

What Will Be The Obama Legacy?

By **Alexander Baron** - Oct 5, 2015



What will be Barack's Obama legacy?

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On November 8, Americans will go to the polls which will result in the end of Barack Obama's eight year tenure. The *candidate of change* has been a big disappointment especially to many black and working class Americans, but Obama's legacy will not depend on how things went at home, rather on his rebuilding of American foreign policy, even after the last disastrous few years in the Middle East.

Obama had barely been sworn in when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, an award that left many people puzzled, including the man himself, but it may be that **unlike Colin Fry**, someone on that committee had genuine psychic powers, and his achievements in the field of statesmanship and diplomacy over the next six years have been exemplary.

Okay, there is the little matter of drones being used to kill American citizens, **beginning with Anwar al-Awlaki**, but that would probably have happened anyway. Indeed, if Obama had been defeated by John McCain when he first ran, the turmoil in the Middle East would have been even greater than it is today, because America or Israel would almost certainly have attacked Iran. Obama's attempts to normalise relations with Iran, which have been partially successful, are undoubtedly his greatest achievement because he has faced vociferous opposition all the way from the Zionist lobby, yet has had his way every time.

The power this lobby exerts over American foreign policy is difficult to overstate, or perhaps that should read exerted, as in the past tense, because with *Operation Cast Lead*, the unchecked atrocities of the Israeli Government against the Palestinians have done what no political movement at home could have done. The Zionist or Israel lobby used to be called the Jewish lobby, and with more than a little justification. In the US and other countries including the UK this was always the elephant in the room; no one was supposed even to mention it on pain of being smeared as anti-Semitic.

In April 2008, some eight months before *Cast Lead*, a new organisation called **J Street** was set up; its purpose is to support the State of Israel *and* to work towards a two-state solution with the Palestinians. That puts J Street and many other Jewish organisations at odds with the Zionist lobby, whose supporters include fundamentalist Christians and many Republicans, including Donald Trump. As Trump is running for President, his attitude toward not just Israel but Iran raises serious questions about US policy in the Middle East should he win. In fact, whoever replaces Obama is likely to be a retrograde step, because his successor is unlikely to stand up to Netanyahu or whatever lunatic is running Israel in the future the way he did.

Only last month, Obama became the first serving President to shake hands **with Iran's top diplomat** since the 1979 revolution, something that was inconceivable only a few years ago. It is important for America, Iran and the rest of the world that this newly won trust is not destroyed. If his successor does not back down from future peaceful engagements with Iran, Obama will have earned that Nobel Prize.

One other thing should be mentioned in connection with Obama's foreign policy, that is the new relationship with Cuba. Briefly, the Batista Government was overthrown by non-aligned communist Fidel Castro in 1959, who had ruled it ever since although in recent years he has taken a back seat to his brother Raúl due to ill-health. After the Castro seizure of power, relations with the US deteriorated, and hit an all-time low with the so-called Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. This resulted in a blockade of the island. The Obama Administration has now reestablished diplomatic relations with Cuba, and as most Cubans have had more than they can take of the workers' paradise, it is likely to move closer to the US sphere of influence. Far better to have a friend on your doorstep than an enemy, so perhaps thirty years from now when the world looks back on Obama's two terms in the White House, this will be seen as another great achievement, regardless of his modest domestic record.