

RECLAIMING AMERICA

The "F" word and how to escape from its clutches

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So we're here. No more shilly-shallying about whether America is beginning to resemble a fascist society. We're now plopped right down into it.

The slide into our particularly American brand of fascism is not total. There still are areas that, at least for a time, remain relatively free. And dissent is tolerated -- up to a point. (That point, by the way, is when that dissent starts becoming effective.)

On the issues that really matter, America is fast moving itself into an authoritarian, militarist, imperial state, one that has more in common with Stalinist Soviet Union and Hitlerian Germany than with traditional American society. There are show trials planned, massive propaganda assaults on the populace, a huge bureaucratic system designed to pry and violate personal privacy (including phone calls, emails and institutions from where you get information, be it libraries or bookstore or websites), and a constitutional system of laws that simply are ignored or violated whenever the federal government chooses to do so.

Many of us on both the right and left have been sounding the alarm for years about how Bush and his legal-toadies like Alberto Gonzales were fashioning a near-dictatorship under the cockamamie theory that whenever a president claims to be acting as "commander-in-chief" during "wartime," he can do whatever he wants, violate whatever laws he wants, in "defense of the homeland."

Bush has ignored past rulings by the courts, indeed even had his rubber-stamp Congress pass laws that forbid the courts from assuming jurisdiction over certain laws passed by the legislative branch. And, of course, most American citizens had no knowledge of this movement toward authoritarianism because the corporate mass-media never told them, preferring instead to pass on the administration's spin on events without much second-guessing or investigative reporting.

But now, with the passage by the Republican-controlled Congress of laws authorizing torture, domestic electronic eavesdropping and military tribunals -- with no opposition Democrat stepping up to filibuster any of these desecrations of the Constitution and human rights -- America has gone into an unknown world of unconstitutional rule, might-makes-right and lie-back-and-accept-it. *Habeas corpus*?? Eight hundred years old -- it's "quaint" now, and no longer applies.

Along these lines, Gonzales has sent out a [clear warning to judges](#) not to interfere with this assumption of total executive control. One can hope that the Supreme Court, even with two new FarRight brethren now on the bench, will be incensed by this abrogation of their authority and smack him upside the head for his dangerous power-grab.

The truth will out

Thankfully, countervailing forces are still at work in our society. So, in the same week when the torture, domestic spying and military tribunal bills were passed, we also have:

- Bob Woodward's new insider book, "State of Denial," ripping the facade off the administration's lies and deceits (especially with regard to Iraq and 9/11) and in-house feuds and corruptions; it's likely that the dynamite revelations in this book will reinforce the decision made by many traditional conservatives to abandon the GOP for this midterm election;
- The Abramoff money-for-access scandal going straight into the White House, often right through Karl Rove's door;
- A reprehensible cover-up is revealed in the House Republican scandal of knowing of and tolerating for at least a year the sexual harassment and perhaps abuse of teenage House pages by at least one predatory, highly-placed Republican congressman;

- The president of Pakistan disclosing that he was threatened by the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State that his country would be placed at grave risk unless he signed up for Bush's "war on terror" and his Iraq War (so much for the "coalition of the willing");
- Various leaked national-security documents revealing that Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice, et al. were warned about the coming debacle in Iraq but did nothing.

On the last point, this is how far we've come: Bush, convinced he is acting as an agent of God in the Middle East, says he [won't change his course in Iraq](#) even if everyone abandons him except his wife and dog. In short, he's prepared to take the country down with him since apparently he's psychologically incapable of admitting that he made a mistake.

The lesson for the rest of us: Beware of those expressing absolute certainty, about anything, especially if couched in religious terminology. But especially beware when that absolute certainty is expressed by a leader of a major superpower loaded with nuclear weaponry and convinced that he can alter the world through his mighty crusade. The ramifications of such zealotry, unless thwarted or overthrown, often lead to disaster and mass slaughter.

The American people can do it

What's to be done? It's clear that Bushism rules inside Congress and within the D.C. beltway, with the exception of many high-level officers in the military. But, and this may be our saving grace, Bushism does not rule out in the country, where most citizens live.

Virtually every poll taken in recent months indicates a deep and growing antagonism toward Bush programs and policies -- especially by traditional conservatives appalled at the extremists who hijacked their party. The anxieties of these voters tend to focus on the phony way the country was conned into the war, the thoroughgoing bungling and corruption of America's occupation of Iraq that is resulting in so many Americans and innocent Iraqis being killed and maimed, the stagnant economy and its horrific effects on the put-upon middle class, and the organized corporate looting and personal immorality in the GOP era of government.

Even though the Republicans won't initiate honest investigations into the culture of corruption that lies at the heart of its rule in Washington -- with Jack Abramoff and Mark Foley and the NIEs being just the visible parts of the immoral icebergs floating in the Potomac -- more and more Americans have wised up and know what must be done. There must be a clean-sweep change of direction and personnel.

If it's impossible right now to get rid of the villains at the top, since the Republicans will not introduce resolutions of impeachment against Cheney and Bush, the only other available option is to begin cleaning out the mess via the ballot on November 7. First order of business: to clean up the corrupted mess that is the voting process/vote-tabulation. Corporations that own the voting and vote-counting machines and the software that controls them must no longer have free, unsupervised opportunities to manipulate the results.

The order of priorities

Does this mean that total moral purity will prevail if the voters turn out the Republicans and install Democrats to control the House and/or the Senate? Of course not; there always are bad apples in any bunch, though the Republicans seem to have harvested nothing but in their orchard for the past six years. But political purity is not the point. The point is that in order to even begin to restore America's checks-and-balances democracy, adherence to the Constitution, reality-based foreign policy, and so on, a sea change has to be made.

Here's how I view the order of priorities for us all in the weeks remaining before the midterm election: act to ensure honest voting processes and especially honest vote-counting (which may necessitate suing local election officials for not taking care to ensure the rights of voters); remove the rubber-stamp Republicans from control of Congress; begin investigations into what went wrong and why, and try to ensure those abuses of power can't happen again; refashion America's foreign/military policy to regain our rightful authority and respect in the world; start working for the 2008 election to weed out Democrats who act like Republicans.

A number of disenchanted Democrats are eager to start that last named weeding-out process right now, today. If incumbent Democrats or candidates for House and Senate don't agree with all points of the progressive agenda, these disenchanted liberal voters are willing to sit on their hands next month or vote for someone other than a Democrat. The result of such narrow-minded focus might well be to hand victory to the Republicans on November 7 and leave them in control of all three branches of government for at least the next two years.

No, once again in some cases, we will have to hold our noses while voting for certain Democrats (Note: no need to face that dilemma in Connecticut; Joe Lieberman is not the Democratic candidate) because we understand the true goal at this moment in history: To break the momentum of the extremists in control of our government. The only way to do that right now is to defeat the Republicans in the House and/or Senate. After we achieve that victory, then we can work on purging the Democratic party of its turncoats and wimps. But not now, not when a defeat of the thugocracy is within our grasp on November 7 if we all work together with that common goal in mind.

November 8 should belong to those who, probably for the first time in their lives, are suspicious and afraid of their own reckless, incompetent government. That's a majority of the American people. Let's you and I join that majority to celebrate the beginnings of a return to a government of which we can feel proud again.

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