

The Bush Tragedy – The Unmaking of a President by Jacob Weisberg.
Bloomsbury 2008.

After nearly eight years in the White House and what is almost universally acknowledged to be the worst, most damaging and crass US Presidency in history, it is surprising that there is anything left to be written about George W Bush that hasn't been committed to paper already. It is therefore greatly to the credit of Jacob Weisberg, editor of the internet magazine Slate, that in *The Bush Tragedy* he has found not only a fresh approach but one which illuminates the extraordinary behaviour of Bush 43 (as he is known in comparison with his father, Bush 41) and explains what makes him tick.

Weisberg traces the story of George W back to the very beginning of the Bush family in the 19th century, and explains and demonstrates how aspects and traits of his forebears come together to form the man whose accumulated decisions have made the world into such a dangerous and fearful place. He analyses the complex relationship with his father and mother, and his siblings, considers the role that his closest advisers have played in his psychological as well as his political self, and pays particular attention to the part that his self-vaunted Christian faith truly plays in his life.

Contrary to the normal view that there is much less to George W Bush than meets the eye, Jacob Weisberg demonstrates that the opposite is actually the case, and explains how this terrible Presidency has been an opportunity for the flaws, inherited angst and intellectual hang ups of Bush to be worked through at the world's expense.

Jacob Weisberg writes like a dream, engages the reader with his character and explains him compellingly and convincingly; this is a book which everyone interested in US politics should read, as well as those who still believe – in spite of George W Bush – that America has a valuable and constructive role to play in global affairs.

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