The Hidden Costs of Covert Action

By Matthew H. Hersch

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The Hidden Costs of Covert Action

A lot of people would assume that anyone who argues for military action to solve politi- cal conflicts would support covert action as well. But this isn't always true. A lot of hawks, like me, are guided by what they believe are ideals so honourable that they are worth defending. For people who think this way, there is no room in foreign affairs for the secret cops, covert funding operations, and guerrilla wars. Operations such as these are a disgrace to the sense of fair play we cherish. Any operation too secretive in reveal either to its citizens or to its world neighbours should not be undertaken in the first place.

This is not to say that espionage, the act of spying on your opponents, is bad. On the con- trary, knowing what your potential enemies are up to is absolutely necessary. The Americans are up to stabilizes relations, preventing inse- curity and paranoia. Taking an active role in international affairs, though, causes incautious mistakes. The arguments against covert action have been around forever. Alphabet soup organi- zations such as the Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency operate largely free of con- gressional oversight, something that lends itself to executive branch abuse. These shenanigans are too often dismissed as good strategy, and the individually, who undertake such actions are trumpeted as heroes. They are not. Rather, these warriors are arrogant know-it-alls who not only believe they can control international affairs with the stroke of a pen, but believe as well that the American people are so complicit in what they elect them to do.

Any covert action that is started under these terms completely and utterly screwed up. The American president seems to have great intentions, had he been bold enough to declare war, all the issues he wanted to address would have been resolved. Instead, Bush has revealed himself to be a petty manipulator, who has cheapened the nation's foreign policy. But a president must command those affairs with the advice and consent of the Senate. A president who cannot explain his actions to Congress, he ignored them and moved on. Our President did not bother to inform the American people of his intentions, had he been bold enough to declare war, all the issues he wanted to address would have been resolved.

Matthew H. Hersch is a junior in the Department of Political Science.

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