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Trends. Cognitive Dissonance and Conflation of Patriotism and Political Advocacy: On the Secrecy of the Intelligence Budget

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The SECRECY NEWS of the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) has recently published an article advocating public knowledge of "secretive budgeting practices" of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), intelligence "funds...openly appropriated" by the United States (US) Congress, ending concealment of CIA funds within the US Department of Defense budget, and "declassification...of the annual aggregate total" of current and past intelligence budgets. The article concludes by advocating "unauthorized disclosure of 'properly classified' [intelligence] budget information."

The foundation of the article's advocacy is based on the following logical sequence. US intelligence officials claim to be patriotic. If they truly were patriotic, then they would "strictly" adhere to the US Constitution. The US Constitution stipulates "'a regular statement and account of the receipts and expenditures of all public money shall be published from time to time.'" US intelligence officials' "secretive budgeting practices [are] outside the clear boundaries defined by the US Constitution." Therefore, to be patriotic, US intelligence officials must necessarily comply with the FAS advocacy. Otherwise, they are not.

IBPP's proximal concerns with FAS advocacy twofold. Should cognitive dissonance of intelligence officials engaging in alleged non-patriotic behavior occur reactive to the FAS argument? If so, would the dissonance be resolved through behavioral change compatible with FAS advocacy? Neither necessarily may occur. IBPP's distal concern is the FAS conflation of patriotism with one particular interpretation of a document--viz., the US Constitution. Are there not other interpretations by individuals and organizations as well-meaning and intellectually responsible as FAS?

In fact, the FAS advocacy smacks of totalistic thinking. This is the kind of thinking that ultimately discounts the utility of debate, negotiation, and compromise for an all-or-none, winner-take-all perspective that can only be based on faith. And this is the kind of thinking that subverts the very essence of the US Constitution that FAS purports to uphold as sacrosanct. (See Greenwald, A.G. (1980). The totalitarian ego: Fabrication and revision of personal history. *American Psychologist*, 35, 603-618; Markusen, E. (1992). Comprehending the Cambodian genocide: An application of Robert Jay Lifton's model of genocidal killing. *Psychohistory Review*, 20, 145-169; Patriotism and CIA budget secrecy. (April 2, 2001). SECRECY NEWS, secrecy_news@fas.org; Schwartz, H.S. (1987). On the psychodynamics of organizational totalitarianism. *Journal of Management*, 13, 41-54; West, L. J., & Martin, P. R. (1996). Pseudo-identity and the treatment of personality change in victims of captivity and cults. *Cultic Studies Journal*, 13, 125-152.) (Keywords: CIA, FAS, Federation of American Scientists, Intelligence Budget, Secrecy, SECRECY NEWS.)