

# Jeb sunk by name association

The presidential election of 2016 continued to challenge the status quo last week when Jeb Bush, the presumptive Republican nominee a year ago, pulled out of the race after a disappointing finish in South Carolina.

Although it's tempting to believe that Bush's decision was influenced more by the success of billionaire Donald Trump's campaign against the Washington establishment, it was his inability to learn from his own family's political successes and failures that doomed his candidacy.

The Bush political dynasty, which reached its zenith during the presidencies of George H.W. Bush (1989-93) and his son George W. Bush (2001-09), was very good at seizing opportunities and keeping its finger on the pulse of the nation's political climate, often exploiting a specific issue to their advantage.

Patriarch Prescott Bush, the U.S. senator from Connecticut, for example, established the family's ideological base as a moderate Republican during the 1950s when McCarthyism made it dangerous to be associated with the conservative element of the party.

Prescott's son, George H.W., was slightly right of center, never comfortable with the arch-

conservatism of Barry Goldwater in the 1960s. Instead, George H.W. supported policies that advocated traditional American values such as personal industry and individual responsibility in the family, schools and workforce and assistance to poor countries around the world. This type of conservatism prevailed in the 1980s when he served as Ronald Reagan's vice president. It also made him the legitimate heir to the popular Republican president.

George W. tended to follow his father's lead, remaining right of center by embracing a "compassionate conservatism" that emphasized excellence in education, tax relief and voluntarism. But what got him elected to the presidency – and re-elected – in the early 2000s was catering to the religious right, the most powerful – and conservative – element within the Republican Party.

Like his father and brother, Jeb Bush began his campaign pitching himself as a "pragmatic moderate," calling for tax cuts and debt reduction as well as compassionate conservatism. What hurt him was his attempt to remain ahead of the curve



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on issues such as immigration reform by referring to illegal immigration as motivated by "an act of love for their families" – a position that was severely criticized by Republicans.

The Bush dynasty's ability to win the presidency also came from fronting for the interests of wealthier, or more powerful, supporters who preferred to remain in the background. George H.W. Bush, for example, enjoyed the backing of his father's partners in the oil business. He was also an active CIA operative throughout his congressional career and later director of the agency.

Similarly, George W. was supported by his family's oil industry ties as well as by Dick Cheney, CEO of Halliburton. Cheney, who served as George H.W.'s defense secretary, was the consummate insider and arguably the most influential vice president in history, shaping the administration's policy on the War on Terror.

Despite his family's considerable wealth and connections, Jeb Bush could not raise the money necessary to continue his campaign.

His big-money super PAC, the Right to Rise,

spent more than \$85 million over the past nine months, largely on TV ads bashing other candidates, most notably Marco Rubio. But over the last month, the Bush campaign raised only \$379,000 and most of that was from a single donor who'd also given the same amount to Rubio.

Even if Jeb had raised the money to continue his campaign, the War on Terror made it doomed from the start. Despite his effort to distance himself from his brother's war, the voters equated Jeb Bush's candidacy with the U.S. invasion of Iraq in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The invasion unleashed much of the chaos that has now enveloped the Middle East and diminished America economically, morally and militarily, contributing to the rise of more assertive and even aggressive foreign policy stances by Iran, Russia and China.

Together with Trump's impressive challenge to the status quo, Jeb Bush's decision to withdraw from the 2016 presidential race has registered the point that the voters are fed up with politics as usual.

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