

COVER STORY

Peddling the President

Elliott Broidy's efforts to lobby the president came close to succeeding, exposing gaps in the system.

BY DAVID BARBOZA — APRIL 25, 2021

*Illustration by Sam Ward*

▶ 0:00 / 27:13



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In early 2017, just after Donald J. Trump entered the White House, an exiled Chinese billionaire named [Guo Wengui](#) began broadcasting sensational claims about corruption involving China's top leaders — all from his \$68 million penthouse apartment overlooking New York City's Central Park.

A self-styled whistleblower, Guo made his accusations on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and even — for a brief time — on the [Voice of America](#). He claimed, for instance, that the HNA Group, a powerful Chinese conglomerate, had bribed Chinese officials and allowed Party leaders the use of its private jet to engage in extramarital affairs. He said China's security chiefs were corrupt, bumbling Keystone Cops; and he posted ID cards, passport photos and even flight manifests to prove that the country's top leaders were crooks who had billions of dollars in assets stashed offshore.¹

"I am telling all my Twitter friends now," he said during a [July 2017 video](#) broadcast, warning of greater revelations to come. "I haven't even started to expose something about the former and current Politburo Standing Committee members, and the inside story of the financial markets. If I begin, you guys will all then see some unbelievable facts."

While his allegations were usually impossible to verify, Guo's was treated like a hero in Chinese dissident circles, and China wanted him back — badly. Beijing claimed Guo had fled the country in 2015, after prosecutors tied him to a corruption case involving the country's disgraced intelligence chief, Ma Jian. And even before he began publicizing his

claims about the CCP leadership, Beijing had approached the Obama administration seeking to have him extradited. Now, his online tweets and videos were attracting international attention — and even being viewed by audiences inside China. Something, Beijing decided, had to be done.

Beijing issued a warrant for his arrest on Interpol, and dispatched security and intelligence agents to the U.S., to both threaten Guo and make the case to American officials that he should be extradited. But Beijing's efforts reached a new level when the casino magnate and Republican National Committee finance chairman [Steven Wynn](#) arrived at the White House in 2017 carrying a document outlining China's charges against Guo. It suddenly became clear that Beijing was willing to go well beyond the official lobbying channels.



Guo Wengui looking over Central park from his New York City penthouse in 2017.

Credit: Timothy A. Clary / AFP via Getty Images

“There was this real eagerness to get Guo Wengui back,” says [Christopher K. Johnson](#), a former U.S. intelligence analyst who now runs the [China Strategies Group](#). “But what is unique about this case is the activation of Americans.”

The full details of Wynn's involvement remain unclear — but according to *The Wall Street Journal*, President Trump was initially swayed by “[the letter Steve brought](#),” saying that “we need to get this criminal out of the country.” Indeed, Trump and his administration were hearing that message from all sides, most notably from top GOP fundraisers. Around the same time, Beijing made contact with [Elliott Broidy](#), a 59-year-old Los Angeles businessman who served alongside Wynn as the deputy finance chairman of the Republican National Committee.²

Beijing reached Broidy through [Jho Low](#), the Malaysian financier, who was living in China as a fugitive after being implicated in an international money laundering conspiracy tied to 1MDB, Malaysia's sovereign wealth fund. Low had been working with Beijing on a series of Belt and Road infrastructure projects in Malaysia at the same time that he was dealing with the 1MDB fallout. With a civil forfeiture case then pending with the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) — and possible criminal prosecution on the horizon — Low was looking for a secret back-channel to lobby the Trump administration to resolve the case.³

In early 2017, Low's American contacts led him to Broidy, a key GOP fundraiser with extensive contacts in the Trump administration. Broidy traveled to China to meet Low and a Chinese security and intelligence official and struck a deal. Low offered to pay Broidy an \$8 million retainer fee, up front, with the promise of as much as \$83 million if he could successfully persuade the DoJ to drop the case against 1MDB and use his ties with the

President and the administration to get Guo Wengui back to China.

It was exactly the kind of covert foreign influence campaign that the [Foreign Agents Registration Act](#) is meant to shed light on, but Broidy and his closest three American partners in the scheme chose not to register with the Justice Department as “foreign agents.”

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— Christopher K. Johnson, a former U.S. intelligence analyst who now runs the China Strategies Group

Neither did Steve Wynn, whose involvement with Broidy is still unclear. Was he acting independently or aiding Broidy when he approached Trump about sending Guo back in the summer of 2017? Either way, records show that around that time, Broidy repeatedly appealed to Wynn to help persuade the President to extradite Guo.

“Trump was really vulnerable to this type of action,” says [Minxin Pei](#), an authority on Chinese politics at Claremont McKenna College in California. “I doubt China would try this type of thing with President Obama or Biden.”

Beijing’s decision to work with Low — a suspected money launderer and a man already under investigation in multiple countries — shows how determined the Communist Party was to silence Guo. After all, Guo had been accused in a Chinese court of working with Ma Jian, the former intelligence chief. A [2016 article](#) in *The Washington Post* suggested that Ma had spied on some of Beijing’s top leaders. If Guo had access to that information, it could influence, or perhaps disrupt, the country’s internal power dynamic, especially the [19th Party Congress](#), the once-every-five-years political event that ratifies China’s leadership changes and introduces the world to the new members of the all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee.

“The country’s leaders are always vigilant about potential threats in the period leading up to a Party Congress,” says [Jude Blanchette](#), the Freeman Chair in China Studies at the [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) in Washington. “The six or eight months leading up to a Party Congress is an extremely sensitive period. Xi Jinping’s deputies would likely take proactive steps to mitigate potential disturbances, not least because the 19th Party Congress was going to be a critical moment for Xi himself.”

As risky as it was for Beijing to pursue a back-channel to the White House, analysts say it may also have been a sign that China was willing to adapt to the unusual contours of the incoming administration. President Trump had assumed office vowing to strike back against China on trade and other matters, and the populist leader had already surrounded himself with dealmakers and a group of radical and unconventional aides, including [Stephen K. Bannon](#) and Peter Navarro. The typical protocols adhered to by the Obama administration, experts say, may have been thrown out.

“It was clear just weeks after the election that the administration was not going to allow the usual vectors of communication,” Blanchette says. “So maybe China wanted to try something else.”

Broidy was eager to oblige. After returning from a brief trip to China in the spring of 2017, he got the ball rolling, texting a former Trump aide he had hired to help him connect with the White House: “Huge opportunity. Can we meet Monday morning at 9:30 a.m.?”

Broidy's Network

Broidy, an investor, defense contractor and top fundraiser for Donald Trump, traveled to Bangkok and Shenzhen in May 2017 to meet Jho Low and a Chinese intelligence official. He agreed to lobby the White House and DOJ in exchange for as much as \$83 million.

ADMINISTRATION



DONALD J. TRUMP

President Trump heard from Elliott Broidy, casino tycoon Steve Wynn and others about Beijing's interest in having Guo Wengui extradited from the U.S. The President pardoned Broidy in January, after he pleaded guilty to failing to register as a "foreign agent."



JEFF SESSIONS

Broidy wrote a memo to then-U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions requesting that Guo Wengui be removed from the U.S. The President pardoned Broidy in January, after he pleaded guilty to failing to register as a "foreign agent."



JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

The DoJ filed the largest civil forfeiture case in U.S. history in July 2016, seeking to seize more than \$1 billion in assets that were acquired with money taken from Malaysian sovereign wealth fund 1MDB. It also filed money laundering charges against Jho Low in 2018.



DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Broidy attempted to set up a meeting between a Chinese government official and the Secretary of Homeland Security in May 2017, according to U.S. officials.

LOBBYISTS & TARGETS



ELLIOTT BROIDY

Broidy, a Los Angeles businessman and GOP fundraiser, pleaded guilty in 2020 to failing to register as a "foreign agent" after he was hired by Jho Low to lobby the Trump administration. He was pardoned in Jan. 2021 by President Trump.



GUO WENGUI

The Chinese billionaire has been living in the U.S. since 2015, broadcasting allegations of Chinese corruption on social media. Beijing says Guo himself is wanted for corruption and sought Low's help to get him back.



ROBIN ROSENZWEIG

Rosenzweig is married to Broidy. Court filings say millions in funds, ultimately attributable to Jho Low, were transferred to her law firm. Broidy's connection to Jho Low was initially revealed after her email account was phished.



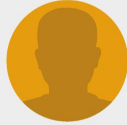
1MDB

1Malaysia Development Berhad is a strategic development fund formed by then-Prime Minister of Malaysia Najib Razak in 2009. Jho Low then allegedly masterminded siphoning off \$4.5 billion from the fund through 2014.



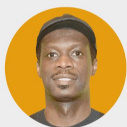
NICKIE LUM DAVIS

The Honolulu-based businesswoman and GOP fundraiser conspired with Broidy to lobby the Trump administration. She pleaded guilty in August 2020 to facilitating a back channel lobbying effort to get the US to drop the 1MDB case and remove Guo Wengui from the U.S.



GEORGE HIGGINBOTHAM

While working at the DoJ, Higginbotham agreed to help Pras Michel, Nickie Lum Davis and Elliott Broidy lobby the U.S. government. Higginbotham also helped route offshore money paid by Jho Low into the U.S. financial system in the hopes of evading U.S. detection that it was coming from Jho Low.



PRAS MICHEL

The former Fugees rapper and businessman was a close friend and business partner of Jho Low, has been accused of working with Jho Low to launder money and conspiring to make illegal campaign contributions during the 2012 U.S. presidential election.



STEVE WYNN

Wynn is a casino and resorts magnate with major properties in Las Vegas and Macau, who also once served as the Republican National Committee's finance chair. Wynn allegedly twice asked President Trump about whether he would consider extraditing Guo Wengui in 2017. Once, he was allegedly on his yacht with Broidy while making the call.

FOREIGN INTERESTS



JHO LOW

The Malaysian financier accused of money laundering and stealing funds from Malaysia's sovereign wealth fund, 1MDB, agreed to pay Broidy as much as \$83 million to lobby the DoJ to drop the case. He is still at large.



NAJIB RAZAK

While serving as Malaysia's prime minister, Najib set up the country's sovereign wealth fund, 1MDB, with the Malaysian financier Jho Low. The U.S. has alleged that billions of dollars from the fund was embezzled by Jho Low and others, and that some of that money went to Najib, his wife and stepson.



SUN LIJUN

Sun, the vice minister at China's Ministry of Public Security, worked with Low and Broidy to lobby the DoJ to extradite Guo. Sun himself was arrested by China in April 2020 and charged with corruption.



XI JINPING

Xi's anti-corruption campaign led to the downfall of an intelligence official close to Guo Wengui, who fled abroad and settled in New York. Xi sought to have him extradited and sent back to China.

Some of the individuals' actions described here were detailed in DoJ case filings and anonymized. Reporting by outlets such as the Wall Street Journal identified the involved parties.

Sources: Department of Justice filings, news reports; Design by Hiram Henriquez

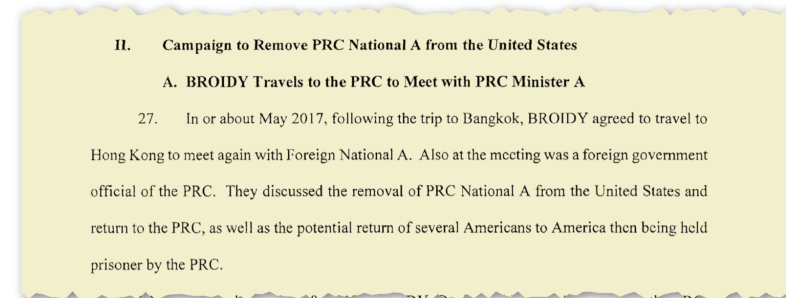
THE INFLUENCE CAMPAIGN

Elliott Broidy's first task was to secure meetings for [Sun Lijun](#), the vice minister of China's Ministry of Public Security, and the senior official he had secretly met with in Shenzhen, China. Sun — a security and intelligence operative charged with monitoring "all potential political and security challenges within the PRC and abroad," according to records obtained by *The Wire* — arrived in Washington in late May, keen to meet the nation's top law enforcement officers so he could press his case for the immediate extradition of Guo.⁴

To lay the groundwork, Broidy turned to Rick Gates, a former campaign aide to President Trump, who he had agreed to pay \$25,000 a month to help navigate the new administration.

Broidy hoped that Gates could help secure a meeting with the Attorney General, Jeff Sessions. Broidy also sent Gates a memo entitled, “Opportunity for Significantly Increased Law Enforcement Cooperation between the U.S. and China,” to pass on to Sessions. Although the memo originated in Beijing, with the Chinese security and intelligence official, Broidy passed it off as his own.⁵

Without fully explaining how or why he had made contact with a high-ranking official in China, Broidy told Sessions he saw an opportunity for Washington and Beijing to cooperate on a variety of law enforcement matters, including cybersecurity. But buried in the memo was his true objective. “The one request that China will make,” he wrote the Attorney General, is that Guo Wengui be deported or extradited “as soon as possible.” Appended to the memo was a copy of the Interpol red notice that Beijing had issued seeking Guo’s arrest.⁶



Source: Elliott Broidy’s Statement of Offense, filed by the Justice Department in October 2020

Apparently, Sessions never received the memo, and records indicate he never held a meeting with the Chinese vice minister. Nor did other high ranking officials at the DoJ, the Department of Homeland Security or the White House. Broidy was forced to meet Sun at a Washington, D.C., hotel to assure the vice minister that he was doing everything he could to set up key meetings and clear the path for an extradition. But Sun returned to China, dejected.

“Just spoke to VM and he sounded like he was crying,” Nickie Lum Davis,⁷ Broidy’s accomplice, texted him, referring to the vice minister. “Terrible. What a mess,” Broidy responded. “Bottom line not our fault. Normally their [ambassador] would handle. This is a cluster f[uck].”

Broidy’s attempts to arrange a one-on-one golf game between President Trump and Malaysia’s prime minister, Najib Razak, fared no better. Over a three-month period in mid 2017, Broidy pressed the White House to set up the golf meeting, ostensibly so that Najib could persuade the President that the U.S. should drop its investigation of 1MDB, which the prime minister himself had been implicated in, and thereby back off its case against Jho Low.

“POTUS said he would play golf with [Najib] in late July or early August. POTUS said he was happy to do it,” Broidy texted White House chief of staff Reince Priebus, in late July 2017. “We’re in the 4th week. I know you are busy and procedures apply but I’ve been more than patient. Instead of being positive, this is now causing me damage. I would truly appreciate it if you could get back to me today with a date. Thank you!”⁸

Jho Low — often relaying messages through Davis — had been pressuring Broidy to secure the date, insisting that the Malaysian government was awaiting the details. “We’re getting killed,” Davis wrote Broidy in July, using the encrypted message app Wickr. “Please call because we need to strategize — I’m getting inundated,” an apparent reference to Low’s messages to her, insisting on a golf date. Two days later, Davis fired off another encrypted message: “Please call when u can so we can talk— we gotta handle this so pls pls go to D.C. And sit at WH [White House] until u get it.”

No golf date was finalized.



Ex-Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak, interviewed in 2013.

Credit: World Economic Forum, [Creative Commons](#)

Meanwhile, Pras Michel and George Higginbotham — the other two Americans who had agreed to help lobby the White House and the DoJ for Jho Low — tried to do their part to sway the federal government. Michel's efforts were almost comical. He wrote a four-page memo to [Mother Jones](#), suggesting that the magazine publish an article on how the U.S. refused to extradite Guo. "The question," he [wrote](#), "is why is the FBI protecting Guo Wengui — a Chinese illegal immigrant who lied on his US visa application for entry to the USA, is wanted for rape, kidnapping and a number of civil lawsuits in the millions of dollars, and has an Interpol red notice warrant out for his arrest?"

Mother Jones, which later released an [excerpt](#) from the memo, noted that it was "stridently pro-China and at times bizarre." The real question was why a former rapper and musician cared about a Chinese fugitive?

What Higginbotham did was even more peculiar. In July 2017, while working as an employee of the U.S.

Justice Department, he visited the Chinese Embassy in Washington and told the Chinese ambassador that U.S. officials were "working on the extradition" of Guo and that there would soon be additional information about the logistics of the extradition.

No such extradition decision had been made, although there was a brief spell early in the summer when Broidy and his partners edged closer to having Guo removed. According to Bannon, who was then serving as the President's chief strategist, in early to mid 2017, the White House saw a stream of American businessmen asking to send Guo back, apparently at the behest of Beijing.

Steve Wynn, who had significant financial interests in China through his control over the multi-billion dollar Wynn casino in Macau, seems to have been the most persuasive. Although Wynn never registered under the [Foreign Agents Registration Act](#), Broidy had put him in touch with Sun, the Chinese security and intelligence officer. According to government filings and a person familiar with the case, Wynn and Sun spoke by telephone on a number of occasions about Guo's extradition, with Nickie Lum Davis serving as the translator.

And in the summer of 2017, with Broidy aboard Wynn's yacht, Broidy and Wynn telephoned the President directly to ask whether Guo would be extradited, according to government filings in the case.

[Bannon](#) says he was aware of efforts to deport Guo. He reviewed material, met officials and discussed what he says were "the CCPs relentless efforts to infiltrate the US and influence the business and government policy" with [Matthew Pottinger](#), then a senior director at the National Security Council. While there was pressure on the President to extradite Guo, Bannon says Attorney General Sessions and Pottinger intervened in the case.

"Thank God for patriots like Matt Pottinger and Jeff Sessions, who put American interests first," Bannon says.

A source familiar with the decision told *The Wire* that the NSC's Pottinger referred the case to the DoJ, since Guo had already filed an application for political asylum, and that the Attorney General and White House lawyers handled it from there. (Pottinger, now a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution, declined comment.)

After Wynn's final push, Broidy seems to have put Low's work on the back burner. When he met the President at the White House in October 2017, for instance, he did not raise 1MDB or Guo, according to court filings.

By mid 2018, the scheme was facing even more hurdles. Guo was meeting with U.S. intelligence and working with Bannon; Najib — the Malaysian prime minister implicated in the 1MDB scandal — was voted out of office and arrested on corruption charges. And *The Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) that President Trump's personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, had negotiated a deal to pay \$1.6 million to a former Playboy model who claimed she had been impregnated by Broidy, who is married. (Broidy acknowledged the settlement and resigned from the RNC).

Then the scheme became public, after Broidy apparently became the victim of a cyber attack and some of his emails were shared with [journalists](#), including details about his effort to secure a one-on-one golf date between Najib and Trump and to lobby the White House to extradite Guo. With some of the details spilling out into the open — Broidy claimed cyber hackers from Qatar were behind the leaked emails — federal investigators began probing his foreign influence campaign. With the FBI on his trail, Broidy was forced to resign from the RNC. Wynn too resigned from the RNC and from the casino empire he founded, following his own sex scandal.

Meanwhile, Guo, who was seemingly safe in the U.S., stepped up his social media blitzkrieg, often live webcasting his allegations about high level corruption in China and threatening to drop “bombshells” about Chinese politicians and businessmen. A few of his tirades seemed to prove true: Following his attacks on HNA, the company collapsed and was taken over by the state. A top HNA executive then died in a bizarre accident in France. Overall, however, journalists were rarely able to confirm Guo's claims.

In the summer of 2017, though, Guo met Bannon in Washington, shortly after Trump's chief strategist was pushed out of the White House. They became [fast friends](#), business and broadcasting partners, and even backers of a non-profit and film and radio programs depicting the evils of the CCP and Huawei, the Chinese telecom giant that came under U.S. economic sanctions. (Since then, Guo and Bannon have each run into their own serious legal troubles.)

The most unexpected twist, however, came in April 2020, when Sun Lijun — the security official working to persuade Broidy and Wynn to help get Guo back to face corruption charges — was himself arrested on corruption charges, or what Beijing called “serious violations of Communist Party discipline.” It is unclear whether his detention was tied to the failed covert lobbying operation with Jho Low.

“This is like something out of a bad spy movie,” says [Bill Bishop](#), a Washington-based expert on China and the author of the China-focused newsletter, [Sinocism](#). “I never understood why China would even work with Low. At some point, you'd figure he is going to lose his utility to them.”



Steve Bannon, pictured here at the 2017 CPAC Conference.
Credit: Michael Vadon, [Creative Commons](#)

THE ANTIDOTE

Last October, Elliott Broidy stood before Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly in a U.S. District Court in Washington and [pleaded guilty](#) to conspiring to violate the Foreign Agents Registration Act.⁹ Two of his co-conspirators — Nickie Lum Davis and George Higginbotham — had earlier pleaded guilty to helping him covertly lobby the White House and the DoJ, bringing to a close one of the largest foreign influence cases ever brought by the Justice Department.

“In exchange for millions of dollars, Elliott Broidy and his co-conspirators agreed to secretly do the bidding of a foreign government and a foreign national by lobbying senior U.S. government officials regarding a pending Department of Justice investigation and the extradition of a foreign national,” Brian C. Rabbit, the DoJ’s acting assistant attorney general, [said](#) at the time. “Although his repeated efforts to influence the administration were unsuccessful, Mr. Broidy never disclosed that he was actually acting on behalf of foreign actors.”

Signed into law by FDR in 1938, the foreign influence statute (FARA) had been largely ignored for more than half a century — both by Washington lobbyists, who had worked in the interests of foreign governments and “foreign principals,” but also by the DoJ itself, which rarely chose to prosecute cases.



Elliott Broidy and Robin Broidy at a 2012 benefit event.
Credit: Alex J. Berliner/ABImages via AP Images

That changed in the wake of concerns about Russian meddling in the 2016 election, and led to a bump in DoJ prosecutions involving former Trump associates, like Paul Manafort and Michael T. Flynn. Those cases, analysts say, helped open a window into a dark corner of Washington influence peddling, including the complex ways in which foreign actors try to shape American policy and public opinion.

And yet the Broidy case revealed just how brazen and insidious foreign influence campaigns can be.

“I’m not even sure I’d call it an influence operation,” [Christopher K. Johnson](#), the former U.S. intelligence analyst who runs the [China Strategies Group](#), says of Beijing’s attempt to extradite Guo Wengui. “It was a pretty naked effort to get back a high value target. This was a desperate act.”

Now, a push is under way to find better ways to police foreign influence operations, with or without FARA. After all, if Broidy & Co. had simply registered with the DoJ, there may have been no crime at all, legal experts say. And had the conspirators made the payoffs offshore, disguising them in business contracts or promises of future benefits, the U.S. authorities may never have been able to build a case against them.

[Claire Finkelstein](#), a legal scholar and founder of the [Center for Ethics and the Rule of Law at the University of Pennsylvania](#), says FARA was meant to make foreign lobbying more transparent, not to outlaw or ban foreign influence in the nation. For that reason, she says, the U.S. may need other tools or measures, particularly since social media, cyber attacks and modern communication modes have reshaped the parameters of global influence.

The Influence Campaign

In March 2017, just after Trump entered the White House, the fugitive Malaysian financier Jho Low made contact with the Los Angeles businessman and GOP fundraiser Elliott Broidy to see whether he would agree to lobby the DOJ and the White House to drop a civil forfeiture case tied to Low's involvement with the Malaysian sovereign wealth fund IMDB. Here is what happened next.



Design by Hiram Henriquez

"We should definitely be worried about the American who ends up as a tool of a foreign government," Finkelstein says. "But FARA will not save us from foreign influence."

The first line of defense, though, seems to be updating the 1930s-era statute. On Capitol Hill, members of Congress are considering granting new powers to the DOJ to more strictly enforce FARA compliance, something Senator [Chuck Grassley](#), the Iowa Republican, has been advocating for more than five years.

And yet some on the Hill worry that an enhanced FARA statute could have unintended consequences, forcing media outlets, nonprofits and charitable organizations operating in the U.S. to register as "foreign agents," which has an obvious stigma attached to it.

In the past three years, for instance, the U.S. has forced American-based Russian, Chinese and Turkish media outlets to register under FARA as "foreign agents," since they are government controlled. (Al-Jazeera, the Qatar-based media group that is considered far more independent, was also forced to register.) But what about the BBC, which is funded by the U.K. government, or Canada's CBC? And could American universities and think tanks also come under scrutiny for susceptibility to foreign influence if they accept foreign donations?

"The underlying principles [of the statute] are sound," says [Mike B. Wittenwyler](#), an expert on FARA at the law firm Godfrey & Kahn. "But the lines between public policy and business interests, that could be more clearly defined."

To guard against covert foreign influence, some analysts are calling for a broader set of solutions, particularly around one of the most pernicious problems involving "foreign actors": dirty money and its hidden role in global politics and influence campaigns.

[Ben Judah](#) and [Trevor Sutton](#), who co-authored "[Turning the Tide on Dirty Money](#)," a special Kleptocracy Initiative report published by the [Center for American Progress](#), argue that money laundering, offshore tax avoidance and a lack of transparency about the beneficial owners of private companies has helped fuel dirty politics and kleptocratic tendencies throughout the world.

In an interview with *The Wire*, the co-authors said that while experts may be focused on whether Broidy and his co-conspirators were registered agents, it may have been far more useful to tighten the screws around the lawyers, lobbyists and financial institutions that enabled Jho Low to funnel tens of millions of dollars from his offshore stash into America's financial system.

Remarkably, Low — a fugitive who had been accused of money laundering — was able to hire white shoe law firms in the U.S. and Trump associates, including former New Jersey governor Chris Christie, to advise him, set up websites and even handle his public relations. Low also managed to elude regulators by transferring millions of dollars through a Los Angeles law firm run by Broidy's wife. The workaround wasn't exposed until the hack of Broidy's emails.

"This is exactly the problem that many people have been campaigning against for years," says Judah. "There are all these leaky holes and key entry points. That he got as far as he did exposes the gaps in the system."

The system eventually caught on to Low and Broidy's scheme, but the American businessman managed to find one final gap in the system. On January 20, 2021, in one of his final acts in office, President Trump pardoned more than [70 individuals](#), including one [Elliott B. Broidy](#).

This is the second of two articles. Read the first article [here](#).



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COVER STORY



Pole Position

BY EYCK FREYMAN

In public, Chinese diplomats and climate negotiators deny that they see any link between climate change and geopolitics. But there is a deeply cynical consensus within China's academic and policy communities that climate change creates geopolitical opportunities that China can exploit — and must exploit before its rivals do. Greenland was the proof of concept for this strategy. And it caught the U.S. flat-footed.

THE BIG PICTURE



Transsion's Triumph

BY GARRETT O'BRIEN

A look at Transsion's monumental growth, unique marketing strategies and future growth potential.

Q & A



Jörg Wuttke on China's Self-Destruction

BY ANDREW PEAPLE

The EU Chamber of Commerce in China president talks about China's self-inflicted problems; how he gets away with being so outspoken; and why he believes in China's comeback gene.



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