

CHANGING TIMES

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THE HEALING NEWSPAPER

Wednesday, December 18, 2013

The 'Ugly American'— The World's Most Wanted - Nalin K. Nirula



A strange love-hate relationship exists between the United States of America and the rest of the world. People aspire to live and work and associate with America for the material rewards and opportunities it offers.

At the same time the American administrative policies make America, without exception, the most liked-disliked and universally loved-hated country worldwide, because it's good as well as the morbid influences are felt everywhere.

The Ugly American

In 1958, Burdick and Lederer's best-selling fictional political novel, "The Ugly American", indicted American diplomats abroad as bungling, insensitive and disrespectful to



local customs and mores, and being incompetent, failing miserably at their jobs as diplomats. In contrast, the book portrays the average American as being open, generous and eager to share their knowledge and skills with others.

The main character of the book is an American, Homer Atkins, a plain looking retired engineer. He is very helpful and considerate to the people of the fictional South East Asian country of Sarkhan in which the story is placed.

While the boorish diplomats squander huge sums of money in grandiose schemes to try and win the hearts and minds of the people away from Communist insurgents, Atkins helps the people to raise the standard of their lives. He does this by installing simple water pumps and thus wins their hearts and minds.

The book was also made into a successful movie in 1963, starring Marlon Brando as the ambassador to Sarkhan who tries to push the official American viewpoint despite all signs that doing that would be a disaster.

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The Helpful American

The truth of the perception about the helpfulness of the average American, and its spillover to American diplomatic policy is what helps to make the USA well-liked, despite the other offensive factors.

The epilogue of Lederer and Burdick's book made a point for "a small force of well-trained, well-chosen, hard-working and dedicated professionals" fluent in the local language and customs, as being the most effective unofficial ambassadors for the USA's aims. In the book's premise, the diplomatic aim was to change the hearts and minds of the people to counter the spread of insurgent communism in South East Asia.

Kennedy also referred to the book during his presidential campaign and proposed that young people volunteer for international humanitarian and educational service. The Peace Corps was formed On March 1, 1961, six weeks after Kennedy took office as the 35th president of the USA.

"Action plan: Buy support, pay for damages, create dependencies"

The American policy of helping other countries buys it support and goodwill, which it then overspends by its totalitarian, forceful and high-handed actions by imposing its will on others.

If public pressure mounts, it makes some efforts at appeasement by paying for it in benefits or money.

The similarity between this aspect of American governmental policy and a drug based enterprise is not coincidental. In both cases, there is deep alignment of interests based upon dependencies created. Both offer perceived benefits.

There is profit to be made and there are free samples— American aid with strings in one case, and initial low-cost

or free drugs to the addict in the case of the other.

The ugliness turns on itself- part 1

The Ugly American in the form of the domestic governmental machinery has been alive and well in America for long. I had read "The Ugly American" before I went to study at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York in 1971, but was quite unprepared for finding the Ugly American alive and well in the American heartland. During my stay there, I found the American governmental machinery to be equally racist and totalitarian towards foreign students at home as abroad. I was racially profiled and interrogated very politely and briefly at a Greyhound bus terminal in Philadelphia by an FBI agent.

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An Indian student editor of a college newspaper writing to protest issues affecting student rights was visited by the FBI and politely threatened with immediate deportation unless he desisted.

The ugliness turns on itself- part 2

My experience of this aspect of America, and of others like me was probably the fallout of the American governmental machinery turning on its own—as witnessed by the incident of the infamous Kent State massacre on May 4, 1970.

The Ohio National Guard opened fire indiscriminately on unarmed students at an anti-war rally at Kent State University. The students were protesting the recently declared war campaign in Cambodia by President Nixon.



Among the students shot were those who were protesting, as well as those who were watching from a distance or were just passersby like the 14 year old Jeffrey Miller in the photo. In 13 seconds 67 rounds were fired killing 4 students and seriously wounding 9 others.

This incident led to a spate of violent and non-violent protests in campuses across the country and demands for an end to US military involvement in Vietnam and other South East Asian countries.

Indian Diplomat Targetted



The use of extreme force has been a hallmark of American policy of governance and containment, whether at home or abroad.

The recent Ugly Americanism to shock the world is the US Marshals publicly arresting the Indian Deputy Consul General, Devyani Khobragade with total disregard of her Consular status.

She was handcuffed in public while at her daughter's school, strip-searched, and cavity-searched. She was then placed in a holding facility with common criminals and drug addicts. No consideration or respect was shown or given to her Consular status.

This was done in pursuit of a pending case against involving her maid Sangeeta Richards, who claimed higher wages. The US authorities were informed about this by India, and US help requested for arresting and deporting the domestic staff back to India.

Instead, US authorities arrested the Deputy Consul General on the complaint of the maid who claimed she was wrongfully paid less than the minimum stipulated wage under US visa requirements.

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"What 'Boundaries'?"



The US authorities further said that Khobragade's immunity status as a diplomat was limited to her actions in discharge of her consular duties.

This is despite Article 41 of the Vienna convention that clearly states consular diplomats must be accorded all respect according to their position at all times, and only in the case of 'grave crimes' may they be arrested and then also only by order of a competent court and in accordance with the Vienna convention.

Being 'technically correct' may not be prove to be 'right'

While the US authorities might have some technical grounds for their actions against Khobragade, one fails to understand what has been gained and served by their action in the larger context.

In the immediate instance, their action would have arisen out of a legal complaint by the maid.

The Vienna convention also provides for non-interference and non-application of staff salary requirements etc for diplomatic and consular staff.

The Americans, in their eagerness to enforce a questionable provision of US law to a diplomat, even to one with perhaps a limited immunity (which is debatable and being debated), the US authorities have failed to perceive the greater picture. They will have to face the repercussions and reprisals that must naturally follow.

This is the Ugly American in action at home and anywhere in the world.

The US policy continues to be, "we do what do, because we can get away with it. Again and again."

The Indian government is not having any of it now.

After the initial shock, India's response has been swift. Whether it is based upon the Congress-led UPA fighting to regain its rapidly dwindling support, or a sudden miraculous stiffening of backbone not earlier noticed under similar circumstances, the restrained action taken may not be enough.

Retaliation begins

The Ministry of External Affairs has commenced a series of actions against American diplomats in India, curtailing the extra courtesies being extended to them and their families.

In a retaliatory move to downgrade the importance given to the US, roadblocks and restrictions on traffic movement near the US Embassy in Delhi have been removed. The roads are open for general traffic.

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Escalation

Other retaliatory steps are being held in reserve. Ministry spokespersons say the Indian response will depend upon what the US does next.

Tough action is necessary to drive home the magnitude of the barbaric American actions perpetrated against the honor of an officer and lady, who represents the people of the India in America.

Let the law of the land prevail argument

There is also talk of taking reciprocal action against American diplomats and consular staff, particularly against gay diplomats and their partners under section 377 IPC.

The 'enforcement of the law of the land' argument extended by the Americans must apply here in India as well to the American's own diplomats and consular staff.

In case this is ever done, the Americans and their partners to be so affected can at least take some comfort in the fact that being cavity-probed would not be a new or unusual experience.

Since the laws of our land are rather draconian, the Americans are sure to be on the wrong side of such laws and they should rightfully be worried.



The American State Department is issuing panicky, loud and strident reminders to India that India should follow the Vienna convention for the US consular staff in India. Clearly the US understands that they are on the back-foot.

The US selectively applies laws and conventions according to its suitability with blatant disregard for anyone else's rights.

Eventually there will be a diplomatic solution to this but with a serious re-think and re-alignment of the official positions between India and the USA.

In the current Indian political environment, if the BJP ends up forming the government at the national level, the relations between the two countries

will have further strains to contend with.

The BJP's candidate for Prime Minister Narendra Modi has himself been on the US's blacklist because of alleged human rights violations. Could we have a situation where the Prime Minister of India will be banned from entering the USA?

The Most Important "Why" Question

The most important question to ask in light of the facts is, "Why is the US doing this?"

No response was given to India's standing request of many months standing for apprehension and deportation of Sangeeta Richards.

Instead, Khobragade's absconding maid's entire family were granted expedited visas for the USA just a few days earlier.

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Sangeeta Richards is untraceable at this time. Her family has just got into New York with US help and disappeared. This vanishing trick could not be achieved without US government help.

It would be simplistic to dismiss the American action as mere stupidity and insensitivity. The American act was pre-planned, deliberate and the US authorities knowingly lied to their Indian counterparts.

What makes Sangeeta Richards and her family so valuable to the US, and the Indian Consul General so non-valuable?

Is there an alleged human-trafficking or slavery charge the US is trying to make?

Perhaps the entire story will never be revealed.

Healing the Body Politic

These are signs that the time is right for Ugly Americanism to get a complete makeover and be recast in its ideal role as a true service-oriented humanitarian nation, and not the cynical self-obsessed dictator to the world that it is.

The US is the solar plexus chakra of the world

The job of the solar plexus is to channel and distribute health to all parts of the body. The US cannot continue to apply its own rules to other nations indiscriminately, and then act accordingly, especially not by disregarding diplomatic conventions and protocols and the spirit they embody.

The malfunctioning of this chakra comes from an attempt to keep all the benefits to itself, while controlling others.

This is imploding upon itself, ulcerating and corroding the solar plexus American nation, allowing intestinal based fear to rule everything, prying, and spying on its own citizens equally as others—a wounded animal gnawing at its own intestines.

It may be recalled that in our old recorded history, the attempted stripping of Draupadi in public was the final step that eventually led to the destruction and downfall of the entire Kaurava clan. The similarity of Khobragade's situation with that of Draupadi resonates in the Indian psyche, if not adequately addressed, will create tensions and further escalations.

So far, the Ugly American blithely ignores this.

Amongst other things, the Ugly American is on the way to rapidly achieving status as the only front-line contender for becoming the world's 'most favored hated nation'.

