

Confessions of an economic hitman

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Confessions of an Economic Hit man John Perkins The reasons as to why I selected this book was heavily weighted on my personal interests. The fact that I am interested in matters of economics, imperialism, capitalism and deception and corruption on a government level, made reviewing Confessions of an economic hit man an enjoyable experience. “ For them, this is a war about the survival of their children and cultures, while for us it is about power, money and natural resources.

It is one part of the struggle for world domination and the dream of a few greedy men, global empire. ” (prologue) If confessions of an economic Hit man had to be summarised in a sentence, the quotation above should give you the reader briefly; a general inquest into some of the main topics of discussion in the book. The author (John Perkins) describes in great depth the conflicts of interests between the developed and the developing world whilst integrating his life journey as part of a riveting and gripping novel.

The book begins in the 1960's and the author gives a personal account of his life, family and education till 1971, the year in which John Perkins became an “ Economic Hit man”. Confessions of an economic Hit man tells a tale of how John Perkins amongst others exploited oil exporting countries such as Ecuador, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Venezuela and Indonesia but to name a few names, in order for them to become indebted to the United States of America. John Perkins goes into grave detail in explaining how America has become probably the most powerful political and economic force in the world.

The elements of genius and deception mixed with the strategic approaches of the so called economic hit men (“EHM’s”) gives an insight as to how these oil rich countries become indebted to the powerhouses of America such as the large engineering corporations, banks, CEO’s and politicians. In order to explain how EHMs go about their work, the author has chosen to make references to the Mafia, through these references it can be understood just how these strategies were implemented in to helping the American economy grow according to the views, expressions and experiences of John Perkins. Like our counterparts in the mafia EHMs provide favors. These take the forms of loans to develop infrastructure - electric generating plants, highways, ports airports or industrial parks. ” (prologue) EHMs pronounce the idea of taking out large loans to the leaders of some of the countries named previously. The main intention of providing countries these inflated loans, is in the end for these countries to default on the loan payments and in turn to be indebted to the USA.

An important part of the process was making sure the infrastructure that was to be built, was built by American engineering firms such as MAIN, which John Perkins initially worked for. This factor was important as a large sum of the loan was instantly injected back in to the American economy via the engineering firms. If the EHMs are completely successful and the default on the loan payments occurs (which it inevitably will) then as the author puts it so well “ when this happens, then like the mafia we demand our pound of flesh” (prologue).

As a result America often try to command some of the following; control over United Nations votes, the installation of military bases, or access to resources such as oil. Thus a country has been added to the “ global empire”. The author tries to diagnose what is wrong with the strategic decisions being made by the American government, himself and other economic hit men in the past by showing the consequences the strategic decisions have. Not only on the ones who reap the benefits from these decisions but of those who are affected negatively.

An example of this is how the indigenous people of Ecuador were affected by the oil companies invading the very environments in which those people live and the destruction of cultures, habitats, wildlife and the people of Ecuador who lived in such areas. To give another example as to what is wrong with the strategic decisions made in the past in regards to the protagonist, the Mafia reference can be referred to once again. Mafia bosses often start out as street thugs. But over time, the ones who make it to the top transform their appearance.

They take to wearing impeccably tailored suits and owning legitimate businesses. ” “ They are quick to lend money to those in desperate straits” They appear to be model citizens. However beneath this patina is a trail of blood” (page 139) Using the mafia analogy it is clear to diagnose what is wrong with the strategic decisions that have been made in the past and are still being made now in regards to, how governments and EHMs leave behind trails of blood just as Mafia bosses can in order to carry out their business.

But the “ model citizens” who are in disguise such as EHMs are seen in a completely different light in that to crime lords. Many strategies have been devised by empires over centuries, these strategies and decisions have helped shape the world as it is in its present state. The author explains how strategic decisions made in the past were the wrong decisions in his opinion, as John Perkins had seen first hand the devastation that could be caused by the American government in its pursuit for a “ global empire”.

An example of this is how in the 1960’s, a key strategy was being implemented by the world governments. This was the switch from neoclassical economics to Keynesian economics. In America this switch happened under the reigns of presidents Kennedy and Johnson. The switch to Keynesian economics meant that the government would play a major role in managing markets and in regards to welfare: health, unemployment, compensation and other forms of welfare. This now meant that government intervention was at an all time high.

The author explains how a one Robert McNamara who at the time was the secretary of defense and then went on to become the president of the World Bank, had the single most important influence on the switch to Keynesian economics. “ McNamara became a strong advocate of a Keynesian approach to government, using mathematical models and statistical approaches to determine troop levels, allocation of funds, and other strategies. His advocacy of “ aggressive leadership” became a hallmark not only of government managers but also of corporate executives.

It formed the basis of a new philosophical approach to teaching management at the nation's top business schools, and it ultimately led to a new breed of CEOs who would spearhead the rush to global empire. (page 79) The author goes on to stress the importance of such an event and how the decisions which lead up to Robert McNamara becoming the president of the most powerful bank in the world. The strategic decision of developing and switching to Keynesian economics which lead to the World Bank becoming an agent in the "global empire" was described by the author as "Robert McNamara's greatest and most sinister contribution to history". page 79) Another key Strategic decision made in 1975 this time by John Perkins was one which shaped global economics at the time. It was that of an innovative approach to economic forecasting originally formed by a Russian mathematician. This was the Markhov method of economic modeling. The strategic decision made by the protagonist in this case John Perkins was one that would affect entire societies. Of course as explained before a EHMs role was to land large loans upon the shoulders of countries which would not be capable to afford the repayment of these loans. It was exactly what we wanted a tool that scientifically "proved" we were doing countries a favour by helping them incur debts they would never be able to pay off. In addition, only a highly skilled econometrician with lots of time and money would possibly comprehend the intricacies of markhov or question its conclusions". (page 102) Together with the help of a Dr Nadipuram Prasad, John Perkins presented Markhov as a revolutionary method for forecasting investment on infrastructure. Now backed with "facts" and figures, EHMs such as John Perkins became very successful at what they did.

This shows what was fundamentally wrong with USA at the time as the implementation of such devious strategy was used to exploit countries who had lesser knowledge economically and who were desperate to have a high flying economy like that of the US and also emulate some of the US infrastructure, such as shopping malls and airports. The author tries to make it fundamentally clear that the strategic decisions made by himself and the American government were wrong in every sense of the imagination.

The author paints men such as George Bush, George Shultz and Robert McNamara with the same brush. He believes under their regimes people like himself were pawns in a game in which such men wanted the result to be: “: an america that controlled the world and all its resources, a world that answered to the commands of that america, a U. S military that would enforce rules as they were written by america, and an international trade and banking system that supported america as CEO of the global empire. ” (page 155)

Through the experiences of the protagonist and the guilt that was felt through such a personal journey John Perkins makes his confessions clear but also tries to lead the reader into new strategic directions and influence society along the way. John Perkins essentially admits to feeling regret for some of his actions but through his writings he tried to correct some of his past mistakes as he aims to educate a new generation on some of the corruption which shapes all of our futures. “ Most importantly this story must be told because today, for the first time in history, one nation has the ability, the money and the power t change all this.

It is the nation where I was born and the one I served as an EHM: the United States of America” (page 219) An example of this is how John Perkins makes references and implications as to how the most powerful firms in the world have at their disposal, quite essentially the power and money to change global problems such as starvation and common diseases. “ the big corporations, banks and government bureaucracies - that threaten the republic could be used instead to institute fundamental changes in the world.

Such institutions possess the communications networks and transportation systems necessary to end disease, starvation, and even wars - if they could only be convinced to take that course. ” page 128) To this example, John Perkins mentions it on numerous occasions but this quotation would best sum up how John Perkins tries to influence the reader on reviewing new strategic directions. John Perkins does not only attempt to influence entire societies or countries as shown with the previous examples but he also attempts to interact with the reader.

In the epilogue John Perkins interacts with the reader and attempts to influence the reader in implementing new strategies in their lives in an attempt to make a difference on some of the issues discussed in this book review. An example of this is where John Perkins states “ so the burden falls on to you to see the truth beneath the veneer and to expose it. Speak to your family and friends; spread the word. ” (page 221). In regard to this John Perkins attempts to influence people’s day to day lives, from “ downsizing” homes, wardrobes cars and to even consider meditation instead of shopping.

He then goes on to mention household brand names such as Nike, McDonalds and Coca Cola in a clear attempt to influence the reader that these organizations have the ability to make their primary goal to clothe and feed the world's poorest. John Perkins almost pushes the idea of equality on the reader as he uses his strong beliefs to try and make the reader consider new strategic directions as strategy after all is not just something that is implemented on a business level but something that can be implemented in one's life.

My opinion of this novel is that I have found it to be enthralling and the argument the protagonist makes is a very convincing and detailed one. It is clear to see that the feelings of the protagonist are extremely strong. So, however strong his argument, one must consider that the story is that of one man's opinion and in all probability, possibly biased. The main argument the protagonist makes is that of one that takes me back to the very first quotation I had used from the book, that of "greedy men, and global empire" and how it is shaping the world and how essentially things must change.

An example of why the story of John Perkins could be found so convincing is an example of today's current economic climate. The greed of some of the world's largest banks has led to a recession in which very few may have predicted. This recession has of course caused many of us to struggle. I believe steps could have been taken to stop this if such high levels of deception were not amongst the CEO's and corporate leaders of some of the world's leading financial institutions.

As I do find the protagonists story and argument convincing I do not agree with it, as in a time of extreme capitalism and globalization many of us are powerless to stop events described in the novel and a current example of today's recession from happening. Overall the book was a more than an interesting read and possibly an eye opener to many who do not have knowledge or understanding of some of the views expressed in the book. So I would not hesitate to recommend this to anyone who takes similar interest into economics, imperialism and government corruption as I have. Word Count: 2028