

SUMMARY

In November 2008, by electing the democratic candidate Barack Hussein Obama as President of the United States, American people chose to track a clear detachment line towards the recent previous administrations. Obama's election, in particular, represented a breakpoint with respect to Bush administration, especially for what concerns the running of foreign policy. Barack Obama isn't just the first black President of the US. He fundamentally personifies American multiculturalism; is the emblem and essence not only of the redemption of at least three generation of afro-American people, but also of a tolerant and responsible America, of a population ready to undertake new paths of cooperation, respecting the founding values of the Nation itself.

By covering, even briefly, the main life stages of the 44th President of the US, it is possible to figure out how his formative, personal and political path has always been based on dialogue, on the research of new perspectives and on ideas to be shared and commonly shaped.

Obama was born on August 4th 1961 in Honolulu, Hawaii, from American mother and Kenyan father. His mother was an acute woman, from a middle class family hailing from Kansas. His father was instead originally from a village just over

the shores of lake Victoria, in Kenya. He was part of the Kenyan intellectual elite, being one of the first African students to have the opportunity to study abroad.

Hawaii, where his parents met, and where Obama grew up as a little child, were considered to be an apart world. The island aren't in fact just a tourism paradise, but are also a kind of Eden garden of races, as a great number of Hawaiian natives, Chinese, Japanese, Philippine, Samoan and white people from all over the world live together in communities characterized by great tolerance and high levels of racial integration.

After Obama's father went back to Kenya, the future president of the US spent a few years in the Philippines with his mother, who worked there as a researcher and community organizer; when he started approaching high school age, he went back to Hawaii, under his grandparents supervision, in order to complete his education in an American school.

At the age of 24 he moved to Chicago, soon becoming an active member of the local community, particularly in the religious and racial fields. He also distinguished himself as a very well prepared community organizer, when in the wake of civil rights movements made several attempts in order to coordinate various neighbourhoods of Chicago suburbs.

Three years later he enrolled at Harvard university, where soon became director of the prestigious "Harvard Law Review", starting to proof his great oratory, diplomatic and problem-solving talents. Once graduated he went back to Chicago, turning down job offers from many corporate law firms, choosing to start a professional career as a law professor. Quoting a senior academic staff member Chicago university, Richard Epstein, is possible to understand how Obama intended his job: «Some professors - people like me - hear a student exposing a reckless analysis and blow it up, stimulating the student in working harder, studying and thinking more. Obama was more the kind of professor who listened to an imprudent analysis and then, by reformulating it, he corrected and deepened it, always making the student feel listened».

In Obama's years of youth and education is possible to find a common denominator: the continuous research for the definition of his own identity, both as a man and as a member of the Afro-American community. The father's abandon caused the beginning of a research for paternal figures to be inspired by and from whom he could draw concepts, love and ideas.

Since he had come back to Chicago, Obama, even if busy with writing his autobiography and besides being active as a lawyer and professor, had started thinking about the possibility of undertaking a political career. Nevertheless, starting such a process wouldn't have been easy. Particular care should have been given to avoid making enemies in the Afro-American political arena. The right occasion for his first candidature arrived in 1997, when he could run for a seat in the Illinois' Senate. Since then, it has been a fast rise of Obama's political star. He stayed in charge as a state senator for three terms, from 1998 to 2004, obtaining electoral victories characterized by great percentages in his favour. His political star continued to rise, as he was elected as a Federal Senator in 2004, gaining 60,97% of ballots. Once started his senatorial mandate Obama proved himself to be a coherent democrat, voting 95% of times in favour of his party. The future President himself, during his career at the Capitol, described his political strategy as follows: «I believe that my values are deeply rooted in the progressive tradition, values of equal opportunities, civil rights, fighting for working-class families, a foreign policy that cares of human rights, a strong faith in civil liberty, willingness to administrate environment as good as possible, a sense of the important role government has to perform, that opportunities are open to everyone, and not that the most powerful step on the less powerful. When we talk of results, I share the purposes of a Paul Wllstone, or of a Ted Kennedy. But I am much more agnostic in the ways we can reach certain objectives».

Once again is possible to identify an open rhetoric, typical of a moderate and inclusive liberalism.

As well as for the former electoral campaigns, Obama's run to the White House in 2008 would have been characterized by the same spirit and manners based on communication and debate.

He was elected on November 4th 2008, winning 52,9% of preferences.

Once elected he soon confirmed his background, giving continuity to the promises made during the electoral campaign, from both the perspectives of priority and means of action. Even though he found himself forced to undertake unpopular decisions, Americans have proved to be able to comprehend the motivations underlying his decisions, confirming the President for a second term in 2012.

Turning to the foreign policy dimension of Obama's administration, it is not difficult to see how it has revealed to be a central issue. The President has the precise duty to regress the American military commitment, giving some nourishment to the federal incomes, in order to re-start national economy. This strategy also entails the treats of a new dogma for the American foreign policy: the so-called pivot to Asia, through which the US hope to move their international axes towards countries standing around Chinese borders. Nevertheless, the instability in the middle-East would have proved very hard to ignore, putting Obama in front of critical decision, that will now be analyzed.

The relationship between Israel and the USA dates back to the 30s and 40s of the last century, when exponents of the newly born Zionist movement, impatient to establish their new State, found a precious allied in the US. Not only a political alliance, but also a military one, recognized as one of the most strong and long-lasting alliances of the 20th century, that saw American army often ready to intervene in favour of its only true allied in the middle-East.

Jewish communities in America have always represented a big part of population; in addition to resulting particularly attentive towards the main national and

international issues, they have proved to be always an active part of society, with a great number of organizations and associations on territory. With a particular focus on the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Many signals suggest that Obama has analyzed the situation in which the dispute is going through, trying to elaborate some shared solutions, in order to get out from the total stalemate in which it is at the moment. Proceeding in the mentioned analysis, the President would have got the impossibility of a fast compromise. His travel to the middle-eastern lands in 2009 could be seen as a desperate attempt to promote peace in the area, even through his physical presence. However, his attempts to generate pressure coming from his own people towards Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu, failed.

Talking of Netanyahu ideology is possible to highlight the major noteworthy guidelines proposed in his book titled *A place among the nations*, published in 1993. The book contained, between the others, a particular concept, that would have obtained great success overseas in the early 2000s: the idea that terrorism, meant as a global and indistinct amalgam, was at war with western democracies, of whom Israel marked the first defensive line. Such a vision considered impossible to overlook the use of force against terrorist, in future perspective.

Moreover, according to Netanyahu, Palestinian should have been living in four strictly limited areas of the West Bank, each of them being managed by the locals. Such an autonomy should have been circumscribed to the administration of healthcare and instruction, naturally avoiding any chance of turning such administrative rights into a real Palestinian State. The remaining part of the West Bank would have been annexed to Israel. In such a context, Obama has tried since the very beginning of his mandate to put pressure on Netanyahu, trying to stop Israeli colonization of the West Bank, and attempting to reach a pacific and shared solution to the conflict with Palestine. The relationship between the two have started worsening since then and never stopped.

Events happened in the middle-East during the first years of the ongoing decade, namely the blow up of Syrian civil war, have determined a further drastic

deterioration of regional geo-political equilibrium, posing Israel in a critical situation, and hardly challenging Obama's non-interventionism.

Since almost three years now, the Syrian civil war is going on, becoming more and more jade and crude every day. The conflict sees the troops faithful to Bashar Al-Asad's regime fighting against a mixed rebel coalition. Once the conflict started, the historic allies were standind for the Syrian regime; countries such as Russia, China and Iran. The international community was instead supporting rebels without any hesitation, even though the mentioned back-up was limited to the ideological sphere.

Obama had initially acted in conformity with the international community, but had been judicious in not recognizing as legitimate the exiled government founded by the rebels, maintaining distances from both the actors on the field. Nevertheless, the discovery of Assad's chemical arsenal was about to make him revise his point of view. Damascus had declared many times that would have never used such weapons in a civil war, but only in case of external aggression. In spite of the American government classifying as «inconsistent» the Syrian chemical arsenal, the awkward humanitarian situation required a firm resolution by the President. Obama then decided to track a red line, that if crossed would have caused an American military intervention in Syria. The same warning came from France and Great Britain. Despite of the delicate situation, Israel Prime minister kept leaning on the US, and Obama's fears turned real when, in the middle of 2013, a consistent number of NGOs and international actors made the world know about the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime, against civilians and rebels.

Netanyahu did not hesitate in using such a news, publically speaking in favour of an American intervention. Obama though didn't have any will neither to attack Syria, nor to get his country involved into a hardly predictable conflict, which would have had no strategic importance for the US. He tried to use various stratagemms in order to avoid the intervention, until deciding to pose the question

in front of the Congress, reversing a long-lasting habit that used to see the President taking such decisions autonomously.

To prevent Obama from being surely defeated, with a remarkable timing arrived Russian foreign affairs minister, who proposed a solution to the UN, which would have avoided American intervention, and helped in dismantling Syrian chemical arsenal. This plan concretely helped in maintaining the situation stable, as well as putting Russia back in the middle of the Mediterranean geo-political context.

Netanyahu on the other hand seems to have comprehended the uselessness of an attack in favour of the rebels, speaking in approval of the Russian-American solution.

Moving forward in the case-analysis, an interesting situation to write about is the managing of the so-called Arab spring. According to Obama, the new "golden rule" should have been the non-interference onto other countries' domestic issues, but the President rhetoric would have soon been questioned by a series of events that would have shackled northern African countries. The first riots came out of Tunisia in 2010, but the most difficult revolt to be sedated would have been the Libyan and Egyptian ones.

Libya has always had a great strategic importance in the Mediterranean area, not only because of its position, but primarily because of natural gases and petrol present underground. After a dictatorship lasted for 42 years though, the internal inequalities and social, economic and cultural disequilibrium led to a revolt, which blew-up in February 2011. Given the heterogeneous composition of the rebels fighting against the regime, it didn't surprise how many western countries were initially reluctant in recognizing and sponsoring them. Nevertheless, a huge mediatic pressure was destined to change things.

After a couple of months of bloody everyday news, French Prime minister Sarkozy, and his British homologue David Cameron started pressing Obama in order to attack military objectives belonging to the regime. The US President ended up accepting a compromise, which entailed an action to be undertaken

under the aegis of the UN, that wouldn't have included any territorial invasion towards Libya.

In administrating the Libyan crisis, Obama had to make coincide his non-interventionist dogma with the inevitable condemnments of the human rights violation that the Libyan regime was conducting, beyond the sustainment to show to the European allies, who were impatient to act.

Egypt constituted a great dilemma as well, also being formally an allied nation to the US. After Hosni Mubarak resigned in 2011, the nation went into chaos. A huge number of demonstrations, clashes and riots took place all over the country, making necessary an intervention of the Egyptian military also at a political level.

The Egyptian situation had been, and still is, a big deal for Obama, who has been exposed to a series of extended critiques, accusations and attacks from both members of the Congress and members of the international community. These actors particularly highlighted the lack of far-sightedness needed in order to manage such a great revolt as well as the incapability of imposing some of the American points of view to the new Egyptian political elite.

It is possible, however, to argue that the US President just kept acting as he had always done in the international arenas, perpetrating that strategic disengagement towards such areas of the world which he does not consider to be useful to American hegemony. Once understood that America wouldn't have gained any advantages in joining the Egyptian revolution, Obama tried to weave relationships with the factions which were resulting winners after each stage of the revolution, disclosing his willingness to help in founding a new Egypt, but without the risks of exposing America as unconditional tutor of the newly born democracy.

The explanation furnished by Fawaz A. Gerges helps understanding why Obama has proved to be so prudent, cautious and reluctant in the intervention. The Lebanese-American academic writes how the new obamian policy does not imply intangible moral values or pure military strength, but it lies on the research of objectives shared with other allied countries and on being pragmatic while

looking for solutions. In Gerges view, Obama could be considered a realist, being conscious of the limits the superpower has and would be aiming at following the path of moderation.