NEO-CONSERVATISM AND DECEPTIONS IN THE INVASION OF IRAQ

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ABSTRACT

The major reason for the March 20, 2003 invasion of Iraq; was to rid Iraq of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the allegation that Saddam's Iraq has links with al-Qaeda and 9/11. Both reasons turned out to be wrong. This article evaluates the invasion in the light of the Neo-Conservative theoretical framework. The objective of the article is to assess whether the deceptions in the invasion were a blunder or calculated manipulation of intelligence and fabrication of propaganda to incite public support for the war. The conclusion is that the deceptions, lies and carefully launched campaign of misinformation were premeditated and in line with the 'noble lies' of the neo-conservative school of thought. Evidently most of the top ranking officers in the George W. Bush administration were neo-conservatives who without minding the consequences or limitations freely lied and fabricated propaganda to bolster invading Iraq. It was not just deceptions in error; the minds of people were systematically coerced, indoctrinated and manipulated to actualize the motive. The article recommends that policies which adversely affect humanity should be transparently and honestly weighed with high sense of morality. War should be a last recourse and a step taken after exhaustive negotiations, arbitration and conciliation.

Introduction

The faulty evidence and constant shifting of rationale for the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq on March 20, 2003, has brought a lot of curiosity as to the authenticity of the rationale behind the war. There were high speculations and confirmations, of the deception and manipulation of intelligence for the purpose. More intriguing is the fact that in the August 16, 2004 speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Cincinnati, President George W. Bush as cited by Sandalow (2004:3) declared that "Even though we did not find the stockpiles that we thought we would find… knowing what I know today, I would have taken the same action." This statement depicts the fact that the invasion and occupation of Iraq was premeditated. It was in actualization of this mindset that precipitated the manipulation of intelligence through deception and lies to invade and occupy Iraq.

Sequel to the claims and counter claims, about the very numerous lies and deception of the invasion and occupation of Iraq; a nonpartisan organization embarked on an investigation. The investigation revealed that the public has been misled almost a thousand times. A special report in the Washington Post Newspaper by Froomkin (Jan 23, 2008) says that, "the nonpartisan Center for Public Integrity has enumerated a total of 935 false statements made by George Bush and six other top members of his administration". The lies and carefully launched campaign of misinformation where according to this source during the period of arousing support for the war at the aftermath of 9-11. What was the background and theoretical framework of these deceptions? To this we turn.

THE NEO-CONSERVATIVE DECEPTIVE FRAMEWORK

The lies and fabrication of propaganda for the invasion of Iraq apparently has its theoretical backing on the ideas of the neo-conservative political philosopher Leo Strauss. His ideas greatly shaped and influenced the Bush administration's world outlook with particular reference to the invasion and occupation of Iraq. This assertion is supported by Shadia Drury, professor of political theory at the University of Regina, who as cited by Postel (2003:2) argues that "the use of deception and manipulation in current US policy flow directly from the doctrines of the political philosopher Leo Strauss (1899-1973). His disciples include Paul Wolfowitz and other neo-conservatives who have driven much of the political agenda of the Bush administration." Evidently most of the top ranking officers in the George W. Bush administration were neo-conservatives who without minding the consequences or limitations freely lied and fabricated propaganda to bolster invading Iraq. As reported by Neil (Jun 8, 2003), "a former CIA officer has described the Office of Special Plans as a group of ideologues who were dangerous for US national security and a threat to world peace, and that the group lied and manipulated intelligence to further its agenda of removing President Hussein."

In politics a noble lie is a myth or untruth knowingly told, by leaders to maintain social harmony, or the social position of the leader. The noble lie is a concept originated by Plato as described in The Republic. However, the concept has far greater scope and has been used by many commentators to talk about much more modern issues in politics. A noble lie, although it may benefit all parties may cause discord if uncovered. Scholars generally agree that the "noble lie" conception of Plato countenances manipulation by propaganda. Most neoconservative scholars argue that an excess of moral clarity leads to bad foreign policy. This aspect is in tandem with Machiavelli's realist tradition. According to Machiavelli "Men are so simple and so much inclined to obey immediate needs that a deceiver will never lack victims for his deceptions." The view that neo-conservatism, is the major theory or ideology which rationalised the invasion and occupation of Iraq is supported by Owens (2007:26) who stated that the "dominant ideological justification for the United States invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 was provided by neo-conservatism."

In another vain, Leo Strauss as cited by Owens (2007:29) noted that "thinkers of the first rank, going back to Plato, had raised the problem of whether good and effective politicians could be completely truthful and still achieve the necessary ends of their society". By implication, Strauss asks his readers to consider whether it is true that noble lies have no role at all to play in uniting and guiding the polis. His views are to the effect that lies may be moral because it protects the wise and maintains social order. The morally and intellectually inferior must believe in 'noble lies'. Neoconservatives or the disciples of Leo Strauss and Irving Kristol have imbibed a superiority complex as well as a persecution mind-frame. They have the strong conviction that they are the superior few who are endowed with knowledge of the truth which entitles them to rule. However, according to Hossani (2003:1), "they are afraid to speak the truth openly, lest they are persecuted by the vulgar many who do not wish to be ruled by them."

In contemporary dynamic propaganda, the daily news and information are controlled by very few giant media corporations. Most of them are apparently neo-conservatives or benefit

from the ideology and so in collaboration with the administration of President George W. Bush, they manipulated the public and invaded Iraq. The unfortunate thing is that they never envisaged the gargantuan limitations that eventually shrouded the whole sager.

DECEPTIONS IN THE INVASION OF IRAQ

The issue of calculated attempts to fabricate lies to strengthen the case for the invasion of Iraq by the George W. Bush administration became rife with the release of the Downing Street Memo which was a British government memo that was published in The Sunday Times. According to Rycroft (May 1, 2005), the memo states, "Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy." The Downing Street Memo contains the highlights of a discrete July 23, 2002 meeting among United Kingdom Labour government, defence and intelligence figures. They were discussing the plan to invade Iraq —including firsthand reference to classified U.S. policy of the time.

The above stance is also supported by Inspector General Thomas F. Gimble who in an April 2007 report testified that there was gross manipulation of intelligence to bolster the mindset of invading and occupying Iraq. The testimony of General Gimble was reported by Jeffrey (Apr 6, 2007), and says that “the Defence Department's Office of Special Plans … a close ally of Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld -- purposely manipulated evidence to strengthen the case for war.” Others who testified to the fact that propaganda was been fabricated and intelligence manipulated by George W. Bush and some key members of his administration was Howard Dean (Democratic National Committee Chairman). As reported by Baker (Mar 20, 2003), Howard Dean complained that; “the Bush and Blair administrations deliberately falsified evidence to build a case for war.”

With respect to the issue in contention, an independent survey was conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center. Its assessment shows that the Bush administration officials did misuse intelligence in their public communications. The above example is buttressed by Russert (2002) with regard to Vice President Dick Cheney's September 2002 statement on Meet the Press, were he declared that "we do know, with absolute certainty, that he (Saddam) is using his procurement system to acquire the equipment he needs in order to enrich uranium to build a nuclear weapon." This statement was a complete distortion of facts and was inconsistent with the views of the intelligence community at the time.

Intelligence was intelligently manipulated by the George W. Bush administration to bolster war. They systematically leaked fake reports on intelligence to reporters who happily published these reports in their dailies thinking that information from such corridors of power would indisputable be reliable. Eventually this same government source would intensify propaganda for war using these references, as if the source were the press. According to Kirk (2006), in some cases “Cheney’s office would leak the intelligence to reporters, and it would be reported by outlets such as The New York Times. Cheney would subsequently appear on the Sunday political television talk shows to discuss the intelligence, referencing The New York Times as the source to give it credence.”

To launch his war against Iraq the George W. Bush administration, systematically coerced, indoctrinated and manipulated the minds of people to buy the war idea. His network and tentacles of propaganda were so vast and widespread it may not be equated with Nazi's propaganda system during the Second World War. According to Hassan (May 29, 2008), "to promote its wars of aggression, the Bush regime relays on a subservient global propaganda machine that dwarfs the Nazis' propaganda machine." The press on their own side were susceptible to publishing and promoting government propaganda be it facts or lies. According to Kegan (2005) " It later turned out that many of the sources for these articles were unreliable, and that some were tied to Ahmed Chalabi, an Iraqi exile with close ties to the Bush Administration who was a consistent supporter of an invasion."

Some few days before the U.S. Senate voted (in October 2002) on the Joint Resolution to authorize the use of United States Armed Forces against Iraq a great number of senators were susceptibly told that Iraqi invasion was imminent. According to Nelson (Jan 28, 2004), "about 75 senators were told in a closed session that Iraq had the means of attacking the Eastern Seaboard of the U.S. with biological or chemical weapons delivered by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs.)" This issue of UAV's was eventually presented by Colin Powell on February 5, 2003, UN Security Council as evidence that UAVs will soon be launched against the U.S. However when this was presented there was very serious controversy, about the authenticity of the claims. According to Lowe (Dec 16, 2003) "At the time, there was a vigorous dispute within the U.S. military and intelligence communities as to whether CIA conclusions about Iraqi UAVs were accurate."

It has to be remembered that prior to the manipulation of intelligence and fabrication of propaganda to incite US public support for declaration of war on Iraq, less than 3 percent of the American population believed that Iraq was responsible for attack on the World Trade Centre. However based on the mindset of George W. Bush and his collaborators to declare war no matter which way the pendulum swings there was overwhelming propaganda which entailed gross manipulation of intelligence and fabrication of lies. Somehow the public was misled to believing that the falsehoods were true and it greatly affected there psyche and frame of mind thereby raising support for the invasion of Iraq. According to Chomsky (2003:3) the "Government-media propaganda has managed to raise that to about 50 per cent."

There are indications to portray that the United States of America under the auspices of George W. Bush intentionally fabricated lies and propaganda as well as ignored or covered up pre-war warnings and facts that showed that Iraq was innocent of the charges levelled against her because she was determined to invade. Any issue which shrouded the case for war was undermined. The malicious lies and distortions of facts concerning the reality on ground for Iraq were so ridiculous that the actual intents and purposes are better imagined than described.

Hans Blix, have denounced the purported reasons for the invasion and occupation of Iraq. This is because when he was the Chief UN Weapons Inspector for UNMOVIC they conducted thorough search and did not find any weapons of mass destruction. As far as he was concerned President George W. Bush and his administration have other reasons to invade Iraq that is completely different from weapons of mass destruction. This is because the UN Weapons Inspectors he led for several years constantly monitored and according to Blix (Apr

23, 2004) "failed to find any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq." The implication is that the allegation of possessing Weapons of Mass Destruction by Saddam where ruses for war. To these we turn.

THE DECEIT OF IRAQI WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), was the central pretext for the March 20, 2003 US invasion of Iraq. The objective of the war was purportedly "to rid Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction and a supposedly imminent nuclear capability" [Surlis 2005] George W. Bush "terrified millions of Americans into believing that forcibly changing the regime in Baghdad was the only way to keep Iraq's supposed stockpiles of unconventional weapons out of hands of Al-Qaeda" [Cooper 2004]. The implication is that the administration maliciously dragged the US into war with Iraq because no weapons of mass destruction was found

The malicious lies and distortions of facts concerning weapons of mass destruction were incredible. According to Rahul (2003:1), "as time passed, the Bush administration's lies, half-truths and distortions became increasingly ridiculous." The unmanned aerial vehicle we discussed above was eventually found to be an ordinary glider held together with spit and baling wire. There was also the propaganda for war against Iraq on grounds that mobile biological laboratories were found. This allegation was promptly "refuted by weapons inspectors as were claims that Iraq was about to get nuclear weapons. And, of course, ongoing inspections would have ensured that no arsenal could be built." [ibid]Despite concerted efforts with high tech sophisticated facilities inspectors did not find the advanced chemical, biological or nuclear weapons or ammunition that where purportedly in Iraq.

The Editorial of Herald International Tribune, pointed out that "an investigative report of Barton Gellman… who read Iraqi documents and interviewed key Iraqi's and members of the American team that has searched for weapons found that Iraq's effort to produce terror weapons had been so thoroughly beaten down by conflicts, sanctions and arms embargoes" [Schmemann 2004]. Recent estimates reveal that Iraq's nuclear program was virtually eliminated during the Gulf war and after. Hence according to Vincent 2005 "…the weapons of mass destruction that had been the ostensible reason for American intervention were looking like figments of 'sexed-up' intelligence reports". The New York Times of September 18, 2004, confirmed this stance when it reported under the caption "Iraq Had No WMD", that the Iraq Survey Groups final report… found no sign of the alleged illegal stockpiles that the US and Britain presented as the justification for going to war, nor did it find any evidence of efforts to reconstitute Iraq's nuclear weapons programme." [Davis 2004]

This same deception shrouded the allegation of attempted purchase of yellowcake uranium from Niger for the purposes of developing a nuclear weapon. In mid-February 2002, former Ambassador Joseph Wilson was sent by the CIA to investigate the skeptical claims about Iraq's attempted purchase of yellowcake uranium from Niger. Wilson's investigation revealed that yellowcake sales or transaction was unequivocally wrong. According to Roberts and Rockefeller (2004:1) "in response, Wilson wrote a critical New York Times op-ed piece in June 2003 stating that he had personally investigated claims of yellowcake purchases and believed them to be fraudulent." Unfortunately the George W. Bush administration continued to tinker

with established facts and intelligence to curry support to invade and occupy Iraq. The issue of yellowcake which has already been debunked and trashed was resurrected by George W. Bush in his January, 2003 State of the Union address. These were obvious deception and blatant falsehood. According to Kuang (2005), "from before the time that the speech was made, it was known that there was no uranium dealing between Niger and Iraq."

A pertinent question asked by Yusuf Al-Kadhi in line with the unfounded Iraqi possession of weapons of mass destruction was "Are we to believe that everyone in government was so naïve or stupid that they could be so easily be misled by inaccurate information with all those cries of reason and caution been raised in the background?" What about the allegation of Saddam's link with al-Qaeda was it authentic or deceitful? To this we turn.

THE DECEIT OF SADDAM'S LINK WITH AL-QAEDA AND 9/11

It is a well-known fact that terrorist hijacked passenger planes on September 11, 2001 (9/11) and used it as weapons against the United States of America. That onslaught claimed more than 3000 lives and colossal loss of property. The Bush administration conducted investigation in the days following the attacks and established that the perpetrators were all members of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization, known to operate out of Afghanistan. Apart from the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, al-Qaeda is also alleged to have carried out the bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi (Kenya), Dar-Es-Salaam (Tanzania) etc. In fact according to John Kelly "The United States has produced evidence tying bin Lan to the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center, the 1998 embassy bombings in Nairobi and Kenya, the attack on the USS Cole in Yemen in 2000, and the attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001."[Kelly] It was also revealed that more plans of terrorist attacks were been planned by Al-Qaeda.

The responsibility for these terrorist attacks by Al-Qaeda is crystal clear. This is because In February 1998, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri his second in command in Al-Qaeda issued a "fatwa" (Islamic holy pronouncement of war), saying that "to kill Americans and their allies, civilians and military, is an individual duty of every Muslim who is able."[ibid]. Al-Qaeda (which in Arabic means "the foundation" or "the base") is a militant Islamic alliance "founded by Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan in 1988 to expand the mujahideen resistance movement against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan into a pan-Islamic movement to defend, via military and terrorist tactics, other Islamic communities under siege." [Robb 2004]. There is no links at all with Saddam's Iraq and Al-Qaeda's 9/11 mayhem and atrocious activities. This is because Saddam Hussein is a major adversary of Al-Qaeda. They are diametrically opposed to each other for reasons that "Al-Qaeda detests secular regimes in Muslim countries, of which Saddam's is a prime example." [Lewis 2002]

Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda network dreaded Saddam Hussein's secular socialist Baathist government in Iraq because of concerns that this might spread to Saudi Arabia and affect Islamic fundamentalism which Al-Qaeda symbolizes. There was thus mutual deep hatred and animosity between Al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein and his secular government. In other words "no operational links between Saddam Hussein's regime and Al-Qaeda's anti-American terrorism" [Cooper 2004] In fact "Bin Laden referred, in his speeches and recorded/written

announcements, to Hussein (and the Baathists) as evil, a demon or devil-worshipper, calling for his overthrow by the people of Iraq" [Robb 2004] There was thus no link between Al-Qaeda's 9/11 and Saddam's Iraq.

The fact that Iraq has no links with Al Qaeda has always been known and there were no pretences about it. It was a known and established fact that Al Qaeda was active in 45 countries including the United States of America where George W. Bush was president. The United States Government Information on Countries where al Qaeda has operated (2001) "listed 45 countries, including the United States where Al Qaeda was active. Iraq was not one of them." The report also has it that the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence did not discover any substantial evidence for reputed links between Iraq and al-Qaeda.

As reported by Mahajan (Mar 20, 2003) "A recent British intelligence assessment concluded that there is no link between Iraq and al-Qaeda." Even President George W. Bush himself has come to accept this fact of Saddam Hussein having no links with Al-Qaeda's terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. According to O'Hanlon (2003:7) "the president [George W. Bush] has himself observed that there is no evidence linking Saddam to the September 11 attacks". Admittedly it was a mistake but apparently the deceptions were calculated efforts to achieve vested interest by fabricating lies in line with the neo-conservative conception.

CRITIQUE

Proponents of the George W. Bush administration oppose the idea that intelligence was manipulated. They argue that if intelligence were manipulated, there would have been fabrications to cover up the gross lies. In the contrary there were attempts to manipulate intelligence to cover up the unavailability of WMD's. Investigative journalist Larisa (2006:3), "found compelling evidence that an off book team acting on behalf of the Office of Special Plans did in fact investigate the plausibility of planting evidence but abandoned it due to the difficulty in replicating the forensics required." The implication is that there were attempts to cover up the deceptions but the idea was abandoned because it was near impossible to accomplish.

Writing in the front page of Herald International Tribune, David Stout (Apr 1, 2005) argued that "the US intelligence on Iraq was dead wrong." The basis of his argument was the Silberman-Robb Senate Intelligence Committee report presented to George W. Bush (the US President). Much of these false information and manipulation of intelligence were eventually acknowledged. Powell later admitted he had presented what turned out to be an inaccurate case to the UN on Iraqi weapons, and the intelligence he was relying on was in most cases, completely wrong. As reported by Warrick (Sep 19, 2003) Powell said that much of the evidence were "deliberately misleading."

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The deceptions, lies and carefully launched campaign of misinformation for the March 20, 2003 invasion of Iraq, were premeditated and in line with the noble lies of the neo-conservative school of thought. Evidently most of the top ranking officers in the George W. Bush administration were neo-conservatives who without minding the consequences or limitations freely lied and fabricated propaganda to bolster invading Iraq. In politics a noble lie

is a myth or untruth knowingly told, by leaders to maintain social harmony, or the social position of the leader. The noble lie is a concept originated by Plato as described in The Republic. In politics a noble lie is a myth or untruth knowingly told, by leaders to maintain social harmony, or the social position of the leader. The noble lie is a concept originated by Plato as described in The Republic.

Surely, there is no way that everyone in government would be so naïve or stupid that they could so easily be misled by falsehood and manipulated intelligence. This becomes more curious because there was a lot of opposition and cries for the government to show caution and constraint that was been raised in the background. The indisputable fact is that the action was a premeditated and well calculated manipulation of intelligence and fabrication of propaganda to invade and occupy Iraq. It cannot just be written off on flimsy reasons like it was a mistake or blunder. The deceptions were calculated efforts to achieve vested interest by fabricating lies in line with the neo-conservative conception.

The article recommends that policies which adversely affect humanity should be transparently and honestly weighed with high sense of morality. The use of force should be viewed as a last resort, appropriate only when it is inevitable and all reasonable diplomatic efforts are exhausted. Conscientious and painstaking negotiations, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and judicial settlements should be adopted to make peace.

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