

Lying and Deception as Government Policy

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What is even more imprudent than the invasion of Iraq and the 'war on terror' is the Bush administration's determination to interpret the tragedy of that stricken nation in a way that lays blame on just about everyone else but itself. And yet this is just one thread within an elaborate web of lies and deceit initiated by the Bush administration years ago.

Immediately after its seizure of power by a court negotiated ruling, the Bush administration seemed determined to marginalize the American public. The terrorist attacks of September 11 were the needed element that transformed that determination into policy: anything goes — from unleashing unwarranted wars abroad to monitoring people's reading habits at public libraries and tapping into their telephone conversations — as long as the goal is to safeguard 'national security'.

While many Americans seemed willing to concede part of their freedoms to preserve the rest — or so the cliché goes — Bush's detrimental policies, at home and abroad, remained heedless and self-serving. The relatively small gap between the government and the public turned into a bottomless abyss.

Not as if past US governments were known for their integrity and painful honesty with the American people regarding their backroom dealings and undemocratic tendencies from Latin American, to Indochina to the Middle East. But the Bush administration has undeniably pushed the conventional and sometimes acceptable margin of a government's deceit to the point that lying becomes the primary, if not the sole form of public policy.

Despite the ruthless marketing of pretenses and policy shams, the US public has grown weary and skeptical. The blanket public approval enjoyed by the president after September 11 — seen then as a green light to take on Afghanistan, perhaps the poorest country in the world — is steadily diminishing as the Bush administration stumbles at every corner. According to a February 28 CBS News poll, President Bush's approval ratings have hit an all-time low of 34 per cent. The same poll indicates that Vice-President Cheney's numbers are even lower, at 18 per cent.

On one hand, one has to wonder when and if such low ratings will ever inspire serious debate in Congress regarding impeachment possibilities — after all, dragging America into a bloody, senseless and destructive war that merely benefits the profit seeking few at the expense of uncounted lives, is as one would assume, an impeachable offence. On the other hand, it is somewhat exhilarating that most Americans have managed to see through the clever propaganda, the smokescreens and fear tactics to realize that they were purposely duped into consent.

Unfortunately for the Bush administration, cant and deceit are the only lifelines still

available to win back the discontented public. Numerous opportunities have been lost, including that of providing a tangible timeline as to when the US will withdraw from Iraq, signaling the end of the nightmare. The confounded public is even denied the mere courtesy of being informed with a realistic assessment of the US 'war on terror' and the Iraq quagmire. In the meantime, America — its economic prospects, its people's welfare, its reputation, its internal struggles, and more — all are being held hostage to a 'war on terror' that even the administration's own pundits are finding it difficult to define. The botched war is a disaster save for a few neo-conservative think tanks, their followers and a dwindling number of rightwing dreamers, who haven't a clue what this war is really like.

Iraqis are of course suffering the consequences of the administration's imprudence as well. In fact, the price they have paid is most unmatched. They were promised freedom and were delivered a torturous war and civil strife that can only worsen. They too were victims of double talk and rosy promises that are yet to actualize.

Not that deceit doesn't have its generous rewards for some. By checking on the growing profits of Lockheed Martin, Halliburton, CACI and Titan, BKSH & Associates, Bechtel, ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco, one will understand that the war in some strange way is not as 'senseless' as one might think.

The Bush administration is likely to carry on fighting descent at home and elusive terrorists abroad so that the status quo is maintained. More Americans are opposing the direction in which the country is headed, but no tangible policy is yet in place to translate such resentment into effective tools to put an end to this violent nightmare. The looming civil war in Iraq is just another outcome of sectarian division, brimming for many years, but cemented by the US policy of divide and conquer. The calamity shall carry on as long as our dissent is merely transmitted through opinion polls that might sound vindicating, but are negligible in the eyes of our government's determined militancy.

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