

Book Review

ROLE OF CORPORATOCRACY & ECONOMIC HIT MEN IN AMERICAN EMPIRE BUILDING

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Title of the Book: ***The Secret History of the American Empire
Economic Hit Men, Jackals, and the Truth
about Global Corruption***

Author: John Perkins.

Size and Price: 365 pages. Price: \$ 25.95.

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Introduction

'*The Secret History of the American Empire*' is a follow-up to John Perkins's past '*Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*'³; that exposes corrupt governmental and business economic policies and

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³ Economic hit men (EHMs) are highly paid professionals who cheat countries around the globe out of trillions of dollars. They funnel money from the World Bank, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and other foreign "aid" organizations into the coffers of huge corporations and the pockets of a few wealthy families who control the planet's natural resources. Their tools included fraudulent financial reports, rigged elections, payoffs, extortion, sex, and murder. They play a game as old as empire, but one that has taken on new and terrifying dimensions during this time of globalization.

practices. Perkins first book, *Confessions of an Economic Hit man*, is an insider's account that unveils the exploitation or neo-colonization of Third World countries by the corporate hegemony of free market controlled by a cabal of corporations, banks, and the United States government. *Confessions* tells stories of deals Perkins helped to broker with key oil exporting countries such as Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Venezuela, Ecuador and Colombia. He explains in riveting detail exactly how the system works—and illuminates the reality behind the hostility of those the United States now condemns as terrorists. Perkins has also written on indigenous cultures and shamanism. His books on these subjects include:

- *Psycho navigation: Techniques for Travel beyond Time*
- Shape shifting: Shamanic Techniques for Global and Personal Transformation,
- The World Is As You Dream It
- The Stress-Free Habit

Having made a splash with *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, John Perkins continues exposing corrupt governmental and business economic policies and practices in *The Secret History of the American Empire*. The book makes further claims about the negative impact of global corporations on the economies and ecologies of poor countries, as well as offering suggestions for making corporations behave more like good citizens. It offers more disturbing accounts of the American imperialistic policies around the world in support of American business. It tells how the foreign aid is distributed to corrupt Third World leaders who keep a share and return the rest to U.S. business for major projects, leaving their nations in debts and absolutely poor. When any leader objected, the CIA destabilized his government by assassination if necessary. Perkins's

asserts that the U.S. assassinated Ecuador's reformist president and connived at genocide in Timor and Sudan.

Though the primary focus of the book is on the United States, however, he doesn't spare the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The fact that the book implicates the highest echelons of government and corporations, including the IMF, WTO, World Bank, U.S.A., Britain and the "G8" countries deeply involved in money laundering, tax evasion and environmental disasters. The Secret History's" Prologue provides an outstanding summary of the dark side of American generosity as exemplified by the World Bank's actions. It is the U.S.right of appointing president and the veto power that opens the door for EHM to channel funds from the Bank into schemes appearing to serve the poor while primarily benefiting a few wealthy people.

Theme of the Books: Thesis of his book as I understood is that this planet cannot survive ruthless consumerism at the expense of the world and its people. When all the trees are gone, and all the oil is tapped, what will be left? His effort to present truth before the collective conscious of the World in general and Americans in particular is aimed to get free those who have been oppressed by the corpratocracy. The book with its 365 pages (including appendixes and indices) envisions a world that has the resources, technology, and viable social models to maintain a sustainable global society but deficient of a vision, and the inspiration to create such a world.

Books Review & Overview

'The Secret History of the American Empire is composed of Six parts spread over on 329 pages and each part is titled and dedicated to the

activities of EHM in Asia, Latin America, The Middle East, Africa, and changing the world. The book as a whole reveals the secret history behind the events that defined our world, including:

- The current Latin American revolution and its lessons for democracy
- How the ‘defeats’ I Vietnam and Iraq benefited big businesses?
- The role of Israel as ‘Fortress America’ in the Middle East
- Tragic repercussions of the IMF’s ‘Asian Economic Collapse’ and Clinton’s ‘ African Renaissance’
- US blunders in Tibet, Congo, Lebanon, and Venezuela
- Jackals forays to assassinate democratic presidents

Before we get to the review of the book, it would be pertinent to examine the word Empire. To answer what exactly is an empire? And does America with its magnificent constitution, Bill of Rights, with its all democratic ideals and pursuit and promotion for democracy, really deserve such a label? For Perkins, ‘Empire means a nation state that dominates other nation states and exhibits one or more of the following characteristics’(pp 4-5):

- Exploits resources from the lands it dominates and consumes large quantities of these resources disproportionate to the size of its population relative to those of other nations. The United States is the state that represents less than 5% of the world’s population but consumes more than 25 % of the world resources through the exploitation of developing countries or occupied world (p.5).
- Maintains a large military that enforces its policies when more subtle measures fail. American Empire though primarily built

through economics but it is fact that when other measures fail, its military, the world largest and powerful force, stepped in, as in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and Central Asia, so on and so forth. (pp.5-6)

- Empire always spreads its language, literature, art and culture throughout its sphere of influence. A cursory look over the globe reveals that the English language and the American culture dominate the world today.
- It imposes its currency and taxes not just its own citizens, but also on people from other countries and land under its control. USA, though doesn't tax other countries directly but its corporatocracy does impose a subtle global tax and makes all transactions in dollars as a standard currency of world commerce. (p.5)
- An empire is ruled by an emperor or king, not subjected to the will of people but by a group of advisors. America is ruled by a group of people who collectively act very much like a king. Perkins substantiates his "American Empire" label by asserting that the U.S. is run by a big group who collectively act much like a king. They run our largest corporations, and through them, our government. They cycle through the "revolving door" back and forth between businesses and government, fund political campaigns and the media - resulting in a great deal of control over elected officials and the information we receive, regardless of who is elected. These men and women from corporatocracy are the actual in charge/ decision makers regardless of that that does control the White House-Republicans or Democrats? (p.6)

In another similar book "*The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic*", Chalmers Johnson while describing the journey of transformation from republic to American Empire describes that America has built an empire of bases rather than colonies, creating in the process a government that is obsessed with maintaining absolute military dominance over the world, Johnson claims. The Department of Defense currently lists 725 official U.S. military bases outside of the country and 969 within the 50 states (not to mention numerous secret bases). According to the author, these bases are proof that the "United States prefers to deal with other nations through the use or threat of force rather than negotiations, commerce, or cultural interaction." *Sorrows of Empire*, Johnson discusses the roots of American militarism, the rise and extent of the military-industrial complex, and the close ties between arms industry executives and high-level politicians. He also looks closely at how the military has extended the boundaries of what constitutes national security in order to centralize intelligence agencies under their control and how statesmen have been replaced by career soldiers on the front lines of foreign policy--a shift that naturally increases the frequency with which we go to war.

"The Secret History's" provides an outstanding summary of the dark side of American generosity as exemplified by the World Bank's actions. The World Bank (and for that matter IMF) is not really a World Bank at all, rather a US bank. The U.S., that controls 17 % of the vote in IMF and 16 % in World Bank, holds veto power over major World Bank decisions, and the U.S. president appoints its president. Of the 24 directors on their boards, eight represent individual countries like US, Japan, Germany, France, /UK, Saudi Arabia, China and Russia, while rest of 184 countries

of the world share other 16 directors who are also induced by the EHM (p.3). Perkins asserts that the World Bank's mission quickly became synonymous with proving the capitalist system superior to communism, and to further this role, its employees cultivated cozy relationships with multi-national corporations. This opened the door for economic hit men (EHM) to channel funds from the Bank into schemes appearing to serve the poor while primarily benefiting a few wealthy people. The 1997 Asian economic collapse formally known as 'IMF crisis', that impacted millions of people, resulting million to death from disease, starvation and suicides, presents a lesson; how IMF and the World Bank enrich corporatocracy at the expense of everyone else. Indonesia, that until had low inflation, over \$20billio foreign reserve, over \$900 million trade surplus, nearly 9% every year GDP growth with a solid banking sector was suddenly found its 52 % population living on less than \$2 a day.

United States of America, once a leader of democratic world and champion of human rights has been transformed in to an 'American Empire' that is run by a big business group who collectively act much like an autocrat king. They run largest corporations, fund political campaigns and the media, resulting in to gaining control over elected officials and through them, the American government. They wish for occurrence of international crises, and national disasters, like wars and aid projects, are highly profitable for big businesses therefore very lucrative for them. A great deal of money for rebuilding is earmarked for U.S. engineering firms and large corporations owning hotel, communications and transportation networks, banks, insurance companies, etc.

Overseas bribery is usually accomplished without violating U.S. law by leasing e.g. equipment from companies owned by the target (and friends) at excessive rates; they can then subcontract portions to others at inflated prices. This model can be used to contract for food, housing, cars, fuel, etc. Another means is to offer to arrange for the target's children to attend prestigious U.S. colleges while covering all their expenses and paying consultant/intern salaries while they are in the U.S. U.S. companies also pay local militias for protection, thus weakening local control over them.

In this follow-up to *CONFESSIONS OF AN ECONOMIC HIT MAN*, John Perkins continues exposing corrupt governmental and economic policies and business practices. Perkin claims that American forces nations to submit or face the dire consequences. The target leadership is asked to "go along with us or we'll foment revolution and/or assassinate you." Mid-East examples include Iran (early 1950s), and Iraq (early 1960s). Perkin also provides the answer of long outstanding question; why the U.S. is so concerned about Israel's welfare? Israel is America's foot soldier in the area, there to help keep the Mid-East in line. Though his primary focus is on the United States, but he also has much to say about the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The *Secret History of American Empire*, though with a conspiratorial tone, is an explosive follow-up to *Confessions*, and I strongly recommend this book to anyone who still believes the free market benefits all. Though the story narrated inside the book is brutal and harsh, but a real call for change. He expects that America can change

provided the Americans realize that non-Americans are also humans and have the right live peacefully, right to prosper, and want to feel love.

If anyone wish to understand the world for how it really exists, and seek the tools to help create positive changes, then one should read this book. As John Perkin says, "***Today is the day for us to begin to truly change the world.***"