to world nuclear war and destruction of the planet with a naval blockade of Cuba is blamed on Cuba, not on Washington.

Bolender points out the same corporate media bias against Cuba is held against Palestine: "The notion that the Palestinians or Cubans have the right to defend themselves is outside the realm of normal discourse?". (p. 182)

The New York Times and Washington Post both presented fake news in the 1980s that Fidel sent 500 Cuban troops to El Salvador.

The media historically describes Cubans as emigrating due to the revolutionary government's economic incompetence and political repression. In fact, people all over the world emigrate from poorer countries to richer ones.

The corporate media used the rescue of Elian Gonzalez to continuously attack the alleged poverty stricken and repressive life in Cuba his mother had fled. Actual US immigration policy at the time was rarely reported: that unaccompanied immigrant children are returned to their parents unless the parents are unfit.

Washington Post, among others, gave credence to John Bolton's 2002 claim that Cuba was developing biological weapons, later convincingly disproven by Jimmy Carter.

The corporate media went on an anti-Cuba propaganda campaign over the Cuban "dissidents," including "independent journalists" and "librarians" arrested

in 2003 during the time of another US attempted attack on the country. It was not pointed out that they were arrested because of their prior and planned disruptions and bombings, or that [they were on the US payroll](#).

The Cuban government allegedly [diverts food from the population](#) to the tourist industry. As with many such stories, no actual evidence is provided.

More than once were some of the 930 Cuban medical professionals working in Haiti after the earthquake [identified as "Spanish"?](#)

The New York Times propaganda still asserted Cuba is a mismanaged anachronism, that the average Cuban has no say-so, that the government does not permit public dialogue on its policies. This is arrogant nonsense to anyone knowledgeable about Cuba. Unlike

the US, Cuba has a number of mass organizations that involve the people in running the government and society as a whole: Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC), Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP), Federation of University Students (FEU), Federation of Pre-University Students (FEEM), and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR). Clearly this system is vastly more open and democratic than in the US.

In 2011 Cuba had a national discussion in thousands of assemblies in workplaces and schools around the country to establish new laws and guidelines for economic reforms. The US did no such thing when confronted by the 2008 economic crisis.

In 2018 Cuba had a similar national discussion on a new constitution. The process was discussed in over 100,000 workplaces and community meetings. After the debates and modifications of the draft, the National Assembly approved it, which was then voted on in a national referendum. In contrast, the US has never organized national discussions or assemblies throughout the country when changes to the constitution have been made. The US does not even give the citizens the right to vote on changes to the constitution, nor gives us the right to elect the president by popular vote.

The media has claimed Cuba is involved in drug smuggling, again without evidence. In contrast, when Gary Webb exposed actual [CIA crack cocaine smuggling into the US](#) the corporate media undertook a major smear campaign against him for reporting it, destroying his life.

The corporate media consistently covered up the hundreds of acts of US terrorism against Cuba, including bombing Havana hotels and blowing up a civilian airliner, killing all 73 on board. The media has covered up [biological warfare against Cuba](#), and does not report that over 3500 Cuban civilians have been killed in US terrorist attacks. Cuba has documented [636 US attempts to kill their head of state](#). Bolender comments "The lack of authentic coverage of this covert war against Cuban civilians remains a great stain against the media in its treatment of the island nation." (p. 100)

When Posada Carriles, who orchestrated the Cubana airline bombing, was arrested for illegal entry into the US, the New York Times did not describe him as a CIA agent or terrorist but as a Cuban "militant" seeking to overthrow Fidel Castro.

When Cuba shot down the Miami Brothers to the Rescue planes in 1996, the media helped cover up that these planes were in Cuban airspace, that they had penetrated Cuban airspace twelve times before, that Cuba had repeatedly complained to the FAA, and that the group was planning on dropping bombs on Havana in future flights. Instead, the shoot-down was presented as a callous and unprovoked Cuban attack on a humanitarian group over international waters.

Corporate media concealed that the Cuban Five were fighting terrorism directed at their country from the US. They were framed up as "spies" and imprisoned while the media colluded to black out reporting of the trial and their sentencing. The Miami press covered the case, but their reporters were working to aid the prosecution in the case. Some prominent journalists became paid US government agents, writing articles to misinform the public and even fabricate stories to help ensure the judicial frame-up of the five. They concocted stories that the Cubans were part of a spy network to smuggle weapons, even bombs, into the US to murder Castro oppo

nents in Florida. [The government spent millions dollars in illegal payments to journalists to write a thousand articles over a six-year period aimed to ensure a conviction.](#)

The media misrepresented [USAID agent Alan Gross](#), arrested and imprisoned in Cuba, as simply bringing in cell phones and laptops to the Jewish communities in Cuba. Honest reporting would have noted that he brought in and helped set up an untrackable, untraceable military grade communications network using devices illegal in Cuba.

Prior to Obama's "opening" to Cuba, the media regularly told us that Cuba blocked US people from traveling to the country, while, in fact, the US disallowed it.

President Obama is credited with "normalizing" relations with Cuba, even though relations are not normalized when one continues a

blockade and economic war on the other.

In 2015, Fox News and Daily Beast claimed hundreds of Cuban military personnel were aiding Syria's Assad.

The media claims Trump ended individual travel to Cuba, which was allowed under two different licenses. In fact, he ended the People to People license, but the [Support for Cuban People license remains in effect](#). This is typically not reported, discouraging travel to Cuba.

In 2017 Cuba allegedly engaged in sonic attacks on US diplomats in Havana, causing serious health problems for the officials, and provided the excuse for Trump to slash US and Cuban Embassy staff. Barely reported was that after four trips to Cuba, the FBI found no evidence to support this assertion of attacks.

The corporate media claims Cuba restricts internet access to its citizens. In reality, by late 2018, anyone with a 3G phone can get online. It is actually the US that restricts internet access by denying access to the fiber optic cables that run near Cuban shores.

Bolender notes that "A favorite ploy of the media is to offer expert opinions on how to fix the serious economic problems Cuba faces, while consistently ignoring America's debilitating economic embargo." (p. 3) The New York Times claims Cuba is "an economically distressed country that is perennially in crisis" with the blockade never referenced. If the blockade is mentioned, its draconian nature remains hidden, thereby maintaining the fiction that US action has no impact on Cuba.

The media has consistently used "democracy" and "human rights" to malign Cuba. [Obama himself declared](#) Cuba "has not yet observed human rights." The fact of the matter is Cuba "has not yet moved to democracy. Has not yet observed basic human rights." The self-appointed US big brother presumes it can "help" the Cubans gain freedom and operate their economy in an efficient manner. The calls for "democracy" and "human rights" in Cuba has nothing to do with representative government nor human rights. The terms are used as a propaganda tool, elevating the accuser to a superior moral status, justifying Washington's illegal interference.

The media claims Cuba has no free elections, no democratic process. In reality, Arnold August's Cuba and its Neighbours, Democracy in Motion explains that Cuba has an electoral system surprisingly more democratic than the US version. The Cuban people both propose and vote on who will be their own representatives, unlike the case here. People in every constituen

cy propose and then vote on who will be their delegates for the municipal government. Once the municipal government is formed, they propose from among their elected members and vote on who will be their delegates to the provincial government. The provincial government does the same in turn for the national parliament. The national parliament elects the president, ministers, and Council of State members from among its own members. This means, from the president to every single member of government, everyone has to be nominated in the first place in the community where he or she lives.

Social media opens many new doors for disinformation operati

ons. Twitter, a neo-con corporation, received USAID funding to build a social media network in Cuba called [Zunzuneo](#). It sought to create a mass youth following in Cuba and later use this network to stimulate demonstrations and cause internal unrest.

When fake news was deemed insufficient the media resorted to a schizophrenic McCarthyism: Cuba was a "point of infection by the Communist virus for the whole hemisphere".³

As if to assert its thinking has not evolved, when Fidel Castro died the New York Times blamed him for "bringing the Cold War to the Western Hemisphere" and for "pushing the world to the brink of nuclear war." In fact, the US had brought the Cold War here at least by 1954 with its coup against Guatemala's Arbenz. The historical record shows that Cuba turned increasingly towards the Communist world only after the US drastically curtailed political and economic relations with Cuba. As mentioned above, the world was pushed to the brink of nuclear war by the aggressive actions by John Kennedy, not by Khrushchev or Castro.

The New York Times also referred to Cuba as 'a dynastic police state'. (p. 151)

The Washington Post on Fidel Castro's death called him 'one of the most brutal dictators in modern history,' an irrational statement that presumably places him in league with Hitler.

Like any foreign leader the US wants to eliminate, Fidel Castro was portrayed as a child, as mentally unbalanced. This helped to both justify US regime change and to avoid informing the US public on the reasons for Cuban anger at the US conduct towards Cuba since 1898. When journalists accurately reported on the Cuban experience, as did Herbert Matthews, he was 'ostracized by his media colleagues as being a dupe of Castro and a communist sympathizer'. (p. 79) More respected were the likes of Tad Szulc who said Fidel was 'an overgrown boy'. (p. 80)

Bolender repeatedly points out 'that whenever there's something positive about Cuba, the media must follow its credo of injecting negative misinformation, no matter how preposterous the claim'. It was intended to ensure the consumer maintains a negative opinion about Cuba, despite reading of its accomplishments'. (pp. 171-172) One example: a criticism of the new Cuban president by the New York Times, 'Mr. Diaz-Canel, who became Cuba's new president on Thursday, the day before his 58th birthday, has spent his entire life in the service of a revolution he did not fight'. (p. 180)

Corporate media reporting of anything negative about Cuba is an acceptable default position, with the underlying assumption being, before and after Obama's opening, that the Cuban system must change, guided by US benevolence.

US Disinformation on Cuba before 1959]

Media propaganda against Cuba began long before the 1959 revolutionary victory. Bolender takes us back to the justifications for the 1898 US invasion and occupation. Cubans were portrayed as unkempt children unable to manage by themselves, needing Anglo-Saxon Uncle Sam to save Cubans from Spain and then from themselves by ruling their affairs for them.

The so-called Spanish-American War saw fake news stories that would be recycled later.

The two chief media outlets of the day competed with wild stories to whip up US support for war and occupation. It was 'doubtful' that the war would have developed without the agency of the most vicious and cynical behavior of a part of the American press that our nation had yet seen'. (p. 53) This same media conduct was repeated a hundred years later to garner support for the war on Iraq.

Spain was blamed without any evidence for the US Navy ship Maine explosion. Vice President Theodore Roosevelt then repeated the unsubstantiated claim the next day, providing the excuse to launch an invasion. Similarly, this story-line was later repackaged with the fabricated North Vietnamese attack on a US destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin.

The corporate press erased the whole 1895-98 independence struggle of the Cuban people against Spain by claiming the US invasion won the war and freed Cuba from Spain.

Even the US name for the war, the Spanish-American War, was a propaganda ploy, removing the agency of Cubans, concealing it being a US war on the Cuban independence struggle. Similarly, the corporate media sold us the US War on Korea as the 'Korean War' and the US War on Vietnam as the 'Vietnam War'.

Cubans were painted as irresponsible, lazy, ignorant, unfit for self-government 'racist stereotypes the corporate media repeatedly applied to many other Third World peoples and countries, including native Americans and Blacks. 'The Cuban is lacking chiefly in the qualities that are conspicuous in American men 'virility, initiative, will power, tenacity, reverences for women and conscience.' They are helpless, idle, of defective morals and unfitted by nature and experience for discharging the obligations of citizenship in a great and free republic. Their lack of manly force and self-respect?' and so on with this precursor of Nazi-style propaganda.

'To clothe such men with the responsibilities of directing self-government would be to summon them to the performance of

functions for which they have not the smallest capacity? (quoted on pp. 55-56). The New York Times at the time declared, 'We are guardians, self-appointed, to the Cuban people? (p. 61) and warned of 'an irresponsible government of half-breeds?. (p. 62)

That Third World peoples still need the American white man's firm hand and

parenting remains a central element of US foreign policy propaganda, not only against Cuba, but the world.

Brazen Yankee arrogance displays itself in one clause of the quintessential neo-colonial Platt Amendment the US imposed on Cuba: Cuba was prohibited from negotiating treaties with any country other than the US 'which will impair? the independence of Cuba? or 'permit any foreign power or powers to obtain?or control over any portion? of Cuba. All precisely US conduct with the Platt Amendment.

The occupation completed, the US

then made available prime Cuban lands to US citizens, following historic US policy with conquered native American peoples' lands.

When Cubans protested this Platt Amendment, the Chicago Tribune editorialized 'The United States reserved the right to intervene?to preserve public order?'We are the parent, Cuba is the child, and the child is about due for a good spanking?' (p. 67). Cuban 'independence,? as written into their constitution, meant Cubans did not have the right to protest without risking foreign intervention. For the corporate media, Cuba was to be eternally grateful to the US for its freedom and independence, and to consider US domination as benign and progressive.

Bolender quotes Walter Cronkite on the US attitude towards Cuba before the revolution: 'Cuba was a resort land for Americans?it was just a part of America, we kind of considered it part of the United States?.The country was a little colony?. (p. 74)

Then came 1959 and Fidel Castro responded to racist imperial patronizing with the simple truth: 'I believe that this country has the same rights of other countries to govern itself?. (p. 68) By the end of 1960 media coverage of Cuba was telling us Fidel Castro was crazy. In the world of corporate media fake

news, all leaders who oppose or criticize US dictates and bullying are called madmen. The media transformed Cuba from a welcoming tourist playground into an armed camp, a repressive Communist state, a colony of the Soviet Union. The media 'went on a rampage of misinformation and outright falsehoods about the Cuban Revolution that persists to this day?. (p. 75)

That Cuba must conform to US imperial standards, nothing less, has been an unchanged US policy from 1898 to the present.

Our Susceptibility to US Disinformation Campaigns]

We should never underestimate the shrewdness of US disinformation, which has affected Bolender to a degree. For example, Bolender describes USAID's Zunzuneo project as analogous to Russian social media operations in 2016. (p. 188) In reality, this entire Russiagate story itself was a [disinformation campaign](#). Bolender again falls for corporate media disinformation by cal

ling the US-NATO war on Syria a '[civil war](#)?. (p. 6) We can be quite knowledgeable about some disinformation campaigns, but even the most astute among us can be taken in by others.

Bolender mentions 'The decision by the Castro government to embrace Soviet orthodoxy? occurred after the Bay of Pigs invasion. He does not explain what is signified by this 'Soviet orthodoxy.?' Nevertheless, Cuba did not become closely aligned with the Soviet Union almost ten years after the 1961 invasion. During the 1960s, a fair amount of discord punctuated the relations between the two countries: Khrushchev unilaterally removing missiles, the split in the Communist bloc, sharp disagreements over guerilla warfare, the Warsaw Pact [1968 intervention in Czechoslovakia](#), the defense of Vietnam, the 1967 crackdown of the [pro-Soviet Anibal Escalante faction in the Cuban CP](#).

Bolender sees 'a softening, even a balance of coverage when examining specific incidents, such as Elian Gonzalez, the Cuban Five

and even the Alan Gross affair. (p. 176) I do not agree. The public regarded Elian's case as a father unfairly being kept from his son, and as the US government not defending family and parental rights. People could not be sold on the attempt to view it through a 'Communist Cuba vs. US freedom' lens. Having worked on the Cuban Five case for twelve years, I observed no opening of coverage on the case. Outside of Miami the corporate media maintained a black out. We even had to raise funds to pay the New York Times to [publish a factual account on the Cuban Five](#).

Corporate Media as Informational Enabler of US 'Regime Change?]

Bolender's book gives us an excellent understanding of the actual role the so-called free press plays. 'Cuba remains a prime example of media manipulation in support of foreign policy perspectives'. (p. 180) 'While politicians express policy, the press was tasked to manufacture acceptable public opinion in support of regime change'. (p.76) 'America's corporate media is the informational enabler of Washington's regime change strategy'. (p. 183)

Media covers other countries in a hostile or favorable light, reflecting the US government and corporate America's relations with those governments. Countries targeted for counterrevolution by Washington are routinely claimed to have serious economic problems and human rights abus

es. Brutal regimes like Colombia, Honduras, Saudi Arabia, and Israel that are allied with the US have their abuses painted over.

'Destabilization, subversion and economic warfare have been the tools of regime change policy used by the US government; the media has willingly helped forge them.' (p. 2) Many studies have substantiated this, such as Carl Bernstein's on the [CIA's Operation Mockingbird](#), revealing that the CIA actually had 400 corporate media executives and journalists reporting 'news' according to CIA objectives. [F. William Engdahl](#) has written extensively on US media and NGO roles in recent regime change operations in Russia, China, Yugoslavia, the Arab Spring and the Middle East today. Beenish Ahmed wrote on a simple media coverup in her article, [Here Are All The Things The Media Calls Torture Instead Of 'Torture'](#).

Corporate media disinformation seeks to poison our attitude towards countries standing up for their national sovereignty, but also towards actual journalists who expose the media's fake news. They seek to destroy [Julian Assange](#) and [Chelsea Manning](#) as they did [Gary Webb](#). Corporate America's disinformation relies on politicians, media and NGOs to implant their messaging. It remains a long ongoing battle to combat it among the people, and an essential part of that requires us to question our own views, as none of us are entirely immune to disinformation techniques, which have, in effect, become an advanced science.

Manufacturing the Enemy: The Media War Against Cuba. He has also written Voices From the Other Side: An Oral History of Terrorism Against Cuba, and Cuba under Siege: American Policy, the Revolution and Its People. [?]

The term 'regime change' is itself not accurate: the appropriate term is 'counterrevolution,' as Washington's actual goal is not overturning a 'regime' so much as the social, economic and political gains of the people of the country. p. 137 [?]

New York Times, April 23, 1961 'a date right after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. [?]

https://popularrresistance.org/a-case-study-of-corporate-media-disinformation/?fbclid=IwAR2_aD40M06d69BGxDcL_6Ad56dotqQD-UmTYqyTSyfCBaygGCO1nX4sw4