
Hate and Hostage Politics: Begging for a Coup

Description

by Jeanne Haskin

Even though he stressed that it was *not* a plan for action, the American military coup that Charles J. Dunlap, Jr. hypothesized in 1992 could not take place in 2012 because President Obama sustained the new vigor that he had brought to American politics by campaigning for hope and change. President Obama successfully addressed the issue of universal health care while creating the impetus for increased political activism by mortgaging more of our future with the bailout of Wall Street. By eliminating two of Dunlap's preconditions for a military coup, i.e., voter apathy and broad non-access to health care, the president restored faith in the power of the electorate. Now President Obama has passed the baton to progressives, and no candidate has generated more excitement than Senator Bernie Sanders.

In large part, Dunlap's essay depended on a desperate and disenchanted people's desire for a good man and a strong man to lead America back to greatness. This is a common dictatorial theme, but by perching the American people on the slippery slope that begins with military good deeds and ends with the corruption of absolute power, Dunlap overlooked America's real history in Central and South America as it pertains to promoting coups, their purpose, immediate functions and the brutality that sustained them long before day one. As such, this article will show how America has all but replicated preconditions for a Latin American-style coup and that the Republican game of chicken played out through the threat of more government shutdowns and reluctance to raise the debt ceiling are not just a matter of intransigence but also a signal to the military that America can no longer govern itself. Coupled with plans to militarize the National Guard, revamp military retirement, scrap social programs to improve veterans' benefits, and ensure that soldiers are paid during shutdowns, Republicans are holding out rewards to secure their seat at the table if, as 57% of Republicans hope, Provisional Government comes to town.

Irreversible Reformation

FDR's New Deal was not an attack on American capitalism but rather a stop-gap measure to address the draining effects of capitalism on average American citizens. By creating a social safety net and new rules of the road for banking, finance and international trade, FDR was mistakenly perceived as the enemy of big business when, in fact, his creation of global institutions (The World Bank, The International Monetary Fund and the United Nations) paved the way for Free-market Reformation to take the world by storm.

This required acceptance of inequality by a small sector of the populace, which became rich beyond its imaginings in exchange for embracing the brutality required to liberalize the economy throughout Central America and later the Southern Cone.

In Central America, and Nicaragua in particular, U.S. reformers found willing candidates in

authoritarian presidents supported by wealthy landowners who expected, and received, more land free of social responsibility. Repression of the landless already took place with anti-vagrancy laws and the deployment of private armies to put down peasant revolts. Thus, U.S. offers to train the countries' National Guards as presidential constabularies (militarized police), skilled in U.S. methods of terror, were efficiently carried out.

In some ways, terror required no other motivator than to protect the ruling class but members of the National Guard were thoroughly corrupted by encouragement to launch extortion schemes. Murder, torture and the "disappearance" of communist sympathizers and left wing organizers fit hand in glove with the needs of foreign-owned businesses and, naturally, the West.

By the time that attention was tightly focused on reforming the Southern Cone, U.S. economists refined the art of liberalization with a detailed instruction manual, otherwise known as "the brick." Not subject to negotiation, this required deeply discounted divestiture of the countries' most precious assets into foreign hands, the dissolution of social safety nets, the abolishment of unions, tight labor controls, and cheap exports, made even cheaper by currency devaluations and cash-crop redundancies. It also required elimination of dissent via control of the press, militarily-rigged voting (even against puppet opposition, created to maintain the pretense of democratic elections), intimidation, imprisonment and displacement to other countries.

Ostensibly "aided" by foreign loans, Latin American governments stayed afloat until currency speculation dried up their foreign reserves, thus requiring more loans. Once debt-dependency was thoroughly assured, Paul Volcker, Carter's chairman of the Federal Reserve, launched a fight against inflation which persisted long after the fight was won. For this was not so much an American issue as one that concerned the neighboring continent. With Volcker's hand at the wheel, Latin America's debt redoubled itself, scaling unsustainable heights and leaving no hope of change for the poor.

The result: Irreversible Reformation that only the far-right could love and huge numbers of inconvenient people, whose misery and deprivation argued against the "miracle" of neoliberal reform.

The American Adaptation

The dream of our most affluent has always been to offload the costs of government while controlling its repressive machinery, but not before exhaustive exploitation of government subsidization and regulatory overthrow to reshape the legal landscape in favor of complete deregulation and permanent protectionism.

Running as a contender for the Libertarian Party in 1980, David Koch promised to: repeal federal campaign finance laws; abolish the Federal Election Commission; abolish Medicare and Medicaid; end compulsory insurance; deregulate the medical insurance industry; repeal Social Security; privatize the postal service; end all personal and corporate income taxation; repeal minimum wage laws; ensure the complete separation of education and State; repeal compulsory education laws; abolish the Department of Energy; dissolve all government agencies concerned with transportation; return America's rail system to private ownership; privatize public roads and the national highway system; abolish the Federal Aviation Administration; abolish the Food and Drug Administration; end all government welfare, relief projects and "aid to the poor" programs; privatize inland waterways and the distribution system that brings water to industry, agriculture and households; abolish the Occupational

Safety and Health Act; abolish the Consumer Product Safety Commission; and repeal all state usury laws.

“The brick,” in other words, had made its way to America.

However, the question still remained: how to prepare the populace?

Step One: Incarcerate the Poor

America’s War on Drugs was seen as a way to clean up the streets, fight inner-city gangs, reform drug users and protect poor neighborhoods. Perhaps deliberately, however, the budget for this war funded all but the justice system. Reluctant to raise taxes in order to fund the newly overwhelming demand for criminal court services, both red and blue states adopted offender-funded justice, or pay-for-service fees, including a \$50-\$200 charge to apply for a public defender. For those who can not afford an application, lack of representation often means harsher sentences and jail or prison time. Even for a minor infraction, such as stealing a \$2 can of beer, an offender spent twelve days in jail.

Pay-for-service fees also extend to incarceration. Men and women who land in prison because they are too poor for representation face re-incarceration if they have no means to pay for prison “consumption.”

In the words of Noel Brinkerhoff:

Defendants can be billed for a public defender in 43 states and the District of Columbia. Prisoners can be charged room and board for their incarceration in 41 states. Those on probation or parole in 44 states can get billed for these services. Anyone ordered to wear an electronic monitoring device in 49 states (except Hawaii and the District of Columbia) must pay for it...Some states also apply “poverty penalties,” including late fees, payment plan fees, and interest when people are unable to pay all their debts at once...Alabama charges a 30 percent collection fee, while Florida allows private debt collectors to add a 40 percent surcharge on the original debt. Some Florida counties also use so-called collection courts, where debtors can be jailed but have no right to a public defender.

Those who are hit the hardest serve time in private prisons, where slave-labor is common and those who own the prisons either bribe judges to hand down longer prison terms and/or require contracts with the state to guarantee a percentage of occupancy.

Private prisons become overcrowded and the prisoners themselves are caught in a vicious cycle.

As Brinkerhoff reports: “African Americans are six times more likely to be incarcerated than a white person and non-white Latinos are almost three times likely to be incarcerated.” Without a high school education, young black and Latino men find the odds especially challenging. Eleven percent of black men, aged between 20 and 34, are doing time at the prime of their lives, when most people start their careers and begin to vote in elections.

Step Two: “Disappear” Blacks via Secret Rendition

According to an article on Reverbpress.com, this is an issue involving Democrats. Secret, illegal detentions for harassment and interrogation occurred in Chicago under Mayor Rahm Emanuel (President Obama’s former top advisor) and persisted for eleven years. Citing from an investigation by

the UK's *Guardian* Newspaper.

[P]olice in the city of Chicago “disappeared” or “vanished” 7,185 people at a secret, “off-the-books interrogation warehouse” on Chicago’s west side...Between August of 2004 and June of 2015, approximately 6,000 of the 7,000 detainees held were African American, representing 82.2 percent of all the “vanished” at Homan Square...Incredibly, only 68 of the 6,000 blacks detained were permitted access to legal counsel, or information of their whereabouts disclosed to family members, per the police’s own records.

The facility at Homan Square has no publicly accessible phone number, nor do records exist of those imprisoned. If an attorney suspects that his or her client has been taken to Homan Square, it is almost impossible to find them. Without access to representation, prisoners are intimidated, threatened, and pressured to turn informant by militarized police in a militarized facility, unknown to much of the world.

Step Three: Extend the War on Drugs

Thus far, Republican efforts to prevent people from receiving state and/or federal benefits have led to drug-testing Food Stamp (SNAP) beneficiaries (the results of which were very disappointing for the state of Tennessee) and the ludicrous assertion that seniors, too, should be tested because receiving Social Security results in heroin addiction.

There is, in fact, a problem with middle-aged white Americans abusing drugs and committing suicide.

As an issue of fear and hopelessness, this may correlate directly with Republican initiatives to shame the beneficiaries of shrinking social programs and get them off the rolls with required participation in nonexistent job-training programs. Because Republicans *know* that such programs do not exist, this will leave needy people with neither the skills to re-enter the job market nor the means to feed their families.

Step Four: Restrict the Right to Political Representation

Aside from the Republican and Democratic gerrymandering that put many of the far-right candidates and Hillary Clinton in office by limiting their voting districts to those who would likely elect them, Republicans are hoping for a Supreme Court ruling that would restrict representation only to registered voters.

In the state of Alabama, where the BBC interviewed the Ku Klux Klan and left the door wide open for the online group Anonymous to publish the names and occupations of 1,000 KKK members, 31 offices of the Department of Motor Vehicles were closed—all of them in counties with a 75% black electorate. For the impoverished blacks who live there, obtaining an acceptable photo ID is not just a matter of driving to a DMV in another district. Most of them have no transportation.

Even if blacks do have proper ID, the voting machines in underprivileged communities are so outdated and decrepit that they are prone to the worst malfunction: overriding a voter’s choice, regardless of who it is.

Step Five: Change the Discourse to one of Hatred

Whether it is Jeb! Bush announcing that he'll end "free stuff for blacks" or Donald Trump demanding a Great Wall of China and a deportation force for a repeat performance of "Operation Wetback," the rise of contempt for vulnerable people is less a matter of blowback against immigrant workers, "anchor" babies, affirmative action, political correctness, and those who rely on social programs than restoring the freedom to hate—openly and violently, without reservation. This divisive force in American politics panders to the far-right fringe and white militant movements.

It is also shaking us slowly to pieces by creating a new "normal" which includes the slaughter of schoolchildren and the torture that ends in murder of suspects in police custody.

The Oathkeepers, a former veteran of which plotted to "detain" members of the U.S. Congress and Senate who supported the Iranian nuclear deal and ultimately arrest President Obama for treason, have created a new instructional video for The Oathkeepers to infiltrate first-responder organizations. Their strategy: to gain access as volunteers for recruitment among the agencies and the communities they serve—to paramilitarize where possible as sappers against the government.

If they are successful, expect the hate crimes to escalate.

Step Six: Pile on More Debt

Leading up to the subprime mortgage meltdown of 2007-2008, Wall Street colluded with the ratings agencies to gain AAA ratings on any and all debt that could be bundled into a security of some form, despite tremendous risk, in order to infiltrate hedge funds and other investment vehicles, the rules of which were conservative and only allowed holdings of triple-A rated securities. The whole point was to keep the good times rolling by deceiving more and more customers, constantly bending the rules, and conceiving of "innovations."

Unfortunately, the end of the Great Recession was predicated on more debt, not just to bail out the banks but to create a new boom in junk bonds, enlarge the shadow banking system, re-inflate the housing bubble and increase consumer debt. The Federal Reserve's policy of purchasing bonds for "quantitative easing" and making zero-interest loans (\$2.6 trillion of which went to central banks but are parked on the books at the Fed as excess reserves, over and above the required \$107.1 billion) has pushed the Fed's balance sheet to \$4.5 trillion.

According to a report on MSNBC, our total debt outstanding is more than "\$18.15 trillion, nearly double of where it stood in 2008. Corporate debt has jumped to \$8.1 trillion, a nearly 50 percent gain over the same period, and household debt has passed \$14 trillion for the first time ever."

Despite this, reduced consumer purchasing power has led to a lack of pricing power. The horror of "deflation," or reduced prices for American goods and services, is compounded by income weakness. Americans either have no money to buy or are so deeply in debt that they can hardly risk more buying. And deflation won't stop there. According to one Wall Street analyst, stocks are 70% overvalued, junk bonds are in serious trouble, and the re-inflated housing bubble won't take much longer to burst. Naturally, Republicans would like the Fed to administer the bitter medicine of rising interest rates to

cause the next market meltdown before the 2016 election so they can blame it on Obama. Speaking to Fed chairman Janet Yellen, one Wall Street headline read, “Get off zero now!”

Yellen isn’t budging, but despite the Fed’s insistence that its policies were, and are, meant to cause “good inflation” (an increase in wages) there is no doubt that its beneficiary has been the business community.

Fear of losing “herd control”

Today, a small percentage of America’s richest people feel that the government must redress income inequality from fear of an insurrection. In the words of Cartier chief Johann Rupert, “We are destroying the middle classes at this stage and it will affect us...How is society going to cope with structural unemployment and the envy, hatred and the social warfare?”

The shaky consensus among the rich is that the solution must lie with the government. However, they feel justified in rolling back the New Deal and would be even more content to roll back the twenty-first century.

Here is how they’ve tipped their hand toward a Latin American-style coup, the precedent for which, as it pertains to an American military leader, lies in the Provisional Government headed by Paul Bremer, which sold Iraqi assets into foreign hands during the occupation.

For at least the past few decades, high-powered political donations have been more or less evenly distributed to Republicans and Democrats. This was less a matter of the rich hedging their bets than of a tacit two-party agreement whereby Republicans and Democrats both supported big business.

Too, there was such a demand for retired military officials to act as lobbyists and speakers that the phrase “rent a general” had long been in usage.

Now, with the victories of the Labour Party in the UK and Canada, this, for the business community, is an ominous indication that they’ve lost “herd control.” Coupled with the perception of conservatives that America’s Republican Party is dissolving into chaos, a military coup would either head off, or end, the potential of a Democratic president. It is not that the business community lacks an ally in Democratic contender Hillary Clinton; it is that Senator Bernie Sanders is a genuine threat to Clinton and the far-right has too much at stake to face the threat of defeat.

For one thing, they have not lost sight of the fact that the next president will be appointing at least two or possibly four new Supreme Court Justices. Their campaign on hot-button issues would thoroughly be endangered by a Democratic shakeup.

And so we have come full circle. The Republican Freedom Caucus is driving the game of chicken (at the cost of \$24 billion in losses for the last government shutdown) from sheer determination to have a seat at the table once they have done enough damage to incite a “protective” coup—one that would honor their goals and rule without need for consensus.

Is there any more to be said? Actually there is.

Win, lose or draw, get ready for the Great Deprivation

Like it or not, President Obama's recovery plan has helped to drive the country toward the next economic meltdown. Add in our national debt and IMF-style reform becomes the preferred solution.

Since at least half of the country believes there are other options, Republicans alone can not impose "the brick," or the Koch Libertarian platform. They must run the government off the rails to persuade the military to take over, and if it does take over, it will usher in a new era of pain for the American nation that may be called the Great Deprivation.