

# The Failed Presidency of George W. Bush: A Dismal Legacy

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## [PART I]

"The price of apathy towards public affairs is to be ruled by evil men." Plato (427-347 B.C.)

"We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office." Aesop (620-560 B.C.)

"When fanatics are on top there is no limit to oppression." [H.L. Mencken](#) (1880-1956), American author

"We've got a gang of clueless bozos steering our ship of state right over a cliff, we've got corporate gangsters stealing us blind, and we can't even clean up after a hurricane much less build a hybrid car. But instead of getting mad, everyone sits around and nods their heads when the politicians say, 'Stay the course.' Stay the course? ... I'll give you a sound bite: Throw all the bums out!" Lee Iacocca, former CEO of Chrysler Corporation (book: Where Have All the Leaders Gone?)

Whoever is elected president in the coming November 4 American election will inherit a most miserable situation on nearly all fronts. This is because [George W. Bush](#) has been one of the [worst presidents](#) the U.S. has ever had, if not the worst. It is widely recognized that he was [a below average politician](#) who led his country on the [wrong track](#), both domestically and internationally. Today, only a meager 9 percent of Americans dare to say that their country is moving in the right direction.

As a matter of fact, a very [large majority of Americans](#)— both Democrats and Republicans, men and women, residents of cities and of rural areas, high school graduates and college-educated— all say that the United States has been headed in the wrong direction under George W. Bush's stewardship. Bush's approval rating reflects the lack of confidence that Americans have in him and his administration. In fact, George W. Bush has recorded the [lowest approval rating](#) of any president in the 70-year history of the Gallup Poll. And, around the world, the United States has never had a leader who commands so [little respect and confidence](#). Most people in the U.S. and abroad will find satisfaction in seeing his [term](#) come to an end.

This is a terrible indictment of the Bush Administration that has presided over America's destinies for the last eight years. What is more disconcerting, this all came after George W. Bush won the presidential election in 2000, with fewer popular votes than Democratic candidate [Al Gore](#), after a one-judge-majority decision of the Supreme Court, in effect, gave him the presidency. Therefore, this is an administration that had no widespread democratic mandate to do what it has done. And it has done a lot of things wrong. In fact, many people think this has been a [morally bankrupt administration](#).

### **International disaster: An Illegal and Immoral War of Aggression**

At the center of this fiasco, is the fact that the Bush-Cheney administration and its neocon cohort rushed to exploit the 9/11 terrorist attacks and used this as a pretext to implement a [preconceived pro-Israel and pro-oil plan](#) in the Middle East. This led them to adopt a simplistic response to Islamist terrorism, barging into complex Middle East societies on elephant feet. But in the process, they have only succeeded in making matters worse and in encouraging more hatred against the U.S. and more terrorism.

Indeed, George W. Bush will be remembered above all as the man who launched an [illegal and immoral war of aggression](#) against another sovereign nation, on [false pretenses](#) and [forged documents](#), destroying in so doing the entire [country of Iraq](#), and damaging perhaps irreparably the U.S. reputation in the world. As [Scott McClellan](#), Bush's former Press Secretary during seven long years, stated, Bush and his advisers [in launching the Iraq War] *"confused the propaganda campaign with the high level of candour and honesty so fundamentally needed to build and then sustain public support during a time of war"*.

Bush's [deception and lies](#) about Iraq in order to initiate a war of aggression, an aggression that is a war crime under the Nuremberg standard established by the U.S., are well documented. Thus, historians will have no difficulty in establishing the fact that the United States, under Bush, acted as a lawless international aggressor.

In initiating a war of aggression, Bush did violate the [United Nations Charter](#), which "prohibits the use of military force" against any nation without the specific approval of the United Nations Security Council. The Security Council never approved the American-led military invasion of Iraq. Therefore, Bush and his crew had no international legal basis to invade Iraq. And they cannot pretend that Congress gave them such an authorization, since it is well known in law that no domestic law can override a signed international treaty in good standing.

In a domestic parallel, George W. Bush and his administration have set up what is probably the most widespread [war profiteering system](#) in modern history, through which billions and billions of dollars were misappropriated and wasted. At the same time as they were adopting a permanent war posture abroad, they were irresponsibly calling at home for a 674 billion dollar tax cut for their rich supporters and pushing up the deficits, of which a large proportion was financed by borrowing abroad.

### **Illegality and Immorality**

On the legal front, this is an administration that has shamed the United States with its [illegal actions](#), with its deliberate and dishonest [lies](#), with its [war crimes](#), its disregard for international treaties, and with its overt disregard of constitutional government.

On the question of [lawlessness](#), the list of missteps the Bush-Cheney administration took outside of the law is too long for a short article as this one. But there are numerous [documents](#) to be consulted and it is possible to attempt a short summary.

From the very beginning, the Bush-Cheney administration has dismissed international law and disregarded domestic law. They began by either repudiating or refusing to honor the United States' international commitments and obligations, thus showing indifference, if not outright hostility, toward international law. They opted out of five important international treaties and commitments: the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty and the International Criminal Court. In so doing, the United States, under the Bush-Cheney administration, has betrayed its international commitments and has moved away from being a moral state, and more and more toward the status of an international [rogue state](#).

This was all confirmed when the Bush-Cheney administration adopted, in September 2002, the [Bush Doctrine](#) of preventive war, an internationally illegal and immoral program. Indeed, under existing international law, no country may attack another under false pretenses, nor use military force unilaterally.

This was followed by the even more dangerous and hairy [Cheney Doctrine](#) (or the [One Percent Doctrine](#)) which is anti-human rights, anti-rule of law and anti-Constitution, because it posits that if there is even a 1% chance American interests are in jeopardy somewhere in the world, unilateral American military interventions are justified, and this without conclusive evidence or extensive analysis. Such hubristic and shoot-from-the-hip foreign policies are a true recipe for international anarchy and thus render a great disservice to [humanity](#).

Domestically, President George W. Bush has introduced the unconstitutional practice of adding [signing statements](#) to new laws, stating that he has the right, as President, to violate any section of a law, should he deem it in the national interest to do so. For example, on January 28, 2008, Bush signed into law the repeal of the "Insurrection Act Rider" in the 2006 defense appropriations bill. That rider had given the President sweeping power to use military troops in ways contrary to the [Insurrection Act and Posse Comitatus Act](#) and authorized the president to have troops patrol American streets in response to disasters, epidemics, and any "condition" he might cite. But in signing this repeal, Bush attached a signing statement that he did not feel bound by the repeal, thus opening the possibility he could ignore the law any time he saw fit to do so.

### **Disrespect for Liberty and the U.S. Constitution**

As if this were not enough, there was the attempt by the Bush-Cheney regime to suspend and even permanently abolish the more than eight centuries old [right of Habeas Corpus](#). And when the Supreme Court, in a [far-reaching decision on June 12, 2008](#), rebuked the B-C administration's argument that it had a right to establish [concentration camps](#) on U.S.-run properties around the world and hold prisoners indefinitely with no legal recourse, especially at the Guantánamo Bay detention center, President George W. Bush had the gall to criticize the [Supreme Court's decision](#) while on a trip to Europe.

Then Bush embarked upon a program of [domestic spying](#) on Americans never before seen in a democracy. He, indeed, removed most of the [safeguards](#) that had been erected to

protect citizens from illegal and warrantless spying activities by government, thus making a mockery of the U.S. Constitution. In particular, the Bush-Cheney administration did not respect key parts of the U.S. Constitution, especially the **Fourth Amendment**, which protects against unreasonable searches and seizures. It must said, however, that some **Bush Democrats**, such as House Speaker **Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)** and Democratic House Majority Leader **Steny H. Hoyer (D - MD)** have also willfully and enthusiastically collaborated with George W. Bush in enlarging the government's spying powers over citizens. On his own, however, George W. Bush did his utmost to make **permanent** the President's War Powers, thus making sure that the United States could remain on a permanent war path and be in a position to suspend at will basic constitutional rights.

On top of everything, George W. Bush will be remembered as a politician who **authorized torture** and indefinite detention of prisoners. Indeed, after Bush willfully suspended the rights accorded prisoners of war by the **Geneva Conventions**, he was, in fact, officially turning the United States into an immoral nation that openly and unashamedly resorts to **torture**, thus violating basic rules of morality, international law and a host of international treaties adhered to by the **United States**. In fact, the Geneva Conventions in its article 3 does not only prohibit torture, but also any cruel, inhuman, degrading, and humiliating treatment of a detainee *"in all circumstances."* However, it is not only on the issue of torture that the United States under Bush has become an international pariah.

The Bush-Cheney administration has also operated **concentration camps** in many countries, holding captive tens of thousands of detainees and hiding them from the **Red Cross**, the body empowered to monitor compliance with the Geneva Conventions. The Bush-Cheney administration has placed itself outside the civilized world and was nearly **alone**, last May (2008), in trying to undermine a treaty banning **cluster bombs**, a type of bombs which have killed so many civilians, when 111 countries signed a treaty outlawing these inhuman weapons. On this occasion, the United States, under Bush-Cheney, sided with a handful of weapons makers and users, none of them known as great defenders of human rights and **democracy**: Russia, China, Israel, India and Pakistan. The Bush-Cheney administration has truly been a shamelessly immoral administration.

(PART II on Global Research next week)

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