

Review of: 'THE ECONOMICS OF KILLING'
- How the West Fuels War and Poverty in the Developing World.'

Vijay Mehta

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This ground-breaking work, has already attained wide acclaim amongst NGOs, academics and peace activists.

The style is calm, without moralizing, and often dryly humorous. In meticulous detail, factual, informed, numerate, and up-to date, it explains many linked events, for instance, how western policies on arms sales to developing countries have deliberately worked against development, wrecked democratic regimes and kept dictators in power.

Foreign businesses actively seek out and support criminal politicians in 'resource trafficking'. These cannot afford to lose power for fear of punishment and so rig elections and suppress the populace often with foreign military assistance and arms. The West has been known to assassinate dissenting leaders.

Businesses are in favour of resource extraction at lowest possible cost. If this damages the local environment, those whose livelihoods have been affected by this with no benefit, may express their discontent. It is cheaper to arm the leaders against their own people and then provide humanitarian aid to conflict victims than to offer them a real alternative. Western Governments do not wish development which would challenge their market dominance. The huge economic drain of arms imports kills investment in civil society. This discourages development and job creation, causing a brain drain of qualified people.

The Military Industrial Complex in the US carries enormous influence. It comprises a huge range of companies of different sizes, politicians, serving and retired service officers in business and politics, state research establishments, security and training organizations.

Military personnel are held in huge esteem in the US and UK. Any criticism is squashed by the cry of 'letting down our boys' or 'endangering lives.' There is constant pressure to expand the budget by talking-up threats and finding new clients and enemies.

It receives so much government support as to render it a socialist state.

This neatly squashes the myth of the free market economy.

The size of these largely unaccountable subsidies calls into question the economic benefits - despite the 'what about jobs?' argument.

The European MIC is large but less monolithic and more secretive. Political leaders are used as front people for these deals, Prince Andrew is helpful with 'prince-to-prince conversations, which France and the US cannot do.

The author clarifies the nexus between companies, secret funds for bribery, and tax havens. This explains why Europe is so tolerant of these, and questions the idea that you have to pay bribes to do business because the people are so corrupt. Company agents are doing the dirty work - setting up the local agents right from the start. Secret accounts are an aid to 'deniability'

European companies are particularly good at producing luxury goods for the kleptocrats to spend their money on. Thus the bribe money and other illegal profits get recycled to European bank accounts, and into London or Paris houses.

Western electorates may be getting wise to this, but they are not being consulted, only those who stand to profit.

The Internet has a crucial role in bringing forth different narratives than those of the mainstream media.

The author rightly admires the Chinese development policy, which has raised 600m out of poverty, and has many other points about the Far East. He thinks that the US embargo on high-tech exports to China may have caused such financial unbalance as to trigger the 2008 crisis.

NATO should have been disbanded after the cold war. It has been busy creating new enemies. Give more support to the UN. The author not anti-technology and is keen to redeploy the abundant talents of those in the defence industry, to develop the tools for a sustainable future.

The author has been criticised for giving the impression that his proposals would be enough- they would encounter stiff resistance- and that we should dismantle capitalism itself. Reading and absorbing this wonderful book would be a good start and I hope it will provoke widespread public discussion - well worth buying as a rich source of reference material.

237 pages.

10 Chapters +introduction + epilogue.

544 references. 8 comparative tables.

A list of contact details for 305 peace oriented NGO's