

The mask, secrets and contradictions of being a Superpower

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18/6/2013

Spying, mask and “universal values”

All governments spy on each other and their own people. “Universal values” such as democracy, transparency, freedom and human rights are always set in relative terms, often defined by dominant countries which influence to the largest extent short-memory media for their own interests. Did/does the U.S. respect human rights and freedom in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Guantanamo?

The typical response in defense goes like this: the U.S. is still (much) better than China. Well, who would disagree? However, it is also much more powerful (and potentially more harmful, at least internationally). In any case, we return to socio-political relativity. I have no further argument. However, spare me “universal values”, please!

Representative democracy is far from being ideal. Learn something from Iceland and Switzerland, which are still second-best. Well, we have to work within global practicality. I enjoy, but feel sad, every time when conscientious persons tear down the mask of a government which abuses its "reputation".¹

Contradictions in the U.S.: Superpower with small government?

The position of the United States as the world’s superpower and police is in serious political and economic contradictions. Partly they stem from reality, the excessive expansion that requires intrusion into or “management” of most international issues, big or small. Another reason is the schizophrenia-like ideology, which connives the excesses of large business groups (resulting in the so called “1% against 99%” phenomenon); while at the same time self-indulging in the ideas of small government

¹ I am not just pinpointing the U.S., although it is obviously my key target (not forgetting British collaboration). Look at what happens in the Czech Republic: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jun/16/czech-republic-petr-necas-quits>.

and private freedom, ignoring the country's own past (including slavery and racial discrimination policies). Washington and Wall Street have been relying on the short-memory media and routinely advocate liberty and human rights as "universal values". When facing and fighting terrorism, however, these values and principles are brushed aside or simply ignored.

The results are obvious: difficulties in making both ends meet and vertical sociopolitical imbalance. It becomes increasingly tough to maintain simultaneous domination of the West and the East. The "return to Asia" means a lack of attention to the South, with troubles brewing or continuing in Latin America and Africa. Unprecedented quantitative monetary easing held back the financial meltdown since 2008, but genuine structural reforms are lacking.

Historically, from the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the sweeping expansion of Mongols into Europe, to imperialism Dutch or British style, when was there a flaunting of small governments, freedom and human rights?

The U.S. is the modern equivalent of globalized Frankenstein, a strange creature of sophisticated financial capitalism. The greenback serves as the principal unit of international transactions, with the quantity issued virtually unlimited. The Fed has made it clear that its allegiance is only to the country. Compared with the world strategy of the U.S., it appears ominously like a mentality of schizophrenia.

I am in favor of democracy, rule of law, freedom and human rights, but I also believe in historical dialectics, hence not subscribing to a particular set of "universal values", because the world is unbalanced and polarised, These values are often defined by the mighty and preached hypocritically.

Back to the contradictions of the U.S.: superpower with a small government! Cost control and efficiency, coupled with so-called free (open) traditions, have pushed the country onto the trajectory of privatization, especially after Reagan and Bush.

The initial targets were public services, but subsequently spread to military and intelligence work.² Moreover, through the revolving door of officials and

² According to a 2008 study by the [Office of the Director of National Intelligence](#), private contractors make up 29% of the workforce in the [United States Intelligence Community](#) and cost the equivalent of 49% of their personnel budgets. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_military_company)

businessmen, the “democratic system” is becoming more difficult to understand and monitor. Ironically, though, the opportunities of leaking confidential information are increasing.

The Edward Snowden incident is the latest example. Some who leaked secret information were civil servants, including Daniel Ellsberg and Bradley Manning, not private sector employees. They did so because of conscience, and the intolerance of the mask of the U.S. authorities.³

While the power of surveillance is rising and penetrating into many corners of society, the ability to react has also been growing, albeit at increasing personal risk. A useful guide for conscientious persons to disclose classified information under the overarching attention of the Big Brother of Intelligence is provided by *Wired*.⁴

The U.S. should make up its mind: Superpower? Or small government?

³ See my recent post on the Facebook:

https://www.facebook.com/shuki.tsang/posts/524389687618497?notif_t=like

⁴ “The Whistleblower’s Guide to the Orwellian Galaxy: How to Leak to the Press”, <http://www.wired.com/opinion/2013/06/the-whistleblowers-guide-to-privacy-how-to-leak-to-the-press/?cid=co8902144>