

Gangsters for Capitalism

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Although benign U.S. intentions are an article of faith among many Americans, theft, murder and oppression have always been central to U.S. policies and practices in the non-white world. George Bush's crusade for 'democracy' is yet another chapter in the shameful saga.

"The U.S. has routinely destroyed democracy throughout the globe while its leaders spout words about spreading democracy."

"I spent thirty-three years and four months in active military service as a member of this country's most agile military force, the Marine Corps. I served in all commissioned ranks from Second Lieutenant to Major-General. And during that period, I spent most of my time being a high class muscle-man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism...."

"I helped make Mexico, especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefits of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. In China I helped to see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested.

"During those years, I had, as the boys in the back room would say, a swell racket. Looking back on it, I feel that I could have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents." - Major-General [Smedley Butler](#), 1933.



General Butler was the most decorated U.S. military officer of his day. His experiences helping the United States Government subvert democracy throughout the world so that multinational corporations could steal the land and resources of other nations, prompted him to write a short but politically devastating book, *War is a Racket*, in 1934. The use of military, economic and political power to control weaker nations is a thread that runs throughout the history of the United States from the past to the present - though most Americans either deny that fact or are ignorant of it.

The recent death of Augusto Pinochet, the Chilean torturer and murderer whom the United States helped bring to power in a coup in 1973 - toppling the democratically-elected government of Salvador Allende - was simply one of the latest reminders of the history of

the U.S. government in subverting democracy in order to advance the interests of U.S. bankers, oil companies, sugar interests and other economically powerful groups. Far from being a force for good in the world, the U.S. has routinely destroyed democracy throughout the globe while its leaders spout words about spreading democracy: words Condoleezza Rice invoked while helping supply the Israelis with bombs they dropped on Lebanese children in what may have been a death blow to Lebanese democracy. Words George Bush invokes while killing hundreds of thousands of Iraqi men, women and children so that major U.S. companies can steal Iraq's oil.

"The fear of democracy exists, by definitional necessity, in elite groups who monopolize economic and political power," declared Haitian historian Patrick Bellegarde-Smith. Bellegarde-Smith was writing about Haiti's history, but his observation applies equally well to the history of the United States, including its current history: those who rule this country fear democracy, especially in lands populated by people of color, because democracy in those lands and in those hands threatens the vast wealth and political power of white elites.

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This fear is especially strong in a nation that was born from a decision by privileged white males to craft a Constitution that protected their privileges, whether their wealth had been gained from buying and selling enslaved Africans, stealing Native American land, or in some other kind of "business" transactions.

"We have a security that the general government can never emancipate them (slaves)," said Gen. Charles Pinckney of South Carolina in praising the advantages the new Constitution gave slaveowners, "We have obtained a right to recover our slaves in whatever part of America they may take refuge, which is a right we had not before. In short, we have made the best terms for the security of this species of property it was in our power to make."

The men who ratified the Constitution invoked words about "democracy," while making sure that Black people, Native Americans, women and white males without property, were not represented at their Constitutional Convention. Patrick Henry and other "patriots" successfully argued for passage of the Bill of Rights, in order to make sure the federal government could not free their slaves under any circumstances, such as it did with some of the Black men who fought in the Revolutionary War.

"May Congress not say that every black man must fight? Did we not see a little of this last war?" Henry asked in arguing for the Bill of Rights. And once Congress passed such a law freeing some Black men, he warned, it could also declare "that every slave who would go to the army should be free."

Thus the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights were adopted on the premise that slavery should be legally protected in the new nation. This pro-slavery decision shocked the Marquis de Lafayette and other freedom fighters, including the 5,000 Black American men who had risked their lives to build a new nation based on democracy.

And so when Black men, women and children in Haiti rebelled against the French who enslaved them and created a free Black republic, the reaction of those in power in the United States was not to embrace their democracy: rather, the so-called Founding Fathers

were terrified at the thought of a Black-ruled democracy and passed even harsher laws to control slaves in the United States, lest the “infection” of freedom threaten slavery in this country.

“The so-called Founding Fathers were terrified at the thought of a Black-ruled democracy in Haiti.”

The result was the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, which was authored by Pierce Butler of South Carolina, and was the first federal act making it a crime to harbor an escaped slave or to try and prevent a slave’s arrest or capture. The Act also made it mandatory to transport a recaptured slave to any state or territory that demanded his or her return.

The U.S. bitterly opposed democracy in Haiti precisely because it threatened slaveocracy in the U.S.

This pattern of U.S. opposition to the freedom of people of color, therefore, was seen from the earliest days of this nation as a threat to white power and privilege. The destruction of democratic governments whenever U.S. interests are threatened or perceived as being threatened, is a goal that is pursued no matter which party is in power.

The list of nations where the U.S. has subverted democracy is long and there are so many places we could begin. But let us start with Cuba and the Philippines in the Spanish-American war of 1898.

U.S. newspapers and politicians filled the air with alleged sympathy for the Cubans and Filipinos suffering under the brutality of the Spaniards. There were denunciations throughout this country of concentration camps in Cuba run by Spain’s Gen. Valeriano “Butcher” Weyler, a man described by the “New York Journal” as “pitiless, cold, an exterminator of men....There is nothing to prevent his carnal, animal brain from running riot with itself in inventing tortures and infamies of bloody debauchery.”



And so the United States went to war, including Buffalo Soldiers of the 9th and 10th Cavalry as well as other regiments of Black soldiers. While stationed in the South, the Black soldiers were disarmed and more of them were killed by sheriffs and other alleged upholders of the law than were killed fighting in the war. An estimated 123 Black men, women and children had been lynched the year before the soldiers went South: burned at the stake, hung from trees, riddled with bullets or flayed alive by white mobs. But still the soldiers went to fight for freedom for other people.

They were welcomed as liberators by the Cubans and fought bravely, including saving Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders from near annihilation at a Spanish-held fort called Las Guasimas.

The Rough Riders could not advance “and dared not retreat,” said one Black soldier, “having been caught in a sunken place in the road, with a barbed-wire fence on one side and a precipitous hill on the other....At the moment when it looked as if the whole regiment would be swept down by the steel-jacketed bullets from the Mausers, four troops of the 10th U.S. Cavalry came up on ‘double time.’”

“In justice to the colored race,” wrote Rough Rider Frank Knox, who later became Secretary of the Navy, “I must say that I never saw braver men anywhere. Some of those...will live in my memory forever.”

But another man had a far different opinion, especially of the Cubans. Winston Churchill, a young military observer from England, had not realized—just as most of the American public had not realized—that a large percentage of the Cuban fighters were Black. “A great danger presents itself,” an alarmed Churchill wrote. “Two-fifths of the insurgents in the field, are negroes. These men, with Antonio Maceo (a Black general affectionately nicknamed “The Bronze Titan” by his fellow Cubans) at their head, would, in the event of success, demand a predominant share of the government of the country....the results being, after years of fighting, another black republic.”

But Churchill need not have worried about the “danger” of Black participation in democracy. Within months of the Black soldiers’ deeds of bravery in the name of Cuban freedom, the U.S. government declared Cuba a “protectorate,” stationed a permanent occupying force of White soldiers on the island and seized its economy for the benefit of U.S. corporations.

Roosevelt, who would probably have been killed if the Black soldiers hadn’t saved him, launched the political career that would carry him to the White House by turning on his rescuers and saying they could not carry on a fight once they lost their white officers. This appeal to White American racism was successful, even though the soldiers had made what one Rough Rider called “their great, fearless charges” under the command of Black sergeants after their White officers were killed, a fact Roosevelt knew full well.

The United States not only grabbed Cuba to prevent the Cubans from establishing a democracy and to open new markets for American corporations, but also stole Puerto Rico, Wake Island, Guam and Hawaii.

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Much of Hawaii’s land had already been taken over by American pineapple plantation owners, and much of its culture trashed and weakened by American missionaries. Hawaii, said U.S. officials, was “a ripe pear waiting to be plucked,” and they plucked it. In 1898, while Black soldiers died and were betrayed in the failed attempt to bring freedom to Cuba, the U.S. Congress passed a joint resolution annexing Hawaii and assigning the U.S. military to insure this country’s control of the islands.

Spain, seeing the futility of trying to stop the U.S. militarily, sold all its possessions to the United States for \$20 million. This also included the Philippines, with Pres. William McKinley clothing the theft in the following words: “...there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all (all of Spain’s possessions) and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God’s grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow men for whom Christ also died.”

The Filipinos, most of whom had already converted to Christianity in the decades before the Americans arrived, didn’t feel they needed “God’s grace” as defined by White Americans. In February 1899, under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo (who had been brought back to the Philippines from China by U.S. warships, in order to fight against the Spaniards), the Filipinos launched a war for freedom and democracy against the forces of the United States.

Though the war against the Filipinos is largely forgotten or ignored in this country, it was a bloody and brutal conflict that saw American soldiers and disease kill hundreds of thousands

of Filipinos. While Black men, women and children were being tortured and killed in this country, White American soldiers slaughtered the brown-skinned inhabitants of the Philippines so that American businesses could expand into the Pacific.

“We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustee, under God, of the civilization of the world,” said Sen. Albert Beveridge in the U.S. Senate, speaking for the economic and political interests of this country. “Where shall we turn for consumers of our surplus? Geography answers the question. China is our natural customer....The Philippines give us a base at the door of all the East.”

And so Americans unleashed their indiscriminate brutality in the name of capitalism and democracy.

“Our fighting blood was up,” said one White soldier, “and we all wanted to kill ‘niggers.’....This shooting human beings beats rabbit hunting all to pieces.”

In brutality reminiscent of that at Abu Ghraib and throughout Iraq, the Manila correspondent of the Philadelphia Ledger wrote: “Our soldiers have pumped salt water into men to make them talk, and have taken prisoners people who held up their hands and peacefully surrendered, and an hour later...stood them on a bridge and shot them down one by one...”

The Black American soldiers were disgusted with the racism they saw their “fellow” soldiers introducing to yet another land, and many of them deserted. One, George Fagan of the all-Black 24th Infantry Regiment, accepted a commission in the rebel army and fought against the White Americans.

Another soldier, William Simms, wrote home (the letters by Simms and 113 other Black soldiers are in *Smoked Yankees and the Struggle for Empire*, by William Gatewood): “I was struck by a question a little Filipino boy asked me, which ran about this way: ‘Why does the American Negro come...to fight us where we are much a friend to him and have not done anything to him. He is all the same as me and me all the same as you. Why don’t you fight those people in America who burn Negroes, that make a beast of you...?’”

Approximately 1,000 Black soldiers married Filipino women and U.S. officials were so alarmed at the friendships between Black soldiers and Filipinos, that they ordered the soldiers shipped home early. While the majority of White Americans supported the war against the Filipinos, there were large protests from the Black American community, including many of the soldiers.

“The first thing in the morning is the ‘Nigger” and the last thing at night is the ‘Nigger,” wrote Sgt. Patrick Mason of the 24th to a Black newspaper, the *Cleveland Gazette* about White soldiers’ routine use of the word to describe both the Filipinos and Black American soldiers. Another Black infantryman, William Fulbright, wrote the editor of the Black-owned *Indianapolis Freeman*: “This struggle on the islands has been naught but a gigantic scheme of robbery and oppression.”

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But while the majority of White Americans supported the war, there were many exceptions.

Speaking of the actions of the United States and other Western nations in stealing land and imposing oppression in the name of democracy and spreading “civilization,” author Mark Twain wrote in the New York Herald: “I bring you the stately matron of Christendom, returning bedraggled, besmirched, and dishonored from pirate raids in Kiao-Chou, Manchuria, South Africa, and the Philippines, with her soul full of meanness, her pocket full of boodle, and her mouth full of pious hypocrisies.”

Between the end of the Spanish-American War and the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929, the United States sent its military into Latin American countries thirty-two times. Haiti alone was occupied from 1915-1934, so that the U.S. could control both its politics and its economy – just as the democratically-elected Bertrand Aristide was deposed by U.S.-supported drug dealers and murderers in 2004 for the same reasons.



(In the months before the coup, Aristide had called for reparations from France for the slavery that had made Haiti France’s richest colony. Aristide’s demand angered both France and the U.S., as had his attempts to bring jobs and justice to the poor, and helped spur his removal from office. In a recent interview, Haitian folk-singing legend and political activist Annette Auguste, told how she was arrested by U.S. Marines shortly after the coup against Aristide and imprisoned for two years without ever being charged. Her only “crime” apparently was supporting Aristide and his attempts to help the poor. Auguste said that everyone in her house, including a five-year-old girl, were arrested by the Marines and handcuffed.)

U.S. Marines suppressed Haitian revolts, used forced labor, destroyed local democratic institutions, and jailed newspaper editors. Marine Major-Gen. Smedley Butler, who had retired in 1931, said the main purpose of the invasion of Haiti was so the Marines could act as bill collectors for the National City Bank of New York.

National City and other U.S. and Western banks had managed to gain control of Haiti’s economy after the Haitians refused to pay Westerners for construction of the National Railway of Haiti. The railroad, which was largely financed by National City, was never completed. Its main terminal for Port-au-Prince, in fact, was built in a swamp two miles outside of town. The U.S. used the alleged default of the Haitian government toward National City and other bankers, to take control of Haiti, including collection of its money from customs and other sources.

When Woodrow Wilson became president, he took time off from introducing racial segregation into federal offices in Washington, D.C., to appoint William Jennings Bryant as Secretary of State. One of Bryant’s first concerns was to learn more about Haiti, and when he was told the Haitians spoke French, he exclaimed: “Dear me, think of it! Niggers speaking French.”

A 1918 law giving U.S. corporations the right to turn Haiti into a U.S. plantation, was passed by just 5% of the population after Wilson’s Marines (led by Smedley Butler) disbanded the Haitian parliament at gunpoint as an essential move in establishing “economic development.”

But White American racism was so strong, it destroyed even the pretense that the Marines had occupied Haiti for the good of the Haitian people. At any rate, U.S. officials soon openly admitted that they intended to control Haiti because of its strategic and military importance. They would also open up the island to any American businesses that wanted to invest there,

but their main objective was to provide protection to the newly-constructed Panama Canal and the naval base at Guantanamo Bay in American-occupied Cuba. The United States also grabbed control of the deep harbor of Samana Bay in the Dominican Republic in 1916, by launching a military occupation of the island. Control of the bay had been a U.S. objective since the days of Secretary of State William Seward in Abraham Lincoln's cabinet.

Over seventy years later, President Bill Clinton secretly authorized the Texaco Oil Company to illegally ship oil to the Haitian junta that had overthrown Aristide. The next day Clinton once again sent the Marines into Haiti to "restore democracy."

U.S. planners under Clinton well understood (as so many people in so many previous administrations had understood), as writer and social critic Noam Chomsky has said, that "the threat of democracy can be overcome if economic sovereignty is eliminated.... The forces that reconquered the country are mostly inheritors of the U.S.-installed army and paramilitary terrorists."

"Once Allende comes to power we shall do all within our power to condemn Chile and all Chileans to utmost poverty."

While the United States has always been determined to destroy any democracy seen interfering with U.S. strategic and economic interests, the words and deeds used to justify that destruction have changed with the times.

In 1970, when the Chilean people elected Socialist Salvador Allende as their president, the U.S. ambassador to Chile said: "Not a nut or bolt shall reach Chile under Allende. Once Allende comes to power we shall do all within our power to condemn Chile and all Chileans to utmost poverty..."

So much for respecting the results of a democratic election.

In 1973 (on Sept. 11th, fittingly enough) the U.S. used covert action involving the Central Intelligence Agency and major corporations, to overthrow Allende. His overthrow resulted in an estimated 3,000 deaths and the torture of tens of thousands of ordinary Chileans - all with the whole-hearted support of the United States, which even sent advisers to help with the killings and torture.

The Beat Goes On

The history of the U.S. destruction of democracy would be tragic enough if it had stopped at this country's actions in Haiti and Latin America. Or even if it had stopped with the 1953 coup against the prime minister of Iran, Mohammad Mossadegh, because he had nationalized his country's oil industry and was going to make sure most of the profits went to the Iranian people rather than to multinational oil corporations. His overthrow was engineered by Kermit Roosevelt, the grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt, thus continuing the family tradition of subverting democracy and spreading imperialism.

The U.S. destruction of democracy continued with its complicity in the 1961 murder of the democratically-elected leader of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba. Lumumba had declared that he was going to run the country for the Congolese and not for the American and European corporations who were determined to keep raping the wealth of the Congo.

"Everyone has realized that if the Congo dies, all Africa will be plunged into the night of

defeat and servitude,” Lumumba said in explaining why he had fought for the immediate independence of the Congo from Belgium. “The choice that was offered to us was none other than this alternative: freedom or the prolongation of our enslavement. There can be no compromise between freedom and slavery.”

“The Eisenhower administration and the Central Intelligence Agency wholeheartedly backed the murder of Patrice Lumumba.”

And so the United States joined with other Western powers to make sure that Lumumba could not lead his people – and perhaps the rest of Africa – to freedom, rather than to the neo-colonialism that continues to this day in so much of that continent.

The murder of Lumumba was wholeheartedly backed by the Eisenhower administration and the Central Intelligence Agency. And the killers of Lumumba are said to be active in Congolese politics to this day, still subverting democracy and selling the country’s riches to the West.

It was natural, then, that the U.S. supported the mass murderer and torturer, Jonas Savimbi, in Angola – where landmines Savimbi was given courtesy of rightwing politicians in the United States, South Africa and Israel, continue to maim and kill men, women and children to this day. Savimbi was seen as the West’s best “hope” for stopping Angola from becoming an independent nation in control of its own resources, especially its oil.

The U.S. destruction of democracy also continued in countless other countries, including East Timor in Indonesia. While millions mourn the passing of ex-President Gerald Ford, few remember and the corporate media never mention that the U.S. government – with Ford’s approval and the whole-hearted support of then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger – gave the go-ahead for the Indonesian government to slaughter hundreds of thousands of Timorese because they wanted democracy. Ninety per cent of the weapons the Indonesians used to murder the Timorese, were supplied by the United States, which knew they would be used for that purpose.

Today the U.S. supports the regime in Nigeria that has spent years helping major oil companies to destroy the land and livelihood – and often the lives – of ordinary Nigerians. In the eyes of this government, and in the eyes of the military men in Nigeria, oil is much more important than the lives of innocent people. And so today the people in the Niger Delta continue to fight to preserve the land and air that has always given them life, against the combined forces of U.S. multinational corporations and the U.S.-supported Nigerian military.

But the most massive destruction of democracy by the United States is being done in the name of spreading democracy in the Middle East: its invasion and occupation of Iraq, and the measures it has taken to control Iraq’s oil. One consultant – in referring to the deposits in Iraq’s vast Western desert – called them the “Holy Grail” of the oil industry, a view echoed by most big oil executives.

Vice-President Dick Cheney and other neocons had been working for decades to get their hands on that oil, and accelerated their efforts once George W. Bush became president. By the time Bush invaded Iraq, his administration and oil executives had planned exactly what to do.

Just one month before the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, investigative journalist Greg Palast

was given a State Department document that laid out the United States government's plan to seize Iraq, its oil and everything else of value in the country.

The document, called "Moving the Iraqi Economy from Recovery to Growth," was a dream come true for neocons and their corporate supporters. It called for lowering taxes on big business, quick sales of Iraq's banks, bridges and all other "state enterprises" to foreigners (mainly Americans), allowing foreign corporations to take all of their profits out of Iraq, eliminating tariffs so U.S. imports would not be taxed and even revising Iraq's copyright laws to provide fifty years of retroactive royalty payments to the U.S. recording industry and twenty years of royalties to Microsoft.

"J. Paul Bremer promptly issued 100 orders designed to carry out the goals of big oil and other corporate interests in Iraq."

But most of all it concentrated on taking the oil industry out of the hands of Iraqis and placing it in the control of Americans and other Westerners. The one law they didn't change was Saddam Hussein's ban on unions. There was no talk about bringing democracy to Iraq, but there was plenty of talk about controlling Iraqi's oil. Executives from Chevron-Texaco, Royal Dutch-Shell and other oil industry representatives, met at the White House and came up with a 300-page addendum to the plan. This addendum called for the complete turnover of Iraq's oil industry to international oil companies.



J. Paul Bremer, who had been the managing director of Kissinger Associates, was installed in Saddam Hussein's old palace to run Iraq as head of the Coalition Provisional Authority. He promptly issued 100 orders designed to carry out the goals of big oil and other corporate interests. Cargill - the world's biggest grain dealer - was able to dump hundreds of thousands of tons of wheat on the Iraqi market, thanks to the U.S. elimination of taxes and tariffs on imported foreign products. One result of this dumping was the devastation of the livelihoods of Iraqi farmers, who could not compete with the cheaper surpluses that flooded their country (Australian surpluses were also dumped on them).

Although Although U.S. officials from Bush on down like to brag about bringing democracy to Iraq, Bremer cancelled scheduled elections and only allowed them to be held after Ayatollah Ali Husaini Sistani threatened to bring a million Shi'ites into the streets to protest Bremer's action.

General Jay Garner, who preceded Bremer as head of the CPA but was quickly fired after refusing to carry out the Economy Plan, said he was bitterly opposed to U.S. attempts to seize Iraq's oil, pipelines, refineries and ports.

"That's one fight you don't want to take on," he told Palast.

But the U.S. is taking it on. While the corporate media in this country have virtually ignored those parts of the Iraq Study Group report dealing with Iraq's oil, a simple reading of the report shows that in Chapter 1, Page 1 are these words: "It (Iraq) has the world's second-largest known oil reserves." The report then goes on to show what the United States can and should do to gain control of Iraq's oil, including privatizing it, opening Iraq to private energy and oil companies, and "helping" the Iraqis draft a new national oil law. This proposed law, which American "advisers" are working on virtually every day, would assure U.S. and Western control of Iraq's oil for decades to come. Under this law, as under the rule of the previous colonial powers, the people of Iraq would have virtually nothing to say about

who gets their oil and how much they have to pay for it.

Two of the report's authors, James A. Baker III (the first President Bush's secretary of state) and Lawrence Eagleburger, have spent most of their adult lives representing oil companies. In 1982, when then-President Ronald Reagan removed Iraq from the list of companies sponsoring terrorism, Baker and Eagleburger took steps to expand trade with Iraq. The two ultimately helped Saddam Hussein's Iraq receive billions of dollars, which the dictator then used to buy U.S. goods. In 1984, when Baker became treasury secretary and Eagleburger became president of Kissinger Associates, Reagan opened full diplomatic relations with Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

Baker and Eagleburger were especially interested in Iraq's "vast oil reserves," and wasted no time in helping both their oil company clients and their law firms get their hands on Iraqi oil money. It is worth noting that the Iraqi Study Group report was written, not only by these men, but by several other conservatives who have long expressed a desire to control Iraq's oil.

U.S. oil companies have said that passage of a new Iraqi oil law is even more important than security concerns in deciding when they will move into Iraq. Many people, therefore, see the continuing presence of U.S. troops in Iraq as necessary both to pressure Iraqi lawmakers to pass the new law, and to try and guarantee security for the oil companies.

"Most Iraqi lawmakers don't even know details about the law the U.S. is trying to force down their throats."

When Bremer quickly left Iraq (some would say when he "fled"), he left behind nearly 200 American "experts" to oversee each new Iraqi minister (these ministers also had to be approved beforehand by the U.S. government).

The proposed new law is being worked on feverishly by these American "advisers" and would require Iraqi lawmakers to sign what are called "production sharing agreements" (PSAs). PSAs are usually negotiated with weak governments and typically last for at least 15 to 20 years. Most Iraqi lawmakers don't even know details about the law the U.S. is trying to force down their throats. Iraqi knowledge or consent isn't considered necessary in the taking over of Iraq's oil, though, anymore than it is considered necessary whenever the U.S. decides that controlling another country's resources is more important than helping sustain or establish democracy.

Greg Gregg Muttitt, a member of a social and environmental NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) operating in Iraq, said he was recently at a meeting of members of the Iraqi Parliament (MPs) and asked how many "had seen the law. Out of twenty, only one MP had seen it."

The same lack of Iraqi participation was evident when Iraq's constitution was drafted, giving Americans and other Westerners the ability to assume effective control of the country's oil. The U.S. has even locked in its new laws, rules and regulations, so that it will be almost impossible for any future Iraqi government to change them.

Said one Sunni negotiator: "This constitution was cooked up in an American kitchen, not an Iraqi one."

Though the corporate media in this country say virtually nothing about the subject, the U.S.

has spent billions of dollars to build permanent military bases in Iraq. This country has also built the biggest embassy with the biggest staff in the world in Iraq: a staff that includes many CIA agents. Paul Wolfowitz, former deputy defense secretary and one of the architects of the invasion of Iraq, is now president of the World Bank. In that position, say many critics, he is pressuring Iraqis to sign the new oil law quickly, before Chinese, Russian and Indian oil firms can move in. To put more pressure on the Iraqis, Wolfowitz recently opened a World Bank office in Baghdad.

A Nation of Locusts

The hypocrisy inherent in the deeds of the U.S. government as opposed to its words, has thus continued unchanged from the writing of the Constitution and Bill of Rights by a few privileged white males intent on protecting their economic, political and social privileges.

John F. Kennedy, who is revered by millions of Americans, including African Americans, directed the overthrow of Bolivia's democratically elected government because he saw it as threatening U.S. corporate control. Kennedy then supported installation of one of the many neo-Nazi governments this country has inflicted on Latin America (Successive U.S. governments, for instance, were perfectly happy with a Cuba riddled by drugs, prostitution, racial discrimination, and lack of health care and schools, as long as the rightwing dictators who controlled Cuba put American interests above the interests of their own poor and largely Black and Brown population).

In 2000, the U.S. hailed the overthrow of the democratically elected Black Indian president of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, and his replacement by a rightwing publisher who immediately dissolved parliament, the judiciary and other instruments of democracy. Chavez was quickly returned to power by a popular uprising, but not before Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and other officials praised what they hoped and thought would be another pro-rich regime. Chavez's "crime" consisted mainly of using Venezuela's resources, including its oil, to benefit poor Venezuelans instead of rich Americans. Rightwing individuals and organizations intent on destroying Venezuela's democracy, are still being supported financially and politically by the United States.

"The Pentagon is now training soldiers to destroy teachers, doctors, writers and anyone else in Latin America who tries to bring democracy to that region's largely Indian and Black populations."

U.S. training of the Latin American military has sharply increased in the last few years. And that training has been shifted from the State Department, which demanded at least minimal supervision and investigation of human rights abuses, to the Pentagon, which asks for none. The new training mission for the Latin American military, as defined by the Pentagon, is now the fighting of "radical populism." In plain English, that means the Pentagon is now training soldiers to destroy teachers, doctors, writers and anyone else in Latin America who tries to bring democracy to that region's largely Indian and Black populations.

And so today in Venezuela, Nigeria, Haiti, Iraq and probably many other countries we're not even aware of, democracy is being destroyed or threatened by the United States, as it has been throughout history when big business wanted it destroyed.

In "Confessions of an Economic Hit Man," John Perkins describes how he was often sent by the U.S. government into some Third World country that had something the U.S. wanted:

from oil or other natural resources to strategic location. He then tried to persuade the country's leader to agree to a project like building oil pipelines or a power plant or a dam. Anything that would cost a lot of money.

The cost of the project, which would be grossly inflated, would be paid for by loans from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. All work would be done by American firms, which received huge profits. Inevitably the Third World country would be unable to repay the loan and would then become, in effect, an American puppet doing whatever the U.S. wanted – from giving control of its resources to multinational corporations to voting whatever way the U.S. wanted in the United Nations to allowing the U.S. to build military bases in the country.



If the hit man's plan didn't work, Perkins said, then the U.S. government sent in "jackals" from the CIA to try and foment civil disorder. If the leader of the Third World country still resisted, "accidents" happened to them. In the 1980's, Panama's Omar Torrijos, who insisted on retaining control of Panama's resources and helping the poor in his country, and Ecuador's Jaime Roldas, whose goals were the same for his country, were both killed in mysterious plane crashes.

Torrijos had taken land from the rich and given it to peasants, and initiated other economic and social programs that antagonized powerful Panamanian families and their American supporters.

"If the leader of the Third World country still resisted, 'accidents' happened to them."

"Their deaths were not accidental," Perkins said of Torrijos and Roldas in an interview on the radio and television show Democracy Now. "They were assassinated because they opposed that fraternity of corporate, government, and banking heads whose goal is global empire. We Economic Hit Men failed to bring Roldos and Torrijos around, and the other type of hit men, the CIA-sanctioned jackals who were always right behind us, stepped in... It's only in rare instances like Iraq where the military comes in as a last resort (as of 2006, the U.S. maintained 725 military bases in 132 countries, including a huge new base in the nation of Djibouti to help control Africa, its resources and its politics. The CIA Fact Book, in describing Djibouti's importance to the West, said it has a "strategic location near (the) world's busiest shipping lanes and close to Arabian oilfields..." Djibouti, in fact, can control access to the Red Sea, which is why both France and the U.S. maintain a strong military presence in that small African nation).

If Torrijos and Roldas had gone along with U.S. wishes, their nations would have been plunged into widespread poverty, and large American corporations would have taken over their infrastructure, resources and political decision-making.

And so while the military is still used to control other nations and their resources, as we can easily see in Iraq, the economic controls in the so-called Free Trade Agreements the U.S. has forced on much of Latin America, are now increasingly used to steal the riches of other regions. Even the forgiveness of the debt of poor nations that Bush has bragged about, said Perkins, is a "complete sham" that forces the poor nations to allow large American corporations to take over their water, gas, power, telephone and education systems.

The U.S. destruction of democracy can be compared to the actions of locusts. I used to spend every summer on my grandparents' farm in Ohio, and I helped my grandfather plant, repair fences, bring in the hay, whatever needed doing. He was a man who could go hours

without saying more than a few dozen words. But he said one thing I've never forgotten, because it applies to so many situations in life, including U.S. history: "When locusts move on, they leave nothing behind."

This nation has acted like a plague of locusts in other lands throughout its history (and as slave-owning, land-stealing locusts within this country, starting with the enslavement of Africans and the slaughtering of Native Americans because Whites wanted their land and labor). While the method of this country's greed-driven destruction has sometimes changed, the goal remains the same as it has always been: to steal in order to make rich Americans richer, even if that means creating generation after generation of locusts swarming around the world, seizing everything they value.

Or, as Marine Major-General Smedley Butler described them when he summed up his career decades ago: creating generation after generation of "gangsters for capitalism."

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