**USA and regime change in foreign countries**

[Akhtar Khan](https://nation.com.pk/authorpost/columnist/akhtar-khan/)

On **May 9, 2022**

Since 1898, the United States has been involved in regime change operations in other countries. In the words of Woodrow Wilson, “teach them to elect good men.”
There are six methods for changing a government, or assisting its change, internationally: overt operation, covert operation, assassination of the leader, creating an economic crisis, funding the media to make a regime unpopular, and contributing towards creating public chaos against a regime. For example, during the Cold War years, there were many operations, overt or more or less covert. During the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, there were many attempts by the West; and before that when the Soviet Union ‘assisted’ the Afghan leaders and occupied the country for a ten-year period from 1979. During the Vietnam War (1955-1975), USA’s efforts were to change the pro-communist regime in the country and region, from the mid-1950s until 1975 when the war finally ended. In Africa, there were assassination attempts on the Congo Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, a pro-soviet leader, carried out by the US military with CIA financing. In Latin America, there have been numerous covert operations by USA, as it considers it its legitimate to make sure there are no regimes that are too hostile to American and Western values. USA changed the regime in Chile in 1970 by creating economic instability and supporting opposition to the Marxist government. At the time, US President Richard Nixon said, “Make the economy scream”. Secret documents reveal that his and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s support for the Chilean coup in 1997. The United States has funded the media to contribute to regime change in countries in the past, and also today, when ordinary and social media plays such important roles. For example, they buy reporters in print and electronic media to build pro-American opinions.
Creating dissatisfaction in the public with a regime, leading to unrest and chaos, is a modern tool for foreign states, again through financing public group against a government which is seen as unfriendly. In Iran in 1953, the USA and UK, through CIA and M16, contributed to the overthrow of Mohammad Mosaddegh and his government.
It has been claimed that during the Cold War, the US attempted 72 regime change operations, mostly covert, but six were overt operations with direct attacks on the foreign states. For all these operations, some twenty-six are said to have been successful, that is leading to political changes in the countries.
In Pakistan, too, some people claim that there was US assistance in overthrowing former Prime Minister Imran Khan’s government. However, these are speculations without proof.
Former senior politicians have said that they want to replace the new government because it is supported to closely by the United States. There have been rumors that senior politicians have been bought by good amounts of American dollars. There is, however, no evidence of this being true, so it remains up to people’s fantasies and opinions as for what to believe. Well, people speculate that it was Imran Khan refusal to accept the US democracy summit invitation of President Joe Biden which was so unpopular. Also, Imran Khan clearly banned the USA from using Pakistani land against Afghanistan. Now then, we live in an era when all countries, indeed big and important countries, need to have good relations with the USA; the only superpower in a single-polar world.
Earlier this year, when former Prime Minister Imran Khan visited China at the invitation of the Chinese President to attend the Winter Olympics, the US did not like that. However, it should be stressed that Pakistan enjoys very good relations with China. Imran Khan also accepted the Russian president’s invitation to visit that country, which took place on the day when the Russia’s invasion of Ukraine started; that timing was certainly unfortunate and not seen as friendly towards the USA.
In the past, whenever a state proved to be a threat to the US or sided with its opponents, then the CIA often played its role against the state in question to teach it a lesson. The National Security Council, including the ISI intelligence agency, has acknowledged that there has been external interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan. Recently, Imran Khan’s followers believe that also includes the ousting of him as PM, but again, these are just speculations. In a country like Pakistan, with a key role played by the army, there will always be rumors about what parties and politicians it favors or if it is indeed neutral without political interference. On the other hand, Imran Khan said that we now live in a different time than that of 1970 when the Americans conspired against Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, leading to his downfall.
An interesting thing here is that the USA has a history of leaking information about conspires against a country some years later, through the disclosure of classified documents. An example of this is when President Nixon’s policies against Chile were revealed. Also, President Obama said that when USA had conducted a successful operation against Osama bin Laden, President Zardari congratulated him, indicating that it was done in full agreement.
Let me end my article by underlining that foreign countries’ interference in other countries, overt or covert, mostly remain rumors and speculations, as few things are proven in stone. It gives a lot of material for the media, political scientists, think tanks and researchers, politicians and all the rest of us who try to follow and discuss what goes on at home and in the world. It is true, too, that there is a lot of interference from other countries everywhere. Hence, we must not be naïve. Yet, we must not become too obsessed with it, especially not as observers, rather leaving the issues to the government agencies to keep an eye on and control. In our time, as observers, we should make sure that we read and interpret all news, local and foreign, with a critical mind, watching out for all kinds of fake news, half truths, propaganda, exaggerations, and so on, and also asking questions about stories and news that are not told.
I have mainly written about USA and Pakistan in this article. At this particular time, when a terrible war rages in Europe, we realise how much of the truth remains hidden and is presented in ways that is in the interest of the ones who makes the news. We get a lot of news from Ukraine, but we cannot know immediately what is true and what is not; Russia and Ukraine have their narrative and the USA and Europe have theirs. We have to make our own efforts to get a truer picture, realising too that much will remain obscure to us, perhaps to be understood better some time in future when researchers study it all, in more neutral ways.