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How Washington Rules the World



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So far, Biden's foreign policy does not differ seismically from Trump's. Indeed Biden's first move – recognizing the unelected pretender to the Venezuelan presidency, Juan Guaidó – was as lousy as anything Trump did. It raises the specter of CIA coups, assassinations, regime changes and Washington-orchestrated color revolutions, which Biden's two dreadful foreign policy appointees, Victoria Nuland and Samantha Power, embraced ardently in the past. Of course, those coups the U.S. sponsors are the antithesis of democracy and have the utterly predictable result of destroying entire countries – but this has been how the U.S. has exercised power in the world (mostly the Global South) since at least the dawn of the twentieth century.

Vijay Prashad documents this shameful U.S. history in his new book, *Washington Bullets*, whose litany of CIA depredations is enough to cause outright despair. The opportunities lost. Human history thwarted. Virtuous leaders cut down precisely because they were virtuous. Heroes murdered. Plans to improve millions of lives just shattered. The cumulative portrait is beyond distressing. This portrait, this book is about how the U.S. rules the world, about raw

power and how amoral, bloody and criminal such power is. As Evo Morales writes in the introduction, the U.S. has justified its assassinations, coups, and massacres as “the fight against communism, followed by the fight against drug trafficking and now, the fight against terrorism.” What will the next fight be? Doubtless something to do with Great Power Competition, something needless and nuclear.

An abbreviated list of U.S. coups and assassinations against assorted socialists and democrats includes the overthrow of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh in Iran in 1953, that of President Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954 – for daring to threaten the profits of a company, United Fruit, in which state department officials held shares; the ouster and subsequent execution of heroic Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba of the Congo in 1961; the overthrow of Prime Minister Abd al-Karim Qasim in Iraq in 1963; the 1964 removal of President Joao Goulart in Brazil and of President Kusno Sukarno of Indonesia in 1965; the ouster of President Juan Jose Torres of Bolivia in 1971; the 1973 overthrow of President Salvador Allende in Chile; and other violent and brutal regime changes.

There were also the murders of leftist leaders such as Mehdi Ben Barka of Morocco in 1965, Che Guevara in Bolivia in 1967 and President Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso in 1987; and this isn’t counting the string of coups instigated by the U.S. in Central and Latin America in the early part of the twentieth century. Much later toward the century’s end, came the U.S. overthrow of the socialist governments in Grenada and Haiti, the kidnapping of authoritarian Panamanian ruler Manuel Noriega, the invasion of Iraq and dissolution of its government, the destruction of Libya, the invasion of Afghanistan and more. This is merely a portion of U.S. and specifically CIA crimes against foreign governments and people.

“So in this prison house of psychological warfare,” Prashad writes, “it is perfectly acceptable for the Free World to claim resources from the colonized world, which should be forced to surrender its wealth for the sake of someone else’s freedom.” That sums up Western colonialism. And when Western profits are threatened, the CIA and US state department have regime change down to a science, whose nine steps Prashad lists: 1) lobby public opinion; 2) appoint the right man on the ground in country; 3) make sure the generals are ready; 4) make the economy scream; 5) diplomatic isolation; 6) organize mass protests; 7) greenlight the overthrow; 8) assassinate opponents; 9) deny U.S. involvement. Sound familiar? That’s because the U.S. currently engages in several of these activities vis a vis Russia, China, Venezuela, Cuba, Iran, Syria, North Korea and other countries.

“The great decolonization process – whose highpoint was in the 1960s and 1970s – became the prelude to poverty and war that now wracks the Third World. Beneath the paving stones in these colonized lands...[lie] the corpses of freedom fighters,” writes Prashad. How many corpses? One estimate is seven to ten million dead worldwide from Washington’s aggressions since World War II. That includes millions in Southeast Asia, millions in Korea, the million

leftists slaughtered with CIA assistance in Indonesia in the 1960s, a million in Iraq and many, many in Latin America and Africa.

One CIA effort alone, Operation Condor in Latin America, killed 100,000 people. In this, the U.S. “worked within the archipelago of military juntas from Argentina to Paraguay to abduct, torture and murder Communists in the continent.” The program ran from 1975 to 1989 and also imprisoned half a million people. The U.S. relied on men who can only be described as fascists. “A ruthlessness was let loose upon the earth,” Prashad writes, “as the most toxic political ideologies were given full license to kill.”

Those toxic ideologies were well summed up in Trump. So while Biden breaks with all things Trump, he has an opportunity to remake foreign policy as well. Wouldn’t it be terrific if Biden did not intervene militarily anywhere in the world? If he ended the sanctions that starve ordinary people in countries the U.S. has designated “adversaries,” but which really, in most cases, are just trying to remain independent of Washington? If he cut off weapons to dictatorships like Saudi Arabia, so it cannot continue to crush Yemen’s bloody corpse? If he left countries like Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela alone, instead of continuing to try to destabilize them for useless ideological reasons? A new presidency is a great time for a new beginning.

But many of Biden’s foreign policy appointments are inauspicious to say the least, and again, his first move on Venezuela is awful. Also, he has been ominously silent on Yemen, not uttering a peep about his campaign promise to end U.S. support for the morally disgusting assault on the poorest country in the Middle East. Still, it’s just the start of Biden’s presidency. He could yet mark out a different course, if he cared to. For the old ways are a failure, as the CIA and government officials who are Prashad’s sources readily admit.

Those sources, Prashad writes, are men “who did nasty things, hated talking about them but were honest enough to say toward the end of their lives that they had helped make a mess of the world.” Indeed they did. And there is little evidence that those who follow them have learned any lessons from their misbegotten crimes. Whole countries have been pulverized by the U.S., from Iraq to Haiti, whose liberation theologian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the U.S. helped depose TWICE. The second time, Aristide says he was kidnapped by the U.S. and shipped out of the country by plane. If he or someone else from his political party, which actually represents the interests of Haitians, came to power again, who’s to say the U.S. would now behave any differently, with any humanity or morality? For those are the two things lacking, for generations, in how the U.S. rules the world. It’s past time for a change. The whole world knows it. The gory U. S. assault on justice in the Global South is the scandal of the century – of two centuries. When will Washington stop it?

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