

Stephen Pizzo:

'Bush: Worst president ever?'

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Posted on Friday, May 20 @ 09:50:13 EDT

Herbert Hoover may have triggered the Great Depression, but he didn't invade another nation on false pretenses, authorize torture of prisoners, or try to stack the courts.

By Stephen Pizzo, <http://www.alternet.org/story/22057/> AlterNet

For the record, I don't like George Bush. And I don't like most of the people who work for George Bush. So, diehard Republicans can just brush aside my remarks as so much partisan blather.

But by now I suppose very few diehard Republicans ever read what I write. So do me a favor -- e-mail this to the diehards in your family and circle offriends. Ask them to tell me why I am wrong about this:

George Bush is the worst president of the United States of America, ever. Hands down.

And here are just a few reasons why I believe that statement is true. America the Disgraced

President Bush's actions and policies have destroyed America's image as a nation that adheres to a set of core values, such as the rule of law, humane treatment of prisoners, presumed innocence, trial by jury and respect for international laws.

How do I know this? Because <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=796> the world is telling us so, whenever we care enough to ask.

> Positive views of the U.S. in Russia have risen 11 points in the past year.
> But U.S. favorability ratings in France and Germany are somewhat lower than
> last year and there has been a larger decline in Great Britain (58 percent
> now, 70 percent last year). Young people in Great Britain, France, and Germany
> have more negative views of America than do people in other age groups. An
> important factor in world opinion about America is the perception that the
> U.S. acts internationally without taking account of the interests of other
> nations. Large majorities in every nation surveyed believe that America pays
> little or no attention to their country's interests in making its foreign policy
> decisions. This opinion is most prevalent in France (84 percent), Turkey (79

> percent) and Jordan (77 percent), but even in Great Britain 61 percent say the
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Nice going George. Even Richard Nixon couldn't tarnish America's image that much.

George's Vietnam

Then there's the war that is largely responsible for that drop in our international image. President Bush really screwed this one up. First, everyone not drinking the neocon Kool-Aid tried to warn George not to pull that trigger. Then Army chief of staff, Gen. Shinseki, warned Bush that a war in Iraq would not be the "cake walk" his neocon Rasputin, Paul Wolfowitz, promised. Instead, he warned, we would need a lot of troops in Iraq for long time. For that piece of advice he was first publicly embarrassed by his boss then shown the door, according to The New York Times:

> At a Pentagon news conference neither Mr. Rumsfeld nor Mr. Wolfowitz
> mentioned Gen. Shinseki, the Army chief of staff, by name. But both men were
> clearly irritated at the general's suggestion that a post-war Iraq might require
> many more forces than the 100,000 American troops and the tens of thousands of
> allied forces that are also expected to join a reconstruction effort. "The
> idea that it would take several hundred thousand U.S. forces I think is far
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That was 2003. Here's a story from today's paper.

> BAGHDAD, Iraq, May 19 - American military commanders in Baghdad and
> Washington gave a sobering new assessment on Wednesday of the war in Iraq....In
> interviews and briefings this week, some of the generals pulled back from
> recent suggestions, some by the same officers, that positive trends in Iraq
> could allow a major draw-down in the 138,000 American troops late this year or
> early in 2006. One officer suggested Wednesday that American military
> involvement
>

Gee. Who saw that coming?

So, thanks to George W. Bush and the handful of Neocon nuts you listen to. Now we are stuck in another Vietnam-type war thousands of miles from home. All the Vietnam trappings are here for anyone who cares to notice - indigenous insurgents, driven by a fanatical ideology, supported and supplied by "spoiler" nation-states with their own anti-U.S. agendas, thousands of dead civilians, American soldiers dying by the gross week in and week out, with no end in sight.

Nice going, George. Maybe because you skipped out on the Vietnam War you didn't know this could happen. Or maybe you really are as dumb as common road gravel.

Sovietization of America

One of the Republican party's proudest boasts is that Ronald Reagan defeated the Soviet Evil Empire. The irony is they are now recreating pieces of that police state here at home now.

Hyperbole? You judge -- while you still can. From The New York Times:

> WASHINGTON, May 18 - The Bush administration and Senate Republican leaders
> are pushing a plan that would significantly expand the F.B.I.'s power to
> demand business records in terror investigations without obtaining approval from
> a judge, officials said on Wednesday. "This is a dramatic expansion of the
> federal government's power," said Lisa Graves, senior counsel for the American
> Civil Liberties Union in Washington. "It's really a power grab by the
> administration for the F.B.I. to secretly demand medical records, tax records,
> gun purchase records and all sorts of other material if they deem it relevant to
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Now, the Patriot Act -- you know, the law that among other things allows federal agents to demand your local library tell them what books you are reading -- is about to be expanded.

Little by little this administration has chipped away at state powers by transferring them to Washington. And nowhere has this process been more pronounced than in the area of law enforcement and the courts. The FBI, which once had to defer to local and state law enforcers when on their turf, can now barge right in and take charge. All they have to do is an investigation a "national security" or "homeland security" matter.

Federal courts, which have acted as a brake on law enforcement abuses, are being systemically stacked with rightwing judges less likely to side with victims of overzealous cops or invasions of personal privacy.

That's why this is going on right now:

> WASHINGTON, May 18 - The Senate plunged into an intense partisan struggle
> on Wednesday over the fate of stalled federal court nominees and the
> governance of the institution itself as the two parties locked in a debate over
> the right of the minority to prevent votes on a president's judicial candidates.
> "If Republicans roll back our rights in this chamber, there will be no check on
> their power," said Senator Reid. "The radical, right wing will be free to
> pursue any agenda they want. And not just on judges. Their power will be

> unchecked on Supreme Court nominees, the president's nominees in general and
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The Bushites are on a neocon roll and the federal judiciary is their final obstacle. If they can stack the appellate courts and appoint two rightwing Supreme Court justices before the end of Bush's final term, it will be "game over" for civil libertarians -- and America as we knew her.

Peasantization of Workers

Over the past five years we have seen the biggest transfer of wealth in the history of money. The already wealthy have become mind-numbingly rich under George Bush. Where did the money come from? It came right out of the pockets of working Americans and the poor.

I heard that groan from the right. Same old liberal, bleeding-heart bullshit, right?

So, you judge.

What the right has accomplished in just five years is the creation of a low-wage economy -- a management wet dream -- a country filled with high-skilled workers so desperate for jobs they will work for peanuts. Once powerful labor unions have been powerless to stop the flow of once high-paying blue and gray-collar jobs to cheap overseas venues. The jobs that replaced those lost to outsourcing pay an average of ten grand a year less. (As I said above, the money came straight out of workers' pockets.)

Deflating Inflation

The administration likes to boast that it has kept inflation in check. Yes they have, at least somewhat. But the reasons inflation remains low are all bad reasons that will result in very bad news down the road.

First, consumers have less money to spend, as noted above. Since consumer spending power is a prime driver of price inflation, prices on many core consumer products have remained low. And many of those now low-price products keeping inflation low are no longer made here but in cheap-labor countries like China.

But inflation has many causes, not just consumer spending. Raw materials, shipping costs, currency fluctuations. And deep inside the bowels of the economic gut, rumbling can be heard.

> WASHINGTON -- Consumer prices jumped again last month, primarily reflecting
> sharp increases in food and energy costs, the government reported today. But

> prices for items other than food and energy were flat in April, while oil
> and gas prices have fallen since then, the Labor Department said, boosting
> hopes in financial markets that the recent inflation flare-up may be fading.
> Food prices climbed 0.7 percent last month, largely because of the rising costs
> of fruits and vegetables. But the so-called core-CPI, which excludes food and
> energy costs, was unchanged in April and is up 2.6 percent from April of last
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Inflation is not as benign as the government figures pretend. This is because of how they calculate inflation on individual items in the CPI and can fiddle with the facts. For example, if HP replaces a printer with a new model that might include a few modest enhancements over its predecessor which sold for \$100, but prices the new model \$125, government economists can claim the price really did not go up because the new model is better than the old model.

Trouble is you can't buy the old model any longer, but never mind that. Even though you have to pay more for basically the same printer, the price did not go up -- because "they" say so.

How much of that is going on in calculating the CPI? Plenty. And if you shop you know it. They keep saying inflation is in check, but the checks I have to write for everything from my utilities to the food keep getting larger.

The point -- figures don't lie but liars can figure -- and they are.

Keeping Up Keeping Up

If things are so bad, why hasn't the economy slipped back into recession? Because it's been running on credit. During Bush's first term the economy perked up because Bush pumped \$1.6 trillion in tax rebates into it. That was like giving a dying patient an injection of meth and then claiming he was cured because he was up and jerking around in bed.

Once consumers consumed their paltry tax rebates and the wealthy had deposited their hefty rebates into family trust accounts, the economy would have slowed again -- had it not been for low interest rates and easy credit. Consumers turned into home-equity vampires and credit card addicts in order to maintain the middle-class lifestyle their new low-paying jobs could no longer finance.

And, the government as well went on a borrowing binge running up a national credit card debt of just over \$7 trillion.

All that damage in just five years! It's almost unimaginable, but true. And the negative long-term implications stagger those who understand that there really is

no such thing as a free lunch, that deficits do matter, be they government deficits or consumer's.

Christian Jihadists

I will not belabor this point, except to say that, at the very time Bush berates religious fundamentalists abroad, he has breached the wall between religion and state here at home. He has jimmed open this Pandora's Box and there will be hell to pay for it eventually -- as there has been everywhere on earth where this was done.

All the above, and more, is why I contend that George W. Bush is the worst president EVER. Hands down, no one else even comes close.

Herbert Hoover may have triggered the Great Depression, but he didn't invade another nation on false pretenses, authorize torture of prisoners, or try to stack the courts. Franklin Roosevelt did try to stack the courts but Congress said "no" and he said "OK," and went on to save the world from fascism and secure the lives of America's elderly by creating Social Security -- which Bush now wants to subvert.

Johnson and Nixon did fight an illegal and immoral war but Johnson lifted millions out of poverty and got the Civil Rights Act passed, much to his own party's detriment. Nixon tried to subvert the Constitution but was caught and thrown out of office before he could succeed.

But I fear it's too late to stop George W. Bush and his band of right-wing revolutionaries. We have let them get too far along now to stop them. We have let them neutralize too many constitutional checks and balances. And once they deep-six the filibuster it truly will be game over.

Yes, the Democrats have begun to fight, but too little and now too late. The only recourse soon will be public demonstrations of the kind and size not seen here since the 1970s.

The only question is, are there still enough of us out here who give a damn.

Stephen Pizzo is the author of numerous books, including Inside Job:
The
Looting of America's Savings and Loans," which was nominated for a
Pulitzer.

Reprinted from AlterNet:

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Subj: Fwd: Stephen Pizzo: 'Bush: Worst president ever?'

Date: 5/22/05 2:36:50 AM Central Daylight Time

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