



America's Political Dynasties: From Adams to Clinton

By Stephen Hess

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The Constitution states that "no title of nobility shall be granted by the United States," yet it seems political nobility is as American as apple pie.

America was founded in rebellion against nobility and inherited status. Yet from the start, dynastic families have been conspicuous in national politics. The Adamses. The Lodges. The Tafts. The Roosevelts. The Kennedys. And today the Bushes and the Clintons.

Longtime presidential historian Stephen Hess offers an encyclopedic tour of the families that have loomed large over America's political history.

Starting with John Adams, who served as the young nation's first vice president and earned the nickname "His Rotundity," Hess paints the portraits of the men and women who, by coincidence, connivance, or sheer sense of duty, have made up America's political elite. There are the well-known dynasties such as the Roosevelts and the Kennedys, and the names that live on only in history books, such as the Bayards (six generations of U.S. senators) and the Breckinridges (a vice president, two senators, and six representatives).

Hess fills the pages of *America's Political Dynasties* with anecdotes and personality-filled stories of the families who have given the United States more than a fair share of its presidents, senators, governors, ambassadors, and cabinet members.

This book also tells us the stories of the Bushes and what looks to be a political dynasty in waiting, the Clintons. Emblematic of America's growing diversity, Hess also examines how women, along with ethnic and racial minorities, have joined the ranks of dynastic political families.

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Editorial Review

Review

America's Political Dynasties is a great gift to students of American history, a monumental work by the always enterprising Stephen Hess. Here the branches on the American family tree form a fascinating portrait of the familiar and the little known families that so affected our national narrative.

—Tom Brokaw

With *America's Political Dynasties*, Stephen Hess presents a fascinating study of the dangers of selecting a country's leaders on their blood lines. We Americans struck gold with Franklin Roosevelt, a fifth cousin of Theodore. Yet too often, the electorate, being taken with the original, grabbed for the faded copy. But not always: I loved the Philadelphia editor who backed Jefferson over Adams chiefly because, like Washington, he had no sons.

—Chris Matthews

Anything Steve Hess writes I stop right in my tracks and read it. He's not reacting, he's thinking. His work benefits all who love American politics and policy.

—Peggy Noonan

About the Author

Stephen Hess, senior fellow emeritus in Governance Studies at Brookings, began his career in Washington as a young speechwriter for President Eisenhower (1958–61). He was Distinguished Research Professor of Media and Public Affairs at the George Washington University (2004–09). His numerous books, now translated into thirty languages, include the *The Professor and The President: Daniel Patrick Moynihan in the Nixon White House* (Brookings Institution Press, 2014).

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