

Najib's Bersih coup claim a Straussian deception?

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COMMENT I was scanning the Internet for my weekly fix of weekend readings from various news lists when an article on the alternative news website *AlterNet.org*, titled 'Leo Strauss' Philosophy of Deception' caught my eye.

The article seems to describe the reactions and behaviour of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and the government of late to a tee, especially their actions prior to, during and post the Bersih 3.0 pro-electoral reform rally.

The article was written by foreign policy writer Jim Lobe, and details what is believed to be a neoconservative conspiracy to secure the invasion of Iraq as part of an agenda to maintain control over the American public.

It was never proven that there was any weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq, yet until today the United States has maintained this pretext for invading the Middle-eastern nation.

In his article, Lobe advanced the theory that there is a conspiracy within the halls of power to invent the pretext that WMDs exist in Iraq so that an invasion is justifiable.

The conspiracy was purportedly orchestrated by men and women in the George Bush Senior administration, who as Lobe puts it, "are disciples of a philosopher who believed that the elite should use deception, religious fervour and perpetual war (or conflict) to control the ignorant masses".

The philosopher in question was Leo Strauss, a German emigre to the United States, a kind of modern-day Machiavelli, who believes in the rule of the elite over the masses and was brazen about the need to make use of deception, the power of religion and aggressive nationalism to maintain the hierarchy and status quo.

Strauss, as Lobe described, "had few qualms about using deception in politics, he saw it as a necessity".

While religion was seen as "absolutely essential in order to impose moral law on the masses who otherwise would be out of control".

'Manufacturing an external threat'

Lobe also quoted a Strauss critic, Shadia Drury, who wrote in her book that "Strauss thinks that a political order can be stable only if it is united by an external threat".

"Following Machiavelli, he maintained that if no external threat exists then one has to be

manufactured.”

According to Lobe further, Drury went on to describe that “the neoconservative vision of the United States’ relationship with the rest of the world - as well as their relationship as a ruling elite with the masses.

“They really have no use for liberalism and democracy, but they’re conquering the world in the name of liberalism and democracy,” Drury said.

Replay the events leading to, during and after the hugely popular rally organised by the electoral reform pressure group, and one cannot help but see a connection between the BN-led government’s actions and the purported conspiracy to invade Iraq.

One wonders why Najib would suddenly cry wolf that the peaceful protest is an attempted coup, as well as for the resounding chorus of agreement from former police chiefs, plus one ultra-conservative ex-PM’s caustic addendum.

In some ways, it is just like when the US shouted about purported WMDs in Iraq. It smells of a pretext, the use of deception so favoured by Strauss. A precursor to another Ops Lalang, perhaps?

While another facet that mirrors the Straussian principle is the use of religion as a whip to cow and control the masses.

Observe the National Fatwa Council’s recent edict against demonstrations and the many ‘specially tailored’ sermons during Friday prayers in mosques. Add one defence minister who said that our pilgrims may be banned from the Muslim holy city of Mecca for allegedly bringing the Bersih protest to the sacred site

Nothing short of religious blackmail, I’d say.

‘Machiavelli would be proud’

While nothing paints a more brazen picture of aggressive nationalism than the loud cries of ‘patriots’ who suddenly came out of the woodwork to express support for the police and government, not to mention Umno-linked NGOs like Perkasa and Pekida adding their own chants.

‘Patriots’ who claim to represent former police personnel and armed forces veterans and the resurrection of the so called “Communist threat”, “gay and lesbian scourge” and “pluralist liberal legion” as bogeymen.

Machiavelli himself would be proud, perhaps Strauss, too. Hey presto, an external threat has just been “manufactured”.

Besides the government, the Election Commission that it has influence on, and Najib seem to be

hopping around claiming to be the champions of democracy, and yet questionable developments in the commission and acts of the powers-that-be scream otherwise.

Add to taste a PM who believes that acts of violence against journalist do not constitute a violation of press freedom, according to media reports.

A PM who also seems to want us to believe that his democratically elected government is under threat from a peaceful sit-in and whose claimed support of democratic freedom is overshadowed by the allergic-tear-gas-and-chemically-laced-water-spurting-reaction to the democratic right of peaceable assembly and freedom of expression.

A perfect fit perhaps of what Drury said of Strauss, as it seems that our government, too, has no use for liberalism and democracy, but they're cracking down and suppressing legitimate dissent while claiming to support liberalism and democracy.

One wonders if there are one, two or more in the Najib Administration who "are disciples of a philosopher who believed that the elite should use deception, religious fervour and perpetual war (or conflict) to control the ignorant masses".

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