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Confessions Of A Hit Man

By Charley Reese

09/26/05 -- -- John Perkins' book "Confessions of an Economic Hit Man" explains American foreign policy better than any of the academic tomes you might read on the subject.

In a nutshell, the game is played this way: People like Perkins work for consulting firms, and their job is to entice a foreign head of state to go deeply in debt. They do this by greatly exaggerating the economic returns on big projects such as dams and electrification systems.

The payoff comes in two ways. The foreign country hires American contractors to build the systems, and they make big profits. Then, mired in debt, the head of state will do what the United States government tells him to do. If he proves too independent or too honest to accept bribes, then he will be removed from power, either in a coup or in an accident.

Yes, I know that sounds more like the Mafia than the great and good government of the United States, which wants only to spread peace, prosperity and democracy around the world. Read the book and decide for yourself. The publisher is Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc.

I believe Perkins is telling the truth, because I have observed through the years that the United States hates any honest nationalist leader. Let some guy try to benefit his own people instead of catering to multinational corporations, and the U.S. government and the propaganda machine will crank up and paint him as a villain. After the American people have been sufficiently indoctrinated, the poor guy won't be around much longer.

We did that to Mohammed Mossadegh, a democratically elected nationalist who thought Iran's oil should benefit Iranians. We painted him as a communist, and the CIA engineered a coup that replaced him with the Shah. In case you're curious, that's why so many Iranians hate us. We did it to a Guatemalan patriot, Jacobo

Arbenz, when he tried to implement land reform and thus ran afoul of the United Fruit Co., which orchestrated the campaign that led to his overthrow by the U.S. Omar Torrijos, a Panamanian reformer, and Jaime Roldos, president of Ecuador who locked horns with big oil companies, both died in planes that exploded.

On the other hand, the ruthless and corrupt killers who play the game our way get rewarded with more loans and more aid. I know this sounds leftist and even, God forbid, liberal, but the more you get to know our government, the less you will think it's all sweetness and light. People fear the U.S. with good reason. We talk about spreading democracy, but what we do is extend empire and make war.

If you count the Cold War, we have been at war almost continuously. There was Korea, Vietnam, the invasion of Lebanon, the invasions of Panama and Grenada, the bombings of Serbia and Libya, our little misadventure in Somalia and two wars with Iraq, and now that the Cold War is over, we have replaced it with an endless war on terrorism. Sprinkled in between all of these overt wars are numerous covert operations.

It isn't, after all, a capital crime for a foreign leader to be a socialist or to believe in land reform or to try to stop oil companies from defiling his country or cheating it out of a proper return. I've often thought old Saddam Hussein cut his own throat when he made a speech to the other Arab leaders saying they should not invest their petrodollars in the West but should instead invest them in the Arab world. Bankers in London and New York don't like to hear that kind of talk. We don't mind thugs and killers, but we despise a nationalist. The very idea of denying us the use of their dollars is, well, sacrilegious from an imperial point of view.

We were a great and much-loved country when we were a republic. Since we've become an empire, we're hardly loved at all and, in fact, are hated by many people in the world. Unless we find a way to return to our republican roots, we will go the way of all empires — simultaneously accumulating enemies and bankrupting ourselves in an eventually futile attempt to defeat them.

At any rate, read Perkins' book. Like a real hit man, he got wealthy and then ratted out his former benefactors.

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