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The West Is Trapped In Its Own Propaganda

By Dr. Paul Craig Roberts
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Theme: Media Disinformation

One of the wishes that readers often express to me came true today (May 11). I was on the mainstream media. It was a program with a worldwide reach–the BBC World Service. There were others on the program as well, and the topic was Hillary Clinton's remarks (May 10) about the lack of democracy and human rights in China.

I startled the program's host when I compared Hillary's remarks to the pot calling the kettle black. I was somewhat taken aback myself by the British BBC program host's rush to America's defense and wondered about it as the program continued. Surely, he had heard about Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo detainees, CIA secret torture prisons sprinkled around the world, invasion and destruction of Iraq on the basis of lies and deceptions, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Libya. Surely, he was aware of Hillary's hypocrisy as she demonized China but turned a blind eye to Israel, Mubarak, Bahrain and the Saudis. China's record is not perfect, but is it this bad? Why wasn't the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs criticizing America's human rights abuses and rigged elections? How come China minds its own business and we don't?

These questions didn't go down well. None of the other interviewees or guests thought that Hilary had made a good decision, but even the Chinese guests were not free of the common mindset that frames every issue from the standpoint that the West is the standard by which the rest of the world is judged. By pointing out our own shortcomings, I was challenging that standard. The host and other guests could not escape from the restraints imposed on thought by the role of the West as world standard.

What has happened to the West is that it can see itself and others only through the eyes of its own propaganda. There was a great deal of talk about China's lack of democracy. As the BBC program was being broadcast, the news intruded that Greeks had again taken to the streets to protest the costs of the bailout of the banks and Wall Street–the rich–being imposed on ordinary people at the expense of their lives and aspirations. The Irish government announced that it was going to confiscate with a tax part of the Irish people's pension accumulations. It simply did not occur to the host and other guests that these are not democratic outcomes.

It is a strange form of democracy that produces political outcomes that reward the few and punish the many, despite the energetic protests of the many.

Political scientists understand that US electoral outcomes are determined by powerful monied interests that finance the political campaigns and that the bills Congress passes and the President signs are written by these interest groups to serve their narrow interests. Such conclusions are dismissed as cynicism and do not alter the mindset.

While the program's host and guests were indulging in the West's democratic and human rights superiority, the American Civil Liberties Union was sending out a bulletin urging its members to oppose legislation now before Congress that would give the current and future Presidents of the United States expanded war authority to use, on their own initiative, military force anywhere in the world independently of the restraints imposed by the US Constitution and international law.

In other words, in the great American "democracy," the president is to become a Caesar.

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