

By Other Means, For Other Ends? Bush's Re-election Reassessed

UNDERSTANDING THE RECENT
CHANGES IN THE U.S.

The authors of this book try to explain the results of the 2004 presidential elections pointing to the changes in U.S. society after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. They take into account the international factors that had the greatest impact, in particular the expansion of violence and terrorist activities, as well as the domestic socio-political variables that had an influence in voters' behavior.

They analyze society's reaction to the perception that there was a crisis of survival, remembering that that was the first time U.S. territory had been attacked with a large number of dead as a result. Given the possibility of subsequent terrorist attacks—as the media constantly blared using intelligence agency information—Congress, part of the public and most U.S. leaders supported the national security strategy undertaken by George W. Bush, first in Afghanistan and then in Iraq. They also supported the administration's New Security Strategy proposal presented in June 2002, which put forward the need to fight against global terrorist organizations and the states that sponsored them or tried to produce weapons of mass destruction, whether chemical, biological or nuclear. By doing so, they approved the new U.S. role as the international system's watchdog, opposing any state that it might consider potentially dangerous to its territory and population, as Hemphill shows in Chapter 6, even if this preventive attack strategy contravenes the norms of international law or rejects the process of resolution of controversies by any international body like the United Nations.

The book's introduction points out that the elections were very special: the majority supported a war platform; foreign policy

made a priority of domestic issues; and religion became part of the institutional discourse and its fight *against evil*. It should be pointed out that immigrants and women played an important role by supporting the Republicans, when traditionally they are considered part of the Democrats' constituency.

In Chapter 2, "Evangelizing elections: Bush's politics by other means," Imtiaz Hussain writes that, using Christian doctrine, the most profound values and the insecurity of the faithful were manipulated. George W. Bush won the election in rural areas, like conservative Ohio, by calling on Christians "to vote because Biblical values are in danger." The use of religion in a political campaign adds an extra advantage, since the opponent is seen as the devil, in the Biblical sense, and

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so can be attacked, emphasizing his errors and failures.

The Gospel calls for spreading the good news: in Bush's mind, the events of 9/11 justify the internationalization of the Christian Gospel toward the Middle East.

For his part, neo-conservative Karl Rove used the fear factor to get the voters to cast their ballots for Bush, while he waged the battle against the *forces of evil* personified in Al Qaeda's terrorists.

Imtiaz Hussain maintains that a cultural hegemony re-emerged in U.S. society, supported and disseminated by the neo-conservative members of the decision-making elite. He also says that the aforementioned social factors influenced the voters' behavior in other ways. Given the danger, voters turned toward their social group, whether religious

(like the Evangelists, Catholics, Jews or Christians, most of whom supported the Republican candidate) or cultural (like the Hispanics, whose participation in the Democratic Party dropped because they threw their support to Republican proposals like support for the family, no to abortion or the ban on gay marriage, characteristic values of white neo-conservatives but that have been broadly disseminated by churches and the media).

In Chapter 3, “Neo-conning America: The deliberate use of deception,” Lowell Gustafson reviews the Republican and Democratic Parties’ electoral strategy, concluding that the Democrats did not know how to “sell” the benefits of liberalism. The Republicans, by contrast, talked about taking democracy and freedom to the Middle East,

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particularly regional hotbeds of radicalism like Damascus, Bagdad, Tripoli, Teheran and Gaza, as some Israeli leaders were suggesting.

According to political trends, says Gustafson, the second Bush administration will be more aggressive and ambitious in its fight against the so-called Axis of Evil, particularly in Iraq, Iran and North Korea.

In Chapter 4, “Religion, economy & the fear,” Satya Pattnayak takes a close look at some aspects of the election, pointing out that due to the state of emergency, voters behaved abnormally; they did not center their interest on domestic policy issues that affect them directly like the budget, inflation or jobs; the contest was based on questions like moral values and the fear of terrorism or homosexuals. For that reason, behavioralist focuses based on status variables could not

predict electoral behavior. Pattnayak states that the great impact of religion and morality on U.S. society after the war climate and uncertainty spawned by September 11 was underestimated.

In Chapter 5, “Election reflections from south of the border: clues, views and values,” Michael Twomey analyzes values like freedom, democracy, equality, individualism, independence, efficiency, prosperity and moral character, among others, important to U.S. culture but that have specific—even different—interpretations in other cultures. Twomey emphasizes that to get popular support, Bush was able to personify these values during his campaign and to transmit his wish to share them with other cultures (such as the Arab countries and in general the Muslim world) even if they were not interested in adopting them.

In Chapter 7, “Trade policy implications of Bush’s re-election: six strategy menus & two-level stakes,” Gustavo Acua reviews and analyzes different trade policy alternatives, hemispheric integration through the Free Trade Area of the Americas, individual adherence to NAFTA, the signing of bilateral accords with certain countries of the region, the presentation of general principles in hemisphere-specific issues, supplemented by bilateral sectoral accords, regional convergence seeking an accord among the sub-regional blocks like the Mercosur, NAFTA, the Andean Community, and, lastly, the signing of preferential regional accords in which the United States is the main actor, like its initiative aimed at the Caribbean.

Studying the different strategies, the author seeks to identify which one the Bush administration will adopt and present to Congress. He underlines that even though the current legislature has a Republican majority, in trade matters, representatives listen carefully to the desires and interests of their constituents, particularly farmers, industrialists, unionists and environmentalists, and

will vote for the option that benefits them the most, regardless of their party's trade strategy.

Considering that the Republicans could dominate the House of Representatives, the author favors a trade strategy based on negotiating bilateral accords with different countries in the hemisphere because that would guarantee the executive broad room for maneuver.

Acua concludes talking about the internal and external factors that influenced the 2004 elections, pointing out that it was an extraordinary process carried out during a crisis, which meant that voters did not behave according to the usual political parameters, but that variables like fear for their own survival led them to be influenced by psycho-

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social factors. This election was marked by voters' fear and insecurity.

In Chapter 8, José Luis Valdés-Ugalde reflects about the elections' global implications, stating that violence and war have imposed a model for change in the world that has an impact on democracy. The United States has reinforced its position on the international scene as the hegemonic power, but does not enjoy legitimacy. For that reason, it believes that it should use hard power based on coercion, particularly military coercion, to convince other states of the legitimacy of the interventions it has staged in some countries and attempts to justify them historically by maintaining that it is fulfilling a mission as the messianic defenders of the Christian religion, presumably sketched out in Manifest Destiny. From its perspective, this theologically

tinged role played by the United States formalizes its exceptional status as a global power.

Several severe limitations can be foreseen for Mexico's bilateral agenda with the United States given that the latter's main interest is its own security, relegating issues important for the Mexicans to the back burner.

This book is the result of a very up-to-date research project, citing specialized journals like the *American Political Science Review*, *International Security*, *Foreign Policy*, influential U.S. newspapers and magazines like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, the web sites of the most important political and social actors, and documents that aim to explain the U.S. political scene.

By Other Means, For Other Ends? Bush's Re-election Reassessed can be an indispensable guide for deeper research into the issue and an important tool for students, professors and researchers of international relations or politics interested in the United States. It presents original analytical and theoretical views in which neither the state nor the administration are the only protagonists: society plays a decisive role in the construction of new mechanisms and social and political forms that make it possible to face the challenges of international violence like terrorism.

To support their arguments, most of the authors have used statistical data or field research about voters' values, motivations and aims. The presentation of this empirical data and the corresponding sociological, economic, legal and/or political analysis will aid the reader in understanding the recent changes in U.S. society and government. ■■

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