

Looking Backward: Another 21st Century Coup For Neo-Conservative America

Reflections on the Re-installation of George W. Bush

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Despite the proclamations of the political pundits over the corporate media outlets that the elections held on November 2 provided a broad mandate for the further implementation of the right-wing agenda of George W. Bush and his allies in the ruling elites, in actuality these developments illustrate the desperate character of the American empire and its increasing escape from the realities of the modern world.

Official America's growing isolationist philosophy and outlook provides no solution to the ever increasing crisis in the world capitalist system. Even though the United States military continues its occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, the people of these nations have firmly rejected their presence while the masses of the world view the current power brokers in this country as the greatest threat to peace in the international community.

Of course the peoples of Iraq will immediately feel the brunt of intensified carpet-bombing of selected bases of national resistance to the genocidal occupation of their nation. Inside the United States the poor and working class segments of the population are being targeted for further governmental repression and exploitation. Issues related to racial and social justice, universal health care, clean air and water, as well as the necessity to resolve the problems of growing poverty and social alienation of tens of millions of people, will be further obscured by the major media outlets.

These acts of self-delusion and the false sense of superiority cannot be seen as a by-product of a putative christian nation that happens also to be "democratic", but as mere symptoms of a deepening malaise growing out of the inevitable decline in the influence of the United States government over the peoples of the world. Although Bush and his supporters may take comfort in what transpired during the course of the national elections and its aftermath, it will not alter the popular world view that America's greatest days are in its past and that the future course of human history could very well diminish the power and influence of this imperialist nation.

How did this right-wing regime organize a second coup that subverts the social will of the majority of the population inside this country and around the world? Simply by controlling the mass media, which is in fact corporate in orientation, and by elevating key political issues to the level of moral questions which speak more to the burgeoning marginalization of conservative American values in the broader community of nations. In addition to the role of the corporate media, the degree to which the state apparatus can manipulate public opinion to create an illusion of "security" which takes precedence over the need for fundamental social benefits and gains, the more strident the leadership of the nation

becomes in fostering the perverted notions that there is no other path outside of what official U.S. policy dictates.

Rigging the 2004 Elections

After the coup of 2000, where tens of thousands of voters were disenfranchised in the state of Florida, there was much discussion in the corporate media about how these pitfalls would be avoided on November 2. However, beginning weeks prior to the election day, there was a series of contentious court cases centering around the efforts to legally resist the right-wing machine that is designed to stifle and subvert the democratic rights of the majority of people inside the country.

The struggles over provisional ballots, the role of Republican and Democratic poll monitors and challengers, as well as efforts aimed at disqualifying voters from African-American, Hispanic and non-Republican voting blocs was a reflection of the desire on the part of the ruling class to even deny these social groups a minimal share of what is considered the privileges of “bourgeois democracy” in the United States.

According to the New York Times on November 3,

“[T]he Election Protection Coalition, a nonpartisan group that tracked problems in polling places, said it had received 23,000 reports of problems at the polls nationwide, including 1,100 about voting machines that malfunctioned and 8,900 incidents of voters not appearing on registration rolls. Thousands more involved problems with absentee ballots.”

This New York Times article goes on to say that

“[S]ome disabled Florida voters who failed to receive absentee ballots were turned away when they tried to vote in person. Elsewhere in Florida, some Hispanic voters said they were falsely told the polls had closed early, and in New Mexico some voters said callers had given them phony information about changed polling places.”

Continuing along these same lines the article claims that in “Nevada, election officials said calls had been made to some registered Democrats telling falsely of changes in the time and place of balloting. Others reported visits from strangers with ballots, which were to be filled out and handed back.”

Key issues involving the so-called “provisional balloting” process would be important to the outcome of the overall presidential election. A provisional ballot is one that is cast by a voter when their name does not appear on the registration rolls. Once the voter fills out the ballot, it is supposed to be matched with the overall registration list and then counted. However, in the same above-mentioned article in the New York Times, “[M]ore confusion surrounded the use of provisional ballots in many states. They were being used for the first time by voters whose names did not appear on official voter rolls. Some states counted them yesterday, others said they would do so only if a recount became necessary.”

Despite the notions advanced by the corporate media and the Republican strategist, that the results of the Presidential elections represented a sound mandate for Bush and his right-

wing agenda, the outcome was determined by the results in one so-called “battleground” state, Ohio. In 2000 it was Florida, but in 2004 it became Ohio. Confusing statements related to the role of provisional ballots created a similar feeling of rigging as was illustrated in the failure to count votes in Florida four years ago.

The corporate media reported several conflicting figures related to the number of provisional ballots cast during the elections. Figures provided by Ohio’s Republican Secretary of State indicated that Bush led the vote tally by approximately 130,000 votes. Nonetheless, there were several unsubstantiated figures given out on how many provisional ballots were cast in the state. Some media outlets said initially that there were 175,000 provisional ballots cast. Later this number was reduced to a figure nearly equal to the supposed lead held by Bush during the early morning hours on November 3.

In stark contrast, the number of provisional ballots estimated by other sources within the Democratic Party alleged that up to 250,000 of such votes were utilized in the state of Ohio. Soon these issues were no longer discussed. During the time period leading up to the rapid concession decision made by the Kerry camp, it was repeatedly stated by the Republican strategist and their allies in the corporate media that it would be statistically impossible for Kerry to win the elections through the counting of the provisional ballots.

During the early morning hours, Vice-Presidential candidate John Edwards appeared before Kerry supporters and stated that every vote should count and that every vote should be counted. Yet several hours later the Democratic candidate for President had dropped the notion of any legal or political challenge to the results in Ohio. Much was made of the fact that Bush supposedly won 3.5 million more popular votes than Kerry, this means very little in regard to how Presidents are selected. In fact it is the number of electoral votes that put presidents in office in the United States.

The role of the corporate media outlets was key in giving the elections to the Bush-Cheney ticket. There were different numbers given out in relation to how many electoral votes the candidates had won. On CNN, the count had remained at 254 for Bush and 252 for Kerry during the early morning hours. With Ohio’s 20 electoral votes, a win by Kerry would have secured the White House, which required a total of 272 electoral votes to declare victory. However, on CBS the figures were different, giving Bush 254 and Kerry 242.

Despite this closeness of the race, the question of the number of provisional ballots cast in Ohio was trivialized as the hours went on. By the time Bush was declared the winner, the issue of how many actual provisional ballots were cast was totally ignored. The provisional ballots would not have been counted until efforts aimed at verification were made. This would have taken several days if not weeks to complete.

After Edwards false proclamation that the Democratic ticket would demand a full counting and verification of all votes in the state of Ohio, the media began to bemoan the notion that this would prove divisive and put the nation through a similar “agony” as occurred in 2000 as a result of the irregularities in the state of Florida. It was rumored that lawyers working with the Kerry-Edwards ticket wanted to launch a challenge to the rapid attempts to certify the votes in Ohio. It also appeared that there was a division between Edwards and Kerry over whether to challenge the election results in Ohio. If this challenge had taken place and the all of the votes were counted, recounted and verified it could have changed the outcome of the vote in Ohio and consequently given the election to Kerry. However, Kerry quickly conceded and handed over the presidency to Bush without a fight, consequently

abandoning the millions of voters who came out and stood in line for hours thinking that their efforts would result in the defeat of George W. Bush.

It is important to recognize the role of the Kerry-Edwards ticket in this scenario. When the leadership itself refuses to fight, the confusion over who actually won the elections becomes a secondary issue in the corporate media. This should not be surprising since all of the television networks have advanced a pro-Bush bias throughout the course of the campaign. Their role in shaping the post-election dialogue and decision must be acknowledged. It became unimportant that all of the votes in Ohio were not counted prior to giving the race to Bush. Consequently, the Oval office was once again seized by the neo-conservative right.

Examples of Voter Intimidation in Detroit

In the city of Detroit there were numerous Republican poll monitors and challengers sent into the city in order to intimidate voters and lay the basis for a legal challenge if the election was given to John Kerry. At Messiah Baptist Church on the city's west side there were at least five Republican monitors and challengers at this one voting location. Democratic lawyers and independent observers were also present and attempted to counter the influence of the Bush supporters. Republicans stood behind the tables where voters signed-in to cast their ballots. Challenges to the right to vote were launched, however, by mid-day the situation had stabilized and voting appeared to be moving along without serious disruption.

Nevertheless, at the voting precincts located in the Greater Emmanuel Church of God in Christ on 7 Mile and Schaefer, one Republican zealot had sought during the early morning hours to intimidate voters by demanding identification. After he was confronted by the largely African-American electorate, the police arrived in several squad cars and this gentleman was carried away.

The atmosphere became quite tense as well at the Unity Temple of the Apostolic Faith on Wyoming, when it was alleged that one Republican challenger pushed someone handing out literature in front of the church. He was later carried away by the police. A similar situation occurred at Greater Mitchell Church of God in Christ when a Republican challenger began to invade the private space of voters in this predominately African-American district. This Republican was also escorted out by the city officials.

Many of the Republicans had drove hours from outstate to voting locations in African-American communities where high voter turnout was common. Yet the people in Detroit would not allow these outsiders to intimidate them and insisted on their right to vote without harrassment and interference.

During the early evening hours at Kettering High School on the city's east side, three Republican challengers and poll monitors attempted to interfere with the operation of the voting precincts. One Republican stated to the challenger after taking a statement, that they would file a legal challenge after the elections, if Bush lost, in an attempt to question or overturn the results in favor of the Republican ticket. When poll observers from Detroit came into the precincts at Kettering and questioned the Republicans, two left immediately leaving one challenger who then moved to the corner of the room and sat quietly.

At Butzel School located on Kercheval, also on the east side, a Republican challenger demanded that a Detroit election observer remove a NAACP cap being worn inside the

voting area, saying that this was a sign of partisanship. However, this attack on the NAACP was halted after citing that the organization is non-partisan and the person wearing the cap displayed no campaign material.

Michigan went to Kerry by a narrow margin, but it illustrated how Republicans sought to effectively suppress the Democratic vote in African-American areas.

Implications for a Second Bush Term

The election results in the presidential race does not constitute a mandate for the furtherance of a right-wing agenda in the United States. According to the results given out by the corporate media, over 55 million people voted against Bush and his program on November 2. This was done despite the constant conservative slant advanced by the media outlets and the attempt to promote the inevitability of the dominance of the Republicans and their allies in the business and political elites. The fact of the matter is that the nation still remains sharply divided. Very much like 2000, the outcome was determined by the questionable results of one state where a Republican Secretary of State was in office. It was reported that over 250,000 provisional ballots were not considered in determining the outcome in Ohio, even though the stated margin of victory was well under 140,000 votes.

Many people who voted for Kerry harbored no illusions about the potential of a Democratic administration in the White House. The anti-Bush sentiment was perhaps the most consistent motivating factor in why tens of millions came out to vote in a race that, if all ballots were counted in Ohio, could have resulted in the ouster of the most conservative government since the great depression. This anti-Bush sentiment existed despite the fake notions related to a "wartime presidency", a war which was based on a series of carefully orchestrated lies by the administration.

As a result of the Iraq and Afghan war over 100,000 civilians have lost their lives. In addition, American soldiers are dying on a daily basis. It has been reported that United States casualties in Iraq have exceeded 17,000 people with 1,100 officially reported deaths of American soldiers. Anti-war sentiment remains high not only in the United States but also in Europe and throughout the world. America has become the most hated nation in the international community. The current leadership under George Bush will undoubtedly continue to breed hatred and resentment throughout the globe.

In essence there is no reasonable way out of the increasing marginalization by the United States ruling elites. People will continue to resist the Bush program in the streets, workplaces and in the halls of educational institutions. This is inevitable because the American ruling class has nothing to offer the majority of the people of the United States and the world. It is easy for the Bush administration to proclaim victory over the popular interests and aspirations of its people as it did on May 1, 2003 in relationship to Iraq. However, this will not end the struggle for real democracy. The war in Iraq continues and the struggle to overcome right-wing hegemony will continue as well in the United States and throughout the world.

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