

Book Review

William Blum, *America's Deadliest Export Democracy: The Truth about U.S. Foreign Policy and Everything Else*, (New York: Zed Books Ltd. 2013), 353pp.

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This exposé, authored by William Blum, documents the many atrocities caused by Western imperial powers. Blum expounds upon U.S. obsession with hegemony and dominance, which in turn leads to global catastrophes ranging from poor, destitute livelihood; to pandemic bloodshed, civil strife, economic woes, and political oppression. *America's Deadliest Export* also explains how the U.S. achieves its' imperial ends which range from covert intervention to the puppeteering of dictatorial minions. Blum is a man from the lion's den as he himself is a former State Department official, an expert on foreign policy, and is the founder and editor of *Washington Free Press*, the very first non-mainstream newspaper in the country's capital.

Blum expounds the notion of American exceptionalism, the idea that the U.S. could do as it pleases, when it pleases, and only it has the right to do so. No other country is to acquire unmonitored nuclear technological advancements, or 'democratically' elect presidents without U.S. approval, for example. Blum interestingly notes that the U.S. Air Force website brandishes on its home page the caption, 'Above all.' One might think that this innocently refers to aircraft flying 'above' and beyond, but other U.S. military sites have similar messages such as 'Cyber dominance,' 'Air dominance,' and 'Space dominance.' Blum argues that the U.S. is not motivated by the desire to champion democracy, establish a just world, quell violence, or eliminate poverty, "but rather by economics and ideology."(p. 5) Thus, when the U.S. professes concern for democracy and welfare of the people of countries it had invaded, claim would even embarrass the late Russian Jewish philosopher, Ayn Rand, who held that altruism was evil, and no one should be placed above one's self. In essence, in reality, Washington's policy is more Randian than one would think; America's international tentacles were neither extended for

altruistic reasons nor for selfless ends. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) clearly explained in 1999 that “the principal beneficiary of America’s foreign assistance programs has always been the United States.”(p. 25)

Blum points out that U.S. global democratic agenda is disputably the greatest lie ever injected into the American psyche. The U.S. is on record for attempting to overthrow more than fifty democratically elected governments and meddling in more than thirty elections in thirty separate countries so as to promote its own hegemony. Blum provides a case study in this respect—U.S. relations with Indonesia, a country with an alleged extensive history of detaining, torturing, and massacring its own people. However, this record is of little consequence to the U.S. given that the Indonesian military has for forty years defended American mining, and oil and natural interests.

The alleged threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction was one of the justifications for invasion of Iraq. Interestingly, Saddam Hussein, the deposed president of Iraq, gave full cooperation to UN weapons inspectors when the news of a nearing invasion came. No WMDs were ever found. Iraq also attempted to prevent a war but the U.S. would have none of it. The invasion of Iraq was supposedly a part of the War on Terror, but one must wonder, then, how the American public would cope with the knowledge that the most egregious acts committed by the U.S. could also be classified as terrorism. Blum rightfully says:

The United States is not actually against terrorism, per se, only those terrorists who are not allies of the empire...a lengthy and infamous history of Washington’s support for numerous anti-Castro terrorists, even when their terrorist acts were committed in the United States. (p. 17)

Blum also alludes to the Cuban terrorist, Orlando Bosch, who exploded a plane with seventy-three people onboard on Oct 6, 1976. He is now enjoying political sanctuary in Miami and protected by the U.S. from extradition. It is, therefore, valid to say that the U.S. does not oppose terrorism when it suits its purpose. The proof of this, Blum states, is Washington adding and removing the names of terrorist groups on the State Department list of terrorists when it’s in their interests to do so. Blum gives the examples of the Contras of Nicaragua in the 1980s, of whom former CIA director, Stanfield Turner, described as “State-sponsored terrorism” (p. 42) and the Jundullah of Pakistan 1990s’ led by the Taliban, neither of which are currently on the terror club list. So long

as the terror can be used as instrument that advances US interests and those of its allies, then it is not terrorism, but spread of democracy.

America's Deadliest Export is a book most needed in the discussion of U.S. foreign policy. If anyone has never read a book on the theme, it would do them well to start with this volume. Blum extracts meanings hidden to the laymen, and lays them neatly like pearls on a string for the reader to see and appreciate with ease.

The credibility and appeal of Blum's book is amplified by the reviews and excerpts from renowned political analysts and public intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky and Michael Parenti, all of whom praise Blum's work immensely. Even without the endorsement of such prominent scholars, Blum's greatest appeal is his factual analysis; his keen observations of US trends, ambitions, and crimes. As a former State Department official, he is also very well aware of U.S. inner networks. His greatest appeal is his ability to cite and reference directly from presidents, terror suspects, army officials, CIA directors, etc. He never resorts to conventional opinion or hearsay, but rather solid research. He spares little effort in presenting the significance of events, therefore, doing the reader a great service of removing ignorance about the nature of the American Empire.