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## Gangster State America – Where Is America’s Democracy?

Paul Graig Roberts

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Anyone who looks carefully behind the veil of words cannot find democracy in America. For years I have been writing that the US government is no longer accountable to law or to the people (see, for example, my book, *How America Was Lost*). The Constitution has been set aside, and the executive branch is degenerating into Caesarism.

Government is used to impose agendas that result from the symbiotic relationship between the neoconservative ideology of US world hegemony and the economic interests of powerful private interest groups, such as Wall Street, the military/security complex, the Israel Lobby, agribusiness, and extractive industries (energy, mining, and timber). Dollar imperialism, threats, bribes, and wars are means by which US hegemony is extended. These agendas are pursued without the knowledge or approval of the American people and in spite of their opposition.

Professor Martin Gilens at Princeton University and Professor Benjamin Page of Northwestern University have examined American governance and have concluded that the US is an oligarchy ruled by powerful rich private interest groups and that the US government has only a superficial resemblance to a democracy. Their analysis is forthcoming in publication in the journal, *Perspectives on Politics*.

Their conclusions are striking:

“The central point that emerges from our research is that economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on US government policy, while mass-based interest groups and average citizens have little or no independent influence.”

“When a majority of citizens disagrees with economic elites and/or with organized interests, they generally lose.”

“In the United States, our findings indicate that the majority does not rule—at least not in the causal sense of actually determining policy outcomes.”

“The preferences of the average American appear to have only a minuscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy.”

A number of factors have contributed to the demise of democracy and accountable government in the US. One factor is the concentration of the US media in a few hands. During the last years of the Clinton regime, a formerly diverse media with significant independence was concentrated in five mega-corporations. The value of these corporations consists largely of their federal broadcast licenses. To insure the renewal of these licenses, the media avoids challenging the government on significant issues.

Another factor is the offshoring of US industrial and manufacturing jobs. This development destroyed the manufacturing and industrial unions, which were the backbone of the Democratic Party’s financial support. Now the Democrats have to appeal to the same interest groups as the Republicans—Wall Street, the military/security complex, and the polluting industries that despoil the environment. As both political parties are now financed by the same private interests, both political parties serve the same masters. There is no longer any countervailing power. The Obama regime is simply a continuation of the George W. Bush regime.

Two recent rulings by the Republican majority on the US Supreme Court are another decisive factor. The court ruled that it is merely an exercise of free speech for oligarchs to purchase the US government (Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission and McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission). A corrupt Supreme Court has invented a “constitutional right” for corporations and oligarchs to use their vast financial resources to form a government of their choosing.

Private interest groups in the US are so powerful that they can purchase immunity from law. On March 27 a retiring Securities and Exchange Commission prosecutor, James Kidney, said that his prosecutions of financial criminals at Goldman Sachs and other giant US banks were blocked by SEC political appointees who “were focused on getting high-paying jobs after their government service.”

In a recent test to ascertain the responsiveness of members of Congress to monied interests in comparison to voters, two letters were sent to congressional offices. One letter asked for the representative to meet with community groups in his district. The other letter asked for the representative to meet with a group of active donors. The latter letter received by far the most responses from members of Congress.

In the US and Europe there is constant propaganda about “gangster state Russia.” According to this propaganda, President Putin is a tool of oligarchs who use Putin to rule Russia and loot the people. In my opinion, this propaganda originates in the Washington-funded NGOs that constitute a US fifth column inside Russia. The purpose of the propaganda is to destroy Putin’s legitimacy and that of his government in hopes of bringing to power a Washington-compliant government in Moscow.

My impression is that the Russian government has curtailed activities of some of the oligarchs who used the privatization era to seize control of resources, but that the government’s actions are consistent with the rule of law. In contrast, in the US oligarchs control the law and use it to acquire immunity from law.

The real gangster state is the US. Every institution is corrupt. Regulators sell protection from law for well-paying jobs in the industries that they are supposed to regulate. The Supreme Court not only permits money to purchase the government but also sells out the Constitution to the police state. The Supreme Court has just refused to hear the case against indefinite detention of US citizens in the absence of due process. This is an unambiguous unconstitutional law, yet the Supreme Court refuses to even hear the case, thus granting unchecked police power to the gangster state. <http://rt.com/usa/156172-scotus-ndaa-hedges-obama/>

Another defining characteristic of a gangster state is the criminalization of dissent and truth tellers. Washington has done everything in its power to criminalize Julian Assange and Edward Snowden for revealing the US government’s illegal, unconstitutional, and criminal actions. Washington reeks of hypocrisy. On April 26 the State Department announced its third annual

Free The Press campaign, a propaganda exercise directed at foreign countries that are not Washington's puppets. The very same day the Justice Department told the Supreme Court to reject the protection US journalists have under the Constitution against being forced to reveal their confidential sources so that James Risen can be imprisoned for reporting a government misdeed.