

Obama's first year in presidency

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President Obama has done much in the one year that he has been president.

Over the past twelve months he has overseen the task of stabilizing the American economy. Under his presidency, an era of torture and war-mongering has come to an end. His efforts to disengage from Iraq have won him many admirers. More importantly, he has helped perk up the image of the United States on the global scene. However, there are many more challenges that await him as he leads the U.

S out of the economic recession and into the path of prosperity. Obama's administration seems to be more competent and disciplined compared to that of his predecessor, George Bush. President Obama has been cautious not to play populist politics that would choke the Wall Street with strict regulations. He has also been hesitant to introduce new taxes that would harm small entrepreneurs who keep the economy alive. Obama has achieved a lot considering that he has been keen to do the popular thing and to keep postponing doing awkward things until much later.

He has, in essence, lived up to the rhetoric of his presidential campaign and inauguration ceremony. He has been keen not to act tough. It is largely because of his populist politics that the health bill is likely to pass. The best thing about the health bill is that it has provisions for millions of Americans without insurance and many more who live in perpetual fear of losing out on health insurance if they happen to lose their jobs. However, republicans are concerned that the bill is very expensive and it does not address any cost control measures.

Some critics are of the opinion that Obama should have concentrated on jobs rather than health issues. This is because the country's unemployment rate has gone up to reach the 10% mark. Americans are worried that the national debt may rise to \$12 trillion by the year 2015, double the amount it was when Obama ascended into presidency. The stimulus package that was introduced in 2009 was justified only that it seems the Obama administration has not set up a concrete set of measures of dealing with this massive debt. The same critics argue that Obama's problems are caused by congressional democrats who he has failed to deal with harshly. This seems like the reason why he has to deal harshly with republicans.

America's dealings with other countries have changed significantly since he took over as president. He has been sending more troops into Afghanistan, which is the only thing that seems right under the prevailing circumstances. Elsewhere, Obama has been extending the hand of goodwill in the many tours that he has embarked on. In all these tours, he is yet to reap any benefits. Israel is opposed to his administration's request that construction of settlements be halted. In Russia, Obama has tried a lot to restore cordial relations as well as ease mutual suspicion without much success.

Engagement in Iran seems like a step in the right direction although there is more diplomatic work to be done in order to dissuade the Middle East nation from enriching uranium and becoming a nuclear power. Some people are worried that Mr. Obama will never be a commander-in-chief; that he will always remain a community organizer. They argue that he did not win the presidency because of his potential to act tough but because he was able to confront boldly all the subjects who he happened to catch in awkward

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situations. Being his first year on the top job, there is hope that he still has time to toughen up.

Some of the challenges that president Obama recognized when he entered office include health, economic recession, security, joblessness and a damaged international reputation of the U. S. However, he seems to have pushed some issues in a move that many critics regard as "too hurried". One of these issues is the congressional stimulus package of \$787 billion as a boost to the economy and employment. His efforts to remove troops from Iraq have been gradual while the decision to up the number of forces in Afghanistan, though not in his campaign agenda seems like the most reasonable thing to do today.

The lingering question is why the health bill, which is too costly, should be his top priority agenda today. According to the latest poll carried out by ABC News, the confidence that Americans have in Obama is lower than it was immediately after his inauguration as president. Fifty percent of all the Americans who were questioned approve of Obama's performance, which compares rather lowly with the 68 percent who felt the same way immediately after the president took office. Sixty two percent are of the opinion that the country is not heading in the right direction, the highest percentage to express such negative views about Obama in the past 12 months. Obama himself is aware of these sentiments and insists that people have a right to feel negatively about the administration, considering that the economy is not doing as well as many people expected.

The president has also admitted his failure to unite people as much as he promised during the 2008 presidential campaign. In this campaign, he was a pledge on bipartisanship, a goal whose failure he blames on lack of support from republicans. Obama, unlike most of his predecessors, maintained a specific list of promises and even went ahead to set a time limit for some of these promises. One of them was the closure of the Guantanamo Bay Detainee Center. A few weeks upon taking office, the president signed an executive order requiring that the detainee center be closed within one year.

The order explained that all the detainees in this prison would either be transported into U. S prisons or other facilities overseas. One year into the presidency, Obama seems to have started facing the toughest choices of his presidency. In the past one year, he has been learning about how to wield power. The tough calls relating to health care, the war in Afghanistan, relations with China, Russia and Iran will determine whether his presidency will be a success or a failure.

At the moment, he seems to avoid being perceived by the world as merely an activist with many transformative ideas. This is why he is willing to delay landmark decisions until later into his presidency. Depending on the prism that you use, president Obama is radical yet pragmatic, bold yet cautious. He seems to have discovered that the oratory that was so effective during election campaigns does not easily win souls in the Kremlin neither does it bring in votes into Capitol Hill. He is likely to get over the health reform problem but the economy is not stable enough to win him any additional marks in terms of performance rating.

As if this is not bad enough for the U. S leader, none of the options available for Afghanistan seems likely to become an astounding success. The main question that many people want answered in the next year is whether he can come up with successful policies in order to fulfill all the promises whose timeline is overdue. The problems facing the administration look simple when looked at from a populist point of view. The main challenge is to maintain a balance between idealism and pragmatism in order to get the day-to-day business of governance going on well. By continuing to be smart, energetic and charismatic, president Obama is not doing his best to bring about the change that Americans expected to get from him.

Some liberal democrats are beginning to express the opinion that the president has been giving too much without taking anything; that his eagerness to compromise is turning out to be counterproductive. One year into the presidency, Mr. Obama has rethought not only strategy but also substance. During presidential campaigns, the president was in support of renegotiation of free trade agreement with Canada and Mexico. One year on, the trade pact is untouched.

Instead, his priority has shifted towards the health reform bill. The main reason why many Americans are worried about Obama's presidency is that he has not yet clearly defined himself in a vivid way, says William Galston, a former senior advisor to Bill Clinton. The fact that the president does not believe he was elected into presidency to do small things may be the main reason why he has not done anything that amounts to significant change. President Obama and his aides keep referring to Bush Administration whenever they are put to task to explain why there is no much change in the <https://assignbuster.com/obamas-first-year-in-presidency/>

country. The implication is often that they may have underestimated the mess that was left behind by the previous administration and that they are still trying to clear it.

Such claims do not win Obama any popularity. Americans have had enough of that rhetoric and all they want to hear is what is being done to turn things round without blaming the mess on anybody any more. In conclusion, Obama has done rather well in facilitating closure of Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp, passing the stimulus package, passage of budget and introduction of a legislation that promises equal pay. The areas where he has failed most include immigration legislation and matters of climate change. Meanwhile, he is by far better than George W. bush.