

WITH OPEN ARMS

"Arms sales are a major method...to exert hegemony, by arming and strengthening key allies, directly or indirectly fueling civil wars and conflicts, and funneling money into the world's major weapons manufacturers."

Andrew Gavin Marshall is the best, most thorough researcher and writer I have encountered about US foreign policy and geopolitics, both historical and current, and he calmly and clearly presents the facts without beating you over the head with his conclusions. Nevertheless, the facts themselves can be startling and enlightening.

This is a chapter in the People's Book Project, describing how the US and other countries use international arms sales in global power politics.

In the Arms of Dictators: America the Great... Global Arms Dealer

"Coups, wars, assassinations and other forms of overt and covert violence and destabilization, while relatively common and consistent for the United States – compared to other major powers – are secondary to the general maintenance of a system of imperial patronage..."

US arms sales totaled about \$101 billion between 2005 and 2009. We are the number one weapons dealer in the world, far ahead of the 2nd-place Russians. Our top customers have been Japan, the UK, Israel, South Korea, Australia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates. More recently Saudi Arabia is becoming a big buyer, with deals worth \$60 billion, followed closely by the UAE. It seems the idea is to arm the friendly Arab dictatorships as a counter to Iran.

These "allies" are based on mutual economic interests: oil, of course, but US policy also exploits the Sunni-Shiite sectarian split within Islam. It seems odd that they seem to hate one another more than Western dominance, but if we recall Protestant-Catholic conflicts of the past, and fairly recently in Northern Ireland, there is precedence for such divisions. If the two sects ever mend their differences, the divide-and-conquer tactic might not be so effective.

No consideration appears to be given to whether weapons buyers are democracies that respect human rights or not. We sell them both offensive war weapons- fighter jets and missiles- and crowd-control armament and riot gear. Foreign policy has always seemed to prefer stable tyrannies to governments subject to the possibly defiant will of their people.

"As an example, the United States approved \$200 million in military sales from U.S. corporations to the government of Bahrain in 2010, just months before pro-

democracy protests erupted in the country, resulting in "a harsh crackdown on protesters," killing at least 30 and injuring hundreds of more people in a matter of months."

In addition to drumming up extra business for the huge American arms industry, the strategy is that if we can arm other countries against one another, we won't have to do the fighting ourselves. That way, with our own people little affected, complacency and apathy allow foreign policy to continue undisturbed.

As the article mentions, that policy is called the "open door". It says to the world, "Keep your doors open, so that American and other Western interests can walk in, do what we want, take what we want, use whoever we want, and pay what we feel like, if anything."

Could we change this, if a majority of us wanted to badly enough? I think we would have to change our fundamental economic system to get it done. No President, and no Congress has made more than slight changes in foreign policy in over 100 years. Long ago we created a monster and allowed it to grow, uncontrolled and unlimited, and now we are dependent on it. The real American Empire is not the government. It is the sum of all the US multinational corporations and banks. We don't elect them; we can't un-elect them, but our elected officials have no choice in letting them have their way, doing their bidding, because they fear, perhaps rightly, that if they don't, the whole thing falls apart like a house of cards.

By all means read the entire article. It has the facts and figures, and many more details than I have quoted. And, though the US is the major player, it is not alone. The UK and many European nations contribute greatly to a world armed to the teeth with all the modern destructive devices it can afford to buy.

--cosmic rat May 19, 2013