

We've Been Duped into Perceiving Good Intentions Behind Global Development

By John Perkins, author of the New York Times Bestselling Book: [Confessions of an Economic Hit Man](#)

From the time of our founding as a nation, Americans have, even if unwittingly, adhered to perceptions designed to justify the subjugation of others in order to advance our pursuit of wealth and power. Consider the many notions that have been ingrained into national psyches to justify ruthless conquests, such as, "To attain eternal salvation, the savages must be civilized" and "The red tide of Communism needs to be stopped before it inundates the world," or "Success is measured by short-term profits, stock prices, and trade balances." These messages are integral to the propaganda machine that politicians and corporate leaders — the "corporatocracy" — use to plunder the resources of low-income countries.

I bought into and propagated such perceptions in my role as chief economist for a major US consulting firm, Chas. T. Main Inc (MAIN), a competitor to Halliburton and Bechtel. I produced studies to justify huge international loans from the likes of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for major infrastructure projects in lower-income countries. Specifically, my studies provided "evidence" of economic growth into the future as a result of our proposed projects.

Like US citizens in general, I believed we were doing countries favors when we built power plants, highways, ports, and other large infrastructure projects. But I came to consider myself an "economic hit man" (EHM) because the projects essentially served only the corporate empire supported and driven by the US government.

The statistics that my team and I provided were highly biased. They were skewed to make a handful of wealthy and influential people in the receiving countries happy while ensuring the long-term financial

dependence — and therefore the political loyalty — of governments around the world.

The fact that the debt burden placed on a country would deprive its poorest citizens for decades to come wasn't taken into consideration. Money that the countries had budgeted for health care, education, and other social services was diverted to pay interest on the loans. In the end, the principal was never bought down and the country was shackled by debt.

At that point, IMF hit men arrived and demanded the government offer its oil or other resources to our corporations at cut-rate prices, and that it privatize its electric, water, sewer, and other public-sector institutions and sell them to the corporatocracy. Of course, the debtor still owed the money — and another country was added to our global empire.

Given the EHM tactics used in development projects around the world, it comes as no surprise that an [Oxfam report](#) showed almost half the world's wealth was owned by just 1 percent of the population, and 7 out of 10 people lived in countries where economic inequality had increased in the last 30 years. Furthermore, recipient countries of development projects are [left with huge debts and deprived resources](#). What's more, officials who come out in opposition to the projects, or attempt to stand up to the corporatocracy, have been threatened, tortured, or killed.

Today, the EHM system is widely and deeply entrenched. And in the last few decades, China has gotten into the EHM game — and has one-upped US strategies. China's EHMs have learned from our successes and failures. Yet the China model is also fashioned to entrap countries. What's more, it's controlled by an authoritarian government that restricts information and retaliates if criticized.

China is now the largest trading partner with countries on every continent. At the same time, many of its projects have proven prone to bad engineering and corruption, and there's a growing mistrust of Beijing's motives.

It is essential that we all recognize that the exploitation of people and natural resources to increase profits and empower a few elites is destroying life as we know it on this planet. We're stepping ever closer to the precipice of ecological, economic, and social destruction. China's strategy, like the US's, results in a Death Economy — one that works to corrupt officials, exploit workers, and deplete resources.

The future of life as we know it depends on ending EHM strategies everywhere. It demands that each of us work to transform a failing, degenerative Death Economy into a Life Economy that maximizes long-term benefits for all people and the planet.

Here's what each of us can do:

1. Use social media to inspire others in the cause. Because much of the way we've justified the Death Economy is by the reality we've created around the narcissistic fable that some people have the right to subjugate others, we need to debunk that idea. Join or start a social media campaign that targets companies that pollute, pay unfair wages, or propagate some other feature of a Death Economy. Once a critical mass of complaints is reached, the company will be motivated to heed the message.

2. Don't take on debt. Start a campaign demanding forgiveness of excessive student debt, high interest rates on credit cards, and payday or similar loans. Demand an end to government, banking, and vulture fund policies that enslave other countries with debt. Advocate for debt forgiveness in countries burdened by debt, pointing out that, in the long term, debt forgiveness serves our own interests and creates a Life Economy.

3. Cut back on consumption. Recognize that your definition of "insufficiency" may be based on perceptions that have more to do with status than actual need. Strive to help others who truly suffer from insufficiency. Adopt a lifestyle that cuts back on materialistic consumption.

It's time to transform perceptions that have molded the beliefs that propagate a Death Economy into new perceptions about how we can move to a Life Economy.

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John Perkins is a former chief economist who advised the World Bank, the United Nations, Fortune 500 corporations, and governments around the world. Now as a sought-after speaker and author of 11 books that have been on the *New York Times* bestseller list for more than 70 weeks, sold over 2 million copies, and are translated into more than 3r languages, he exposes the world of international intrigue and corruption and the EHM strategy that creates global empires. His latest book, **[Confessions of an Economic Hit Man, 3rd Edition – China's EHM Strategy; Ways to Stop the Global Takeover](#)**, continues his revelations and describes China's highly effective and dangerous modifications to the EHM strategy. Learn more at **[John Perkins | Confessions of an Economic Hit Man, 3rd Edition](#)**