

Elections and Foreign Meddling

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Global Research, September 11, 2020

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence, Media Disinformation](#)

There is a great brouhaha over foreign nations interfering in United States' elections. Russia, we are told, not only interfered in the 2016 presidential election catastrophe, but is back at it again, trying to get their candidate re-elected.

How, one asks in righteous, democratic anguish, can such a thing be tolerated? What is more sacred to democracy than a free and unfettered right to vote? The thought of such interference in U.S. elections is enough to make the angels in heaven weep!

This writer is a firm believer in reality checks, and now is as good a time as any to take one. Let us look at just how much the U.S. government believes in free and fair elections. The following is only a small sampling.

- In 1953, the CIA overthrew the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh, and installed the brutal Shah of Iran as monarch. The U.S. government supported his decades-long reign of terror.
- Following the Geneva Accords that separated Vietnam into two nations, North Vietnam and South Vietnam, elections were scheduled for 1956 that would have been a referendum on reunification. The South boycotted them, with U.S. support. "President Eisenhower wrote later in his memoirs that if in fact the elections had been held, Ho Chi Minh would have gotten 80 percent of the vote."^[1]
- Following Chile's fair and democratic elections in 1970, President Richard Nixon said this: "I don't see why we need to stand idly by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people."^[2] Please note that Salvador Allende was a Marxist, not a Communist. The U.S. spent millions of dollars to foment economic and civil problems that eventually resulted in the overthrow of Allende. He was replaced by the U.S.'s choice, the brutal dictator Augusto Pinochet, who ruled for 17 years. "Truth commissions set up after Chile's return to democracy concluded that Pinochet forces tortured some 29,000 people and killed more than 3,000."^[3]
- In January of 2005, Hamas won a decisive victory in the Gaza Strip of Palestine. Then Senator Hillary Clinton (later Secretary of State) said this: "'I do not think we should have pushed for an election in the Palestinian territories. I think that was a big mistake,' said Sen. Clinton. 'And if we were going to push for an election, then we should have made sure that we did something to determine who was going to win.'" (Emphasis added).^[4]

It is clear that the U.S. doesn't disapprove of election meddling, as long as it is the one doing it. But do government officials really object to foreign nations' interference in U.S. elections? Perhaps not. In 2020, pro-Israel lobbies have poured millions of dollars into the campaigns of various candidates. The haul by just the top 20 recipients, this year alone is

\$5,647,895.00.[5] And once their candidates are elected, the lobby groups write legislation for them, that is then introduced to be voted on.[6] And one is naïve indeed if one thinks that pro-Israel lobbyists write legislation for the benefit of the average U.S. citizen. No, they write legislation to curtail the rights of U.S. citizens to boycott; to increase foreign aid to Israel (let's remember that places like Flint, Michigan, still have to buy bottled drinking water), and to otherwise benefit Israel.

It would be incorrect for the reader to think that pro-Israel lobbies are only busy during a presidential election year. In 2018, the top 20 recipients received \$4,372,220.00. And the top 20 for 2016, another presidential election year, received \$6,454,498.00. And remember, please, that these number only show the top 20 recipients of each year. Many other politicians, children of lesser gods, apparently, still received huge amounts of funding from pro-Israel lobbies.

Is this not foreign interference in U.S. elections? When lobbies representing foreign governments donate millions of dollars to get their chosen candidates elected, and then write legislation for those candidates who are now elected officials (this writer cannot bring himself to call them 'representatives') to introduce as bills, can interference be more obvious?

Russia, apparently, is going about this all wrong. All that country needs to do is establish a lobby group in the U.S.; say, the America-Russia Political Affairs Committee (ARPAC). ARPAC members can meet with candidates and officials running for re-election; take them and their families on 'fact finding' junkets to Russian resorts, and donate generously to their campaigns. There will be no more of this talk of Russian interference; that country will simply be using the same method that has been so successful for Israel, and look at how beneficial that has been for that racist, oppressive, apartheid nation.

But, one might say, there may be some anomalies, but that doesn't negate the U.S. government's deep commitment to free and fair voting. Well, let's take a closer look at voting within the U.S.

- In some poor and rural areas, photo identification is required. Many people in those areas don't have driver's licenses, or photo IDs from college, and getting a photo ID card may require an hours-long bus commute. So, in many cases, they simply can't vote.
- Under the current administration, countless numbers of mailboxes, into which people can deposit their mail-in ballots, have been removed. Where the nearest mailbox is located may be difficult to discern. Following a hue and cry about mailbox removal and voter disenfranchisement, the Post Office said it would no longer remove these letter collection boxes in 16 states, although it will not replace those that have thus far been removed. And there is no word about mailbox removal in the remaining 34 states. And is it just coincidence that according to surveys, more Democrats than Republicans are concerned about in-person voting due to Covid-19, and so are more likely to vote by mail? This writer thinks not.
- The U.S. Postal Service has high-speed mail sorters, which the current head of the Post Office, Louis DeJoy, who just happens to be a major donor to President Donald Trump's campaign, has chosen to disable.

Let us take a small flight of fancy. Imagine, for a minute, that you heard the following facts about a nation:

- An election is approaching.
- The current president, a white racist, is behind in the polls, and removes mailboxes into which an unprecedented number of ballots are expected to be deposited, due to a pandemic that is raging in that nation. Most of those mailboxes have been removed from population centers of people of color, with whom the president is not particularly popular.
- A close associate of the president, who is a major donor to his political campaign, is appointed to lead the postal service, and disables high-speed mail sorting machines.
- The president, his main opponent and many members of their political parties benefit from the financial donations of foreign nations.
- The number of polling places, and their hours of operation, will be limited, mostly in communities of color.
- Corporations are allowed to donate unlimited amounts of money to political campaigns.

Does this not conjure thoughts of a banana republic, a backward nation, kept that way by the oligarchs who have long run it? This belies the repeated U.S. government proclamations that that nation is a shining city on a hill, the envy of the world for its democratic principles, the upholder of justice and human rights everywhere. These myths have long been perpetrated by the U.S., but seldom believed outside its own borders. It is long past time for them to be dispelled within, as well. With civil unrest still raging coast to coast due to racism and police brutality; with voter suppression at home and imperial wars abroad, change must come about. The 2020 election will not be the vehicle which ushers it in; Democratic Candidate Joe Biden may be the lesser of two evils, but evil is still evil.

If the people of the United States knew the power that they hold, change would happen. Unless and until they learn this important lesson, there will be little alteration in the business of U.S. governance.

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Notes

[1] Jayne Werner, "A Short History of the War in Vietnam," *Monthly Review*, Vol. 37, June, 1985

[2] [2] Pamela Constable and Arturo Valenzuela, *A Nation of Enemies: Chile under Pinochet* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), 23.

[3] Benjamin Witte-Lebhar, "Chile's Dictatorship-Era Spy Chief Manuel Contreras Dead at 86," *NotiSur - South American Political and Economic Affairs*, August 28, 2015.

[4]

<https://observer.com/2016/10/2006-audio-emerges-of-hillary-clinton-proposing-rigging-palestine-election/>

[5] <https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/recips.php?ind=Q05++>

[6]

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/investigations/2019/05/01/statehouse-model-bills-bds-protest-bans/3575083002/>

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