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The United States Government has an incredible amount of responsibility. With 430 government agencies and sub-agencies, the government oversees a highly diverse array of functions. An astonishing amount of governmental functions are being outsourced to private contractors. Addressing what aspects of government are being contracted out is essential to analyze the impact this has on the American people, the national interest, and whether or not this is a significant cause for concern.

So, what kind of government functions are currently being contracted out to these private companies? Given the vast amount of contracting already occurring, it's challenging to pinpoint precisely what's going on. Trying to look up anything involving government contracting only returns a heap of government handbooks and policies on becoming a contractor for their government agency. Since the 80s, and most notably through the Clinton administration, more and more of what seem to be 'inherently governmental functions' are being contracted out to companies in industries like defense, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, logistics, and especially information technology. Usually, government agencies are motivated to outsource specific services or functions when the private sector can provide these more effectively due to expertise or inherent efficiency. However, there are times when this is highly advantageous.

In Chris Edwards's argument piece 'Options for Federal Privatization and Reform Lessons from Abroad,' he makes a few critical points to discuss. One major one is decision-making and funding. Chris goes on to use Amtrak as an example. Amtrak is a publicly owned and managed passenger rail service in the U.S. He mentions that many of Amtrak's routes

and investments are managed poorly because of politics. It is investing much of its proposed budget on unpopular routes and not enough on where it's needed, such as the North East corridor. Much of this is true in a sense. If the U.S. had introduced other private companies to offer more passenger rail services earlier on, we might have seen the growth of a much more efficient passenger rail system in the U.S. today.

The Brightline, Florida's most recent high-speed passenger train, is an excellent example. This combination of public and private services is like the USPS, UPS, FedEx, and other transportation services working cohesively today. This type of private and public sector cohesion seems to serve the public interest most. The efficiency of UPS and FedEx (FedEx is a stretch, honestly) and the equality and reliability of the USPS create a nice balance. Also, being a government worker can be monotonous, and they do not often receive the most glamorous paychecks. Their funding comes directly from the government, so these public agencies often have no other incentives to provide better service than general feedback. As a result, customers often receive subpar service. Take the DMV or the TSA, for example. Has anyone ever been excited to go and experience either? There has never been a top ten first-date ideas list that has ever featured the DMV. However, these functions do not need to be glamorous in any way. This is where the benefits of government contracting stop.

In Chris's argument, he actively pushes for governmental services like the USPS and Amtrak to privatize their operations fully. This would be a tremendous mistake. Handing these services to private corporations would most certainly cut off vital services to many Americans who rely on them. The USPS must offer services to all U.S. towns regardless of size and usage. These government entities provide equitable service to the majority of Americans. This is especially true for Amtrak now following the announcement of expanding passenger rail

nationwide, which was dictated and decided by public interest, not shareholder profit. It's also important to mention the lack of government oversight in these major private contracting companies. This can lead to disaster when corporations are free to maintain critical infrastructure within the country. Take the recent train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio.

Freight and industrial rail are crucial to the country's economy, and rail companies like Norfolk Southern are also federally contracted. Norfolk Southern has received millions from federal agencies such as the FHA, the Navy, the Air Force, and the DOT. Yet years before the derailment disaster, Norfolk Southern cut safety and maintenance spending. This is representative of many incidents involving corporate negligence that have disastrous public health consequences. In her argument, Janine Wedel focuses on how this will impact the national interest and security.

Janine goes over her concern with contracting mission-critical functions to private contractors. On numerous occasions, these private contractors are predominantly responsible for the success or failure of these missions. These private entities inherit the ability to undermine the country's national interest and the government's decision-making. The Department of Defence contracts a majority of its functions to private contractors. With that proportionality, the ability to oversee all these different contracted functions is slim, leaving much of the decision-making to the corporations instead of the government agencies. In theory, but not always in practice, the decision-making should be held up to national and public interest.

As more and more government functions are contracted out, the proportionality of civil workers to private contractors is becoming a great cause for concern. Currently, the U.S. government is highly dependent on these contractors. It would require much effort to return high-risk government functions to civil workers.

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