

Basically, what is needed is a political system that is not as dependent on individual members of parliament or senators with the ability to exercise their will independently and therefore the ability to seek patronage in the purse of the American system. Every senator and every congressman to a great extent should be able to vote against the will of their party on important issues should they want to. I mean that they often do that because the purse is paying them. This leaves them in hock to the Israeli lobby, to the health management lobby and to the military-industrial complex. **A certain system of voting, relatively independent of money but also subject to party rules, needs to be established.**

The other key issue is that a state elite that has some concept of national interest and national strategy that goes beyond military spending and simply more tanks and more guns is needed.

It is not a question of decisions on the human level; it is a question of the inherited political culture of institutions, which can be extremely difficult to change. If you look at the United States, America is crying out for a whole raft of major constitutional reforms – but if you know America, you will know this to be impossible. The American system is incapable of such reforms unless maybe there was a really shattering crisis. Yet, even having had a pretty severe economic crisis in the past couple of years, still nothing has changed. ■

Anatol Lieven was speaking with Julia Netesova



‘PARTY GOVERNMENT’ IS ALMOST THE IDEAL



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Samuel Huntington was right in saying that at some point during the process of development, strongly structured one-party systems that are equipped with a progressive ideology will be in a position to make some significant contributions to socio-economic development. If they are truly successful, the problem will then be that they will block any efforts to replace them. Single-party regimes may produce some political order grounded on the repression of any and all oppositions.

The risk is that incompetent one-party systems will manage to retain political power despite being unable to bring about development. Even though they can produce some political disorder, multi-party systems at least provide the potential for political and socio-economic development.

The ideal distribution of power is to be found in the ‘party government’ formula, applied within a two-party, or bipolar, competitive system as in the United Kingdom and Germany. Of course

the historical conditions that produced not only the two-party system in the UK, but also its peculiar type of democracy, can neither be imitated nor created. The same is true to a lesser extent for contemporary Germany. In any case, competitive party systems are the product of a society that has passed through two phases: liberalization and contestation.

The emphasis must be placed on citizens being able to organize themselves freely, to create their own newspapers and utilize all forms of communication, and criticize the government and bureaucracy. **A competent, not partisan, well-paid bureaucracy also represents a fundamental component of any decent state** and a prerequisite for equally decent democratic regimes. In any case, the role of political parties is to provide representation and a framework for governance. The role of the bureaucracy is to offer support and services to the citizens on an equal and fair basis. ■