

In announcing his decision last month not to campaign for his younger brother, Jeb Bush, former president George W. Bush reportedly stated that Americans don't like political dynasties. He is right. This concern dates to the founding of the republic.

During the revolution, the colonists hated nothing more than the concept of monarchy. From their perspective, the House of Hanover, as embodied in King George III, was an abomination. To free themselves from this illegitimate leader, many were willing to sacrifice their lives. Thomas Jefferson devoted more than half of the nearly 1,400 words of the Declaration of Independence to cataloging the king's 27 crimes. This "prince," insisted the Virginia delegate to the second Continental Congress, "is unfit to be the ruler of a free people."

The last thing Americans wanted to do was to set up a new monarchy to replace the old one. They were even wary of giving any one person much executive authority. Under the Articles of Confederation, the legislative branch called all the shots. Because this system meant that the federal government could hardly get anything done (sound familiar?), the framers of the Constitution reluctantly came up with a president.

**DYNASTY-PROOF PRESIDENT**

Even so, the Constitution would never have been ratified if Americans had been worried that its new leader was likely to pass on the reins of power to a family member. One of the key reasons that George Washington was unanimously elected as our first president was that he had no biological children. He was thus dynasty-proof.

"I have no child for whom I could wish to make a provision," he wrote in a draft of his first inaugural address, "no family to build in greatness upon my country's ruins. ... Let my personal enemies ... point to the (sinister) object, or to the earthly consideration beyond the hope of rendering some little service to our parent country, that could have persuaded me to accept the appointment."

Likewise, voters never really warmed up to Washington's vice president, John Adams, precisely because they weren't convinced that he could be trusted to put country before family. After all, in his three-volume treatise published in 1787, which defended the Constitution, Adams had ex-

# ANTI-DYNASTY ROOTS RUN DEEP IN USA

Let's see what Jeb Bush and Hillary Clinton can offer beyond pedigree



EVAN SISLEY, AP

The Bushes gather at the family estate in Kennebunkport, Maine, on June 7 to celebrate Barbara Bush's 90th birthday.

pressed some fondness for both monarchy and aristocracy.

The very use of such categories, according to historian Joseph Ellis, has always been "nearly treasonable" in American political culture. In the election of 1800, Jefferson was able to thwart Adams' bid for re-election by insisting that he was a closet monarchist who was grooming his eldest son, John Quincy, to succeed him.

**THE ADAMS FAMILY**

A generation later, Andrew Jackson also managed to turn John Quincy Adams into a one-term president by painting him as an out-of-touch aristocrat whose son, John Adams II, was also waiting in the wings.

Despite the successful administrations of both Teddy Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt, the electorate did not show all that much interest in their heirs.

After Ted Jr. lost a close race for governor of New York to Al Smith in 1924, the Democratic winner quipped, "The young fellow ain't there" — a sentiment that was widely shared.

Though two of FDR's four sons

were elected to Congress, both suffered embarrassing defeats when they sought to move up the political ladder.

In the months ahead, both Jeb Bush and Hillary Clinton will need to make clear exactly what they have to offer above and beyond their pedigree.

But Washington can perhaps also be a guide here. In the winter of 1797, when President-elect John Adams was about to appoint John Quincy, then the ambassador to Holland, to another foreign mission, he asked his predecessor for advice.

Washington encouraged his successor not to "withhold merited promotion from Mr. John Adams because he is your son. ... I give it as my decided opinion that Mr. Adams is the most valuable public character we have abroad."

Let the debate about the respective merits of the latest incarnations of the House of Bush and the House of Clinton begin.

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