

Reflections on Obama's Second Term



A DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTIC of the U.S. political system is situating the first executive not only as the nation's moral leader, but as the central axis that articulates the gamut of interests involved in the functioning of a pluralist democracy. James D. Barber has incorporated other attributes into presidential leadership that go beyond this and that he considers essential, such as the president's capacity to bring cohesion to the hope of the people and to focus their most intense emotions.

The melding of all these elements must also be accompanied by keeping some of the promises made during the campaign to promote public policies that deal with the citizenry's needs, plus appropriate supervision of government administration and the economy's performance. Obviously, in an era marked by the media, the president's personality will also weigh in public opinion, turning him/her into a celebrity.

Barack Obama seems to possess most of these characteristics; that is why the aim of this section is to analyze different aspects of his second term. To do that, we have six valuable contributions by academic experts in U.S. political, economic, and social developments, who explore new responses to stimulating questions about them, using diverse conceptual approaches.

Is the U.S. moving toward more inclusiveness in terms of the role of ethnic, racial, and religious minorities? Is the weight of the different groups in the U.S. electorate today due to a profound socio-cultural transformation or simply to pragmatism? What elements exist today to affirm that the United States is in decline, or rather to recognize that it is only going through a series of crises?

Rounding out this space is the multi-thematic agenda that Barack Obama and Enrique Peña Nieto say they will cover to lead to a relationship that will be more inclined toward the prosperity of their respective peoples. Nevertheless, the great culmination of the United States' much-awaited immigration reform and its impact on Mexico are still an unconcluded story.

Silvia Núñez García