

Comment by Michael C H Jones

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US President Obama - what will be his leadership legacy?

Without writing an academic treatise with 17 pages of footnotes recycling other author's opinions - as if ideas are owned like property because allegedly they have never previously been announced, those Greeks and Romans were pretty thoughtless, I will defend Barack Obama with strong reservations.

It is like membership of the Australian Labor Party. The reality is that you may vote Greens or for other Independents but only the Labor and Liberal Coalition Parties can in this historical period garner sufficient votes to rule the country. Similarly in the US, only the Republicans or Democrats can surmount the governance structural barriers holding back other parties and individuals. Democrat Bill Clinton won the Presidency in 1992 simply because of billionaire businessman Ross Perot's candidature and almost 19% of the vote causing Republican George H W Bush to lose 37.4% to 43.0%. Likewise the George Bush and Al Gore chads fiasco is notoriously well known.

Is there any objective criteria for judging the achievements and failures of a US President, or any leader of a country? My view is that it is always subjective. What are the issues considered most important, does ideological or theological perspectives have any influence? Is the external international environment when a leader comes to power having any relevance? Surely these factors and many others impact a leader's capacity to govern whether domestic laws or international treaty.

How do we compare Obama to Clinton, to Carter, to Johnson and Kennedy, or to Truman and Roosevelt? Again, the father and son Bush to Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon, or Dwight Eisenhower? These are only post World War 2 party presidents, and do not contrast Democrat with Republican if that is ever possible.

Moreover, the media simplification of ideological allegiance into Left and Right, White Hats and Black Hats, means the nuances of policy formulation and implementation are never properly analysed, discussed or conveyed even to the well read public let alone the masses. The external interest groups, the flush with funds Congressional lobby organisations, the intricacies of the enormous US Public Service Departments, as well as the power-brokers within each political party, amongst many other considerations, are never understood even by experienced academics in the best universities of America. Arguably the best and brightest CEOs in globally operating MNC (Multinational Corporations) may have similar challenges to a US President?

Certainly, the simplistic "ranting" of the Left or Right, in this article apparently the Left, gives little clue to the worth of a US President, Obama or whoever.

The US-Russian Relations, post collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, has been poorly crafted, Obama inherited a triumphant and inconsistent European Policy wherein the new Russia was basically a periphery issue. The expansion East of both the EU and NATO were continually challenged by Moscow but few in the West were listening. Great Powers, or countries aspiring to such status, have historically had a sphere of influence, the morality is not relevant, and the Ukraine has three times in the modern era been the path for Russia's invasion - the Crimea was part of Russia from 1783 and was merely donated by Khrushchev to the Ukraine.

Increasingly, outside military-security matters, the US day-to-day influence on EU country domestic policies has evaporated despite extensive corporate interests across the Region. The perspective

twin Economic Partnerships across both the Atlantic and Pacific is an attempt to re-establish US economic power on a global rather than regional basis, as well as to counter-balance Chinese economic diplomacy In Eurasia especially.

Obama's wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and now Syria, not to mention Libya and the drones bombings throughout West Asia and North-East Africa, are problematical in the sense of the possible alternative policies. The Neo-cons are a reality, and both influential and still powerful, despite whatever policies certain elements of the Left may emotionally wish for. Obama hasn't done this, and he has not done that, and he has reversed himself on other matters thus betraying the "righteous", but could he have done something else re policies? These questions are not easily answered.

Bottom line is simply has he been edging in the right progressive direction? Are the Conservatives, fundamentalist and racist etc, happy with his Presidency? Would the Republicans, or Hillary Clinton, have done a better job? Is Obamacare a good leadership legacy? Will the Iran nuclear deal be a plus or minus in future history?