

The United States of America; a time of change?

By Costantine V Magavilla

Published by S&C Magazine

Over the last decade or so, the United States of America has increasingly consolidated its international 'watchdog' reputation by acting unilaterally on critical global issues, by-passing the United Nations and consequently resulting into a heavy handed approach that is more liken to that of a bulldog; this, coupled with a strong turn towards isolation policies, has left the USA with more enemies than friends. Is this the profile we should expect from a super-power incumbent; some argue yes, but a great majority of Americans are increasingly arguing no!

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Bush administration has embraced a neoconservative approach with regard to the War on Terror (which in its own right terrorizes), including the 2001 war in Afghanistan, that removed the radical Islamist Taliban but failed to capture al-Qaeda leader – Osama bin Laden and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which resulted in the capture of Saddam Hussein and attempts to spread democracy in the Middle East and around the world. Bush and his pundits have been critical agents in implementing this formula for self destruction, but

Bush's victory in 2004, at the peak of surmounting pressure on Iraq and its supposedly hidden weapons of mass destruction came as an unwelcome surprise to many international observers. It was, indeed, an interesting turn of events for many. America was in the middle of what was generally viewed, by these same keen international observers, to be a miscalculated war against an

intangible foe that would result into immeasurable and consequently uncontrollable damage for the USA both within and abroad. So from a futile search for Osama bin Laden, now the search for Saddam Hussein quickly ensued with unperturbed momentum. Right in the middle of this foreseeable mess, George W. Bush Jr. secured a victory that made him the first candidate since 1988 (when his father was voted in as President) to achieve a popular majority in the USA general elections! It is worth noting that Bill Clinton, one of America's most internationally respected former presidents, won in 1992 and 1996, but without a popular majority. If this doesn't say something about America, then it definitely says something about those who voted; but maybe like Hillary Clinton, had they [the voters] known what they know now about the war in Iraq, they would have voted differently...

It is clear that times have changed since. Whereas, Americans, at least those that vote, have been known to have their votes determined by three main areas namely: economic, social and international policies with social and economic policies normally being big ticket items, the run ups to party nominations are proving that international policies are heavy under the spot light and may be a key determinant of the next presidential elections. As a result of the 2006 midterm elections, the Democratic Party became the majority party in the House of Representatives as well as the effective majority party in the United States Senate when the 110th Congress convened in 2007 ending a 12 year minority streak! To top things off the House of Representatives ushered in its first female speaker – Nancy Pelosi; if this is not a sign of change, then what is?

Americans are speaking their minds and this time they are not motivated by fear of an unknown foe created by a misguided administration, but out of hope

presented by a tide of change and daunting revelations. On top this list of advocates of hope is Senator Barak Obama, who just happens to be the latest presidential aspirant. In Obama's maiden speech as presidential hopeful, he called on Americans who vote to be *the generation that makes these changes*. Obama's charm and political charisma is underscored by a *return to the basics* formula which has won the otherwise underdog a lot sincere local and international support. A lot may be working against the young Obama, but the general enthusiasm that has accompanied his bid for presidency says a lot about where America is and where its people want it to go.

America's focus on its global 'watchdog' profile may turn it into another Rome without hopefuls like Obama, who are seeking to rebuild America's faded legacy. This entails fighting just as many internal battles as they do externally. Rome's end came as a result of internal inefficiencies (decline in morals, public health, political corruption, unemployment, inferior technology and overspending on military) and not external conflicts. America clearly needs to retune its engine to make it a more efficient player at a time when global standards for excellence are rendering it slower and less productive when compared to new age powers like China.

Obama brings to the electoral platform more than just the War on Terrorism; he embraces a war that will improve schooling, healthcare, families and other socially and economically pertinent issues that are key for positioning the United States of America in this new era of global competition. Some argue that he is exactly what America needs at these times of change. Whether he wins or loses is not really the point; a clear message has been sent to the world

and times of change in the world's leading power are set to come, less they fall to the same fate that befell Rome.