

The Failed Corporate Record of George W. Bush

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Several researchers have investigated the business history of the Bush family. The facts that they have uncovered are not very pretty. The business record of George W. Bush holds some revealing insights to how his presidency has operated, and helps to explain why the country has fallen so deeply in debt and has so many other problems.

As explained by [Kevin Phillips](#) in his book, **American Dynasty: Aristocracy, Fortune, and the Politics of Deceit in the House of Bush**, George W. Bush's businesses fail but he makes millions. Among Mr. Bush's business ventures:

- **Arbusto**, an oil exploration company, lost money, but it got considerable investments (nearly \$5 million) because even losing oil investments were useful as tax shelters.
- **Spectrum 7 Energy Corp.** bought out Arbusto in 1984 and hired Mr. Bush to run the company's oil interests in Midland, Texas. The oil business collapsed as oil prices plummeted by 1986, and Spectrum 7 Energy was near failure.
- **Harken Energy** acquired Mr. Bush's Spectrum 7 Energy shares, and he got Harken shares, a directorship, and a consulting arrangement in return. Harken, under Bush, brought in Saudi real estate tycoon Sheikh Abdullah Bakhsh as a board member and a major investor. Over the next few years, Harken would turn out to have links to: Saudi money, CIA-connected Filipinos, the Harvard Endowment, the emir of Bahrain, and the shadowy Bank of Credit and Commerce International.
 - A 1991 internal SEC document suggested George W. Bush violated federal securities law at least 4 times in the late 1980s and early 1990s in selling Harken stock while serving as a director of Harken. This is essentially the same kind of activity that Martha Stewart is going to prison over. Except at the time of the investigation, Mr. Bush's father was president and the case was quietly dropped.

In his book, **Worse Than Watergate: The Secret Presidency of George W. Bush**, [John W. Dean](#) explains that his family name and his father's prominence were significant factors in George W. Bush's business "success", or, were significant factors in repeated saves from serious business and financial failures. Both Arbusto/Bush Exploration and Spectrum 7 failed with Bush as chairman and CEO. At Harken, Mr. Bush was relieved of day-to-day management responsibilities but still served on the board of directors. Dean also notes:

- George W. Bush claims his formative years, which he extends to age 40, are out of bounds. Yet those are the years when one's character and values are formed. Bush had occasionally overindulged with alcohol, and he was a bit of an irresponsible youth.
- Dean believes Mr. Bush took advantage of his insider information when he sold his Harken stock in 1990, but he escaped SEC penalties because his father was president and many of the investigating officials had Bush family ties and other conflicts of interest. Many of the facts about the Harken deal remain buried and Bush has stonewalled all efforts to find out more.

Our first oil company/MBA president naturally views the world through the eyes of a CEO, according to [Eric Alterman](#) and [Mark Green](#). In their book, **The Book on Bush: How George W. (Mis)leads America**, they describe how this results in a probusiness/anticonsumer record, including crony capitalism with the awarding of post-Iraq war contracts (Halliburton, Bechtel, and MCI/Worldcom getting most of the contracts). Alterman and Green note that the first 2 years of the Bush administration coincided with the biggest corporate scandals and bankruptcies since Teapot Dome in the 1920s. Mr. Bush had to manage a falling economy riddled with corporate malfeasance. Companies on the corporate rap sheet:

- **MCI/Worldcom** -- the single largest corporate securities fraud in U.S. history.
- **Enron** -- the largest contributor to Bush's political career. The Bush administration is staffed with numerous former Enron employees and consultants.
- **Harken Energy** -- Bush's behavior on Harken's board of directors was similar to that of the companies caught in the corporate scandals. Mr. Bush received several memos from Harken officials about the impending financial crisis in the company, sold his stock, then several days later the Harken financial problems were made public. He failed to file notice of these sales to the SEC for 8 months. The SEC simply stopped their 1990-91 investigation.
- **Halliburton** -- Dick Cheney served as CEO and chairman from 1995-2000. He sold Halliburton stock before bad financial news regarding his company was made public. Halliburton committed fraud on its investors by overstating its earnings.
- Enron and Worldcom were followed by scandals and failures at Adelphia, Tyco, and others.

As he did to his unsuccessful businesses, George W. Bush is doing to the country -- leading it down a path of failure:

- huge federal deficits
- mismanagement
- deception
- cronyism.

[The Bush family](#) has had financial and oil business ties with Middle Eastern countries for decades. As explained by [Kevin Phillips](#) in his 2004 book, **American Dynasty: Aristocracy, Fortune, and the Politics of Deceit in the House of Bush**:

- "no other political family in the United States has had anything remotely resembling the Bushes' four-decade relationship with the Saudi royal family and the oil sheikhs of the Persian Gulf" (page 315).
- The investment firm, The Carlyle Group, is run by the Bush crowd (George H.W. Bush, James Baker III, and Frank Carlucci have been/are its top managers and advisers). The Carlyle Group served as an interface between these Bush characters and the Saudi bin Laden family. "Some commentators felt that some connections between the bin Ladens and their black-sheep relative (Osama bin Laden) persisted" (page 315). This connection directly links George W. Bush to Al Qaeda and leads to the logical question: In spite of the president's rhetoric, are Mr. Bush and Osama actually working together? Could that be why Osama bin Laden hasn't been caught?
- "Greg Palast (asked) 'What made this new president [George W. Bush] take particular care to protect the Saudis (after the September 11 terrorist attack), even to the point of stymieing his own intelligence agencies?' The answers, he said, kept coming back 'Carlyle' and 'Arbusto,' the two prominent interfaces between the finances of the Bush family and those of the bin Laden family" (page 316).
- The Bush administration demanded major deletions (especially in the 28-page section dealing with the role played by the Saudis and other foreign governments) in the 2003 joint report of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees on the origins of the 9/11 attack and how it might have been prevented (page 316).

[Kevin Phillips](#) comes to a frightening conclusion about the Bushes and America in his book on page 330:

- Mr. Bush's main advisor, Karl Rove, is an avid reader of Machiavelli. Machiavelli wrote his books, **The Prince** and **The Discourses**, during the early sixteenth century at a time when his own Florentine republic was undergoing political turmoil. "French, German, and Spanish imperial power was overrunning Europe, including Italy, through a scale of wealth and military capacity that doomed many of the old city-states. Florence (Machiavelli's home), one such, surrendered its republican status in the 1530s and took the Medici as hereditary rulers. ... the advice Machiavelli gives in **The Prince** was dedicated to the Medici and designed to work in the new princely, aristocratic, and neo-imperial milieu of 16th-century Italy."
- **"The possibility that the United States could edge toward its own Machiavellian moment in an early-21st-century milieu of terrorism, neo-imperialism, and dynastization is not far-fetched."**
 - "Chapter 4, in its discussion of Bush domestic policy and 'compassionate conservative' rhetoric, has

already referred to Machiavelli's advice that the Prince should lie but must 'be able to disguise this character well, and to be a great feigner and dissembler.' Moreover, 'to see and hear him, he [the Prince] should seem to be all mercy, faith, integrity, humanity and religion. And nothing is more necessary than to seem to have this last quality. ... Everybody sees what you appear to be, few feel what you are.'"

- "Other advice dwells on the merits of fraud, hypocrisy, faithlessness, and related practices, and 20th century academicians have noted Machiavelli's appeal to leaders like Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini. Doubtless there are also hundreds of copies of **The Prince** at the CIA. Which makes it revealing, and arguably ill advised, that the two political advisers to the two Bush presidents should claim it as a bible of sorts."
- "Even in religion, Machiavelli's advice to emphasize it is relevant to the early-21st-century United States. His career in Florence overlapped that of Friar Girolamo Savonarola, the Religious despot who ruled the gasping republic from 1494 to 1498 with a politics of fighting sin and immorality. Doubtless the youthful Machiavelli absorbed how close Savonarola came to achieving a theocracy even in republican Florence. Not a few Americans see a little bit of Savonarola in George W. Bush."
- **"The advent of a Machiavelli-inclined dynasty (the Bush dynasty) in what may be a Machiavellian Moment for the American Republic is not a happy coincidence, but one that demands attention."**

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