

Is there an ideology of Bushism?

Written by Эрик Вальберг/ Уолберг □□□□□ □□□□
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Until recently, Bushism referred only to George W Bush's infamous malapropisms, such as "they underestimated me", "make the pie higher". As Americans gear up for the 2016 presidential elections, it is coming to mean something completely different. Two dynasties are competing for the presidency. Hillary Clinton and Jeb Bush will most likely face off, the former the spouse of the popular Bill Clinton (1992—1980), the latter, the younger brother of the now reviled George Bush junior (2001—2008), herein Bush II—both sons of George HW Bush senior (vice president 1980-1987, president 1988—1991).

Elites, dynasties, families, and even tribes have always been governing society. Conspiracy theorists refer to such elements as "the deep state," a coalition of (some believe) occult forces exercising real power regardless of who is nominally in charge. Does the US have its own "deep state" too? Yes, but only a few families can be called both deep staters and political leaders. Logically, Bushism would mean a family dynasty from the deep state, in harmony with the elites, able to convince the voters that they are providing the best political leadership, given the economic system in place.

This clan rule has been the norm in pre-capitalism, and continues to some extent in the third world; for example, in Syria under the rule of the Assads and it seems to be shaping up for the Karimovs in Uzbekistan. But it has not been the rule in the West. America had a father-son president in the 19th century (John and John Quincy Adams) and a grandfather-grandson (William and Benjamin Harrison). The Roosevelts, too, produced two presidents, uncle and nephew Theodore and Franklin. The Kennedys had their own dynastic ambitions but were stopped after just one president, John F., because both he and his most likely successor Robert were assassinated. But there was no sense of a dynasty in any of these instances. None of them were deep staters.

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The Bush clan is by far the most important such dynasty. In addition to two presidents and a likely third, they also include congressmen, senators and governors. Just how coherent their politics are is moot. But the Bush family has been intimately connected with power for a century now, and thus are supported by the deep state to be president, who is (or should be for the powers that be) mostly a figurehead, following the policies necessary to maintain the US as world hegemon.

New World Order

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, President Bush professed the goal to be “a new world order—a world where the rule of law, not the law of the jungle, governs the conduct of nations ... an order in which a credible United Nations can use its peacekeeping role to fulfill the promise and vision of the UN’s founders.” This was his vision of US world hegemony, using the UN as a cover, and based on a consensus within the hegemon. The basis for Bushism (whether or not a dynastic version) was in place.

The older Bush was the most nonpartisan president of the 20th century. “For him, understanding ‘the other side’, going for fifty-fifty deals and almost always preferring a good compromise to a confrontation were quintessential American values,” writes

Asharq Al-Awsat

columnist

Amir Taheri. He was respected, even a friend of Lyndon Johnson, and Bill Clinton, the man who denied him a second term as president. In fact, Bill Clinton is now regarded as a “Bush brother from another mother,” as Bush II noted in 2014, adding that his own father “serves as a father figure” to Clinton.

This NWO ambitious plan did not pan out so well, ironically to a large extent because of the policies of Bush II. The consensus feeling of the Bush senior period gave way to the vitriolic politics of the Clinton, Bush II and Obama eras, despite the fact that their policies are not much different: The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq under Bush II proved disastrous, but once in place, had to be brought to some kind of conclusion with the US saving face, under an avowed

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anti-war Obama. (Imagine the upheaval if he'd abandoned Afghanistan and Iraq like the Soviet Union. It could have led to a similar collapse of the hegemon. He would surely have been impeached, assassinated, at the very least, drummed out of office after one term.)

Whether this disastrous Bush II legacy is enough to undermine brother Jeb's chances of election is the most interesting aspect of the upcoming election. And whether Hillary Clinton can snatch the prize as the first woman president, and relatively nonpartisan politician, in the tradition of Bush senior, is what will keep the election interest high.

The emergent Bush dynasty

Elites, not elections, put Bush in power. Says Kevin Phillips, ex-Republican author of *American Dynasty*,

"I'm not talking about ordinary lack of business ethics or financial corruption. Four generations of building toward dynasty have infused the Bush family's hunger for power and practices of crony capitalism — with a moral arrogance and backstage disregard of the democratic and republican traditions of the US government. Deceit and disinformation have become Bush political hallmarks."

Bush senior was not popular in Republican circles, who resented his privilege and connections. Richard Nixon was one; Ronald Reagan was another. Donald Rumsfeld didn't like him, either — he and a lot of others in the Ford administration thought Bush was a lightweight. In one of Rumsfeld's greatest miscalculations, he put Bush in charge of the CIA, thinking that would put him out of the race. Instead, Bush fought back and used his deep state connections. He became near-family and a business associate of Saudi princes, whose oil interests need no comment. He funneled arms to Saddam Hussein and then, as president, fought the first Gulf War to oust Saddam from Kuwait, though he wisely held back from a full invasion, unlike Bush II. He was implicated in scandals involving the Iran hostages and BCCI, the rogue bank that financed clandestine arms deals, but despite his many misdeeds (all in the name of fighting communism and promoting democracy) he is now seen as a compromiser, and in comparison to Bush junior, intelligent.

Bush II

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But Bush junior jumped on the hawks' bandwagon, flush with the sense that US world hegemony was within reach (after a few more wars). He was very different from his father. The black sheep of the family, who became an alcoholic. His tribute to his father was the invasion of Iraq to killing Saddam Hussein, though Bush senior was against this, despite their bad blood. Compared to Bush junior, Bush senior was indeed a compromiser, or rather had some political sense.

Bush junior's zealous fundamentalism, given the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, spelled bad news for the world. Never have we felt closer to Armageddon (Bush sincerely believes it's a-coming). After 9/11, that allowed him to think of himself as somebody who has a God-ordained role. He saw himself as an anointed leader, and his speeches evoke religious code words: evil, crusade, the ways of Providence, wonder-working power. In his speech to the nation on October 7 2001, announcing the US attack, there were a half-dozen veiled borrowings from the Book of Revelation, Isaiah, Matthew and Jeremiah. For all his evangelical bluster, Reagan did not believe in preemptive war and looks mild in comparison.

He survived impeachment calls from Congress over the Iraq war, and more or less disappeared after that, as his shallowness left him no post-presidency career, unlike Carter and Clinton. His legacy is more as a gaff-ridden, erratic leader, following the neocon deep state through his vice president Richard Cheney. While his father tried to craft a legacy of America as a benign hegemon, the rebel son tore up the scenario and undermined this version of Bushism.

Bush III.

Jeb Bush (b 1953) studied Latin American affairs and served as the 43rd Governor of Florida from 1999 to 2007. He is clearly the most intelligent of Bush senior's five children. Unlike Bush II, Jeb was the model son, volunteering for his father's campaigns in 1980 and 1988. During the 1980 campaign, Bush said that his father is "the greatest man I've ever met or will meet." Jeb is more like his father and George is more like his mother," said Steven Schier, author of *High Risk and Big Ambition: The Presidency of George W. Bush*, the former diplomatic, introverted and cerebral, the latter caustic, extroverted and emotional.

In 1998, Jeb became governor of Florida at the same moment brother George was re-elected governor of Texas, making the Bush brothers the first siblings to govern two states at the same time since Nelson and Winthrop Rockefeller governed New York and Arkansas from 1967 to 1971.

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If elected president, he faces a dysfunctional system. Government corruption looms as the central issue of the 2016 campaign. It should be a policy of the Democrats. Obama came to power in 2008 based on his elegant denunciation of corruption: *“The lobbyists... the special interests who turned our government into a game only they can afford to play. They write the checks and you get stuck with the bills... they think they own this government, but we’re here today to take it back.”* His reform agenda included ending the revolving door policy between government and business, and a ban on lobbyists in high government positions.

In office Obama forgot all about ethics reforms. His rhetoric was either a blatant campaign lie or his Wall Street lobbyist and corporate advisers pressured him into dropping his most important promise. His only 'success' was to put some minor limits on campaign financing. But even that has been flouted by Hillary this year. Clinton has dispensed with Obama’s sole self-imposed rule aimed at lifting the ethics standards of political fundraising, his 2008 and 2012 bans on bundling by lobbyists. In just her first three months Clinton took in more than \$2 million in bundled high-dollar donations.

Now Republican contenders for the presidency, including Bush, are making corruption reform a plank in their campaigns. Rick Santorum, the evangelical teen idol of 2012, cited corruption 10 times and abortion just twice. Bush and Trump have both put it in their speeches. The disappointment with Obama and Hillary's unconcern with corruption could well give the advantage to the Republicans.

In a 2006 poll, the country agrees with Democrats on nearly every issue now under debate — and by margins often exceeding 60/40. The list includes not just progressive economic policies like a minimum wage and paid family leave, but climate change, gun safety, gay marriage, the lifting of the Cuban embargo, all of the president’s immigration reforms, every tax proposal and nearly every budget priority. But even more bipartisan is the public concern about corruption. Fox News poll, 91% said they were concerned about Washington corruption, up from 81% the year before.

Republicans are a minority taste on the major issues, but win elections on a claim to a frugal, efficient and, above all, honest government. And, oh yes, keeping America strong and safe. Bush III, by adding fighting words about corruption, is poised to attract the dissatisfied electorate. Some of Bush’s proposals come straight from Obama’s old playbook, including a revolving door bill and a requirement that public officials disclose meetings with lobbyists. For

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Bush even to speak of such things is odd. He spent his life out of office trying to monetize family connections, though unlike his father and brother, he has no Saudi oil on his hands. However, his own relatively uncorrupt record combined with an honest campaign vow to tackle corruption alone could win him election.

Bush III policies

Bush's term as governor of Florida are hints of what lies in store if he is elected president. During his eight years as governor of a traditionally Democratic state, he honed typical moderate Republican credentials.

*His claim to niceness is his promotion of preservation of the Everglades. But at the same time, he scuttled the popular push for a monorail system in 1999, despite a voter-inspired constitutional amendment in 2000 passing a law to defy him. He managed to ignore it till it died. And Bush supports offshore drilling outside of Florida. He supports the Keystone XL oil pipeline as well as fracking.

*On immigrants, he talks well (in Spanish and his wife has Mexican heritage) but does little. In 1989, Bush was the campaign manager of Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the first Cuban-American to serve in Congress. In his first, unsuccessful bid for the Florida Governor's office, he garnered 61% of the Hispanic vote. In April 2014, Bush said of illegal immigration: "It's an act of love. It's an act of commitment to your family. I honestly think that that is a different kind of crime. There should be a price paid, but it shouldn't rile people up that people are actually coming to this country to provide for their families."

But his is a tough love. In 2015, Bush took the position that people in the United States illegally should have a path to legal status, but not a path to citizenship. Legal status and avoiding deportation should require immigrants to pay fines, get work permits, pay taxes, not receive government assistance, learn English, and not commit crimes, putting them on the level of slave labor. He compared President Obama's executive orders creating the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) programs to the decrees of "a Latin American dictator", stating that he favors changes through legislation and not by executive order and vowing to revoke those executive orders.

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*He is anti-abortion and initially opposed even civil rights legislation for gays, though he changed his tune when the writing on the political wall became clear. In 2012, Bush softened his opposition to gay adoption saying, "I don't think people need to be discriminated against because they don't share my belief on this, and if people love their children with all their heart and soul and that's what they do and that's how they organize their life that should be held up as examples for others to follow because we need it." More recently he has stated that people should accept court rulings that legalize same-sex marriage and "show respect" for gays in committed relationships, while reiterating his long-held belief that "marriage is a sacrament". Bush chooses his battles to win, publicly criticizing the national Republican party for its adherence to "an orthodoxy that doesn't allow for disagreement" in 2012. He told Bloomberg View that Reagan and George H W Bush would "have had a hard time" finding support in the contemporary GOP.

*He is pro-gun, pro-capital punishment (21 executions under him), pro-tax cuts and anti-workers' rights.

*He has vowed to cancel Obamacare, with his own version of private practice support. He moved Medicaid recipients to private systems, and supported caps for medical malpractice litigation.

*In education, he issued vouchers and promoted parental choice of schools. In 2006, he cut \$5.8 million in grants to public libraries, pilot projects for library homework help and web-based high-school texts, and funding for a joint-use library in Tampa.

*Bush has questioned the scientific opinion on climate change, stating, "It is not unanimous among scientists that it is disproportionately manmade. What I get a little tired of on the left is this idea that somehow science has decided all this so you can't have a view." Bush has also taken issue with the second encyclical of Pope Francis, in which the pope asks for climate change action. Bush, who is Roman Catholic, commented: "I hope I'm not going to get castigated for saying this by my priest back home, but I don't get economic policy from my bishops or my cardinal or my pope."

International relations and security

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But overshadowing all these details is the intimate relations with the Saudis. In *House of Bush, House of Saud: The Hidden Relationship Between the World's Two Most Powerful Dynasties*, Craig Unger estimates that \$1.476b has made its way over time from the Saudis to the House of Bush, and its allied companies and institutions. He writes: "It could safely be said that never before in history had a presidential candidate—much less a presidential candidate and his father, a former president—been so closely tied financially and personally to the ruling family of another foreign power. Never before had a president's fortunes and public policies been so deeply entwined with another nation."

There is little evidence that Jeb is close to the Saudis; his business career was not in oil. It was Bush I and Bush II whose presidencies were strongly influenced by the oil link. In this sense, the House of Bush is not a clone of the House of Saud. It is the rule that princes often veer sharply from their royal ancestors. Jeb has little personal baggage in this regard, though family loyalty is surely going to prevent any real move to change this perverse and illegal influence on US foreign affairs.

Jeb Bush has played his cards well. The favorite son, but not arrogant, nor alcoholic, nor born-again—something to satisfy most Americans, at least those on the conservative end. Given the disappointment that has been Obama, trying to show his WASP warrior credentials and accommodating the ruling elites, things could hardly be worse under Jeb. In fact, Hillary is not a big difference, except on feminist-tinged issues. Like Obama, she has liberal baggage which she will have to shed to rule. The significance of Hillary taking over as a dynastic move is not important, as there are no further Clintons in line. Perhaps her only advantage is her lack of Saudi baggage. Conceivably, she could distance herself from this connection.

From Obama to Bushism

Obama will probably be best remembered for carrying out Bush's middle east tragedy but without any end in sight in either Afghanistan or Iraq/ Syria. Obama's failure to seriously change the dynamics of international relations (as well as his inability to put a dent in corruption) is a great disappointment, hinted at within months of his inauguration, when his vow to close Guantanamo was broken. This was confounded by his hesitancy to wind down the occupation of Afghanistan, and on the contrary, his turning of Bush's infatuation with drone bombings into standard policy. This frustrated US allies (except Saudi Arabia) and left the field open for the likes of ISIS, which has a clear policy diametrically opposed to the US (and their Saudi allies). Bushism in its belligerent Bush II period defeated Obama.

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Are Americans averse to a dynasty, tired of the Bush name? Even if Jeb prevails and inaugurates the House of Bush, recreating Bush I's benign deep state hegemon, it is unlikely that anything will change under either Bush III or Hillary, given the lock the military industrial complex, the old fashioned term for the deep state, has on both politics and the economy, and the paralysis in fighting political corruption.

What about relations with Russia and Iran? Again, not much change, but at least no wars. Russia and Iran have time to continue to consolidate their alliance building with BRICS and SCO and let's not forget the UN. There is no sign of the UN being squeezed into Bush I's plan for a NWO. As a discredited US extricates itself from the middle east, the UN may find itself called on to keep stability.

<http://politconservatism.ru/forecasts/bushizm-est-li-takaya-ideologiya/>