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Deadly Sins of Imperialism

By Cesar Chelala
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No one would have imagined that one of the greatest truths about American foreign policy would come from President Donald Trump during an interview with Fox News reporter Bill O'Reilly. When O'Reilly referred to Russian President Vladimir Putin as "a killer," Trump replied, "There are a lot of killers. We have many killers. Or do you think our country is so innocent?"

With these words Trump confirmed what we have known for a long time about U.S. foreign policy: The United States has a dark history of involvement in in many countries' politics, often economically or through direct murder or participation in the elimination of foreign leaders, including leaders of the U.S.

Patrick Lawrence, an American author and essayist, relates a conversation he had with an American whistleblower known for his denunciations against the establishment. He told Lawrence that, during a dinner to raise funds for the Democratic Party, one of the attendees asked President Barack Obama: "President Obama, what happened to your progressive foreign policy plans?" President Obama replied, "Do you want me to end up like John F. Kennedy?"

We now know that there are still serious doubts about the involvement of the CIA in both the death of John F. Kennedy and that of his brother Robert Kennedy, who was the Attorney General of the United States from 1961 to 1964. Robert Kennedy was murdered on June 6, 1968, still

without total certainty (as in the case of his brother John F. Kennedy) about who was really his killer.

William Blum, an American historian and sharp critic of US foreign policy, denounced in his books and numerous articles U.S. intervention in other countries. Blum worked for the United States Department of State as a computer expert.

According to Blum, after the end of World War II, the United States:

Tried to overthrow more than 50 foreign governments, most of which were democratically elected.

Dropped bombs from the air on people from more than 30 countries.

Tried to assassinate more than 50 foreign leaders.

Tried to suppress popular or nationalist movements in 20 countries.

Interfered in democratic elections in at least 30 countries.

In addition to these actions, the United States has practiced torture, as in the case of Guantánamo and in the other countries to which they sent their prisoners of war. This includes not only torture by Americans against foreigners, but also providing torture equipment and manuals, lists of persons to be tortured, and training in torture techniques by U.S. instructors.

Violent acts, murders and wars are not the only ways to intervene in other countries. In the book *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, American author and consultant John Perkins details the techniques used by both the United States government and international banks and corporations to subdue countries through forced indebtedness and very high rates of interest on loans they impose on them, many of which enrich not only the lenders but the corrupt local elites.

Perkins' testimony is especially valuable because he himself was an economic hit man on the payroll of large US corporations and banks. His work consisted precisely in forcing countries into debt and thus weakening their economies and their possibilities for independent development.

Not everyone, however, agrees with Perkins' conclusions. Sebastian Mallaby, a Washington Post columnist and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations thinks that what Perkins says is exaggerated and cites improvements in global poverty and health levels despite his assertions about the harmful behavior of international banks and companies.

Dambisa Moyo, a Zambian-born African economist who worked for Goldman Sachs, the World Bank and many other international organizations says: "Rich countries money has trapped many African nations in a cycle of corruption, slow growth and poverty. Cutting the flow of aid would be much more beneficial." In dozens of missions to developing countries, I have been able to

verify the disasters caused by the interference of corporations, banks and other countries in the degree of corruption of governments and local economies.

These considerations should not ignore the responsibility that national elites have in enabling and benefiting from those policies that have a significant negative impact on the countries' development. This is particularly relevant when one takes into account the forecast of the Intelligence Unit of The Economist. According to it, 65 countries out of 150 will experience significant social and political uncertainty in the near future.

For many decades, the U.S. has been intervening in other countries (mainly developing ones) through a variety of mechanisms that have led to their destabilization, the fall of democratic governments and encouraging widespread corruption. The more these countries become aware of these intervention policies the better they will be able to respond to them.