**How to Overthrow a Government**

Coleton Sanheim, Jun Bae, Jonny Ngai

Submitted to Dr. Stuart White PhD.

& Karen Riley BEd. BA (Hons), MEd.

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Abstract:

This essay details Chris Rock’s presentation of “How to Overthrow a Government” and contrasts and compares his ideas with strategic thinkers such as Sun Tzu, Machiavelli and Lawrence Freedman. In Sun Tzu we compare Sun Tzu’s ideas of spies and espionage to Chris Rock. In Machiavelli we explore Machiavelli’s view of mercenaries and how Chris Rock fits into that. In Freedman we discuss how important propaganda is and how Chris Rock utilizes it in Kuwait.

Keywords:

Chris Rock, Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, Lawrence Freedman, government, spies, espionage, hack, cyber, warfare, mercenary, overthrow, coup, revolution, strategy, propaganda, media

Outlining Chris rock and Introduction:

In Chris Rock’s DEFCON lecture he talks about the use of cyber mercenaries, the threat they hold, and the benefits of using them. He explains the various methods that you can use to overthrow a government which include an election, a coup, or a revolution and how you are able to decide which would be the most useful to use in each situation. Chris Rock shows us a firsthand example of using these methods with the Kuwait government. As a cyber mercenary himself he asked to locate vulnerabilities within the Kuwait security and after finding its weak defenses he was able to hack into the national banks and private banks to implant fake embezzlement transactions. He then told the media that the leaders embezzled money, which led to the citizens demanding the resignation of the leader that Chris Rock framed. Chris Rock places great importance in the use of cyber mercenaries and the use of espionage when in a conflict and displays how cyber warfare can be more effective in destabilizing and overthrowing a government than traditional means. His methods of infiltrating, hacking and use of cyber mercenary forces then moving and executing off the information collected relates heavily to the strategic thinkers and their ideas this is shown through Sun Tzu, Machiavelli and Freedman.

Sun Tzu:

The use of cyber espionage is primarily to gather and manipulate information. In Chris Rocks lecture and Q&A he explains how he was able to hack into the government website and the national banks of the state of Kuwait and manipulate, release and gather data that assisted in the collapse of the Kuwait government. The act of espionage is another way of defining spies and the use of spies which Sun Tzu (1993) placed great importance in ”no one should be more liberally rewarded than spies, and no matters should be held in greater secrecy than those concerning spies.”(Loc 1939). Sun Tzu (1993) stated that “Therefore one who is good at martial arts overcomes others' forces without battle, conquers others' cities without siege, destroys others' nations without taking a long time” (Loc 1430) Spying does precisely this, it conquers and overcomes without bloodshed and battle through the implementation of false knowledge and the collection of valuable information. To overthrow an existing government the use of espionage is necessary to gather and manipulate information because the goal of a government overthrow is not to destroy but to replace which Sun Tzu (1993) reinforces by stating “the highest excellence is to subdue the enemy’s army without fighting at all” (Loc 1430). Sun Tzu (1993) talks about the 5 classes of spies “There are five kinds of spies that can be employed: local spies, inside agents, double agents, expendable spies, and unexpendable spies.” (Loc 1933), but the two that matter the most in this context is the combination “unexpendable” and “expendable” spy, the unexpendable spy is able to come back with valuable information, and the expendable spy is there to plant false data to sabotage. Through the implementation of these spies, one is able to gain the upper hand in a conflict prior to it even beginning. In the example of “The Revolution of Kuwait in 2011” by Chris Rock explains how he was able to infiltrate, relay information about the instability and the corruption within the state and exploit these factors by implanting fake evidence or causing outages which resulted in the eventual revolution of its people. By using espionage, Chris Rock was able to incite revolution within a state and eventually overthrow a corrupt government, which shows us how espionage and spying is still a major threat to us even now in our contemporary environment.

Machiavelli:

In his presentation Chris Rocks advises the use of mercenaries, this seems to be in direct contention with Machiavelli’s thoughts on this matter; however, the two thinkers are in agreement on the value of mercenaries. Chris Rock argues from a perspective of someone trying to attack a state, whereas Machiavelli wrote from a perspective of someone trying to defend a state. Chris Rock says that mercenaries are more loyal to you than conventional troops because they hold no other loyalties (such as that to a state) other than to the money that is paid to them, Machiavelli said that because of their loyalty to money, they are not loyal to the state you are defending (page 43). Chris Rock points out that mercenaries can be used against the state because they will not be loyal to that state or any other. Machiavelli says that if you rely on mercenaries for the security of your state then you will be led to ruin (page 43), and this is exactly what Chris Rock wants to prey upon. He explores the idea that if you cannot break in somewhere, you could instead pay someone to let you in, and this is precisely what Machiavelli warns against. Machiavelli says that mercenaries will be bought out by the enemies of the state. “Know how to escape the vices that would take the state away from him” (page 54) here Machiavelli is talking about how there are certain vices that a leader of a state could have that if discovered, would lead the leader to ruin. He believes the people would have such a problem with the vice in question, that they would demand, peacefully or otherwise, that the leader steps down. Chris Rock displays an example of this when he describes stealing money from the central bank of Kuwait and transferring the money to the prime minister to frame him for stealing the money. This would anger the populace so much that they would demand he step down. This is what Machiavelli warns about when counting on mercenary forces for the security of the state. Chris Rock also says to hire mercenaries as it will mask the level of the conflict. He says that instead of using forces of a state, which would frame the conflict as a war, using mercenaries will make the attack seem less severe. Using this strategy will trick the leaders you are trying to overthrow into thinking that there is no \*real\* threat, which should allow the attacker to operate with relative impunity. Machiavelli warned against this, he says that rulers in “peacetime” will become complacent and will not notice subversive elements taking place against them, he argued that “not to consider the possibility of a storm in good weather is a common defect among men” (page 83) This way of thinking is exactly what Chris Rock preys upon in utilizing mercenary forces. He uses these forces to have a separation between himself, the attacker and the attack itself, which allows the attacker to make moves against the state with less scrutiny about their actions.

Freedman:

Flawless execution of propaganda is one of the most important strategies to strip down the outer defenses, which can cause a potential coup by manipulating their own citizens. Chris Rock mentions an example about Kuwait’s Prime Minister transferring money that was actually executed by hackers. That information was passed onto news media causing huge anger from citizens with a violent protest demanding justice that the Prime Minister would step down from his position.

In Freedman’s book, he explains how the Nazis were able to successfully use propaganda that convinced most citizens to believe in Hilter’s speeches. “The broad masses of a nation are always more easily corrupted in the deeper strata of their emotional nature than consciously or voluntarily.” (chapter 22, pg. 333) when a collective of citizens is present it is way easier to convince them because the thoughts become united, even if there are individuals who think differently.

“The primitive simplicity of their minds, they were more likely to fall victim to the big lie than the small lie as it would never come into their heads to fabricate colossal untruths, and they would not believe that others could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously.” (chapter 22, pg. 333) this is the example of the violent protests that were originally caused by the hackers on the Prime Minister’s bank accounts. The citizens believed that the news was the absolute truth and would not believe the other side’s explanations. That is why it is important to step back and observe and find out what is the truth behind the curtain. The Kuwait Prime Minister is a perfect example of how using propaganda can be a powerful weapon. History has shown us that people can be easily tricked by the traditional media or as we are seeing more of, popular social media. People often are not able to tell what the real truth is and in turn, put a lot of faith in the media. Unfortunately, they do not always realize that media can be one sided, can be made up of biases and is not regulated to report on both sides of a story. We are seeing more instances of people taking immediate action after consuming media from a news outlet, oftentimes without the full story. Thanks to the internet, and its vast amount of information, people are surrounded by media all day long, because of this it can be a very powerful tool.

Chris Rock mentioned that if you cannot fight the enemy head on, strip down the outer defenses and let the citizens in their own country do its work.

Conclusion:

The use of spies, mercenaries, and propaganda can be a massive weapon where it can deter people’s thoughts and their beliefs. Chris Rock clearly demonstrates a good knowledge of the strategic thinking that classical thinkers describe. Chris Rock acted like a spy in Sun Tzu’s worldview and acted exactly how Sun Tzu predicted. He also describes the efficient use of mercenaries to destabilize a government, which Machiavelli warns against, as well as a knowledge of the types of vices that would cause the people to lose faith in the head of state. Using this knowledge, he shows how propaganda can be used to spread disinformation about these leaders, and the role the media plays in this destabilization, as outlined by Lawrence Freedman. It is clear that Chris Rock demonstrates an exceptional strategy in his goal to overthrow a government from the perspective of classical strategic thinkers.

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