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***Barack H. Obama: The Foreign Challenges
And Domestic Policies***

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Dedication

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Abstract

In essence, the present dissertation seeks to highlight President Obama's race to Presidency with a particular focus on his political career, domestic, and foreign affairs. To this end, the study used a historical approach to trace back these main issues. At the domestic level, President Obama offered a host of proposals to improve the standard living of the American people particularly at the level of: economy, education, healthcare, and Civil Rights. As for Obama's foreign policy, the study has shed light on the New Start Treaty, the Withdrawal from Iraq, and the Arab Spring in addition to some other global challenges that the President faced during his administrations, such as the economic crisis and the climate change.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Much has been written and said about President Obama's political, as well as private life; about both his great achievements and his failures. Barack H. Obama, who has become a historic figure in the U.S history as the first African American President who ever rule over the oval office, has been until now a model of success people should follow. His political career emerged between the end of the nineteenth until 2004, when he served as a senator. In this period of time America witnessed dramatic events, since it marked the 9/11 attacks, and the invasion of Iraq by the U.S army in 2003. Despite all the challenges in foreign affairs, Obama was also concerned with domestic issues during his both terms of Presidency, especially those related to economy, education, and Civil Rights. The United States' forty fourth President succeeded to solve most of these economic and social problems thanks to his charismatic personality, as well as his sense of responsibility.

Obama's new policies have been subject of heated debates and hard talks by many politicians, experts, and writers. While some see Obama as a myth, being the first black person ever to be elected for the highest office of the American nation, and whose policies brought success that no one could deny, many others, however criticized him of expending the role of government more than it should be. Many Republicans also thought Obama wasn't doing enough, particularly when it came to ending global warming, and stopping the war in Afghanistan.

Within this course of thoughts, the following memoire examines Obama's administrations and the programs he initiated during his presidencies. Thus, the questions that seem important to ask are:

1. What are the foreign challenges President Obama faced during his administrations?
2. Were his Economic and Social reforms efficient?

In order to answer these questions, the study makes use of 'the historical approach'. It composes two parts.

The first part provides background information related to Barack H. Obama, his childhood and early life, his political career, his election as a president and most importantly his strategies in shaping the U.S. Foreign Policy while the second part focuses on the economic and social reforms that Obama proposed during his administrations. It deals mainly with programs in education, health care, and gun control. Besides, the issues of renewable resources and Civil Rights.

Overall, the aim of this dissertation is to highlight Obama's major achievements in both economic and social fields. As for me I would like to recommend other students and scholars to do further researches about President Obama's achievements at both Social and Economic grounds.

Chapter One

Barack H. Obama Timeline: From Childhood to Presidency

1.1. Introduction:

On the 20th of January 2009, the United States of America witnessed a historical turn; the first African-American president was elected to rule in the oval office over the American People. It was, and still is a controversial turn of events, as the Democratic Party won the presidential elections after losing the race to George W. Bush two times in a row. At the start of his legislation, some distrustful American people were not convinced that President Barack Husain Obama could rule and lead the nation onto better times, especially being involved in more than one war in the Middle East.

This first chapter will focus on the personal and professional life of the man as a son, student, husband, father, senator and presidential candidate, but also on the state of the American nation before the Obama legislation was set into place. Moreover, the focus will mostly rely on his foreign policy.

1.2. Family Roots and Education:

Barack Hussein Obama or 'Bama', as his friends and family like to call him, was born on 4 August 1961 in Honolulu, Hawaii. He is the son and grandson of people who came from Kansas in the center of the United States. He is also the son of people who came from a small village in Kenya in East Africa. He grew up in Honolulu, Hawaii, and Jakarta, Indonesia. "I was raised as an Indonesian child and a Hawaiian child and a black child and a white child" (Obama, Barack, 2004, p15).

Barack's mother, a young lady named Ann Dunham, had moved from Kansas to Hawaii with her family during her teen years, and his father Barack Obama Sr, a black Kenyan studying in the United States. When Barack was still two years of age, his father left the family to study at Harvard University. After that, he returned to Kenya where he died in an automobile accident nineteen years later. Bama and his mother were close to each other; he learnt from her how to be kind and sincere to other people. If he did or said something unkind, she would ask, 'How would that make you feel?' Barack was also close to his grandparents. He used to go with his grandfather for swimming and spearfishing in the sparkling waters around Honolulu. Once they went to Hickam Air Force Base¹ to watch astronauts return from space, Barack sat on his grandfather's shoulders to get a good view. (Nichols, Catherine, 2012, p6)

In 1964, Barack's parents got divorced, and his mother soon remarried. Her new husband, Lolo Soetoro, he is Indonesian. He was in Hawaii as a student. One year later, some Indonesian rebelled against their government which led the Indonesian government to require all Indonesian students studying abroad to return home. In 1967, six years-old Barack moved with his mother and stepfather to Jakarta, a new journey has just begun for the little young boy.

¹ Hickam Air Force Base; is a United States military base adjacent to Honolulu, Hawaii. It is an amalgamation of the United States air force Hickam field and the United States navy naval station Pearl Harbor, which were merged in 2010.

When Obama moved to Jakarta, he did not know what he would be waiting for him. That country was so poor that the people used to wash themselves and their clothes in the river. Many of them rode bicycles with small carriage, instead of cars. At that time, Barack Obama's family lived in a simple house at the edge of the city, without even any air-conditioner or refrigerator. Both his mother and his stepfather could not afford to send him to a private school; instead he went to the local school like any normal Indonesian child. The little boy was full of dreams, he wrote once in his first grade an essay titled "I want to become president" this shows how much Obama was hopeful and inspirational even in his early life. (Nichols, Catherine, 2012, p8).

Worried about his education, Obama's mother decided to send him back to Hawaii to live with his grandparents, Stanley and Madelyn Dunham, and to attend Hawaii's "Punahou" school from fifth grade through graduation from secondary school. While Obama was in school, she divorced Soetoro, went back to Hawaii to study anthropology at the university, Afterward, she returned to Indonesia to do field research. Living with his grandparents, Obama was a good, yet not prominent student at Punahou, played varsity basketball and, as he later confessed "dabbled in drugs and alcohol", including Marijuana and Cocaine. Obama's mother died in 1995, she deeply admired the civil rights movement² and taught her son, he later wrote that "to be black was to be the beneficiary of a great inheritance, a special destiny; glorious burdens that only we were strong enough to bear" However, as culturally diverse as Hawaii was, its African American population was minority. With no or other relatives to serve as good examples, Obama later stated: "I was trying to raise myself to be a black man in America, and beyond the given of my appearance, no one around me seemed to know exactly what that meant" (Obama, Barack, 2004, p55).

² Black Americans struggled for racial equality in the 1950's and the 1960's.

After Six years at Punahou School, Obama left Hawaii for college, selected as first at occidental school in Los Angeles for his freshman and sophomore years, and then at Columbia University in New York City, he read profoundly and widely about political and international affairs, graduating from Columbia with a political science major in 1983. After spending another year in New York as a researcher with business international group, a global business firm, Obama accepted a job as a community organizer in Chicago's largely poor Black south side. As biographer David Mendell describes the work given to Obama as: "His first deep immersion into the African American community he had longed to both understand and belong to" (p19). In 1988, Obama enrolled at Harvard Law School where he majored as a student, graduating Magna cum laude³ and winning election as president of the prestigious Harvard law review for the academic year 1990-1991.

1.3. Early Political Career:

Obama started his political career as an Illinois state senator, where he served from 1997 to 2004. He became well known among Chicago political circles for utilizing Hardball⁴ political strategies; during his work in office, Obama served the south of Chicago, casting more than 4.000 votes, including some bills that required murder interrogation be recorded, reconstruction of campaign finance, allocation of text credits for the poor and elimination of racial profiling. He also spoke in opposition to the U.S attack of Iraq, a card that Obama played during his first presidential nomination race. ("How Barack Obama works" 2014)

Obama's claim was backed up, however by the publication on his official candidate's site of his speech at an anti-war rally in October 2002. "I'm not opposed to all wars, I'm opposed to dumb war" (Barack, Obama 2002) He also declared "What I'm opposed to is the cynical attempt by Richard Perle⁵ and Paul Wolfowitz⁶ and other arm-chair, weekend warriors in this administration to shove their own

³An academic level of distinction used by educational institutions to signify an academic degree which was received with great honor.

⁴ A term for political warfare that does not exist on paper and not reported in the media.

⁵ Richard Perle (born September 16, 1941) is an American political advisor, consultant, and lobbyist who began his career in government as a senior staff member in the 1970.

⁶ Paul Dundes Wolfowitz (born December 22, 1943) is a former president of the World Bank, United States Ambassador to Indonesia, and U.S. Deputy Secretary of defense.

ideological agendas down our throats, irrespective of the costs in lives lost and in hardships borne” (Barack, Obama 2002). Instead of fighting Iraq, Obama stated “Let’s finish the fight with Bin Laden⁷ and Al Qaeda, through effective, coordinated, intelligence, and shutting down terrorism, and a homeland security program that involves more than color-coded warnings” (Barack Obama, 2002) Despite all his arguments and protests, Obama failed to convince the White House, the Iraq war began in 2003. (“How Barack,” 2014)

Encouraged by poll numbers, Obama made the jump from the State Senate to U.S. Senator for Illinois when he was elected to Congress in 2004. He won 52 percent of the vote, defeating multimillionaire business man Blair Hull and Illinois comptroller Daniel Hynes. From that point forward, he has served on several senate committees: Foreign relations, health, education, labor and pensions; homeland security and government affairs; permanent subcommittee on investigations; veteran’s affairs; subcommittee on state, local and private sector preparedness and integration. (“How Barack,” 2014)

Throughout his career of being a U.S. Senator, Obama did many appearances on television, debating and speaking on various topics such as in 2004 with Alan Keyes. In 2005, he partnered with republican senator Richard Lugar of Indiana on a bill then with another republican senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma on a website. “Barack Obama is deemed as one of the world’s greatest speakers. His skills as an orator quickly brought him into national limelight. His charisma, natural speaking ability, and talent for bringing people together aid in his political conquest” (Stewart, Felicia. R, 2012, p9). He spoke out also for victims of Hurricane Katrina, pushed for alternative energy development, and championed improved veterans’ benefits.

⁷ Osama bin Mohammed bin Awad bin Laden (1957-2011) was the founder of al-Qaeda, the organization that claimed responsibility for the September 11 attacks on the United States.

1.4. Presidency and Campaign:

Obama's election to the senate immediately placed him in a higher rank as the most well-known African American officeholder in the nation; thanks to his brilliant speeches and his books (**D**reams from my **F**ather⁸, brought back into print, joined **T**he **A**udacity of **H**ope) on the bestseller list, put him high on the list of democratic presidential candidates. Thus, it was not surprising when he announced his presidential candidacy on February 10, 2007, at a rally in front of the Old State House in Springfield, Illinois, where Abraham Lincoln⁹ had delivered his famous "house divided" speech in 1858. ("Barack Obama: Campaign and Election" 2009)

Relying heavily on the use of the internet, the Obama campaign mobilized a huge social organization of volunteers and donors. In addition Obama surrounded himself with a very skilled team, with Axelrod at the helm, who played a key role in managing Obama's campaign. They both focused on developing a strategy for winning the Democratic nomination that depended on gathering the same coalition of blacks and white liberals that had enabled him to succeed in Illinois, with an extra focus on young voters. Basically, however, senator and former first lady Hillary Clinton launched a solid lead in the polls¹⁰, even among African American voters who appreciated her and her husband, former President Bill Clinton, and did not think Obama had lot of opportunities to win. Former senator John Edward was also considered at the beginning of the campaign as a stronger democratic candidate than the inexperienced Obama. (Barack Obama: Campaign and Election" 2009)

Going hand in hand with his internet supporters, Obama surprised many political experts by equaling Clinton and surpassing Edwards in Campaign fundraising during the year 2007. By winning the Iowa caucuses¹¹ on January 3, 2008, breaking down both Edwards and Clinton by an 8 percentage margin. Yet Clinton succeeded in winning the New Hampshire primary five days later,

⁸ Dreams from my father: A story for race and inheritance; A memoir by Barack Obama, It was first published in 1995 as Obama was preparing to launch his political career in a campaign for Illinois Senate.

⁹ Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) was the 16th president of the United States.

¹⁰ A place, where votes are cast and registered.

¹¹ A meeting of the local members of a political party, especially to select delegates to a convention or register preferences for candidates running for office.

surpassing Obama by 3 points and crushing Edwards by 22 points. In the following serious test, Obama led the race in the nomination contest by defeating Clinton with an expert touch in South Carolina, 55 percent to 22 percent, on January 26. Moreover black voters persuaded by the Iowa results that white would give their votes to an African American candidate for President made him overwhelmed by all that support that had in South Carolina. On the other hand, Edwards ended third, and dropped out the race on January 30. (“Barack Obama,” 2009)

With only Obama and Clinton survived in the race, the competition between the two reached the climax through the remaining primaries and caucuses. Overall Clinton won twenty primaries, while Obama tasted victory in nineteen, including some large states such as, California, Texas, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Both candidates were nominated to become historic Firsts¹². However Obama had two important advantages that enabled him to take the lead and snatch victory from Clinton’s hands for the Democratic Nomination. First, he was able to play the card of his opposition to the war in Iraq. Second, and despite some differences between them on the issues, Obama ran for the theme of change, while Clinton relied in her campaign on the theme of experience at time America needed change regarding to its unstable economy. (“Barack Obama: Campaign and Election” 2009)

At the Democratic Convention, Obama was successful and wise in securing the nomination. He named Senator Joe Biden as his vice presidential running mate on August 22, two days before the opening of the Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado. In his acceptance speech on August 28, Obama highlighted the issues of his election campaign. In addition to other things, he promised to cut taxes of working families “I will cut taxes- cut taxes- for 95 percent of all working families. Because in an economy like this, the last thing we should do is raise taxes on the middle-classes” (Obama 2008), ending America’s dependence on oil from the Middle East, finally put an end to the war in Iraq, and finishing the fight against

¹²The first African American President, or the first woman President.

Al Qaida and Taliban in Afghanistan; “I argued for more resources and more troops to finish the fight against the terrorists who actually attacked us on 9/11” (Barack, Obama 2008).

In the General Election, Obama’s Republican opponent was Senator John McCain. In order to easily defeat McCain, Obama proposed series of televised debates between the two candidates, compared to Husain, who looked youthful and confident; John appeared a bit older, unconfident, and altogether unexciting. Patrick James, an expert on Canada, Middle East, and U.S. politics said “The Obama Campaign did almost everything imaginable right. It was the most confidently executed campaign I have ever seen”, he also noted “To win, Obama had to be almost letter perfect, and he was”.

After their third televised debate, Obama left McCain Dumbstruck, because he had a very good plan concerning health care insurance at that time. On November 4, Obama won over McCain by 53 percent to 47 percent in the national popular vote, winning election as the 44th president of the United States—and the first African-American to hold this office. “If there is anyone out there who still doubt that America is a place where all things are possible.” Obama addressed a cheering crowd of supporters delivering his famous “victory speech” in the night of election. Yet his Administration took place on Tuesday, January 20, 2009. (“Barack Obama: Campaign,” 2009)

1.5. Obama's Foreign Policy:

Obama had a strong interest in foreign policy back in his undergraduate days at Harvard; during his administrations, his foreign policy saw diplomatic and military strategies in South Asia, the Middle East, and other regions which were considered as a threat to the United States of America. As president, Obama has taken on various foreign-affair initiatives, including the negotiation of the New Start nuclear arms reduction treaty with Russia, the withdrawal from Iraq, and the Arab spring.

Former US President George W. Bush left his successor a grim legacy of two wars and a crisis in the financial markets. Barack Obama, on the other hand, will likely be remembered as a president who primarily concerned himself with domestic policy and overcame an economic disaster that was without parallel a recent memory. (Nünlist, 2016, p1)

1.5.1 The New Start Treaty:

Within just a year and a half of becoming president, Obama faced a big challenge; i.e. to convince the government of Russia to reduce the number of nuclear weapons and launchers that Russia deploy. As Obama pointed to in his opening speech “While the New Start treaty is an important first step forward, it is just on a longer journey. As I said last year in Prague, this treaty will set the stage for further cuts” (Obama 2010).

New START provides the parties with 7 years to reduce their forces, and will remain in force for a total of 10 years. It limits each side to no more than 800 deployed and no deployed land-based intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) launchers and deployed and no deployed heavy bombers equipped to carry nuclear armaments. Within that total, each side can retain no more than 700 deployed ICBMs, deployed SLBMs, and

deployed heavy bombers equipped to carry nuclear armaments. The treaty also limits each side to no more than 1,550 deployed warheads; those are the actual number of warheads on deployed ICBMs and SLBMs, and one warhead for each deployed heavy bomber. (Amy F. Woolf 2)

The New Start treaty has been considered as one of the central points of Obama's first-term foreign affairs in order to "reset" relations with Russia. The president effectively negotiated the New Start nuclear decreasing treaty, although there have been some clear glimpses of disagreement between both Russia and his GOP¹³ adversaries concerning the contours of missile defense, human rights have strongly criticized the president for ignoring the erosion of Russian democracy. Russia has additionally kept on obstructing the U.S. efforts to impose tough and durable international sanctions on Iran and Syria. Obama appeared to have made friends with Dmitri Medvedev, yet relations with Russia might get just tougher, with Vladimir Putin¹⁴ likely return to Office. ("New Start" 2011)

1.5.2. The Withdrawal From Iraq:

In extension to inheriting an economy in a severe decline, President Obama inherited a war in Iraq. Due to his opponent the former U.S. president George W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq in 2003, Obama guaranteed and promised during his presidential campaign to withdraw American soldiers as soon as possible, putting an end to the U.S army's existence in Iraq which lasted 8 years. ("Barack Obama: Foreign Affairs" 2009)

In 2009, he declared an arrangement to bring troop levels down from 110.000 to 50.000 by August 2010, including the evacuation of all battle forces. The remaining troops, he added, would be pulled back before the end of 2011. Therefore the withdrawal continued smoothly, to some degree in light of the fact that Obama wanted to build on the gains accomplished by Bush's "Surge" of 200.000 additional soldiers in 2007, which had helped the Iraqi government to bring back stability to the country.

¹³ Grand Old Party, the Republican party.

¹⁴ President of Russia since May 2012.

1.5.3. The Arab Spring:

Obama faced many other foreign policy challenges that reflected the concerns he raised about the objectives for “Promoting Democracy” in the Arab world. “After Obama took office, some democracy promotion proponents in Washington hoped he might make Middle East democracy a priority.” (Thomas, Carothers 29).

As many experts refer to, the Arab spring started with government collapses in Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011, and began to spread against other regimes in the region including Lebanon, Yemen, Libya, and Syria. The United States though refused to interfere by military actions in the region. “The United States had now active role in the collapse of Ben Ali’s presidency in Tunisia.....” (Thomas, Carothers 32), it did support intervention by NATO forces in Libya, which at last promoted the end of the revolution and the “Taking out” of leader Muammar Kadhafi¹⁵ at the hand of his people.

After a very slow start, the Obama administration eventually decided to calling the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak¹⁶ to quit ruling “As the demonstrations intensified, however, Obama got on the side of change” (Thomas, Carothers 32), joining the NATO mediation in Libya, and supporting several sanctions against Syria. On the other hand, the president has been less candid about other gulf countries including Bahrain, which hosts a key U.S. naval base.

However Obama has asked Egypt and Tunisia to “Set a strong example through free and fair elections, a vibrant civil society, accountable and effective democratic institutions, and responsible regional leadership.”

¹⁵ Muammar Muhammad Abu Minyar al-Kadhafi (1942-2011); was a Libyan revolutionary and politician who governed Libya as its primary leader from 1969 to 2011.

¹⁶ Muhammad Hosni El Sayed Mubarak (born May 4, 1928); is a former Egyptian military and political leader who served as the fourth President of Egypt from 1981 to 2011.

1.6. Conclusion:

Barack H. Obama is considered as one of America's admired presidents. During his administrations, the United States faced a number of international challenges in Europe, Middle East, and Africa. Apart from these foreign challenges, Obama was also confronted with domestic issues such as unstable economy, violence, and inequality.

The next chapter examines Obama's economic and social programs.

Chapter Two
Obama's Economic and Social
Programs

2.1. Introduction

In Addition to his charismatic look, as a way of addressing people manifesting confidence, President Obama's devotion and commitment to domestic policy actions turned him to a great figure according to the majority of the American citizens. During his tenures, Obama supported many economic as well as social programs. He fought violence, social inequality, and strove to save the economy from recession by advocating some reforms, such as the American auto industry bailout, health care insurance for the elderly; and for education, raising the minimum wage and improving the American welfare. In addition to his impressive role in civil rights, Obama's greatest challenge was and is stillto find other natural resources rather than oil and gas.

2.2. Economic Achievements:

President Obama strongly believed that increased prosperity would help to fix some of the country's social problems. Hence, when he became president, his first priority was to reinforce economic growth. However, his ability to take serious actions to stimulate the economy was blocked by a severe financial crisis. Obama had to find urgent solutions before things got worse.

2.2.1. Wall Street Reforms and Consumer Protection:

By the end of 2008, a severe financial crisis hit America and left millions without jobs and resulted in trillions in lost wealth. "During the height of the financial crisis and the enactment at that time of the emergency Economic Stabilization Act which, among other things, created the troubled asset relief program fund" (Mayer, Brown 22). One of the main reasons behind the crisis was the broken financial system. It was divided, antiquated, and permitted huge parts of the financial system to work with practically zero oversight. Moreover, it allowed some reckless lenders to use hidden fees to take advantage of consumers. However, and to ensure that a crisis like this never happen again, President Obama passed 'The Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection'. ("Wall Street Reform: The Dodd-Frank Act" 2010)

This act put an end to all the risk taking that led to the financial crisis. In addition, the law gave and provided a full protection for American families, making a new consumer watchdog¹⁷ to avoid them from being exploited by mortgage companies and pay-day lenders.

¹⁷Organized or functioning as a watchful guardian, especially against illegal or unethical conduct.

Before Obama took office in 2009, there were only seven different controllers with authority over ‘The Consumer Financial Services Marketplace’, and no one could explain why the American economy reached such a devastated state, because responsibility was diffuse and fragmented. Furthermore, several houses lenders were totally unregulated, which led too many American families to pay the cost for an old, cracked financial system that failed to adequately observe payday lenders, credit card companies, mortgage lenders, and others, permitting them to exploit the consumers. That is the reason why President Obama was obliged to take some serious steps to protect the consumers. He created an independent agency called CFPB¹⁸; its role was to set clear rules of the road and will guarantee that financial associations are held to high standards. The same as a cop, CFPB supervises banks, credit unions, and other financial companies, and will reinforce consumer financial laws. (“Wall Street Reform,” 2010)

For instance: First, for families who want to buy a home, as all Americans know, the piles of forms required for a regular property can be too much, which led many brokers to take an advantage of that confusion to give borrowers credits they did not need or could not afford and manage. Therefore, the CFPB has launched a program named ‘Know before you owe’, based on combining two required mortgage admissions into a single, less difficult form that makes the expenses and risks of the loan and allows consumers to comparison shop. Thus, and for the first time there was a continuous government oversight of both, nonbank¹⁹ companies, banks in the market to protect lenders from unjustifiable, unfair, or other illegal mortgage lending activities. Second, for families with credit cards, this law was signed by the President in May, 2009, yet many of the most important provisions of the law took effect only a year after, and being encouraged by the CFPB. (“Wall Street Reform: The Dodd-Frank Act” 2010)

¹⁸ Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

¹⁹ Financial institution that performs banking activities without legal banking classification.

The law has two major purposes; Fairness, basically to prohibit certain practices that are unfair or damaging, for example, permitting a consumer to go over the limit of his credit card. Transparency; mainly to make consumers aware of how much they are paying for their credit cards and can compare different cards. These new principles built a safer, more stable financial system that creates a lasting economic growth as well as jobs.

2.2.2. American Auto Industry Bailout:

On March 2009, President Obama, as part of his noticeable effort to overcome the economic crisis that the former American President left behind, decided to provide support to GM²⁰ and Chrysler²¹ on the condition that they and all their partners make the necessary sacrifices to essentially rebuild their businesses and return to activity. The decision taken by the President to save GM and Chrysler was beyond those companies.

It was about helping thousands of workers, countless communities, and businesses- large and small that rely on the automotive industry. However, and after inspecting the business plan given by Chrysler, it was obvious that the company was weaker than GM, without any modern product pipeline and resources to compete with other international auto companies. Therefore, the President determined that Chrysler was not practical as ‘Standalone Company’. (“The Resurgence of the American Automotive” 2011)

Despite the financial problems that Chrysler was suffering from. Obama, and after a close and serious deliberation, decided that this company had an opportunity to accomplish viability and continuity through cooperation with the international automobile manufacturer Fiat. On April 30, 2009, the President declared that Chrysler had worked with its stakeholders²² and gained the permissions needed to

²⁰ General Motors; an American multinational corporation headquartered in Detroit, Michigan, that designs, manufactures, markets and distributes vehicles and vehicle parts and sells financial services.

²¹An American automobile manufacturer headquartered in Auburn Hills, Michigan and owned by holding company Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA), headquartered in London, U.K.

²² A person, group or organization that has interest or concern in an organization.

form this partnership. In addition, Obama was committed to give sufficient working funding to help Chrysler through this rebuilding period, including some credits to support its restructuring.

These are challenging times for America's auto industry and for the American people, but I am confident that, if we as a nation can act with the same sense of shared sacrifice and shared purpose that's been shown by so many of Chrysler's stakeholders, if we can embrace the idea that we're all in it together, from the union hall to the boardroom to the halls of Congress, then we will succeed not only with Chrysler, we will not only see our American auto industry rise again, but we will rebuild our entire economy and make the 21st century another American century.

(Obama, April 30, 2009)

Depending on bankruptcy²³, this plan and partnership have started to show great results. Chrysler surprisingly reduced its expenses by becoming more productive, and adopting Fiat's new technologies. It has begun to revive its product lineup, releasing new refreshed cars (75 percent of its product portfolio). Also, it has started to reconstruct its image among costumers and dealers by launching an advertising campaign titled 'Imported from Detroit'. After two years from the auto industry bailout was acted, the American auto industry was escalating a rebound. General Motors made growing production, including new employments, while Chrysler repaid its debts to the U.S. In addition, the auto industry has created 115.000 jobs, since GM and Chrysler emerged from bankruptcy marking its strongest period of work growth since the late 1990s. ("The Resurgence of the AmericanAutomotive Industry" 2011)

²³ Legal procedure for liquidating a business (or property owned by an individual) which cannot fully pay its debts out of its current assets.

2.3. Social Programs:

Beyond advancing the cause of equal rights, also speaking out against violence, Obama's main objective from his role as president contained social programs. These included government aids to education that was allocated for school construction and teachers' salaries, health care insurance for every American citizen known as Patient's Bill of Rights. However, it was so difficult for Obama to achieve major parts of his domestic program, in light of the American population which is increasing year after year.

2.3.1. Education:

Obama has strongly supported providing schools with financial aids. He proposed bills to support grants for college and school construction, rising teachers' wages, and other supplementary services, such as medical care to every child in America. Although Obama's victory was surprising to some Americans, and some others stood even against him when he first ran for presidency, he kept his numerous campaign promises he had made to schools. "If we want America to lead in the 21st century, nothing is more important than giving everyone the best education possible — from the day they start preschool to the day they start their career" (Obama, August 18, 2012).

During his administration, President Obama focused on the early learning by expanding High-Quality preschools and kindergartens²⁴ to every child in the United States. As Obama himself declared in one of his speeches:

In states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children, studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, form more stable families of their own. We know this works. So

²⁴ A school or class for young children between the ages of four and six years.

let's do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind (Arne, Duncan 7).

Thus, he proposed a series of investments that will set a continuum High-Quality early learning for a child starting at birth to age 5. In addition, Obama insisted on boosting the quality of child care as part of his effort in the field of education, he also comprehends that families play a major role in providing the healthy development of their children. Therefore, he asserted on creating partnership between schools and parents, yet not all families are equipped with support and information that make them create a good environment for their children to develop and learn. In order to solve that issue Obama Signed 'The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program'.

This program was created under the low-cost care act, providing more than 1 Billion over 5 years in funding to enlarge Evidence-Based²⁵ home visiting programs to serve the most needy children and families. It also makes home visitors accessible to rely families to a bunch of services such as health care, early education, early intervention and more, to make sure children are healthy and ready for both school and life. ("Early Childhood Learning" 2013)

Concerning K-12 education²⁶, Obama made a huge step further by creating an initiative called "Race to the top" in which it offers absolute motivation and freedom to states who want to precede reforms to develop and improve teaching-learning process in America's schools. Race to the top has led to a significant change in the U.S education system, especially in boosting standards reforms and structures to the objective of college and career readiness. Finally, it helped drive states across the nation to seek after higher standards, enhance teacher efficiency, use information successfully in the classroom, and receive new procedure to help

²⁵Refers to any concept or strategy that is derived from or informed by objective evidence—most commonly, educational research or metrics of school, teacher, and student performance.

²⁶A term used in education and educational technology in the United States, Canada, and possibly other countries, is a short form for the publicly-supported school grades prior to college.

struggling schools. Moreover, Obama put an end to more than a decade of strict federal control of public education by redesigning and reforming the “No child left behind” act that returns power to states and local districts to decide how to enhance troubled schools. The new program will improve educational results for all students, close achievement gaps, and improve the quality of teaching. Up to the present time, 41 states have benefited from this program. (“K-12 Education” 2013)

Regarding higher education, President Obama believed that America was and is still home to the best colleges and universities in the globe, and increasing college gain has never been more essential to the U.S. economic development. However, the fees impose on the students who graduate from high schools making it more difficult for American families to invest in a higher education for their future. Nowadays, university students make more debts than ever before, resulting more than 26.000\$ in an average that the college owns. Therefore, and in light of all those problems caused by debts, Obama decided to place education in the hands of all who are willing to build a strong middle class, because it has been the only way to help students overcome the issue of college fees. (“Support for Higher ED” 2013)

In keeping this promise alive, President Obama has extended government support to help more students afford university, at the same time he insisted on sharing the responsibility in dealing with the issue of rising college costs, as he stated in one of his speeches “We have a mutual responsibility to make sure our schools are properly funded, our teachers are properly paid, and our students have access to an affordable college education. And if we don’t do something about all that, then nothing else matters” (David, Olive 123). Thus, Obama’s efforts of reform in higher education funding have created the biggest investment in student aid since the G.I. bill²⁷, while resulting in a more productive, dependable, and effective system for students to help them afford college and manage debt.

²⁷ The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; it was a law that provided a range of benefits for returning World War II veterans.

2.3.2. Health Care Reform:

On March 23, 2010, the U.S. Health sector witnessed an important turn in events. President Obama had finally signed the Affordable Care Act into law, setting in place comprehensive reforms that enhance access to health coverage for everyone and assure consumers from oppressive insurance company practices. One of the biggest problems American patients faced in the past is that insurance agencies could take advantage of them. They could even dare to deny coverage to children who suffered from Asthma²⁸ or were born with a heart defect, or undo their coverage just by finding an accidental error in their paperwork. However, the health care act creates a patient's bill of rights that protects him from these and other abusive practices. ("Consumer Rights and Protections" 2011)

The bill contains three essential amendments. First, put an end to Pre-Existing Condition Discrimination; that is to say, insurance companies can no more deny coverage or charge more because of a Pre-Existing condition. Secondly, no limits on care; before, some people who had chronic illnesses such as cancer, ran out of insurance coverage in light of the fact that their health expenses reached a dollar limit imposed by their insurance agency, yet and under the health care law, insurance companies can no longer impose lifetime dollar limits on health benefits. Thus, more than 105 million Americans no longer have problems with lifetime limits now, thanks to the new law. Last but not least, put an end to Coverage Cancellations, which means insurers can no longer drop your coverage only because an error you might make on your application. ("Consumer Rights and Protections" 2011)

²⁸A respiratory disorder; often of allergic origin, characterized by difficulty in breathing, wheezing, and a sense of constriction in the chest.

2.3.3. Gun Control:

Gun violence has taken a tragic turn of events on several communities across America. Over the last ten years, more than 100,000 people have been shot to death in the United States as a result of gun violence, and millions more have been the victim and witnessed confrontations, robberies, and crimes involving a gun. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of other people committed suicide using a gun; also half a million persons suffered gun injuries. These statistics give a great deal about how gun violence is completely out of control in America. (“FACT SHEET: New Executive Actions to Reduce Gun,” 2016)

President Obama strongly believes that the second amendment gives the right to any American to bear an arm. However; he and his Vice President Joe Biden are devoted to use everything possible to reduce gun violence. To solve such serious issue, the President continues to call on Congress, because the only solution to decrease crimes involving a gun is through legislation, and to pass safety reforms which have to be supported by the majority of the American citizens. “We won’t be able to stop every violent act, but if there is even one thing that we can do to prevent any of these events, we have a deep obligation, all of us, to try.”

As Obama declared after the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy²⁹. Therefore, and building on steps that have already been taken before, the administration led by Obama announced a series of actions such as keeping the guns out of the wrong hands through background checks. The ATF³⁰ stated that anyone who is in the business of selling firearms must get license and conduct background checks. In addition, the U.S. government dedicated more than 4\$ million to establish a center to track online firearms trafficking, also and in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the government will prohibit anyone who suffers mental diseases to bear an arm despite any circumstances. (“Sandy Hook shooting” 2012)

²⁹Twenty six people had been killed in 2012, as a gunman shot his way into the school and gunned down 20 first-grade children and six educators.

³⁰ The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

2.3.4. Welfare and Poverty:

When Obama reached presidency, he was greatly concerned about poverty in the United States like any other president who would take office in the White House. Fifty two years ago, President Lyndon Johnson declared the ‘War on Poverty’ during his first State of the Union speech. Under Obama two consecutive administrations, however several welfare reforms have been passed, also more than \$1Trillion per year has been spent, poverty levels remained unchanged, and dependence on government has reached serious new heights. (“Welfare Hits Record Levels After 50 Years,” 2014)

Since Obama took office 13 million more Americans have become dependent on food stamps³¹, with the numbers now hitting a record 47 million — about a third more than when he was sworn in. In 2007, there were 26 million recipients. Spending on the scheme has more than doubled just since 2008. The explosion of the program, along with other welfare schemes, has resulted in countless commentators and critics labeling Obama ‘the Food Stamp President’ (Alex Newman, Jan 10, 2014). Overall, Obama and despite all the reforms he had passed, he failed in containing the issue of poverty in America.

2.4. Clean Energy Revolution:

When President Obama took office in 2009, he made a promise that by the year 2020, America would diminish its greenhouse gas emissions in the level of 17 percent, if all other major factories across the country agreed to reduce their emissions as well. This important step would help keep the planet safe and clean, and would reverse the effects of climate change too. Therefore, for a better future of our planet that is not polluted and damaged, that decision was a moral obligation not only for the present generation, but for the future ones as well. (“Clean Energy now and in the future” 2015)

³¹Any of the coupons sold or given under a federal program to eligible needy persons and redeemable for food at designated grocery stores or markets.

Today, the President stays strongly committed to that objective and to building on the progress of his first administration; he launched the Clean Power Plan on August 3, 2015, in collaboration with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), that program has been considered as an historic and essential step in reducing and decreasing Carbon's level pollution from power plants that plays an effective role in climate change. Formed by years of hard efforts and public engagement, the latest Clean Power Plan is fair, adaptable, and intended to reinforce the fast-growing pattern toward cleaner and lower-polluting American energy. ("Clean Energy," 2015)

Dealing with the issue of climate change, that was not something new to Barack, before two years from announcing the clean power plan, he delivered a speech in Georgetown University campus in front of thousands students and teachers talking about the large lines, and the essential parts of the plan. He believed that environmental protection is the responsibility of everyone, not just the government. It is the establishment of healthy lives and solid economies, which go hand in hand. A developed economy needs a developed energy system and a clean environment; for that reason the Clean Power Plan does not only reinvent the wheel, but also builds on the growth that states, cities, and business have been making for years. The program permits planning investments, and reductions of Carbon's level to start now, with the period for mandatory reduction in 2022, providing states and utilities the flexibility they require to build on the transition to clean energy already under way in the power field. ("Clean Energy," 2015)

In addition, the Clean Energy program rewards who invest earlier before the others in renewable energies, to encourage people enter to such business as well as to create more jobs. EPA will also provide communities and states with the process of accessing to financial and technical assistance programs that help communities raise the use of energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. These include government programs, such as: The National Community Solar Partnership, which

the White House revealed this year, basically to increase access to solar energy for all Americans particularly, whom with lower incomes. Another program titled the Clean Energy Impact Investment Center will be launched sooner by the U.S. Department of Energy, to make information about energy and climate change accessible and more understandable to the public.

According to many experts, the Clean Power Plan made by President Obama, including investments in renewable technologies are already paying off. The United States now uses three times more wind energy than it did in 2009. Last year, the United States supplied houses with electricity came from solar energy every three weeks as much as it did in all of 2008. Moreover, the solar industry added jobs 10 times faster than any other work field, finally, and since the fall of 2010, the average cost of a solar electric system has decreased by the half which means 50 percent. (“Clean Energy,” 2015)

2.5. Civil Rights and Anti-Discrimination:

As an African-American President, Obama gave too much concern to Civil Rights during his administrations. On the issue of voting, the president as he promised before in the state on the union has signed an order to establish a voting commission to enhance access and efficiency at the polls, in order to overcome the problem of the hours-long lines some voters suffered during former elections. “When any Americans – no matter where they live or what their party – are denied that right simply because they can’t wait for five, six, seven hours just to cast their ballot, we are betraying our ideals” Obama said in his address to congress.

However, the first law the President signed concerning Civil Rights and anti-discrimination was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which allows women who face pay discrimination to seek and demand rectification under federal anti-discrimination laws. The law also highlights the fact that any discrimination based on age, religion, national origin, race, sex and disability will ‘accrue’ every time the employee receive a paycheck that is deemed discriminatory (David, Siegel 19).

On April 12, 2016, Obama spoke at the newly-designated Belmont-Paul women's Equality National Monument in Washington DC, clarifying his first piece of legislation the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, particularly to overcome the gender pay gap between men and women in the U.S, the President stated that the road is still a bit far to reach that goal, yet we will never stop fighting to achieve it.

Today, the typical woman who works full-time earns 79 cents for every dollar a typical man makes; the gap is even wider for women of color. The typical black woman only makes 60 cents, a Latino woman, 55 cents, for every dollar a white man earns. If we truly value fairness, then America should be a level playing field where everyone who works hard gets a chance to succeed. That's good for America. (Obama, 12 April, 2016).

Last year, Obama traveled to Selma, Alabama, to celebrate and mark the 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery marches³², the event which was considered a turning point in America's civil rights history. The President delivered a very touching speech in which he commemorated the marches and celebrated how far the U.S. has come, but also criticized what he considers some shadows of segregation and racism which still exist in the United States, particularly toward the Afro- American community. ("Obama Marks Civil-Rights Turning Point in Selma Speech" 2015)

³² Black protestors beaten by state troopers on March 7, 1965, as they sought to cross the bridge toward Montgomery, an event that came to be known as Bloody Sunday. The clash, along with subsequent marches, helped pave the way for passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Barack Obama spoke at Edmund Pettus Bridge, in front of more than 40,000 people, at an event characterized with symbolism, as a nation's first African-American president honored those who fought and sacrificed their lives to set blacks free such as, Dr. Luther King³³, Rosa Parks³⁴, and John Lewis³⁵. Thanks to people like them, Obama said, "the U.S made great strides towards creating a more racially just society, one in which blacks run boardrooms, sit as judges and—in a line that elicited fervent applause serve in elected office", yet the President also highlighted the fact that there is still some tension for minority communities, pointing to a recent incident in which a black 18 years old boy named Michael Brown was shot by an officer in Ferguson. "This nation's racial history still casts its long shadow upon us", Obama stated as he commented on the incident. ("Obama Marks Civil-Rights Turning Point in Selma Speech" 2015)

Eventually, Obama concluded his speech with a warm salute to America that evoked the unifying rhetoric of his two presidential campaigns. "We are Lewis and Clark and Sacagawea," he said. "We're the immigrants who stowed away on ships to reach these shores...We're the slaves who built the White House and the economy of the South." (Arian Campo-Flores, 8 March, 2015)

³³ Was a Baptist minister and social activist, who led the Civil Rights Movement in the United States from the mid-1950s until his death by assassination in 1968.

³⁴ Was a civil rights activist who refused to surrender her bus seat to a white passenger, spurring the Montgomery boycott and other efforts to end segregation.

³⁵ One of the "Big Six" leaders of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.

2.6. Conclusion:

Although no one had expected that one day a president from African roots will rule America, Obama made history when he was elected as the first African American president of the United States. Through his brave political actions, and skills as one of the world's greatest speakers, brought him quickly into international and national timeline. Even though many politicians from the Republican Party and experts in economy criticized him in the light of the U.S. debts he will leave by the end of his second term this year, his legacy and heritage in American politics has been deep. Obama captured millions of hearts and minds, when he ended two wars and saved the U.S. economy from recessions.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

On the night of victory, Obama delivered a speech before a crowd of 200,000 people, opening a whole new chapter in the history of the United States. That night he spoke of the historic moments, “If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible... tonight is your answer.” Once he reached the White House and took office, President Obama rolled up his sleeves and started working to solve U.S’ major domestic and foreign issues; his highest domestic priority was to save the economy from recession of the Bush’s years while his great foreign concern was to end the wars both in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Obama succeeded to help the wheel of economy turn again by passing some acts such as the Wall Street Reforms and Consumer Protection which put an end to all the risks that may lead again to financial crisis, and provided a full protection for the American families. Two giant car companies, General Motors and Chrysler, were failing. They employed close to 1 million people. In March 2009, Obama directed the government to take over the automakers. The government gave the companies loans and made changes to how they operated. Both companies got back on their feet.

One of Obama’s biggest campaign promises was to make health care more affordable, especially for families with limited incomes. During 2009 and the beginning of 2010, he called for the Congress to pass the health care bill. When the health care was passed, more money went to government health programs; it also obliged insurance companies to cover people who were already sick, as well as patients with fatal illnesses such as cancer. However, a large portion of Americans disliked and opposed the bill. No one from the Republican Party in the House of Representatives voted for it. They claimed that it made the government too big and took power away from states. They believed that it would be impossible for

everyone to be insured in the country, yet the congress agreed on the bill and Obama signed it into law on March 23, 2010.

Race discrimination, as a very sensitive issue in the United States, had long been one of Obama's main concerns. Though he made big steps on the road of equality, particularly when he handled very wisely the problem of pay gap between men and women in work places, many experts criticized him on being too late to tackle that issue. Obama delivered a historic speech celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery marches, when he highlighted an event that led to the Civil Rights movement and the freedom of African Americans in 1960.

According to many experts, Obama achieved total success on the issue of renewable resources. The United States now supplies houses with electricity came from solar energy and the solar industry is adding jobs ten times faster than any other work.

In a brief, Obama had many ups and downs during his two terms as President. When he was sworn to office on January 20, 2009, the U.S. and global economies were in deep recessions. Moreover, the former President left him with two wars, yet he knew how to handle all those issues, save the economy and ended two wars in a row.

Even though Barack H. Obama failed to achieve all what he wished domestically, especially on the issues of gun control and poverty. The proposals and plans he supported will definitely survive and be taken into consideration by the next American President.

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