

Key Factors Enabling the American Government to Commit Horrific Acts Abroad

Political Bunraku

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For those who are not familiar, Bunraku is an old form of Japanese puppet theater, its distinctive characteristic being that the puppeteers are on the stage with their puppets, dressed in black so that the audience can pretend not to see them.

While many old art forms have conventions that are unrealistic by modern standards, there is something particularly unsatisfying about bunraku: you can pretend not to see the puppeteers but you cannot fail to see them.

Bunraku, as it happens, offers a remarkable metaphor for some contemporary operations of American foreign policy. So many times – in Syria, Ukraine, Libya, Venezuela, Egypt – we see dimly the actors on stage, yet we are supposed to pretend they are not there. We can't identify them with precision, but we know they are there. Most oddly, the press in the United States, and to a lesser extent that of its various allies and dependents, pretends to report what is happening without ever mentioning the actors. They report only the movements of the puppets.

One of the consequences of this kind of activity is that many people, including many of your own, come simply not to believe you, no matter what newspapers and government spokespersons keep saying. Another consequence is that because many knowledgeable people no longer believe you, when it comes time to enlist the support of other nations for your activities, you must use behind-the-scenes pressure and threats, stretching the boundaries of alliance and friendship. After all, your major government friends and allies have sophisticated intelligence services themselves and are often aware of what you are trying to do.

Still another consequence is that many people start doubting what you are saying concerning other topics. In the United States, a fairly large segment of the population does not believe the official version of a great deal of comparatively-recent American history, including explanations of John Kennedy's assassination, of events around 9/11, of the downing of TWA Flight 800, of what Israel was doing when it attacked an American spy ship in 1967, and of the CIA's past heavy connections with cocaine trafficking – just to name a few outstanding examples.

Government in America feels the need only to go so far in its efforts to explain such matters because the doubters and skeptics, though many, are not a big enough segment of the population to matter greatly in political terms, and it is simply brutally true that the great

passive mass of people are never well informed about anything outside their own lives. America is a place, as relatively few people abroad understand, where people must work very hard. Its industrial working class went through a great depression since, say, 1960, many of them now holding low-paid service jobs. Its middle-class workers have seen real incomes decline for decades, something providing part of the incentive for both parents in a family to work and for them to move into America's great suburban sprawl of lower land costs as well as to embrace stores such as Wal-Mart with their bare-bones costs. Many Americans work so hard, they have little time to be concerned or informed about government, satisfying themselves that a few minutes with corporate television news is adequate, a phenomenon favoring the government's interests since on any important and controversial subject the television networks (and the major newspapers) do the government's bidding, mostly without being asked. American corporate news, especially in matters of foreign affairs, resembles nothing so much as nightly coverage of a banraku performance.

Selling stuff, whether it's widgets or religion or political ideas, is at the core of American life, and America's one unquestionably original creation in the modern world involves the disciplines of marketing, advertising, and public relations – all highly artful aspects of selling stuff. The success of these methods has long been proved in American commerce, but they are no less effective when applied to other areas. So, it should hardly surprise that the same "arts" are heavily employed by, and on behalf of, government in propaganda and opinion-manipulation around its acts and policies. Indeed, we see America's entire election system today having been reduced to little more than a costly, massive application of these crafty skills, and no department or agency of government is ever without its professional, full-time spokespeople and creative back-up staff, making sure that whatever words or numbers are spoken or printed never slip beyond what those arts have conjured up. Unacceptable photos, say those of women and children smashed by bombs or missiles hurled into the Mideast, are made simply to disappear much as they were in 1984.

Government knows, too, that the American political system is heavily stacked against people with doubts ever gaining serious influence. Ninety-five percent of Senate elections go to incumbents, and because only one-third of the Senate faces re-election at any given election, a majority on some new matter is virtually impossible to build. The presidential candidates of the only two parties with a hope of being elected are almost as carefully groomed and selected as the party chairman of a former communist-bloc country, and generally about as surprising in their views.

And always, time makes people forget, even with the most terrible issues. After a generation or two, there are relatively few people who are even aware there was an issue. In the case of the most overwhelming and terrifying event of my life, the Vietnam War, polls show a huge number of young Americans today don't know what it was or when it occurred.

These are the key factors permitting an American government to commission horrific acts abroad resembling those of the bloodiest tyrant, all while it smilingly prances across the international stage as democracy's self-designated chief representative and advocate. As for the great mass of people, the 95% of humanity living outside the United States, no one in America's government ever gives them a moment's thought, unless they step out of line.

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