Terrorism, War, and Bush 43: Crash Course US History #46

Crash Course: U.S. History
https://youtube.com/watch?v=nlsnnhn3VWE
https://nerdfighteria.info/v/nlsnnhn3VWE

Hi! I'm John Green this is Crash course US history and today we've done it! We've finally reached the 21st century!

Today we boldly go where no history course has gone before because your teacher ran out of time and never made it to the present. Also if you're preparing for the AP test its unlikely that today's video will be helpful to you because you know they never get to this stuff.

Mr. Green, Mr. Green! Awesome. Free period.

Yeah, Me From The Past, there's no such thing as a free period. There's only time and how you choose to use it. Also me from the past we're in your future, hold on I have to take this stuff off its hard to take me seriously with that. We're in the future for you, which means you are learning important things about the you who does not yet exist.

You know about Lady Gaga, Kanye and Kim, Bieber. Well you're not going to find out about any of those things because this is a history class but its still going to be interesting!

(Intro)

So the presidency of George W. Bush may not end up on your AP exam, but its very important when it comes to understanding the United States that we live in today.

The controversy starts with the 2000 election. Democratic presidential candidate Al "I invented the internet" Gore was sitting vice president and he asked Bill Clinton not to campaign much because a lot of voters kind of hated Bill Clinton.

The Republic candidate was George W. Bush, governor of Texas, and unlike his father a reasonably authentic Texan.

You know as people from Connecticut go.

Bush was a former oil guy and baseball team owner and he was running as a compassionate conservative which meant he was organizing a coalition of religious people and fiscal conservatives. And that turned out to be a very effective coalition and George W. Bush got a lot of votes.

He did not however get as many votes as Al Gore.

But as you will no doubt remember from earlier in crash course US history in the United States presidential elections are not decided by popular vote. They are decided by the Electoral College.

So the election was incredibly close, it solidified the Red-Blue divide that has become a trope for politicians since, and in the end Gore won the popular vote by about 500,000 votes. However, Al Gore did not have the necessary electoral votes to become president. Unless he won Florida. Did he win Florida? I don't even want to go there...

In Florida the vote was ridiculously close, but George W. Bush had a gigantic advantage which is that his brother, Jeb Bush was the governor of Florida. So when it came time to certify the election Jeb was like, "Yeah. My brother won. No big deal." But then the Gore campaign sued to have a recount by hand, which is allowed under Florida Law. But then Bush's lawyers asked the Supreme Court to intervene and they did.

Their decision in Bush v. Gore remains rather controversial. They ruled that the recount should be stopped, interfering with a state law and also a state's electoral process, which is a weird decision for strict constructionists to make.

However, one of the strong points of the United States these past couple centuries has been that sometimes we have the opportunity to go to war over whether this person or that person should be president and we choose not to.

So, regardless of whether you think the recount should have gone on, or George W Bush should have been elected, he was, and he set to work implementing his campaign promises, including working on a missile defense system that was very similar to *Star Wars*. And that was Ronald Reagan's *Star Wars*, not George Lucas' *Star Wars*. Man if we could get a federally funded new *Star Wars* trilogy that doesn't suck, that would be awesome.

Anyway, in the first 100 days of his presidency Bush also barred federal funding for stem cell research, and he supported oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. And speaking of environmental policy, the Bush administration announced that it would not abide by the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on carbon emissions and that didn't go over well with environmentalists in the U.S. or in all of these green parts of not-America because they were like, "You guys made all the carbon." To which we said, "This is America."

(Libertage)

Bush also attempted education reform with the No Child Left Behind Act, which mandated that states implement rigorous standards and testing regimes to prove that those standards were being met. The No Child Left Behind Act is especially controversial with teachers who are great friends of Crash Course US History so we will say nothing more.

Most importantly, George W Bush pushed through the largest tax cut in American history in 2001. Claiming that putting more money in American's pockets would stimulate growth in an economy that had stumbled after the bursting of the "dot-com" bubble in 2000.

Oh, it's time for the Mystery Document? The rules here are simple. I guess the author of the Mystery Document, I either get it right or I get shocked with the shock pen. All right, what have we got here today? I've got a feeling it's going to be a sad one.

"It was a beautiful fall day with a crisp, blue sky. I was coming on to work late that day; I guess I didn't have first period class. It was only the second or third day of school.

When I emerged from the subway, Union Square was strangely quiet, which only added to the beauty of the day. People were standing still, which is weird in New York under any circumstances, and looking down University Place towards Lower Manhattan. Before I even looked I asked a passerby what had happened. She, or her, I really don't remember, said that a plane had crashed into the Trade Center.

Then I looked and saw the smoke coming billowing out of the South Tower. I thought it was an accident, but I knew that this was not going to be an easy day."

Well it's obviously someone who was in New York City On September 11, 2001, but that only narrows it down to like 10 million people. However, I happen to know that it is Crash Course historian and my high school history teacher Raoul Meyer who wrote that account. This is the saddest I have ever been to not to be shocked.

So whether George Bush's domestic policy would have worked is up for debate, but the events of September 11, 2001 ensured that foreign policy would dominate any discussion of the opening decade of the 21st century.

That morning terrorists affiliated with al-Qaeda hijacked 4 airliners.

Two planes were flown into Manhattan's World Trade Center, a third was crashed into the Pentagon in Washington (Well, actually Arlington, VA), and a fourth, also headed for Washington DC crashed in Pennsylvania when passengers overpowered the hijackers.

Almost 3,000 people died including almost 400 policemen and firefighters.

As Americans rushed to help in the search for survivors and to rebuild a devastated city, a shared sense of trauma and a desire to show resolve really did bring the country together.

President Bush's popularity soared in the wake of the attacks. In a speech on September 20, the president told Americans watching on television that the terrorists had targeted America "Because we love freedom and they hate freedom."

This is another critical moment in American history where the definition of freedom is being re-imagined. And we were reminded in the wake of September 11th that one of the things that government does to keep us free is to keep us safe but at the same time ensuring our safety sometimes means impinging upon our freedoms.

And the question of how to keep America safe while also preserving our civil liberties is one of the central questions of the 21st century.

At any rate, in the September 20th speech, the president announced a new guiding principle in foreign policy that became known as the Bush Doctrine. America would go to war with terrorism making no distinction between the terrorists and the nations that harbored them.

Bush laid out the terms for the world that night: "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists." But that dichotomy, of course, would prove to be a bit of an oversimplification.

So on October 7th the United States launched its first strikes against Afghanistan, which at the time was ruled by a group of Islamic fundamentalists called the Taliban who were protecting Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda's leader.

This was followed by American ground troops supporting the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance in chasing out the Taliban and setting up a new Afghan government that was friendly to the United States.

This new government undid many of the worst Taliban policies, for instance allowing women and girls to go to school, and even to serve in the parliament. More women than girls in the parliament naturally.

But by 2007 the Taliban was beginning to make a comeback and although fewer than 100 Americans died in the initial phase of the war, a sizeable force remained and in the ensuing 12 years the number of Americans killed would continue to rise.

And then, by January 2002 Bush had expanded the scope of the Global War on Terror by proclaiming that Iran, Iraq and North Korea were an "axis of evil" that harbored terrorists, even though none of those nations had direct ties to the September 11 attacks.

The ultimate goal of Bush Doctrine was to make the world safe for freedom and also to spread it and freedom was defined as consisting of political democracy, free expression, religious toleration, free trade and free markets.

These freedoms, Bush said, were "right and true for every person, in every society." And there's no question that the Saddam Hussein led Iraq of 2003 was not, by any of those definitions, free. But the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the United States was predicated on two ideas- first that there were weapons of mass destruction, chemical and biological weapons that they were unwilling to give up, and second that there was, or at least may have been, a link between Saddam Hussein's Iraq and the al-Qaeda attacks on 9/11.

So in March 2003 the United States, Britain, and a coalition of other countries invaded Iraq. Within a month Baghdad was captured, Saddam Hussein was ousted, Iraq created a new government that was more democratic than Saddam's dictatorship, and then descended into sectarian chaos.

After Baghdad fell President Bush declared the end of major combat operations in Iraq, but troops found themselves trying to manage an increasingly organized insurgency that featured attacks and bombings. And by 2006 American intelligence analysts concluded that Iraq had become a haven for Islamist terrorists, which it hadn't been before the invasion. In fact, Saddam Hussein's socialist government, while it occasionally called upon religion to unify people against an enemy, was pretty secular.

Although fewer than 200 Americans had died in the initial assault, by the end of 2006 more than 3,000 American soldiers had been killed and another 20,000 wounded. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi's had died in the conflict and the costs of the war, which were promised to be no more than 60 billion, had ballooned to 200 billion dollars.

So that, and we try very hard here at Crash Course to be objective, was a bit of a disaster. But let's now go back to the domestic side of things and jump back in time to the passage of USA PATRIOT Act. Which believe it or not is an acronym for the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001.

Oh Congress, you don't pass many laws these days, but when you do, mmm, they're some winners.

The Patriot Act gave the government unprecedented law enforcement powers to combat domestic terrorism, including the ability to wiretap and spy on Americans.

At least 5,000 people connected to the Middle East were called in for question and more than twelve hundred were arrested, many held for months without any charge. The administration also set up a camp for accused terrorists in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, but not the fun kind of camp, the prison kind. It housed more than 700 suspects.

The President also authorized the National Security Agency to listen in to telephone conversations without first obtaining a warrant, the so called warrant-less wiretapping. In 2013 Americans that NSA surveillance has of course gone much further than this with surveillance programs like PRISM, which sounds like it's out of an Orwell novel. I mean both like the name and the actual thing that it refers to.

Meredith would like us to point out that Prism is also the name of a Katy Perry album, proving that we here at Crash Course are young and hip and with it. Who's Katy Perry? Oh right, she has that song in Madagascar 3. Sorry, I have little kids.

The Supreme Court eventually limited the executive branch's power and ruled that enemy combatants do have some procedural rights. Congress also banned the use of torture in the 2005 defense appropriations bill sponsored by Republican John McCain, who himself had been the victim of torture in Vietnam. But the Defense Department did condone the continued use of so called enhanced

interrogation techniques, like waterboarding. Which most countries do consider torture.

But George W. Bush won reelection in 2004, defeating the surprisingly weak John Kerry, who was characterized as a waffler on a number of issues, including the Iraq war. Kerry's history as a Vietnam protester and a terrible windsurfer probably didn't help him much.

Bush's victory is still a bit surprising to historians. Admittedly at that moment the Iraq war seemed to be going pretty well. But during Bush's first term the economy, which is usually what really drives voters, wasn't that great at all. A recession began in 2001 and the September 11 attacks made it much worse. And while the GDP did begin to grow again relatively quickly, employment didn't recover, hence all the description of it as a jobless recovery.

90% of the jobs lost in the 2001-2002 recession were in manufacturing, continuing a trend that we've been seeing for thirty years. The number of steel workers dropped from 520,000 in 1970 to 120,000 in 2004. And in his first term George W. Bush actually became the first President since Herbert Hoover to oversee a net loss of jobs. Now I want to be clear that that's not necessarily his fault, as I have said many times before economics are complicated and presidents do not decide whether economies grow. But at any rate George W. Bush was reelected and went on to have an extremely controversial second term. Let's go to the thought bubble.

In 2005, several events undermined the public's confidence in the Bush administration. First, Vice President Dick Cheney's Chief of Staff was indicted for perjury and then House Majority Leader Tom "The Hammer" Delay was indicted for violating campaign finance laws.

Then in August 2005 Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast near New Orleans, submerging much of the city, killing nearly 1,500 people, and leaving thousands stranded without basic services. Disaster preparation and response was poor on the state, local and federal levels, but the slow response of the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency was particularly noticeable as thousands of mostly African-American New Orleans residents suffered without food or water. Damage to the city was estimated at around 80 billion dollars. And the Katrina disaster also exposed the persistent poverty and racial divisions in the city.

While the Katrina response probably contributed to the reversal of fortunes for Congressional Republicans in the 2006 midterms, it was more likely the spike in gasoline prices that resulted from the shutting down of refining capacity in the Gulf and increased demands for oil from rapidly growing China. Voters gave Democrats majorities in both houses and Nancy Pelosi of California became the first woman Speaker of the House in American history.

And then in 2007 the country fell back into recession as a massive housing bubble began to deflate, followed by the near collapse of the American banking system in 2008.

Thought Bubble, thank you once again for the tremendous downer.

So the Bush years are still in the recent past and it's impossible to tell just what their historical significance is without some distance. But the attacks on September 11th had far ranging effects on American foreign policy, but also the entire world. Under the leadership of George W. Bush, the United States began a global fight against terrorism and for freedom. But as always what we mean by those words is evolving and there is no question that in trying to ensure a certain kind of freedom we have undermined other kinds of freedom.

We will get to the even messier and murkier world of the 2008 financial collapse next week. Until then, thanks for watching.

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