

War, Politics and the Economic Crisis: Why We Barely Know What's Going On

In war as in Politics and finance, the real "action" is now covert hidden from the public -- deceptive and dishonest

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Defending America covertly has become an ongoing theme for one more TV series. Salute the flag and praise NBC (GE) for its latest effort to persuade the population to accept the kind of secret operations that now drive the war in Afghanistan. Their latest show is called "Covert Affairs" and airs on the patriotically named USA Network.

This fiction is based on faction, glamorizing the work of our unaccountable CIA at home and at war with Piper Perabo who has been promoted from dancing barmaid in Coyote Ugly into a CIA trainee "who is suddenly thrust into the inner sanctum of the agency after being promoted to field operative."

The dumbed down formula is tried and true , showcasing what TV pros call "the three S's:" Sex, Spies, and Sensationalism.

It's a "world of bureaucracy, excitement and intrigue," the network tells us, on the frontlines of protecting our declining way of life. Doug Limon, an old friend who directed the first Bourne blockbuster is exec producing this propaganda exercise. And if that's not bad enough, the series about covertly defending America is being overtly filmed in Canada. Toronto gets the jobs, one more reason, no doubt, why we have had a "jobless recovery" here at home.

So much of politics and economics today is a covert affair where public knowledge is blatantly manipulated. For weeks, we were told that political incumbents were toast until they weren't in the recent election, but few media outlets let the facts get in the way of their Tea Party reinforced and endlessly repeated narrative.

On another big story, 49% of the American public is said to have been convinced by one-sided pro-Israeli coverage of the Gaza Flotilla interception perhaps because it built on long embedded perceptions in which alternative information—make that factual information— is excluded.

Netanyahu's publicity army got out its video version of the events first even as his military army screwed up while keeping their victims from getting out theirs. The US media dutifully used it as a perception management exercise of demonizing Israel's critics and boosting the heroism of the IDF's pirates at sea while keeping the humanitarian aid workers from the media and seizing/surpressing their videos—which are just getting out—a bit late, perhaps too late to change the media frame.

The outsourcing of jobs for actors on TV shows mirrors the wider outsourcing in the economy as a whole. So many jobs are gone and not coming back.

There is a growing number of war jobs while civilian employment sinks. Pro-business propaganda has successfully convinced the Congress that deficit reductions must come before job creation. The [National Employment Law Project \(NELP\)](#) reports:

“The Department of Labor has reported that more than 300,000 workers will run out of benefits by June 12th, the end of the first week Congress returns from recess.”

Economist and former Labor Secretary Robert Reich attacks what he calls the “Deficit hawks” by arguing that consumer spending is 70 percent of the American economy, so if consumers can’t or won’t spend we’re back in the soup.

He writes, “Yet the government just reported that consumer spending stalled in April – the first month consumers didn’t up their spending since last September. Instead, consumers boosted their savings, probably because they’re worried about the slow pace of job growth
....

So what’s Congress doing to stoke the economy as consumers pull back? In a word, nothing.”

Congress may not be passing new job creation bills but there is something insidious underway as these deficit hawks are said to be beginning to target Medicare and Social Security.

As for financial reform, many media outlets are not sure where that is going either. Example, an editorial in the Milwaukee Journal:

“As Congress works to put the finishing touches on a massive bill to reform the nation’s financial system, it’s a fair question to ask whether the proposed legislation will do what its sponsors claim: reduce the odds of another crisis, protect consumers and ensure that taxpayers won’t be on the hook for a future bailout.

At the same time Heather Booth of Citizens for Financial Reform is mildly optimistic, and chides my pessimism, writing:

“Do think you are not recognizing what was accomplished-while it is important to say that the struggle goes on and the nature of the crisis demands more.

We achieved so much more than anyone thought we could at the start of this fight.

First time there was real fight back against Wall Street. And the bill has gotten stronger, not weaker. We probably will win: consumer protection-still need no carve outs in the future fight to greater enforcement

....There is MUCH more to do: ban naked credit default swaps (the weapons of mass financial destruction), foreclosure (!!!) and community reinvestment, executive compensation, and more. But quite a start and should not be discounted.”

I hope she’s right but, even as no changes have yet been made, there has been a wave of unjustified media optimism as satirized by the Onion which asks, “Could the economy be on

the rebound? Here are some other favorable indicators:"

Sufficient supplies of toilet paper in all rest stops between Tomah, WI and Gary, IN Jim Cramer no longer wildly waving a gun around during his telecast

Phrase "Fucking Goldman Sachs" has been dropped almost completely in favor of "Fucking BP." Alas, this is nothing to joke about as an article on the Naked Capitalism website makes clear:

"It is not a sign of intelligence to repeat a course of action and expect different results. Yet our officialdom is doing pretty much just that on the economic front. Treasury and the Fed in particular seem quite pleased with their success in patching up the financial system with duct tape and baling wire and prodding it into a semblance of operation via massive support, most notably via super low interest rates..."

The failure to change the structure, operation, or leadership of major financial firms means they are just about certain to repeat the same behavior that led to mind-numbing bonuses in 2007 and 2009."

In the meantime, even as an investigation of Goldman Sachs is being broadened, there is still no clamor in Congress or big media to go after financial crime, the story I tell in my film Plunder The Crime of Our Time. (Plunderthecrimeofourtime.com)

The sad truth is that the banjsters who have gotten away with the massive theft of our economy are still getting away with it and profiting while so many of us continue to sink.

*News Dissector **Danny Schechter** offers his "crime narrative" in his book *The Crime of Our Time* and in the film, *Plunder The Crime Of Our Time*. (Plunderthecrimeofourtime.com.) Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org*

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