

Opposing Views

Obama Worse than Jimmy Carter & George W. Bush?

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By [Cato Institute](#) on Aug 13, 2011

By *David Boaz*

Conservatives have become so furious with President Obama that they forget just how bad some of his predecessors were. One Jeffrey Kuhner, whose over-the-top op-eds in the Washington Times belie the sober and judicious conservatism you might expect from the president of the “Edmund Burke Institute,” [writes](#) most recently:

A possible Great Depression haunts the land. Primarily one man is to blame: President Obama.

Mr. Obama has racked up more than \$4 trillion in debt.

Yes, he has. And that’s almost as much as the \$5 trillion in debt [rung up](#) by his predecessor, George W. Bush. True, on an annual basis Obama is leaving Bush in the dust. But acceleration has been the name of the game: In 190 years, 39 presidents racked up a trillion dollars in debt. The next three presidents ran the debt up to about \$5.73 trillion. Then Bush 43 almost doubled the total public debt, to \$10.7 trillion, in eight years. And now the 44th president has added almost \$4 trillion in two years and seven months. (Here’s an [online video](#) depicting each president’s debt accumulation as driving speed.) So Obama is winning the debt war, but it’s not like he caused the debt crisis or the unemployment crisis all by himself.

And then, trying to prove that Obama is even worse than Jimmy Carter — *even worse than Jimmy Carter!* — Kuhner makes this curious claim:

Most importantly, Mr. Carter had respect for the dignity and integrity of the presidency. He never trashed his opponents the way Mr. Obama does.

Really? Maybe Mr. Kuhner is too young to remember Carter, and didn't bother to check his claim, or maybe he just got carried away. But I can remember October 1980, when President Carter repeatedly said that the election of Ronald Reagan would be “a catastrophe” that would mean an America

separated, black from white, Jew from Christian, North from South, rural from urban.

Liberal columnist Anthony Lewis asked in *The New York Times*, “Has there ever been a campaign as vacuous, as negative, as whiny? Probably so — somewhere back in the mists of the American Presidency. But it would take a good deal of research to come up with anything like Jimmy Carter's performance in the campaign of 1980.” The venerable Hugh Sidey [wrote](#) in *Time* magazine, “The wrath that escapes Carter's lips about racism and hatred when he prays and poses as the epitome of Christian charity leads even his supporters to protest his meanness.”

Obama is a big spender who portrays himself as a “beyond left and right” above-the-fray president trying to work with everyone while demonizing his opponents. But let's not forget the meanness of Jimmy Carter and the spendthrift record of George W. Bush in seeking to establish Obama's uniqueness.