

Securing Deterrence: Exposing and Countering Adversary Influence

By

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In an era marked by complex security challenges, the traditional notions of deterrence are being tested in new ways. Adversaries such as China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia, lacking the conventional capability for direct confrontation, are increasingly turning to subtle [grey zone tactics](#) to undermine American deterrence. Central to their strategy is the manipulation of public perception and policy discourse. In fact, [dark money](#), funneled through opaque channels like [501\(c\)\(4\) organizations](#), plays a pivotal role in this adversarial interference. There are ways to counter it.

The Role of Dark Money in Adversarial Interference

[Dark money](#) refers to funds used to influence political outcomes where the source of the money is not disclosed. This form of funding is particularly [sly](#) because it operates within the [loopholes of campaign finance laws](#), exploiting the lack of transparency in the system to advance agendas that may run counter to American interests.

Adversaries, keenly aware of the limitations of direct military confrontation with the US and its allies, turned to these covert tactics to achieve their objectives. By funneling funds through [501\(c\)\(4\) organizations](#), which are classified as “[social welfare](#)” groups and are not required to disclose their donors, adversaries evade scrutiny and manipulate American policy and public opinion.

One of the most concerning aspects of this tactic is its potential to influence American elections. [Peter Schweikert’s scenario, presented in a recent congressional hearing](#), underscores this danger. If an adversary were to donate to a 501(c)(4), which then redirected those funds to a Super PAC supporting candidates sympathetic to their agenda, they could effectively buy influence and shape American policy in ways that may not align with the country’s interests.

Implications for National Security

The implications of adversarial interference through dark money are significant, affecting both the credibility of its deterrence posture and the integrity of its political system. [By manipulating public perception and policy discourse, adversaries seek to undermine the credibility of deterrence](#), a cornerstone of national security strategy. If successful, such efforts could weaken the resolve of the US and its allies, creating a perception of vulnerability that could embolden aggressive actions by adversarial states and non-state actors. This, in turn, could lead to increased tensions and ultimately destabilize the global security environment.

Moreover, the use of dark money undermines the integrity of the American political system, which is built on principles of transparency and accountability. By circumventing disclosure requirements and influencing policy decisions behind the scenes, adversaries erode trust in democratic institutions and raise doubts about the fairness of the political process. This erosion of trust not only weakens the United States’ ability to counter adversarial threats but also undermines its standing as a global leader in democracy and governance. It sets a dangerous

precedent that could be exploited by other actors seeking to undermine democratic norms and institutions worldwide.

Furthermore, the use of dark money in American politics could have ripple effects beyond its borders. As a global leader, the US sets an example for other countries in terms of democratic governance and transparency. If the integrity of the political system is compromised, it could embolden authoritarian regimes and other adversaries to disregard democratic norms and institutions, further destabilizing the international order.

Countermeasures and Recommendations

To counter adversarial interference through dark money, several measures should be considered. First and foremost, greater transparency is needed. Regulations should be strengthened to ensure that all sources of funding for advocacy groups, including 501(c)(4) organizations, are disclosed. This would provide greater visibility into the flow of dark money and help identify and mitigate foreign influence.

Additionally, efforts should be made to enhance public awareness of this issue. First and foremost, there must be a concerted effort to [enhance public awareness and education on deterrence policy](#). By providing accurate and accessible information, the government can counter misinformation and ensure that the public understands the necessity of maintaining a credible deterrent.

Furthermore, it is crucial for the US to engage with its allies and partners to collectively address the challenges posed by adversarial [narrative control](#). By presenting a unified front and sharing best practices, the international community can better defend against attempts to undermine deterrence policy and stability.

Ultimately, protecting the [integrity of the domestic narrative](#) is essential for safeguarding US interests and maintaining global stability. By taking proactive steps to counter adversarial interference, US officials and deterrence experts can ensure that the public remains well informed and supportive of efforts to modernize our nuclear capabilities.

Conclusion

The use of dark money as a tool for adversarial interference poses a significant threat to national security and the integrity of the political system. Adversaries, recognizing the limitations of direct military confrontation, are increasingly turning to covert tactics to undermine deterrence. By manipulating public perception and policy discourse through funding channels like 501(c)(4) organizations, adversaries seek to weaken the credibility of American deterrence and erode trust in democratic institutions.

The implications of this interference are far-reaching. If successful, adversaries could undermine the resolve of the US and its allies, emboldening aggressive actions and destabilizing the global security environment. Moreover, the use of dark money undermines the principles of transparency and accountability that are essential to a functioning democracy. This raises doubts about the fairness of the political process and weakens the United States' standing as a global leader in democracy and governance.

To counter this threat, greater transparency in campaign finance laws is needed, along with enhanced public awareness and international cooperation. By taking decisive action to expose and counter adversarial interference through dark money, the US can protect its



Global Security Review

deterrence posture, safeguard its democratic institutions, and uphold its leadership role in the global community.

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