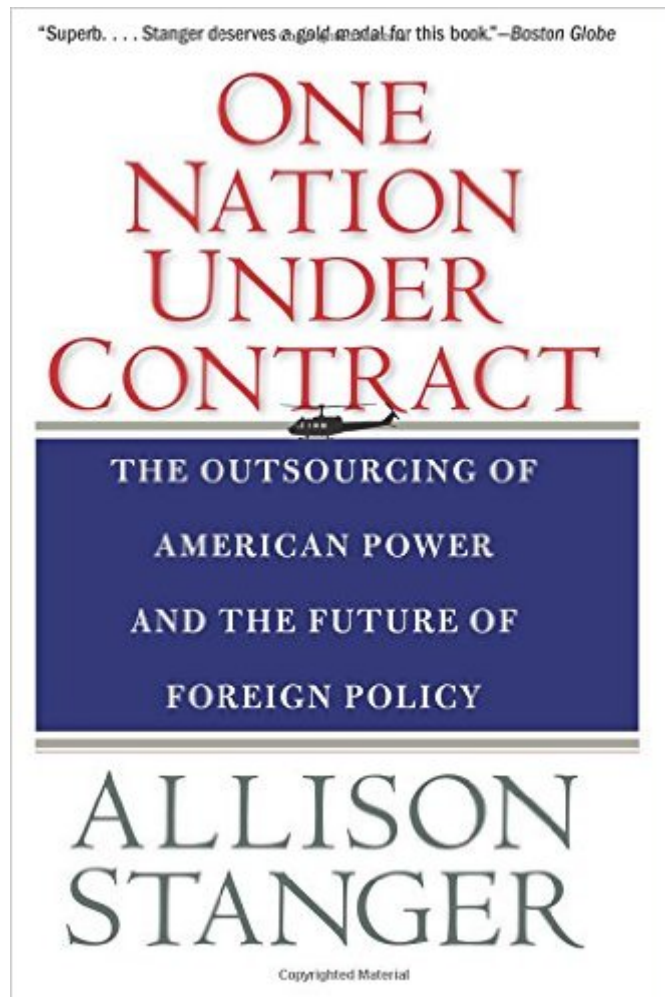


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One Nation Under Contract: The Outsourcing Of American Power And The Future Of Foreign Policy



Synopsis

International relations scholar Allison Stanger shows how contractors became an integral part of American foreign policy, often in scandalous ways—but also maintains that contractors aren't the problem; the absence of good government is. Outsourcing done right is, in fact, indispensable to America's interests in the information age. Stanger makes three arguments. The outsourcing of U.S. government activities is far greater than most people realize, has been very poorly managed, and has inadvertently militarized American foreign policy; Despite this mismanagement, public-private partnerships are here to stay, so we had better learn to do them right; With improved transparency and accountability, these partnerships can significantly extend the reach and effectiveness of U.S. efforts abroad. The growing use of private contractors predates the Bush Administration, and while his era saw the practice rise to unprecedented levels, Stanger argues that it is both impossible and undesirable to turn back the clock and simply re-absorb all outsourced functions back into government. Through explorations of the evolution of military outsourcing, the privatization of diplomacy, our dysfunctional homeland security apparatus, and the slow death of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Stanger shows that the requisite public-sector expertise to implement foreign policy no longer exists. The successful activities of charities and NGOs, coupled with the growing participation of multinational corporations in development efforts, make a new approach essential. Provocative and far-reaching, *One Nation Under Contract* presents a bold vision of what that new approach must be.

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Customer Reviews

"The American homeland is the planet." - 9/11 Commission Report

Very rarely do I read a "policy wonkish" book in which I so clearly agree with the diagnosed problem, but feel like the solutions offered leave me completely at sea. Allison Stanger's *One Nation Under Contract: The Outsourcing of American Power and the Future of Foreign Policy* is such a book. Stanger is no slouch. She is Middlebury College's Russell Leng '60 Professor of International Politics and Economics, and directs the college's Rohatyn Center for International Affairs. Her clear, concise, and thoughtful new book is "blurbed" by some high-powered people, including USMC General Anthony Zinni (who calls Stanger's analysis "a superb work on government outsourcing and contracting"); Canadian Liberal Party leader Michael Ignatieff ("a clarion call to bring the business of government under more effective public control"); and Harvard University professor Joseph Nye ("well-reasoned"). But her book's conclusions left me scratching my head. Stanger sets out to answer a big and crucially important question: In an age in which governments around the world have "outsourced" nearly everything to private for-profit corporations, how do citizens reestablish effective oversight over private-public partnerships? This outsourcing problem is so vast and extensive that even the Establishment New York Times, an overexuberant cheerleader for U.S. foreign policy if ever there was one, referred to contractors as a "fourth branch of government" in 2007, a sign of just how troublesome things have become. Stanger's extended case-study is the United States, a "republic-turned-Empire" (to her credit, Stanger is willing to entertain the use of the term "empire" to describe U.S.

Allison Stanger has written a tour de force -- the first book that succinctly and accurately describes the new reality of 21st Century foreign policy -- and the urgent need for our government to adapt. Dr. Stanger lays out in lucid prose and deeply researched detail the outsourcing of American government -- not only in the well-documented military sphere, but in our development aid, diplomacy, and even homeland security arenas. She shows how our government has given up much of our ability to implement foreign policy -- and how we have lost the ability to oversee the implementers, private and nonprofit, whom we have hired. For anyone who longs for "smaller government" Dr. Stanger shows the results of those policies in reducing American power worldwide. Dire as these problems are for America's continued strength, Dr. Stanger's conclusion is wise. She understands what many activists do not -- that private businesses and nonprofit organizations are now part and parcel of foreign policy worldwide, and that the movement towards a more open world in which private citizens make a significant impact on world affairs can't be stopped. The clock can't be turned back, she says: we live in a world where Bill and Melinda Gates

can do more for malaria in Africa than most governments, and where the decisions of Walmart affect trade more than the demands of most countries. These are facts on the ground--they are caused by globalization, increased wealth, and the internet--they can't be reversed without returning to totalitarian states or a world of reduced connections between countries that would impoverish billions. Dr. Stanger thoughtfully concludes that when change cannot be fought, it should be understood, and managed.

The intent of this book is to highlight the implications of privatizing government policy, that present practice is scandalous, and that undoing government privatization is not the answer. Unfortunately, Stanger's overly academic treatise fails in all three missions, though her anecdotes and documentation of some of the numbers involved make the book worthy of a quick skim. The Dept. of Defense is a good place to start. Stanger points out that the Pentagon's acquisition workforce shrank 25% between 1990-2000, while the volume of contracting increased 7X, and that between 2002-2005, the number of its contract employees rose from 3.4 million to 5.2 million. A key point here is that the simplest way to handle increased contracting with reduced staff is to issue giant contracts that allow subcontracting as desired - including evaluations. Thus, we end up with contracts that generate sub-contracts that generate sub-contracts, etc., for as many as five layers - adding costs at every layer. Then there's the missing billions in Iraq. Another typical problem is that various reports on procurement estimate that at least half of these contracts take place without full and open competition. Thus, there is no need for surprise when Stanger points out that a school costing ASAIID \$25,000 to build in Afghanistan could have instead be built for \$50,000 by local Afghans (and probably generated good feelings for the U.S. at the same time). As for quality - shoddy electrical work by KBR is blamed for the deaths of at least 18 soldiers in Iraq, and Blackwater Security severely damaged U.S. credibility when it killed 17 civilians in Baghdad.

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