

The Delray Democrat

Is It Fascism Yet?¹

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America has entered one of its periods of historical madness but this is the worst I can remember, worse than McCarthyism, worse than the Bay of Pigs, and in the long term potentially more disastrous than the Vietnam war. [John Le Carre](#), 1/15/2003.

I first encountered the provocative question in the title on a handwritten sign carried by an elderly woman at an anti-Iraq War rally in DC in September 2002. With the rise of single-party rule in Florida, led by book-banners, nativists, racists, and crypto-fascists, it's a question worth examining in the context of the events of the last 20 years. This article looks at fascism on the federal level. A follow-up article will look at how Florida does fascism.

The question posed by the elderly woman seemed rhetorical at the time. The [chickenhawks](#) in the administration of George W. Bush were on the verge of launching a war against a country that had neither attacked nor posed a threat to the United States.

The threat that worried these men was not to the United States, however. It was to the post-World War II military-industrial complex that Dwight D. Eisenhower had famously [warned](#) was encroaching on basic human needs: "Every gun that is fired, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed."

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the United States as the sole superpower, it had become difficult to justify continuation of the massive military spending that occurred during the Cold War. The military-industrial complex needed new threats.

The Project for the New American Century ("PNAC") provided them. PNAC was a neoconservative think tank whose founders included Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz, the principal architects of the illegal invasion of Iraq. In September 2000, PNAC published [Rebuilding America's Defenses](#).

The report acknowledged that the American public had little appetite for foreign wars and that it would take a "catastrophic and catalyzing event – like a new Pearl Harbor" – for Americans to support the massive increase in military spending PNAC was advocating. The principal threats identified by the report were the three nations the puppet they were about to install in the White House would later bumptiously label "the Axis of Evil."

The report failed to identify the real threat to America, and the Bush administration paid little attention to those who repeatedly warned of the danger posed by Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda

¹ [The Delray Democrat](#), July 2023, page 1.

– the CIA and Richard A. Clarke, chief counter-terrorism adviser on the National Security Council. CIA analysts responsible for preparing the President’s Daily Brief became so concerned with Bush’s refusal to act on the threat that they included it in the title of their August 8, 2001 PDB: [“bin Laden Determined to Strike in US.”](#)

One month later, the worst attack on American soil since Pearl Harbor occurred and the PNAC had the catastrophic event that would not only explode military spending but introduce another period of American madness. Civil liberties would be eroded, the media co-opted, and the [Masters of War](#) enriched.

Convincing a reluctant public to support a war against a nation that was neither involved in 9/11 nor a threat to us, the chickenhawks in the Bush administration turned to a disinformation campaign, the contours of which had already been laid out by [Herman Goering](#): “All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to greater danger.”

Convincing the So-Called Liberal Media of the danger posed by Iraq proved as easy as convincing Bush he was a “War President” avenging his daddy. *The New York Times* published what turned out to be deliberate lies emanating from Dick Cheney’s office about Saddam Hussein’s pursuit of nuclear material, allowing administration officials to go on the Sunday morning talk shows and insist, “even *The New York Times* believes Saddam is a threat.”

A study by Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting [found](#) that only 3 of 393 guests on ABC, CBS, NBC, and PBS in the two-week period surrounding Colin Powell’s shameful appearance before the UN were opposed to the war.

Phil Donahue, one of the few journalists who questioned the rush to war, was fired by MSNBC, even though his program had the [highest ratings](#) on the channel. According to published [reports](#), the firing occurred “after a study commissioned by NBC described Donahue as ‘a tired, left-wing liberal out of touch with the current marketplace.’”

Interviewed shortly after 9/11, so-called liberal icon Dan Rather [stated](#), “George Bush is the President, he makes the decisions and as just one American, wherever he wants me to line up, just tell me where and he’ll make the call.”

Reporting from Baghdad, Rather openly [admitted](#) to a lack of objectivity: “when my country is at war, I want my country to win . . . Now, I can't and don't argue that that is coverage without a prejudice.”

It all led the progressive journalist Amy Goodman to pointedly [ask](#), “if this were state media, how would it be any different?”

To his credit, Rather later [apologized](#):

If we journalists, including myself, had right from the get go, from the opening pop, had started asking the kind of tough, digging, aggressive questions we should have been asking and doing our reporting...if we had done our job I do think a strong argument can be made that perhaps we would not have gone to war.

But more than 4,431 American soldiers were killed and more than 31,000 were injured in that

illegal war, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians died and millions more displaced, and we are still paying for what Nobel Laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz and Harvard economist Linda J. Bilmes famously [labeled](#) the Three Trillion Dollar War.

Civil liberties were abrogated by the Patriot Act, which passed Congress by overwhelming margins (despite the fact that few members actually read the text). Torture was condoned and war crimes committed and no one was ever held accountable.

In an abdication of its role as a member of the Fourth Estate, *The New York Times* sat for a year on an exposé that the Bush Administration was illegally wiretapping Americans. The story, by James Risen and Eric Lichtblau, was ready two weeks before the 2004 election but quashed as the managing editor deemed it a threat to national security.

The Times published the story a year later, after [Risen](#) warned his editors the details would be appearing in his upcoming book, Risen and Lichtblau later won Pulitzers for the story; if it had been timely published, John Kerry might have won the presidency.

Only the incompetence of the Bush regime saved us from full-blown fascism. After Katrina and then the subprime mortgage meltdown (in which 4 million people lost their jobs and 10 million their homes), the country and the media were ready for Obama.

The respite was brief. Democrats prevented a second Great Depression and took steps toward a humane healthcare system. Yet it was Obama's fate for his presidency to be bracketed by two murderous morons.

Trump eked out an electoral victory despite losing the popular vote by 3 million votes. He was aided by the So-Called Liberal Media, which cluelessly believed he was unelectable and shamelessly engaged in false equivalences, all while cravenly counting the dollars that flowed from treating Trump as a buffoon rather than a threat to democracy and our freedoms.

Trump would probably have been reelected if the pandemic hadn't exposed his colossal incompetence and heartlessness and punctured his barefaced lie to have created "the greatest economy in the history of our country." Having inherited the greatest post World War II economic expansion, he left office with fewer people working than when he entered.

If you worried back in 2020 about what Trump would do in a second term, don't stop. Biden has done a remarkable job as president, but you wouldn't know it from the media's all-inflation-all-the-time coverage and its Biden-will-be-86 obsessions.

That coverage helps explain a recent [poll](#) that found Americans thought Trump did a better job on the economy than Biden . . . by a 54-36 margin! The same poll reported that only one-third of Americans thought Biden was in good enough health to serve effectively as president, but nearly two-thirds thought that Trump was.

If we begin another descend into wfascism next year, the [media](#) will again have a lot to answer for.