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USA

Sun Setting on Bush's Empire

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With the George W. Bush presidency limping into its final sixteen months and a line of rats led by torture boy Alberto Gonzales and dirty trickmeister Karl Rove jumping ship, several questions come to mind. Even if definitive answers aren't possible, the questions provide a kind of window into the state of the regime and the larger crisis it has helped to create.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/gonzalesrove.jpg>]

Rove and Gonzales

- Is this administration, as some serious historians suggest, the very worst in U.S. history?
- Following its failure and debacle in Iraq, will this gangster regime take the ultimate plunge the world into the ultimate catastrophe of a war with Iran?
- Will the Democrats who narrowly control Congress do anything to force Bush out of Iraq?
- Will the sudden turmoil in financial markets triggered by the sleazy “subprime mortgage” collapse translate into political crisis for an administration on the brink?

The question of the Bush regime's place in history should be divided into two parts. Certainly in its levels of corruption, mendacity, destruction of the Bill of Rights and of people's freedom from government abuse, this administration has combined the criminality of the Nixon (Watergate) and Reagan (Iran-Contra) presidencies and, as we say on this side of the pond, “taken them to a new level.” Just take the Supreme Court – please!

Nonetheless, in terms of its damage to American society itself, the George W. Bush presidency can be considered only the second worst in our history.

Going back 130 years, it was the presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes – who took office through a dirty political deal following a deadlocked election – that ended post-Civil War Reconstruction in the U.S. South, opening the way for generations of lynch law terror, the stripping of voting and civil rights from Black citizens, and the whole culture of white supremacy that has poisoned the United States ever since. There you have the most internally destructive administration ever.

In 1877, however, the United States wasn't yet a world power. If you examine the GW Bush presidency in terms of the damage done to the world – from the utter destruction of Iraq, the brutal impasse of Afghanistan, the destruction of Palestinian democracy (and all this in the Middle East alone) to blocking action on catastrophic climate change – these past eight years smash all previous records.

These considerations lead naturally into the other questions posed above, and a broader one: If the strength of the U.S. Constitutional structure – which we must admit has served the bourgeoisie very well indeed for over two centuries – lies partly in the fact that it doesn't assume or depend on presidents being necessarily wise, particularly competent or even honest, then why have there apparently been no serious checks on the runaway behavior of the current one?

This is clearly the most destructive of all the recent imperial presidencies, and now the most unpopular of them all, yet it has encountered the least institutional resistance.

Why, indeed, has a Democratic Congressional majority, elected in November 2006 precisely because the U.S. population is sick to death of the Iraq war, proven unwilling or unable to change the Bush regime's behavior when it's

clear the war is lost?

There are conjunctural reasons, or if you like excuses: The Democrats' majority is thin and can't force an end to debate in the Senate (where 60 votes are required to stop a filibuster), let alone achieve a two-thirds majority to override Bush's veto of any legislation for withdrawal "timetables" or adequate time at home between deployments.

What infuriates antiwar activists, however, is that Congress doesn't actually need to pass anything: All it would need to do is to refuse to pass the Bush administration's semi-annual requests for hundreds of billions of dollars in "supplemental," off-budget war spending.

Here's where political cowardice intersects with the objective crisis of imperialism. The Democratic leadership are not only terrorized by the "soft on terror" label; they have no real alternative to the Bush gang's emerging program for the regional crisis.

That "surge and beyond" program entails a longterm presence of U.S. occupation troops on the Korean model; a tactical alliance with Sunni insurgent tribes in Iraq to counteract Shia and Iranian power; sponsorship of a rightwing Palestinian leadership in the hopes of forcing Palestinian aspirations for an independent state into a miserable Bantustan.

The Democrats intend to win the 2008 election on the basis of Bush's incompetent management of the Iraq occupation, but not to bring about any fundamentally different direction. Tactically, the Democratic leadership's trick is to wage the facsimile of a fight against Bush sufficient to hold onto the antiwar vote on which they absolutely depend, but not to risk actually winning it. This is particularly true of the party's de facto leader Hillary Clinton.

A more serious fight might occur if the administration follows through with its plans to attack Iran. There is little doubt that the then-dominant neoconservative faction headed by Dick Cheney, two years ago, committed the Bush administration to war with Iran before leaving office.

The catastrophic failure in Iraq, however, has left no popular support for this level of insanity, even if the "official" Democratic opposition pretends not to know the war plan even exists, let alone trying to block it. (Most of the military elites also consider it crazy, except for the air force brass who apparently think they can bomb anything into oblivion.)

In this writer's tentative opinion, there's a more serious new factor that tends to further push back the war drive: the threat of the housing and credit crunch morphing into a serious recession.

With oil prices already at \$80 a barrel, with stock markets very uneasy and with the U.S. dollar falling fast, with U.S. corporations' domestic profits falling (although propped up by their international operations) and the emerging realities of rotten debts not only in housing mortgages but throughout the banking system, the shock of a new war today might have implications greater than 1973. No one really knows – but it seems logical that the ruling class wouldn't want to find out.

One way or another, one expects that corporate capital will have ways and means of stopping this rogue regime from playing geopolitical Russian Roulette with trillions of dollars of its hard-earned money. Still, it would feel a lot better if we had a mass movement to rely on to impose sanity.