

Presidential Rule by Deception: Obama, the Master Con-man

By [Prof. James Petras](#)

Global Research, June 24, 2013

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

Introduction

In an electoral system, run by and for a corporate oligarchy, deception and demagoguery are essential elements - entertaining the people while working for the wealthy.

Every US President has engaged, in one fashion or another, in 'play acting' to secure popular approval, neutralize hostility and distract voters from the reactionary substance of their foreign and domestic policies.

Every substantive policy is accompanied by a 'down home' folksy message to win public approval. This happened with President 'Jimmy' Carter's revival of large-scale proxy wars in Afghanistan in the post-Viet Nam War period; Ronald Reagan's genocidal wars in Central America, George Bush Sr.'s savaging of Iraq in the First Gulf War; 'Bill' Clinton's decimation of social welfare in the US while bombing civilians in Yugoslavia and deregulating Wall Street; George Bush Jr.'s invasion and partition of Iraq and Afghanistan, the attempted coup in Venezuela and massive tax cuts for the rich; and Barack Obama's staggering bailout of the biggest Wall Street speculators, unprecedented launching of five consecutive wars, and arrest and deportation of millions of immigrant workers. Each President has elaborated a style in order to ingratiate himself with the public while pursuing his reactionary agenda.

In rhetoric, appearance and in public persona, it is 'de rigueur' for US Presidents to present themselves as an 'everyman' while committing political actions - including war crimes worthy of prosecution.

Each President, in his 'play acting', develops a style suitable to the times. They constantly strive to overcome the public's suspicion and potential hostility to their overt and covert policies designed to build empire as domestic conditions deteriorate. However, not all play acting is the same: each President's 'populist' style in defense of oligarchic interests has its characteristic nuances.

The Carter Feint: 'Human Rights' Wars in the Post-Viet Nam War Era



'Jimmy' Carter was elected President at a time of the greatest mass anti-war upheaval in US history. His campaign projected a soft-spoken, conciliatory President from humble roots reaching out to the anti-war electorate and solemnly pledging to uphold human rights against domestic militarists and their overseas despotic allies. To that end, he appointed a liberal human rights advocate Pat Derian to the State Department and a veteran Cold Warrior, Zbigniew (Zbig) Brzezinski, as National Security Advisor and foreign policy strategist.

Duplicity reared its head immediately: Carter openly criticized the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua - while privately telling the dictator to ignore the public criticisms and assuring him of continuing US support.[1] As the Sandinista revolution advanced toward victory, Carter convoked a meeting of Latin American leaders urging them to join in a joint military intervention with the US to 'save lives' and to prevent the popular Nicaraguan revolution from taking power and dismantling the dictator's army. It soon became clear to the leaders of Latin America that Carter's mission was a thinly-veiled 'humanitarian' version of 'gunboat diplomacy' and they declined. When Carter realized that, without the fig leaf of Latin American participation, a US-led invasion would arouse universal opposition, he abandoned the project. The political climate would not support a unilateral US invasion so soon after the end of the war in Indochina .

However, Carter soon re-launched the Cold War, reviving military spending and pouring billions of dollars into funding, arming and training tens of thousands of fundamentalist Jihadists from around the world to invade Afghanistan and overthrow its leftist, secular government.

Carter's policy of re-militarization and launching of large-scale and long-term secret CIA operations in alliance with the most brutal dictators and monarchs of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan was accompanied by sanctimonious speeches about human rights and token appeals to protect 'civilians'. In this regard, Carter became our founding father of the double discourse: a con man that publically condemned the jailing and torture by Pinochet of political opponents in Chile while orchestrating what would become a decade-long blood bath in Afghanistan with millions of victims.

Reagan: Geniality with Genocide



Up until the ascendancy of Barack Obama, the avuncular President, Ronald Reagan, was acknowledged as the 'master con-man', by virtue of his Hollywood acting experience. Reagan was and remained a disciplined and hardened backer of policies designed to concentrate wealth while smashing unions, even as he entertained the flag-waving hard hat construction workers with his jokes about 'limousine liberals' and Cadillac welfare queens. The knowing wink and clever two-liners were matched by an adaptation of morality tales from his cowboy films. Reagan, in his role as 'the righteous sheriff', backed the mercenary contras as they invaded Nicaragua and destroyed schools and clinics and the genocidal military dictators in El Salvador and Guatemala who murdered hundreds of thousands of Indians and peasants.

Uncle Reagan's friendly chats would describe how he had stopped the communist 'outlaws' (peasants, workers and Indians) of Central America from flooding across the Rio Grande and invading California and Texas. His tales resonated with mass audiences familiar with the racist Hollywood cowboy film version of unshaven Mexican bandits crossing the ' US ' border. The clean-shaven, straight-talking, 'stand-up for America' President Ronald Reagan was elected and re-elected by a resounding majority in the midst of CIA-backed mujahedeen victories over the government and secular civil structure of Afghanistan, Pentagon-supported Israeli slaughter of Palestinian refugees in their camps in Lebanon and the mass genocide of scores of thousands of indigenous villagers in Guatemala.

When news reports seeped out about the mass graves of poor villagers in Guatemala , Reagan resorted to colloquial language right out of a Hollywood film to defend General Rios Mont : "He's getting a bum rap". In defending the brutal dictator of Guatemala , Reagan replaced Carter's sanctimonious phrasing in favor of down-to-earth macho talk of a no-nonsense sheriff.

In substance, both Carter and Reagan were rebuilding the US war machine after the debacle of Viet Nam ; they were setting up a global network of client dictators, Muslim fundamentalists and hypocritical Anglo-American humanitarians interventionists.

Bush Senior: Uni-Polarity and the Ticket to Uncontested Imperial Conquests



Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, the US and

Western Europe re-conquered, pillaged and neo-colonized Eastern Europe . West Germany annexed East Germany . And a predator-gangster oligarchy in Russia seized over a trillion dollars of public assets, impoverishing millions and laundered the illicit funds via elaborate banking operations on Wall Street and in London and Tel Aviv.

President George Bush Sr. embraced the doctrine of a unipolar world – free from rival super-power constraints and independent Third World resistance. ‘Poppy’ Bush believed the US could impose its will by force anywhere and at any time without fear of retaliation. He believed he was heir to a new imperial order of free markets, free elections and unrestrained plunder. The first war he would launch would be in the Middle East – the invasion, massive bombing and destruction of Iraq . It was followed by an unprecedented expansion of NATO bases in the countries of Eastern Europe . The spread of neo-liberalism led to the naked pillage of public assets throughout Latin American and Eastern Europe . The Empire ruled the Muslim world through an arc of client dictators from Tunisia , Egypt , and Saudi Arabia to Pakistan .

Bush adopted the persona of the ‘happy warrior’ – the invincible American President who had triumphed over the Evil Empire. Meanwhile, the domestic economy deteriorated under the enormous costs of the massive military build-up and gave rise to a crisis that hurt the electorate. Bush’s personal rigidity and lack of theatricality prevented him from playing the con-man – unlike his predecessor, the actor Reagan. Even as he extolled the prowess of the US military, his career as an ‘insider’ corporate operative and CIA director did not provide him with the demagogic skills necessary for a successful re-election.

While Bush celebrated his overseas victories, he failed to attract a popular following: His pinched face and wooden upper-crust smile was no match for ‘Cowboy’ Reagan’s street corner geniality or even ‘Jimmy’ Carter’s pious intonations of human rights and Christian values ... Deception and demagoguery are crucial elements in a re-election campaign – and so Bush, Sr. gave way for the next Presidential con-man-in-chief, Bill Clinton.

The Clinton-Con: Black Churches , Welfare Cuts and the Wall Street Warrior



Bill Clinton, like Ronald Reagan, turned out to be a Wall Street populist .With his folksy Arkansas intonations he preached messages of hope in black churches while diligently applying the free-market lessons he had learned from his Wall Street mentors. Tooting the saxophone and oozing compassion, Clinton told the poor that he could ‘feel their pain’, while inflicting misery on single mothers forced to leave their children and take minimum-wage jobs in order to retain any public assistance. He joined hands with labor union bosses at Labor Day festivities, while fast-tracking job-killing free-trade treaties (like NAFTA) that devastated the American working class. Bill Clinton enthusiastically sent bombers over Belgrade and other Yugoslav cities for several weeks, destroying its factories, hospitals, schools, power plants, radio and TV stations and bridges, as well as the Chinese Embassy, in support of the terrorist Kosovo Liberation Army and its separatist war against Belgrade . Clinton bombed civilians and their vital infrastructure, a war crime in the name of ‘humanitarian intervention’, to the ecstatic cheers of many Western liberals, progressives,

social democrats and not a few Marxists as well as many Jihadists. On the home front, this self-proclaimed 'people's candidate' ripped to shreds all restraints on banking speculation by repealing the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933, New Deal legislation enacted to protect against massive banking swindles. This opened the floodgates to massive financial manipulation, which destroyed the pensions of many millions of workers.[2]

Clinton's policies laid the groundwork for the information technology and Stock Market crash of 2000-01. His appointee, Alan Greenspan, created the conditions leading to speculative financial frenzy and subsequent economic crash of 2008. Bill Clinton's stand-up comic performances in black churches, his back slapping encounters with labor bureaucrats and his embrace of feminists and others just raised the rhetorical bar for future aspiring Wall Street warlords in the White House. It would take eight years and the election of Barack Hussein Obama to finally surpass Bill Clinton as Con-Man-In Chief.

Bush Junior: A Yale Man with a Texas Drawl



President George Bush, Junior's regime launched two major wars and backed two Israeli assaults on Palestinian civilians trapped in Gaza - the world's largest open-air prison. He virtually eliminated taxes on billionaires while overseeing the geometrical growth of the domestic police state apparatus; and he unleashed the biggest speculative bubble and crash since the Great Depression. He lowered the living standards for all Americans except the top 10% of the population - and despite these disasters and despite his lack-luster performance as a con-man, he was re-elected.

His handlers and backers did their best to market their boy: his Ivy League credentials and New England background was replaced by a transparently phony Texas accent; tinny, whiney sound bites, reminiscent of his father's, were replaced by a Texas 'ranchers' homely drawl. His 'just-folks' grammatical mistakes may have been mocked by the liberals but they resonated deeply with fundamentalist Christians - who would never have recognized the Phillips Exeter Academy-Yale Skull and Bones boy in their Commander-in Chief.



President Bush, Jr. was decked out in the uniform of a 'Top Gun' fighter pilot to polish his military credentials tarnished by revelations that the millionaire-playboy had gone AWOL during his service in the National Guard. His silly 'Mission Accomplished' claim that the Iraq war had been won in the first months after

the invasion was rudely corrected by the huge outbreak of Iraqi resistance against the occupier. Bush handed over foreign policymaking, especially pertaining to the Middle East , to a small army of Jewish Zionists, aided and abetted by notorious militarists, like Cheney and Rumsfeld. Most major political events were handled by his Cabinet thugs – Secretary of State Colin Powell shamelessly fabricated the ‘evidence’ of Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction in his performance before the United Nations. Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz invented Afghanistan ’s ties to the planners of 9/11.

Cheney and his Zionist troika of Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith and ‘Scooter’ Libby trumpeted the ‘global war on terror’ while Michael Chertoff, Michael Mukasey and Stuart Levey conducted a domestic war against the Bill of Rights and US Constitutional freedoms, defending torture, jailing thousands of Muslims, punishing businesses trading with Iran and labeling US opponents of Israel’s war crimes as ‘security threats’. Bush, Jr. just nodded his approval, letting the “big fellas have a piece of the action”. With Junior, there was no peace demagoguery just plain talk to plain folks and- “Let the bombs fall and the Capital flow”. Bush did not have to go preaching to black churches (he had a black Secretary of State and National Security Adviser to do his dirty work without the cant); Bush never claimed that Israel got the ‘bum rap’ when it was charged with genocidal crimes. Under Bush, Jr., war criminals did not have to ‘sugar-coat’ their crimes. While occupying the White House, Bush signed off on the multi-trillion-dollar bailout for Wall Street and then just went off to tend his cows and chop wood at the Texas ranch.

Bush’s ‘style’ was a combination of ‘laid back’ and ‘straight forward’: he simply committed war crimes, protected Wall Street swindles and expanded the police state, without claiming otherwise. As the endless wars dragged on, as the stock market flopped under its own fraud and manipulation and the increasingly repressive legislation provoked debate, Bush just shrugged his shoulders and finished out his term in office without flourish or fanfare: “Y’all can’t win ‘em all. Let the next guy try his hand”.

Barack Obama: The Master of Deceit



From the beginning of his Presidential campaign, Obama demonstrated his proficiency as the master of all cons. He spoke passionately against torture while consulting with the torturers; he condemned Wall Street speculators while appointing key Street operatives as economic advisers. He promised a new deal in the Middle East , especially for Palestinians and then appointed a dual citizen, Israeli-US, Rahm Emmanuel (son of an Israeli Irgun terrorist) to be his most intimate Presidential advisor. Honolulu born and bred, Barack modulated his voice according to the audience, adopting a Baptist minister’s cadence for the black audiences while assuming the professorial tone of an Ivy League lawyer for his Wall Street contributors.

He hob-knobbed with Hollywood celebrities and Silicon billionaires, who bankrolled the fairy tale of his 'historic breakthrough' - the First Afro-American President who would speak for all Americans - nay for the entire world! Millions of giddy camp followers, white, black, old and young, the trade unionists and community activists alike were willingly deceived. They had chosen to disregard the fact that Barack Obama's key advisers were rabid militarists, big bankers, corporate CEO's, die-hard Zionists and Wall Street manipulators.

Indeed Obama's supporters were enchanted by the phony rhetoric, the demagoguery, the 'populist style', and the fake 'authenticities'. Here was the man who promised to end the wars, close the torture concentration camp in Guantanamo, bring Wall Street to heel, repeal the Patriot Act and restore the Bill of Rights. And he was 'their guy' - shooting hoops in an urban playground - something Bush had never done! In truth, Barack Hussein Obama did a lot that Bush never dared to do - he surpassed Bush by far in committing war crimes against humanity - pushing for more military adventures abroad and police state repression at home. He exceeded by far any President in US history in assuming dictatorial police powers, in waging multiple wars while directing the massive transfer of state revenues to Wall Street bankers. President Obama, hands down, will be regarded as the greatest con-man President in American history. The Carters, Reagans and Clintons all pale in comparison: the enormous gap between style and substance, promise and performance, peace and war, capital and labor has never been greater.

It is President Obama's hollow eloquence that raised the hopes of millions at home and abroad only to condemn them to an inferno of endless wars. It is the perversity of his rhetoric which attracts the Latino vote with promises of immigrant citizenship while his policy has been fill detention centers with hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers and their families. His soaring rhetoric promising justice for Muslims in Cairo was followed by the bloody bombing of Tripoli, the torture and slaughter of the Libyan patriot President Gadhafi; the broken promises to the Palestinians contrasts with the embrace of the bloody Israeli warlords.

Obama far out-paced President Bush's drone attacks in Pakistan, Yemen and Afghanistan, bombings which targeted farmers, whole families and famished orphans in their schools. Soaring moral and ethical pronouncements accompany Obama's arming and praising the 40,000 Muslim fundamentalist mercenaries sent to degrade and shatter the secular Syrian state. The pretexts for mass killing fall from his lips like maggots on a rotten corpse: his blatant lies about the use of poison gas in Syria as the government in Damascus confronts a foreign mercenary invasion; the lurid tales of fabricated massacres in Benghazi (Libya) and the false claims of stolen elections in Venezuela. Obama's rhetoric converts executioners into victims and victims into executioners.

President Barack Obama promised a comprehensive health care overhaul for America and then presented the electorate with a confusing series of obligatory payments for plans designed by for-profit private health insurance companies. Obama 'defended social security' by raising the age of retirement, ensuring that hundreds of thousands of workers in hazardous occupations would die before ever receiving any benefits after a lifetime of obligatory contributions. Obama solemnly promised to defend Medicare and then proposed to reduce its budget by a trillion dollars over a decade.

Obama claims a presidential prerogative of 'defending American interests' by ordering the assassination of whomever his million-member secret police state apparatus designates as a security threat - including American citizens - without trial, without recourse to habeas

corpus.

In the White House Rose Garden President Barack Obama strolls arm-in-arm with his wife and children, a family man, true to his promises... While in Aleppo a young teen, a street vendor, is beheaded before his parents and neighbors by fanatical 'freedom-fighters' praised and supported by the President. The boy's alleged crime was blasphemy. The murdered teen has joined the scores of thousands of Syrians killed and the hundreds of thousands who will join them, as Obama has decided to openly arm the mercenaries.

Casual, open collar, President Obama jokes as he walks and talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the sumptuous estate of a California billionaire, offering friendship and peace – shaking hands for the cameras with a scorpion in his palm. The smiling Obama has ceaselessly dispatched his envoys to Asia, Latin America, Oceania and Africa to incite claims and conflicts against Beijing . Obama believes that his own 'personal magic' will blind the Chinese to the fact that China is being encircled by US air and maritime bases. He seems to believe that the Chinese will ignore his efforts to forge US-centered trade pacts which specifically exclude China .

The master 'confidence-man' sincerely believes in his power to move and mystify the public, pick the pockets of his adversaries and make his victims believe they have been in the presence of a world-class statesman. In fact, Obama has been playing the role of a street hustler living off the earnings and lives of his people while handing them over to his corporate bosses and pimps for Israel .

Obama fills internment camps with hundreds of thousands of Latino immigrant workers while promising a 'roadmap to citizenship' to the cheers of Mexican-American Democratic Party vote hustlers!

Obama received 95% of the Afro-American votes, while the income gap between blacks and whites widens and unemployment and poverty figures soar. Obama, the first 'Afro-American President', has bombed and intervened in more African countries, backing mercenary armies in Libya and Somalia and establishing more military bases throughout the black continent than the last five 'white' Presidents ... So much for the self-proclaimed "historic breakthrough of a Black President ending centuries of racism".

It's enough for Obama to appoint other black police state thugs and foreign interventionists, like Eric Holder and Susan Rice, to win the cheers of liberals even as their own security files grow in the data warehouses of the world's biggest spying agencies.

One cynic, commenting on the long-standing love affair between Obama and white liberals, observed that 'the more he screws them the better they like him ... Even as he marches them off to jail, they would take care to note on his behalf, that the barred windows have curtains – something Bush would never have allowed.'

Conclusion

For sheer span of broken promises, of systematic lies in pursuit of wars and financial manipulation in the name of peace and social justice , of consistent and bold aggrandizement of executive power over the life and death of US citizens in the name of security, Obama has set the standard of political deception and demagoguery far beyond past and probable future US Presidents.

The political context of his ascent to power and his deep links to the military-financial-Zionist networks insured his success as a premier confidence man.

President George Bush, Jr., the cringing, fading war-monger engaged in prolonged, costly wars and facing the collapse of the entire banking and financial sector, provided Candidate Obama with an easy target. Obama exploited the mass revulsion of the American people, longing for change. His soaring rhetoric and vacuous promise of 'change' attracted millions of young activists ... The problem is that in their enthusiasm and blind adherence to 'identity politics' with its claims that all 'blacks' and 'women' are oppressed and therefore guaranteed to promote peace and justice — facilitated Obama's con-game and political hustle.

Obama, once in office, not only deepened and widened the scope of President Bush, Jr's wars, massive spy apparatus and corporate profiteering; he bamboozled the vast majority of his liberal-labor supporters in the Democratic Party! Barack Obama conned the Democratic Party Congressional liberals and they, in turn, conned their constituents into supporting this fraud.

The costs of President Obama's two-faced policies are enormous: democracy has given way to a police state openly defended by the President and Congressional leaders; Wall Street's recovery and corporate profiteering is fast destroying public health and social security. Barack Obama's multiple endless wars and interventions are destroying vast cities, infrastructure, entire cultures while and killing and impoverishing millions of people from Libya to Palestine , from Syria to Iran . The economic sanctions against Iran , the provocative encirclement and isolation of China , and the campaign to destabilize Venezuela are the centerpieces of Obama's 'pivot to empire'. These policies portend even greater world-shattering catastrophes.

Unmasking the con-man is a first step requiring that we expose the tricks of the con-game. The politics of deception and demagoguery thrives by directing popular attention to style and rhetoric, not substance. The solemn and pious cant of 'Jimmy' Carter distracted from his launch of the rabid Jihadists against the secular administration of Afghanistan . Uncle Ronald Reagan's geniality and populist TV patter covered-up his blood baths in Central America and mass firing of the unionized air controllers and jailing of union leaders. 'Bill' Clinton's show of empathy for the poor and embrace of 'feel-good' politics neutralized opposition as he bombed Yugoslavia into a pre-industrial age while his domestic policies kicked vulnerable single mothers from welfare programs. They all paled before the grand con-master Obama, billed as the 'first black' President, a community organizer (who disowned his sponsor into the black communities of Chicago, Rev. Wright, for his anti-war, anti-imperial stand) has capitalized on his racial credentials to garner the vote of guilty-ridden, soft-headed liberals and marginalized blacks in order to serve the interests of Wall Street and Israel.

Disarming these con-men and women requires exposing the nature of their demagogic populist styles and focusing on substantive politics. The decisive criteria need to be class politics that are defined by fundamental class alignments, between capital and labor regarding budgets, income, taxes, social spending, financing and property rights. 'Shooting hoops' in ghetto playgrounds is a con-man's distraction while his budget cuts close hospitals and schools in black and poor neighborhoods.

The extravaganzas, featuring sports and entertainment celebrities to promote imperial wars, are the 'con' to undermine international solidarity for war victims and the unemployed.

President Obama, the confidence man, is still performing while sowing destruction.

It's time for the deceived, the disillusioned and the deprived to stand-up and shout! "We are deceived no more. Its time you were put on trial for Crimes against Humanity!"

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Prof. James Petras](#), Global Research, 2013

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Prof. James
Petras](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca