

# BUSHED!

An Illustrated History of What Passionate  
Conservatives Have Done to America  
and the World



**Walter C. Clemens, Jr.**

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Illustrations by Jim Morin

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*Et dimitte nobis debita nostra,  
sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris.  
Et ne passus nos fueris induci in tentationem,  
Sed libera nos a malo.*

(Matt. VI. 9-11)

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*“I think we agree, the past is over.”*

George W. Bush  
May 10, 2000

## Introduction

### **HOW COULD SO MUCH GO SO WRONG SO QUICKLY?**

Bushed! Drained. Wasted. Its military muscles spit-polished but its moral authority and treasury dramatically diminished. That’s the United States after one term of George W. Bush’s presidency. America and the world have been ambushed by a bush-league top gun and his passionate conservative aides-de-camp who wage guerrilla operations, often from “undisclosed locations”.

How could the world’s only superpower be so rich, so powerful and so influential in 2000 only to descend into a swirl of financial and moral bankruptcy just a year or two later? How could a country that effectively served as a bulwark of international peace and security in the 1990s become a rogue outlaw virtually overnight?

The steep decline began with a stolen election. It continued with a presidency that, even though it lacked a popular mandate, acted to promote the narrow interests of a few. Passionate conservatives who bankrolled the election campaign kept their families rolling in stock dividends, bond coupons and numbered off-shore accounts. They called themselves “compassionate conservatives” but were neither compassionate nor conservative. They were passionate about looting the public weal for private gain, aided by government action and inaction.

Here was larceny on a vast scale: Public goods—clean air, clean water, public lands—would be violated to enrich a few thousand Bush cronies while most of the population suffered. A huge surplus in the U.S. Treasury would soon be transformed into a growing mountain of public debt—abetted by waves of tax cuts, mainly for the wealthy, and by military expenditures that enriched the military-industrial complex.

Though 9/11 indeed demonstrated a serious global threat from al Qaeda, the Bush team used this threat to justify a host of measures to advance its kleptocrat agenda, justifying virtually anything—even drilling for oil in Alaska—as part of the war on terrorism.

How and why did the U.S. fall so far so fast? Here we will cut through the thicket and expose the role of one constant in the whole picture: The

rulers' lust for power and wealth. Speaking pieties about faith and freedom, the Bush team has labored to maximize its own power and wealth and that of its patrons. A Marxist would say that some of the country's richest capitalists put their man in office and got him to serve their class interests. While acting as Marx predicted, Dubya and his entourage seemed to implement the advice that Machiavelli provided to the princes of Renaissance Italy.

Be a lion and a fox, Machiavelli urged the aspiring princes. Be strong and wily. The criterion of success is that you obtain, hold and expand your power. If you do this, people will forget if you neglect "law" or "principle". Machiavelli emphasized executive action—*esecuzione*. The prince must be a powerful executive—unfettered by courts or legislatures. He must act forcefully to execute commands, policies—whatever must be done. Indeed, the first rule is to stage executions: Capital punishment. Law and justice are not the point. Executions are needed to intimidate others and remind all who is boss.

A second guideline: Use war and foreign policy to enhance power at home as well as abroad. Foreign crises justify emergency rule and even more power to the executive.

Third: Act as though you execute the will of some third party—best of all, God.

Fourth: Understand that the only important difference between governments is that some succeed and others fail in gaining and holding power—not whether the people or a prince seems to rule.

Fifth: To underscore that you are strong and decisive, you must sometimes act with suddenness. Surprise others and keep them off guard.

Sixth: Envelop your plans and actions in secrecy.

Finally: Recognize the need for one alone—*uno solo*—to make decisions and execute them.

The bottom line for the Bush White House as well as Machiavelli: Might makes right.

These views are not just short-sighted but obsolete. Case histories in every realm show that treating others as if we inhabit a zero-sum world, where only one side can win, sometimes produces short-term profits, but tends to backfire over time. One of the great advances in social science since Plato, Machiavelli and Marx is the insight that human relationships often blend opposing interests, and that skillful players can generate mutual gain.<sup>1</sup> To do so, however, requires mutual respect, openness and dialogue—not brutal and sudden exercises of force. Another advance is the insight that individuals and groups survive and prosper, not by rugged individualism, but by self-organized cooperation from the bottom up.<sup>2</sup>

Rule by *uno solo* in modern times has not worked. The top-down rule of Soviet and Chinese Communists yielded not just economic disaster but also democide, politicide and genocide. Hitler followed Machiavelli's maxims. Nazi Germany absorbed Austria and Czechoslovakia without a fight. Soon Hitler plunged Germany into a two-front war that quickly destroyed the Third Reich. Machiavellians started most of the 20th century's major wars and then lost them.

The greatest achievements of the United States at home and abroad have arisen from policies quite the opposite from those advocated by Machiavelli and practiced—if not preached—by George W. Bush. In the 20th century Americans made great progress in creating a society of equal opportunity and mutual respect. Incomes gradually increased while a growing web of institutions aided the needy. When Theodore Roosevelt busted trusts, this was not for show but for real. When Henry Ford paid workers a decent wage, this was also for real. They could buy the cars they made. When women got the vote, they used it. When Franklin Roosevelt gave “fireside chats” by radio, he did not bully or intimidate but persuaded and co-opted. He, and most presidents after him, seldom commanded action. They consulted with experts, explained their thoughts to the people, and then worked with Congress to get the appropriate legislation.

When Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon pursued the Indochina wars with sudden moves, orchestrated in secret, and without sharing all the facts with the public, disaster struck. In nearly all cases where the U.S. attempted “Machiavellian” dirty tricks to overthrow other governments, the long-term consequences proved horrendous: Iran 1953, Guatemala 1954, Vietnam 1963, Chile 1973. The jury is still out on the consequences of the Iraq War, but the deceptions that fueled it already haunt the Bush administration.

America's greatest achievements abroad—the Marshall Plan and NATO—show that Machiavellian tactics are not necessary to do well in world affairs. The reconstruction of Europe and formation of a prosperous and secure trans-Atlantic community arose from a quest for mutual benefit, planned and conducted in the open.<sup>3</sup> This strategy aimed at mutual gain but demanded that each actor contribute what it could. It guarded against Machiavellians, who were ready to exploit others' generosity for one-sided profit.

To get ahead in the world, brute strength and cunning do not suffice. Neither does unlimited faith in human goodness. The best working proposition is that all humans have become interdependent—mutually vulnerable to each other. We are linked so closely that we can readily hurt—or help—one another. Since our relationships are a blend of opposing and shared interests,

we need dialogue on how to promote mutual gain. A mutual gain orientation based on conditional cooperation is the key to enhancing the long-term interests of all Americans and all humanity. Indeed, concerted action for mutual gain is probably necessary to save the biosphere—the thin membrane of soil, water and air on which all life depends.<sup>4</sup>

A mutual gain orientation advanced U.S. policies at home and abroad in the 1990s. It was challenged by Newt Gingrich and some other Republican radicals in Congress, but Gingrich was expelled and the others held in check. The orientation helped put America on top of the world at the outset of a new millennium.

As we see in this book, however, a cabal of greedy manipulators seized power and took over Washington in 2001. In previous times, many of America's greatest presidents had personal fortunes before they entered politics—among them George Washington, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy. But these men did not exploit the presidency for private or family gain. On the contrary, they felt a sort of *noblesse oblige*.<sup>5</sup> The Bush dynasty and its supporters were already quite wealthy in 2000-2001, but they wanted more. The Bushes interlocked government, business and social ties to grow family wealth and power.<sup>6</sup> The family and its co-conspirators raised hypocrisy to new levels, often masking their designs with claims to a nearly divine mission.

The United States under the Bush team spends ever more on defense but is less secure. Corporate bosses receive large bonuses but most Americans are poorer than they were in 2000. Most Americans face higher medical bills with less help from the government or private insurance. Pollution, as well as global warming, increases. Teachers give more tests but kids are not better educated. Some families get vouchers for private schools while public schools are shortchanged. The White House becomes ever more secretive. Except for the right to carry firearms, the Bill of Rights shrinks. Doubts about American democracy mount—at home as well as abroad. Uncle Sam is widely seen as a petulant bully on the world stage—one that speaks loudly and also wields a big stick. He is no longer viewed as an honest broker, good at mediating others' quarrels.

A true conservative in the Teddy Roosevelt mold would seek to maintain and enhance the common good—within the United States and, when possible, worldwide. A compassionate conservative would provide a serious program to help the less fortunate get on their feet. But George W. Bush and his backers have been more passionate than compassionate—passionate about enriching their already bulging bank accounts. Indeed, they give conservatism a bad name, for they pillage more than they preserve.

A wise conservative would surely try to maintain America's status as the world's leading power—one that gets its way mainly by persuasion and example, not by threats or unilateral actions that goad others to resist and undermine America's lead. But Bush and his advisers often seem intent on thumbing their noses at the world. Unlike America's Founding Fathers, the Bush team does not show a "decent respect to the opinions of mankind". Reversing the wisdom of Dale Carnegie, they lose friends and inspire foes.

A former flower child recalled the 1960s: Then, "we thought America was being run by the corporate military-industrial white male power structure. We were certain there was a right-wing conspiracy. We thought civil liberties and free speech were imperiled.... We had reason to believe there was corporate malfeasance and Wall Street was bad. We worried that the government was backing coups in Latin America. We assumed that powerful people were rigging elections. We feared there were people who wanted to blast roads through forests and rip up the tundra." Now, some forty years later, this veteran of the 1960s concluded, "all our worst paranoid nightmares are coming true." How did this happen?

Passionate conservatives waged a very determined, well-organized, and well-financed campaign to regain power and carry out an ultra right-wing revolution. Their greed and ambition also got help from a silent and often selfish majority. Many former activists from the Age of Aquarius gave up and collapsed into an Age of Acquiescence.<sup>7</sup>

"You can fool some of the people some of the time." Mr. Bush's smirk, promises, and his deceptions suggest a confidence that voters can be manipulated to believe almost anything. Fearing another 9/11, many Americans continue to assume that George W. and his key collaborators are doing what's best for the country. If they review the story told in these pages, they may reach the opposite conclusion. The analysis tries to "connect the dots" to suggest what they all mean. This book—its sometimes acrid humor reinforced by hard facts and analysis—strips away the gloss from the dark aims and destructive policies of the Bush White House. New facts and interpretations will surely emerge, but this book tells the story of what probably ranks as the worst administration in U.S. history.

*Walter C. Clemens, Jr.*



*“If you’re sick and tired of the politics of cynicism and polls and principles, come and join this campaign.”*

George W. Bush  
February 16, 2000

# Chapter 1

## **BAD FOR TEXAS, WORSE FOR AMERICA: PRIVILEGE WITHOUT HEART OR PRINCIPLE**

George W. Bush absorbed Machiavelli’s teaching that the only principle in politics is to achieve, hold and expand power. Dubya acted very much like a Machiavellian executive as he wheeled and dealt in business, governed Texas and loose cannoned from the White House. He followed in the footsteps of forebearers who, starting in World War I, helped to run and finance America’s military-industrial complex. Dubya’s grandfather, Prescott Bush (later a Senator from Connecticut), helped arrange supplies for Hitler’s war machine—such as tetraethyl lead for the Luftwaffe—as late as 1938. Prescott and other progenitors were also associated with World War II and Cold War intelligence—connections that overlapped with their business interests in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, as well as in Europe. Some analysts think it likely that Dubya’s father had been recruited by the CIA at Yale. The future 41st president performed valiantly in World War II, but he certainly exaggerated the extent to which he ventured west and struck oil on his own.<sup>1</sup> He managed to link the Bush dynasty to Enron and the House of Saud.<sup>2</sup>

Born on July 6, 1946, George W. went east and attended some of the world’s best schools—Andover, Yale, and the Harvard Business School. Somewhere along the way, he absorbed Machiavelli’s basic advice: Use whatever means will help you succeed.

Young George did not apply himself in school, but privilege and connections can compensate for some deficiencies. Starting in 1975, Dubya raked in, lost and made lots of money—first in energy and then in baseball. Though defeated in a race for Congress in 1976, George W. later won the governor’s office in Texas—in 1994 and again in 1998.

Determined to prevent Al Gore from succeeding Bill Clinton in the White House, top Republicans and their financial backers chose George W. as the man they would run for president in 2000. Was Dubya running on his father’s coattails? Of course not, he replied. Did he have a drinking problem? No—that was a youthful excess he renounced at age 40.

Whatever else, George W. had a golden touch. Dubya's number one career patron, the Enron Corporation, delivered some \$550,025 to his two gubernatorial runs and 2000 presidential campaign. Other major donors are listed later in "Bushonomics". In 2000 Dubya spent some \$89 million just to nail down the Republican presidential nomination. His bulging coffers enabled him to spurn \$15 million in federal matching funds and before the Republican convention he spent more than twice the ceiling allowed for candidates accepting federal money. Altogether the Bush campaign collected \$191 million—far more than Gore's \$133 million total.<sup>3</sup>

When Florida's electoral votes were disputed after the November 2000 election, Bush collected an extra \$14 million to fly in staff, hire lawyers and bus partisans around the state; Gore raised less than \$4 million to challenge hanging chads and other irregularities.

### ***CLASS CREDENTIALS***

The "education president" who would promote testing as the way to save America's youth had been an indifferent pupil at Andover, Yale and the Harvard Business School. Still, he passed one vital test—in his school years and later: He scored A+ on family wealth and influence. What about his C record at Yale? Boosters said this showed him to be a man of the people, a regular guy—not an elitist. If George was still just a grown-up frat boy, one Texas magazine opined, this was all for the good. After all, the French Revolution extolled liberty, equality and fraternity! The magazine ignored evidence that Dubya showed little devotion to equality. Hispanics complained that George W. had never in all his years as governor looked in on the 400,000 plus people living in shabby *colonias* near the U.S.-Mexican border—in contrast to Al Gore, who had visited them at least twice before the 2000 election campaign even began.

### ***SUPER PATRIOT UNTESTED***

George W.'s flying potential was so evident during the Vietnam War that, despite getting the lowest possible passing score, he was leapfrogged over 150 applicants and awarded one of two remaining slots in the Texas Air National Guard. Asked about his motives, Bush stated in 1990 that he was unwilling to mutilate himself to get a deferment or go to Canada and therefore chose to learn how to fly. Asked by the Guard if he would volunteer for overseas duty, he checked the box "do not volunteer". He pledged to serve six years

in the Guard and to make flying a lifetime pursuit, but he often did not show up for training in Texas. After four years he left for Alabama, where he was suspended from service for failing to take a physical.<sup>4</sup>



### ***THE TERMINATOR***

George W. laid claim to being a law-and-order governor—tough on drugs and on all crime. Consciously or not, Dubya followed Machiavelli’s advice and allowed Texas to execute more people annually than all other states combined. In 2000 the state broke the national record (set in Texas a few years before) for executions in a single year. That year there were 85 executions in the United States—40 of them in Texas, followed by Oklahoma (11) and Virginia (8). In 2000 some 450 Texans awaited execution, the highest per capita rate in the country. California, with one-third more residents, had a higher total on death row, 586, but executed just one person that year. Trying to justify the high rate of executions, some Texans noted that they had more murders than elsewhere and therefore needed more capital punishment.

In his six years as governor, George W. presided over more executions than any governor in U.S. history—152 (names of those executed at: [www.wf.net/~connally/apdxAbush.html](http://www.wf.net/~connally/apdxAbush.html)). Was this record a cause for pride and pleasure or for shame and pain? Was it a reason to vote for George W. as a firm enforcer or to despise and reject him as one indifferent to life and justice? How much “compassion” had he shown? Governor Bush sponsored

*“The reason I believe in a large tax cut because it’s what I believe.”*

George W. Bush  
December 18, 2000

## Chapter 2

### **BUSHONOMICS: VODOO ECONOMICS OR KLEPTOMANIA?**

Back in 1980, George Bush the Elder lambasted Ronald Reagan’s “supply side” tax cuts as “voodoo economics.” But voters twice made Reagan president with George H. W. Bush serving faithfully as his vice president. Many years later, when George the Elder became president and welshed on his “no new taxes” pledge, many conservatives cried out, “Betrayal!” George the Younger did not make his father’s mistake. As governor he kept the Lone Star State free of all taxes except sales taxes and license fees—resulting in too little revenue to meet basic needs.<sup>1</sup>

Bushonomics is Reaganomics beyond the pale. It is kleptocracy—a greedy and corrupt regime that robs the public. Kleptomaniacs feel an obsessive drive to rob even without material need. The leading Bush kleptocrats have been multimillionaires for years, but they continue to exploit public positions for private gain.<sup>2</sup>

Bushonomics generated a zero-sum conflict between Americans. Seldom in U.S. history had so few benefited at the expense of the many. The Bush system violated intergenerational equity—the principle that each generation should pass on a better world to its progeny. Today’s children and theirs will have to shoulder and pay off the public debts rung up by George W. Bush’s kleptocracy.

Bushonomics is straightforward: Cut taxes, but mainly for the rich. Give preferential treatment to the petroleum and other resource-extracting industries; privatize retirement funds; starve “the beast”—what passionate conservatives call the welfare state. Meanwhile, preach self-reliance and promise that tax breaks will stimulate investment and generate jobs—just as Reagan claimed for his “trickle down” approach. If seniors insist on prescription drug benefits, structure the program to ensure a bonanza for drug makers.

Bushonomics showed that Karl Marx had great insight into the ways that economics shape politics. As evident in Table 2.1, corporate America backed George Bush and his business-friendly economics in the 2000 elections.

Defense companies donated over four times more to Bush than to Gore.

SOURCE: Center for Responsive Politics

Industry sector	For Bush	For Gore
Finance, insurance, real estate	\$16	\$5
Miscellaneous businesses	\$8	\$3
Lawyers and lobbyists	\$7	\$6
Health	\$4	\$1
Construction	\$4	\$1
Communications and electronics	\$3.3	\$2.5
Energy and natural resources	\$2.8	\$0.3
Agribusiness	\$2.6	\$0.3
Ideology/Single issue	\$2.5	\$0.9
Transportation	\$2.3	\$0.3
Defense	\$181 k	\$40 k
Labor	\$40 k	\$100 k

Table 2.1 Contributions by Sector to the 2000 Presidential Elections  
(in millions except for Defense and Labor, in thousands)

Each of 214 members of the Pioneer Club raised more than \$100,000 for Bush. Among them: AG Spanos (finance and real estate, Stockton, Ca.), \$877,000; Sam Fox (CEO of Harbour Group in St. Louis and a key figure in a national Republican Jewish coalition), \$831,000; Kenneth Lay (CEO of Enron), \$574,550; Louis A. Beecherl, Jr., (owner of Beecherl Investments in Dallas, energy and natural resources), \$446,350; and Herbert F. Collins (chair of Boston Capital Partners and leader of the elder Bush's New England campaign in 1992), \$303,719. One hand washed the other. President George W. Bush did not neglect the material interests of those who helped him.

### ***SLEIGHT OF HAND***

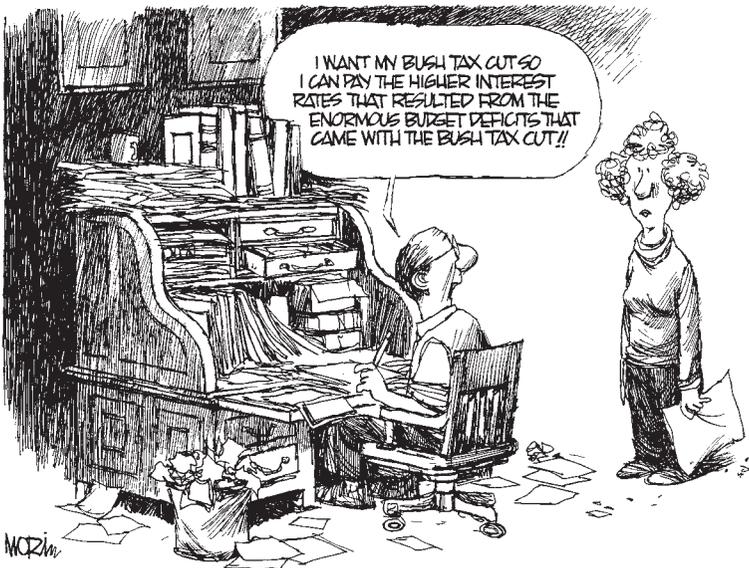
Dubya told Americans they could have it all—lower taxes, beefed-up defense, better education, bigger agricultural subsidies, plus a prescription drug benefit. To make this voodoo economics plausible required much sleight-of-hand accounting. Bush signed his first tax package into law on June 7, 2001. It provided for \$1.35 trillion in tax cuts over the next nine years, to be financed by a recently acquired budget surplus which was already vanishing. Despite huge security outlays after 9/11/01 and a sagging economy, the White House rammed through two more tax cut programs in 2002 and 2003.

### ***A MAGIC ELIXIR***

Guided by divine inspiration and/or the material interests of his backers, George W. unveiled a panacea for whatever ailed the country, namely tax



cuts. When times were bad, tax relief would put money into the pockets of consumers and the investment tills of manufacturers. When times were good, tax reductions would reward people who had paid high taxes in rough times. Meanwhile, if gasoline prices inched up, tax relief would ease the pain. The U.S. Treasury could help you to help Exxon. Was this not a win-win outcome?



# THE WORST PRESIDENCY IN U.S. HISTORY?

## Bushed! Delivers a Compelling Argument in the Affirmative

“How could a country that effectively served as the bulwark of international peace and security in the 1990s become a rogue outlaw virtually overnight?” - *Bushed!*

“*Bushed!*” traces and analyzes what the George W. Bush administration and its passionate conservative supporters have done to America and the world. Capturing the synergy of Pulitzer Prize-Winner Jim Morin’s incisive cartoons and Walter Clemens’ penetrating text, the book depicts the major thrusts of Bush policies at home and abroad and their horrific consequences for America and the world. This worst administration in U.S. history can claim no accomplishments for public interests but has wreaked havoc with the economy, with education, and with civil liberties, while severely undermining America’s standing in the world.

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Morin is the author of three books: *Famous Cats*, *Jim Morin’s Field Guide to Birds*, and a collection of political cartoons, *Line of Fire*. His cartoons and oil paintings have been exhibited in galleries and museums worldwide. His recent exhibition at the International



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