

'Govt PLC - who's the real world power?'

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Economist and writer John Perkins was deeply involved in Washington's economic schemes to create a global empire. Now he tells RT what's come out of it – and who really controls the world's biggest economy.

RT: You have been an 'economic hit man' for about ten years. What exactly does that job entail?

John Perkins: We economic hit men have created the world's first truly global empire. And it's the first empire in history that's been created primarily without the military, through economics. And we [economic hit men] work many different ways, but perhaps the most common is that we will identify a third world country that has resources our corporations covet, like oil, and then arrange a huge loan to that country from the world bank or one of its sister organisations. But the money never actually goes to the country. Instead it goes to our own corporations to build big infrastructure projects in that country. Things like power plants and industrial parks and highways that benefit a few wealthy families in that country as well as our own corporations, but don't help the majority of people. The whole country is left holding this huge debt. And it's such a big debt that they cannot repay it.

So at some point we economic hit men go back to them and say: you cannot pay your debt, so give us your pound of flesh – sell your oil real cheap to our oil companies or vote with us on the next critical United Nations vote, or send troops in support of ours to some place in the world like Iraq. When we fail then what we call a 'Jekyll' steps in. These are people who overthrow governments or assassinate their leaders. And on the very few occasions when both economic hit men and the Jekylls fail, as we both did in Iraq, then and only then does the military step in. And it's pretty secret, because most people in the United States don't realise that they're reaping the benefits from this empire. They don't realise the exploitation of resources and environments and people and sweatshops and so on all over the world that are the result of this. I think it's fair to say that this process is a huge threat to democracy. And if the majority of the people who vote in the country don't understand this most basic principle of our foreign policy, then we are not informed. And if we're not informed it's hard to say that we are voting truly democratically, which I think is a big concern.

RT: And this isn't considered illegal under international law because it's kept secret? How does it work?

J.P.: Well, the process isn't illegal at all. The process of identifying countries that have resources you covet and then giving them huge loans. And through macro economics you can in fact show that when we make loans to these countries, the economy increases. But what wasn't shown, what isn't shown, is that in many of these countries only a few people really benefit. And they are really the major contributors to the economy. They're very wealthy families. And the majority of the people end up being worse off.

RT: You said the United States hit men filled in Iraq? What happened exactly?

J.P.: In order to really understand Iraq we have to look at Saudi Arabia first. Because in the early seventies, Saudi Arabia stopped selling oil, OPEC stopped selling oil, to the United States. And the US treasury department came to me and some other economic hit men and said, 'you cannot let OPEC hold us up for ransom anymore, do something!' So we knew we had to work out a deal with the House of Saud, the royal family of Saudi Arabia. And eventually we worked out this deal whereby the Saudis agreed to return most of the money they made selling oil to the world to the United States and buy US government securities. The interest from those government securities was basically turned over to our treasury department and used to hire American companies to westernise Saudi Arabia to build these civilisation plans, petrol chemical complexes, cities. And also Saudi agreed not to sell oil for anything other than dollars which made the dollar very strong at that point. And we agreed to keep the House of Saud in power. It was an amazing deal that we put together. And after that, we were so successful we decided we ought to sell the same deal to Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Iraq was the next largest producer of oil, we wanted to get Saddam in bed with us basically. But he wouldn't buy, he wouldn't accept it. If he had he'd still be running his country, I'm convinced. He wouldn't buy. So we sent the Jekylls in to assassinate him. They couldn't. He had very good security. He had look-alike doubles. So his own security officers never knew whether they were actually guarding him or somebody else. It makes it very difficult to take someone out. He was very savvy, he knew our system pretty well. We'd at one time hired him to be an assassin for another former president or premier of Iraq. So we sent the military in, in 1991. Destroyed his army.

And at that time of course we could've taken Saddam Hussein out but we decided not to. He was the kind of strong man we liked, someone who could keep the Iranians in their borders, keep control of the Kurds and keep pumping oil to us. And we figured that by destroying his military we'd chastised him sufficiently, that now he'd come around. So in the 90s the economic hit men went back in and tried to bring him around. Couldn't do it again. He was obstinate. And again the Jekylls couldn't take him out. So we formulated the second invasion and sent the troops in again and this time of course, we took him out.

RT: Your book ‘Confessions of an Economic Hit Man’ caused a lot of controversy. What was the reaction of the U.S. government?

J.P.: A lot of the American press wanted to ignore ‘Confessions of an Economic Hit Man’. The book was only the New York Times bestsellers list for about a year and a half and the New York Times never reviewed it. The state department issued a website called ‘misinformation’ or something, and my book was the only book listed on that website for a long period of time. People were told this book is wrong, and to me that was farcical.

RT: You’ve claimed that the United States’ government has wanted to create a global empire. Do you think that is still the case?

J.P.: The United States, certainly under the Bush administration, was very much involved in the empire expansion. What we were doing in Iraq was totally into that. However it got itself into a lot of trouble. So by being in Iraq and Afghanistan in such a big way, so committed, it meant that when Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, for example, got on the bad side of the administration and the CIA was sent in to overthrow him, a coup was staged in 2002 against Chavez. And Chavez was able to overcome the coup. At that point, under older regimes, we would’ve gone and done something much more massive against Chavez. But because we were so extended, overextended in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Bush administration really had its hands tied. It couldn’t go into Venezuela. In the process of trying to expand this empire – and I think in the process of moving away from the economic hit man approach going back to the more militarised approach as the Bush administration did in Iraq and Afghanistan – has created a huge problem for the United States. So it can no longer continue in this mode.

RT: Where do you think the United States is heading in terms of its ties with other nations?

J.P.: Nations aren’t very important anymore as power brokers. Big corporations – they really are calling the shots. In whatever country you’re in today, corporations have tremendous power. We have a new president now, Obama, and one of the things that he ran under was that he didn’t accept money from big institutions, but in fact he did. He accepted a lot of hedge fund money, a lot of money that came through corporations in one way or another. And even if we ever had a president that wouldn’t be influenced by corporations, he’s got to deal with Congress – that’s terribly influenced by corporations [also] Senate and the House of Representatives both and all the local governments. Corporations are the powers today. And so when we talk about modern geopolitics we’ve really got to look at the corporations.

RT: So in your opinion, is it the corporations that are responsible for the economic crisis that the United States is struggling through right now?

J.P.: I think it's fair to say that the corporations are responsible for the economic crisis that the United States and the rest of the world is getting deeply involved in. The government of the United States has to take a lot of responsibility. In fact, if you look at the top of the corporate world and the government world, you usually get the same people, in the United States at least. They move back and forth through what we call the revolving door policies.

RT: Do you think a solution could be found to this global economic crisis? Many analysts are predicting that, basically, light at the end of the tunnel is nowhere in sight. What are your predictions?

J.P.: I believe there is a light at the end of the tunnel to this economic crisis. I think it's frankly, a good thing that we are going through it. But you know we've been living in a very unbalanced world. Less than 5% of the world's population lives in the United States and we consume more than 25% of the world's resources. At the same time, roughly half of the world's population lives beneath the poverty level. That's not a world that can be called a success. We have to change.

RT: One of your books is called 'Secret history of the American empire'. Nowadays does the United States still exist as an empire, should it be considered as an empire?

J.P.: An American empire, if we look at it that way, as an American-based empire which now has become really a global empire that's really run by the corporatocracy, which is the heads of big corporations. And it just so happens that the majority of them have their headquarters in the United States.

RT: What about people who are less optimistic and who say that basically the United States might be headed towards the exit, just may collapse because of so many problems that it's faced with right now?

J.P.: You know it's entirely possible that the economy will collapse, the United States will collapse, the world economy will collapse. And out of that will grow something else. It will have to. Out of the ruins something new will take seed. I want to believe that we can not collapse but change. And the whole world can change and the whole world economy. And I think we have a very good shot at doing that. And we do something about it.

The other possibility is we don't read the signs and we just go into decline. And then we'll have a terrible turmoil and chaos and there will be tremendous amount of suffering. The signs are out there.

http://www.russiatoday.ru:80/Politics/2009-03-18/_Govt_PLC_-_who_s_the_real_world_power_.html

