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**But Foreign Aid Is Bribery!
And Blackmail, Extortion, and Theft Too!**
by Jacob G. Hornberger

Horrors! Sen. Edward Kennedy has thrown the Washington establishment into turmoil by making the shocking observation that the Bush administration is using U.S. foreign aid to bribe foreign governments to support its occupation of Iraq. “My belief is this money is being shuffled all around to these political leaders in all parts of the world, bribing them to send in troops,” Kennedy said, causing Republican House Majority Leader Tom DeLay to describe the accusation as “disgusting” and “false.”

The real reason that everyone is so upset is that Kennedy has spoken the truth. The plain and simple truth is that foreign aid is nothing more than an integral and perverse part of the U.S. government’s morally bankrupt foreign policy, not only because its primary purpose is to bribe, blackmail, and extort foreign regimes into doing Washington’s bidding, but also because of the enormously destructive consequences it has.

Kennedy’s use of Turkey is, of course, a perfect example. Prior to its invasion of Iraq, the U.S. government offered Turkey \$26 billion to permit the United States to use Turkey as a base of operations to invade Iraq from the north. When the Turkish parliament voted against the proposal, Turkey didn’t get the money. If that’s not a bribe, what is it?

And let’s not forget how foreign aid is used to blackmail and extort foreign regimes that have been made dependent by years of U.S. foreign aid largess. The threat is a simple one: Do as we say or lose your dole.

For example, when Yemen voted against a UN resolution authorizing United States to use force against Iraq in 1990, UN Ambassador Thomas Pickering walked over to the Yemeni ambassador and said, “That’s the most expensive No vote you ever cast.” According to writer John Pilger, “Within three days, a U.S aid program to one of the world’s poorest countries was stopped. Yemen suddenly had problems with the World Bank and the IMF; and 800,000 Yemeni workers were expelled from Saudi Arabia.”

[Pilger adds,](#)

When the United States sought another resolution to blockade Iraq, two new members of the Security Council were duly coerced. Ecuador was warned by the US ambassador in Quito about the “devastating economic consequences” of a No vote. Zimbabwe was threatened with new IMF conditions for its debt. The punishment of impoverished countries that opposed the attack was severe. Sudan, in the grip of a famine, was denied a shipment of food aid.

Helping the poor is the standard justification for foreign aid. In fact, it’s not uncommon for supporters of foreign aid to hit foreign-aid opponents with what has become a standard bromide employed against opponents of all government welfare programs: “You hate the poor!”

What nonsense, especially given that foreign aid not only does not help the poor but instead actually reinforces the poverty it is supposedly designed to combat. Consider the following articles:

“[Foreign Aid: Help or Hindrance](#),” by Doug Bandow

“[Turn Off Foreign Aid](#),” by Richard Rahn

“[Foreign Aid: End It, Don’t Mend It](#),” by Stephen Moore

Let’s also keep in mind that if the purpose of foreign aid really was to help the world’s poor, why would the U.S. government steadfastly maintain an extensive web of domestic subsidies, tariffs, and import quotas, knowing the horrific damage [they cause](#) poor people all over the globe?

Let’s also not forget the perverse role that U.S. foreign aid plays in U.S. foreign policy, specifically in its use to prop up and strengthen the ability of tyrannical regimes to suppress and brutalize their own people. Consider these two articles:

“[America’s Pro-Terrorism Foreign-Aid Program](#),” by James Bovard

“[America’s Hypocritical, Counterproductive Foreign Aid](#),” by James Bovard

Consider also the large amount of *military* foreign aid that is given away, which is sometimes used to brutalize foreigners as well as citizens. A good example entailed the biological and chemical weapons that the United States [delivered to Saddam Hussein](#); they were used to kill both Iranians and Iraqis.

Of course, whenever someone objects to foreign aid to countries in the Middle East, whether Arab or Israel, aid defenders employ the same types of tactics as those used by defenders of aid for the poor in Third World countries: “You hate Arabs” or “You hate Jews.” In fact, it’s sometimes amusing to see U.S. conservatives or even libertarians defending foreign aid to Israel while at the same time declaiming indignantly against the food-stamp mother standing in the grocery store line. What those conservatives and libertarians conveniently block out of their minds is that the same moral principles that argue against domestic welfare apply equally to foreign welfare. That is, given that it’s morally wrong for the state to take the money of Person A

to give it to Person B, it is equally wrong for the state to take the money of Persons A and B to give it to officials in foreign governments.

Finally, it is impossible to ignore the deep anger, animosity, and hatred that U.S. foreign aid has engendered among people all over the world, including terrorists who are now bent on killing Americans. Why would we expect it to be otherwise, especially when such aid has often been used by so many recipient regimes in such destructive ways?

Senator Kennedy has obviously stirred up a Washington firestorm by stating the truth about U.S. foreign aid. It *is* bribery, and it's also blackmail, extortion, and stealing. Moreover, given that God has created a universe in which evil means inevitably beget rotten consequences, how can we be surprised that the results of foreign aid have been so perverse and destructive?

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