

Modern US Presidents Acting Like “Thugs”

Historian Michael Parenti Charges

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Region: [USA](#)

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President George W. Bush is “the biggest thug” ever to occupy the White House, writes historian Michael Parenti, adding that most post-World War II U.S. presidents have also acted like “thugs.”

His “thug” list includes Presidents John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and Bill Clinton. Conspicuously absent from his list are Republican Dwight Eisenhower and Democrat Jimmy Carter.

What the thugs have in common, Parenti says, is their dedication “to a U.S. global interventionist policy” and support for “gargantuan, bloated, criminally wasteful military budgets” to execute those interventions.

President Kennedy “undermined the democratic government in Guyana and supported a lot of the counter-insurgency dirty works that were going on in Central America,” Parenti writes in *The Long Term View*, a journal of informed opinion published by The Massachusetts School of Law at Andover.

President Johnson followed him, perpetrating “the first major escalation of Vietnam” and also invading the Dominican Republic “when it threatened to have a reformist left government that would take over and move in a democratic revolutionary course.”

After LBJ, “Nixon committed terrible crimes in IndoChina: massive carpet bombings of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, killing literally hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people,” Parenti recalled. In Laos, “Nixon went and bombed the Plain of Jars and just bombed every square inch and killed —only God knows how many—hundreds of thousands of people and destroyed that whole society.”

Parenti holds President Reagan responsible for the invasion of Grenada, “an unoffending, small country that was trying to develop a communitarian way, and overthrew its government” and had some of its leaders killed. Reagan, he said, “brought Grenada back to where it was before: a country of high unemployment. He abolished the communal farms which it was starting, and the land was converted back into golf courses for the tourists.” Reagan also waged war “against a wonderful democratic revolution in Nicaragua, the Sandanistas, and destroyed it and bled that country,” supporting “the worst murderers and thugs” of the Contra Armies and then lying about his role in support of the war.

As for President George H.W. Bush, he “waged a war against Iraq that was totally avoidable,” pointing out, “The Iraqis were ready to negotiate a withdrawal from Kuwait” but “just wanted the slant drilling of the Ramallah oil fields to stop.” However, he adds, “Bush used it as an excuse to bomb, to kill huge numbers of Iraqis and destroy that country’s infrastructure, and it’s because that country was self-defining, was committing the ‘sin’ of economic nationalism, and was not acting like a good obedient client state.”

Parenti further charged the senior President Bush also invaded Panama to capture its leader Noriega, and after its victory abolished “all sorts of education programs.”

As for President Clinton, he “bombed Somalia and killed thousands of people there and

waged a 78-day, around-the-clock, aerial war against Yugoslavia...and was also thuggish in his determination to expand and to increase the military budget.”

Parenti, author of some 20 books including “Democracy for the Few”(Wadsworth), reserves his harshest criticism for President George W. Bush: “He has been a total thug in overthrowing a democratic government in Haiti and supporting the death squads and murderers there, and in pursuing a war of aggression in Iraq,” Parenti writes.

“He (Bush) unilaterally has announced that the U.S. will be held to none of the international treaties that it has signed, that no strictures of international law will inhibit foreign policy, and that the U.S. reserves the right to act as it will on its own accord, according to its own interests, and the limitations of its own power,” Parenti points out.

“The U.S. will,” he goes on to say, “of itself, decide unilaterally what countries it will attack, when, and for what reasons,” a policy he adds that has “caused such an alarm throughout the world that people have demonstrated massively...”

Parenti said the Iraqi war has given President Bush “the opportunity to clamp down on dissent at home, to intimidate, and to accumulate more power.”

Parenti’s remarks are contained in Volume 6, Number 3, of *Long Term View*. His views are not necessarily those of the journal, published by the Massachusetts School of Law at Andover. Views of authors in LTV are not necessarily those of the law school.

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