

Has Obama Lost His Magic Touch?

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Public opinions polls in America show that only 6 months after taking office, the level of popularity enjoyed by US President Barack Obama has dropped from 76 percent in February to 57 percent in July. Perhaps half a year is not a long period of time in the history of the world, or even in the history of the US presidency; however US media that is fond of statistics has reported that Obama's current level of popularity is not too dissimilar to Bush's popularity 6 months into the job. In fact, Obama is currently only 1 percent more popular than Bush at the same stage in his presidency, and Bush left office as one of the least popular presidents in the modern history of the United States.

What has happened to the popularity of the president that everybody believed was one of the most popular, charming, and charismatic presidents in the history of America?

What has happened to the popularity of the president that was found to be charming and charismatic, not just by the American public, but by the rest of the world?

The man in the White House, his wife, and even his two daughters, have become an example of the "honest American" who until recently were discriminated against in American politics. However following a long struggle, one of these "honest Americans" has come to the mantle of power of the most powerful country in the world. It is not an exaggeration to say that Obama fever swept through Europe, Asia, and Africa. Even the Islamic world – where both the states and the public are skeptical of American actions – was captivated by Obama, especially as there is a promising indication that he is different than previous US presidents, particularly towards the Middle East.

In fact, it seems that Obama himself has begun to understand that he is not just addressing the American public in his speeches, but also the rest of the world. Who can forget the historic speech Obama gave from Cairo University which was fundamentally aimed at the Islamic world, although at the same time it was also an address to the rest of the world, including the American public.

What happened then to explain this decrease in the president's popularity in such a short period of time?

Is the American public so bored that they will withdraw their support from a president who they just got elected?

This phenomenon can be explained as an impact of the global financial crisis on the American public, unemployment rates have increased once more to reach 9.5 percent. Unemployment is at a level not seen since 1983 when America experienced a recession that lasted almost a decade, until Ronald Reagan came to power in 1982. The darkest moments of this economic crisis took place during President Jimmy Carter's administration (1977 – 1981) however the roots of this crisis can be traced back to [Richard] Nixon and [Gerald] Ford. Is this something that will happen once more, a "catastrophe" from a previous era – namely George Bush's administration – [negatively] effecting upon the next era, namely the administration of Democrat President Barack Obama?

Many of those looking at this financial crisis place a large portion of the blame on Obama's policy of economic stimulation, and his injection of an \$800 billion relief package into the economy. For despite the passing of many months this relief package has only had a limited effect on the crisis. However this economic package was not designed to solve the financial problems within six months, and in fact it will take two years at the very least for any change to be seen. The public, and particularly the American public, do not know how to be patient, and in the current [political] era, patience lasts only a few months, and then everybody expects results.

It is also possible that this decrease in popularity has nothing to do with the economic crisis, and has more to do with Barack Obama attempting to resolve all of the world's problems. Obama does not travel to any international area without first getting involved [to resolve] all of its problems or dilemmas, whether this is in Africa, Europe, Asia, the Middle East or Latin America. He is acting as if it is in his hands to solve every problem, crisis, and long-term conflict in the world. By doing so, he is raising expectations and promising more than any American President can deliver. Even the US - which is an unrivalled superpower in the world – has a limited capacity to be involved in [and attempt to resolve] all problems around the world.

Look at what happened when the US got involved with the "Russian issue" by way of making an agreement to reduce the number of nuclear weapons held by Washington and Moscow. It must also be noted that this was not even a major problem, as the basis for such an agreement existed as far back as the 1980s. However a new problem arose when the Russians attempted to link this agreement with another agreement regarding the US missile defense shield that is set up close to Russian borders, and in some cases in countries that are traditionally considered to be within Moscow's sphere of influence.

What we are now seeing in America and throughout the world is something not too dissimilar than a state of frustration as a result of the public's expectation being raised [due to Obama]. However frustration has now set in following a passage of time in which such expectations have not been fulfilled.

The Arab – Israeli conflict is a good example of the crisis taking place between the optimists and the pessimists. Expectations arose that a solution would be found when Obama swooped in to save the day and bring about a settlement. He appointed George Mitchell as his Middle East envoy to settle a conflict that has raged – in one form or another – for a hundred years. At the same time the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem that were being built prior to Obama's arrival to the White House, and continued to be built after he took office, began to see an unprecedented increase in the rate of construction.

Then summer came around, and still a solution with regards to the issue at large or the construction of settlements, remains elusive. In fact the only thing to happen is for members of Obama's administration to begin to cast blame upon the Israelis for not responding to the American demands, and on the Arabs for not being "courageous" enough to make the tough decisions.

As for the Republic party, the only comment that it made was to simply tell their Democrat counterparts: Welcome to the Middle East, didn't we tell you that there is no solution to the Middle East?

The result of this wide range of issues that Obama is dealing with, some internal, and others external, will be that Obama has tried his best, but ultimately failed. Indeed he cannot even benefit from what is often mentioned with regards to the global financial crisis; namely that progress has been made, the banking system stabilized, and that banks are once again lending money. Such talk does not benefit the people who are looking for work in an environment where there are no jobs, and it is likely that the unemployed will become even more bitter and resentful.

If Obama has one advantage it is his ability to understand the realities on the ground. In fact, Obama has many qualities including the ability to remain firm and uncompromising on his path towards achieving his objectives, and this is what allowed him to win the election and become president in the first place. Will he now be able to regain the magic touch that has deserted him?

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