



# Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq

By Stephen Kinzer

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**Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq** By Stephen Kinzer

**A fast-paced narrative history of the coups, revolutions, and invasions by which the United States has toppled fourteen foreign governments -- not always to its own benefit**

"Regime change" did not begin with the administration of George W. Bush, but has been an integral part of U.S. foreign policy for more than one hundred years. Starting with the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893 and continuing through the Spanish-American War and the Cold War and into our own time, the United States has not hesitated to overthrow governments that stood in the way of its political and economic goals. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 is the latest, though perhaps not the last, example of the dangers inherent in these operations.

In *Overthrow*, Stephen Kinzer tells the stories of the audacious politicians, spies, military commanders, and business executives who took it upon themselves to depose monarchs, presidents, and prime ministers. He also shows that the U.S. government has often pursued these operations without understanding the countries involved; as a result, many of them have had disastrous long-term consequences.

In a compelling and provocative history that takes readers to fourteen countries, including Cuba, Iran, South Vietnam, Chile, and Iraq, Kinzer surveys modern American history from a new and often surprising perspective.

"Detailed, passionate and convincing . . . [with] the pace and grip of a good thriller." -- Anatol Lieven, *The New York Times Book Review*

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**Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The recent ouster of Saddam Hussein may have turned "regime change" into a contemporary buzzword, but it's been a tactic of American foreign policy for more than 110 years. Beginning with the ouster of Hawaii's monarchy in 1893, Kinzer runs through the foreign governments the U.S. has had a hand in toppling, some of which he has written about at length before (in *All the Shah's Men*, etc.). Recent invasions of countries such as Grenada and Panama may be more familiar to readers than earlier interventions in Iran and Nicaragua, but Kinzer, a foreign correspondent for the *New York Times*, brings a rich narrative immediacy to all of his stories. Although some of his assertions overreach themselves—as when he proposes that better conduct by the American government in the Spanish-American War might have prevented the rise of Castro a half-century later—he makes a persuasive case that U.S. intervention destabilizes world politics and often leaves countries worse off than they were before. Kinzer's argument isn't new, but it's delivered in unusually moderate tones, which may earn him an audience larger than the usual crew of die-hard leftists. (Apr.)

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Former *New York Times* correspondent Stephen Kinzer has produced a book on foreign policy that can sit comfortably beside "edgy fiction, juicy memoirs or newsy exposes" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). His wide range of inquiry opens him up for some nitpicking: too much focus on American policy without considering the corresponding foreign policy; a tendency towards caricature; and entries on Iraq and Afghanistan that yield little new insight. But if reviewers feel that Kinzer's thesis isn't blindingly original—he has covered some of this material in his previous books *All the Shah's Men* and *Bitter Fruit*—they concur that his amalgamation of the materials is unparalleled and, more important, a thrill to read.

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From [Booklist](#)

Narrating 12 instances of American toppling of foreign governments, Kinzer strives to detect motivations common to the incidents, settling frequently on the protection of American international business. Some of Kinzer's cases simply don't fit the model of the nefarious corporation (the 1963 coup against South Vietnam's Ngo Dinh Diem; the 1983 invasion of Granada). Yet others manifestly do, such as the agitation of American banana interests over the communist leanings of Guatemala's Jacobo Arbenz. Perhaps better read as a series of discrete histories, Kinzer's book indubitably reminds Americans that their country has forced the fall of governments it doesn't like for more than a century. Commenting negatively on justifications for interventions, Kinzer dramatizes their precipitating events and decision makers. William McKinley, William Howard Taft, John Foster Dulles, Richard Nixon, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush are the main protagonists; the Mossadeghs and Noriegas, their antagonists. From a former foreign correspondent, this is fluidly composed popular history with a censorious point of view. *Gilbert Taylor*

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