

The Remains of an Administration

By VICTOR DAVIS HANSON, May 26, 2020



Obama's policies are in tatters, and the worst scandals of his White House are coming to light.

"One is not struck by the truth until prompted quite accidentally by some external event." — Kazuo Ishiguro, The Remains of the Day

Each day that the Obama administration fades into the past, its wrongdoings manage to wander back into the present.

After years of suppression, all sorts of strange events keep popping up to remind us of what little is left of the Obama years — the Susan Rice memo, Christopher Steele deleting his computer records, FBI-doctored and lost 302s, text messages wiped clean, the bizarre Obama January 5, 2017, Oval Office meeting, the

ambush interview of Michael Flynn, the unmasking and leaking of redacted names swept up in reverse-targeting surveillance operations, the administration fraud perpetrated on the FISA courts. The list is so overwhelming and bizarre that it ensures that anything at any time can now appear. And the result keeps reminding Americans of how corrupt were the years between 2009 and 2017 and how untruthful was the coverage of such institutionalized wrongdoing.

Feet of Clay

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Emeritus Barack Obama now and then ventures out to go through the motions of an enfeebled defense for what is becoming an increasingly discredited administration. But his heart is not in it. His mind is elsewhere. His cause is no longer social activism and community organizing, if it ever was, but lucre and the perceived well-earned good life. The arc of his moralizing universe is long, but for the anointed like him, it apparently bends toward the just deserts of riches and material bounty.

First lady forever and bestselling memoirist Michelle Obama sometimes takes a hiatus from making millions to offer a half-hearted progressive warning about the sudden heartlessness of the country — reminiscent of her transitory 2008 warnings about a downright mean country and one of which she had previously not been especially proud.

The remains of the Obama team (Susan Rice, Ben Rhodes, Hillary Clinton, John Brennan, James Comey, Samantha Power) are not offering much of a defense for the Obama years — they are now too busy scrambling to hide their own legal culpability and exposure. The bending arc of the 2009 dream team finally ends in the platitudes of “I can’t remember” and “Not to my knowledge” that will eventually find their way from CNN and MSNBC into the court room.

Obama entered office to gushes that he was a living god and the smartest man ever to enter the White House. He quickly won the Nobel Peace Prize and was courted internationally through a series of overseas tours. His brand was that he was not so much a citizen of an unexceptional America as a citizen of the now globalized world.

Obama entered with a supermajority in the Senate and a large majority in the House, with the likelihood of remaking the Supreme Court. When he left eight years later, he had lost both houses of Congress, lost the Supreme Court for a generation, and lost more than 1,000 state and local offices. Once Obama discovered in his last year in office that the more he disappeared, the more the public liked the idea rather than the reality of Obama, his polls recovered. His designated successor, armed with Obama’s endorsement, a captive media, and a vast preponderance of money lost to outlier Donald Trump in the greatest upset in U.S. election history. Trump, remember, ran on being the antithesis to Barack Obama.

Gone with the Breeze

Because Obama sought to ram down the throats of the public a radical progressive agenda on the force of his supposedly charismatic godhead, none of his initiatives ever won majority public support. A few were pushed through on entirely partisan votes or by executive — and thus easily reversible — orders. For the most part, what Obama ran on in 2008, he quickly forgot. Instead, he sought to enact what he had once warned against, from open borders and gay marriage to radical deficit spending and one-size-fits-all federal medical care.

In fact, Obamacare remains a mess and hobbles along, to the extent the individual mandate was scrapped. The Obama future of centrally controlled, high-density, skyscraper apartment living, reliance on mass transit and subways, and energy-efficient crowded workplaces was rendered inert by COVID-19. Those who must soon return to the coastal-corridor paradigm are not too happy about it. The MeToo movement is now dead, killed off by its own selective applications and hypocrisies. The Obama federal Title IX counterpart edicts to universities are now being overturned on grounds that they are likely unconstitutional.

The Obama-administration appeasement of China is over and in retrospect seen as disastrous. “Reset” with Russia was as mythical as Russian “collusion.” The much-heralded Asian “pivot” is a forgotten divot.

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