



Details the outcome of progressive policies in Obama's second term.

THE OBAMA ILLUSION UNRAVELS: Progressive Policies on Display at Home and Abroad

by Gayle Strickland

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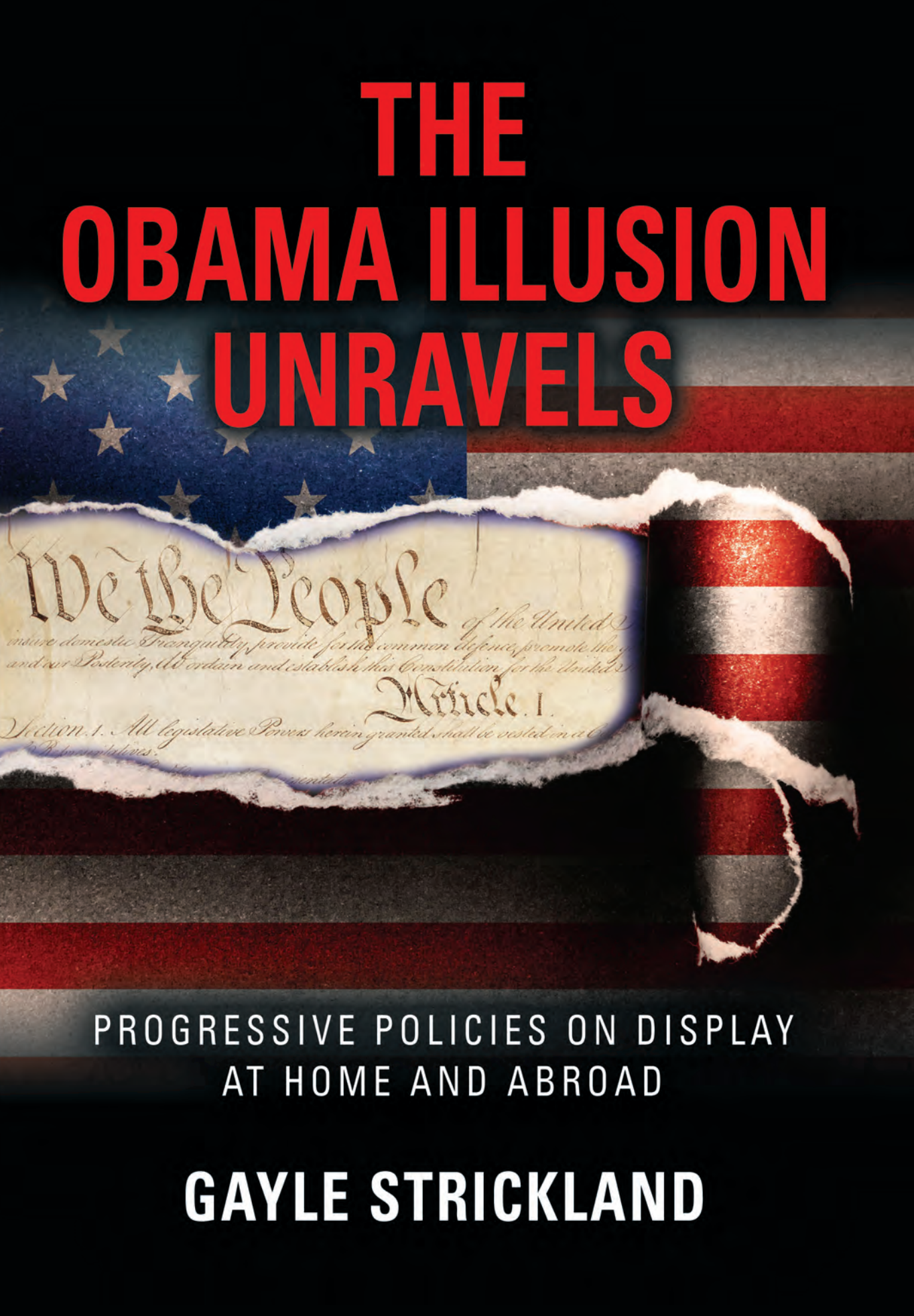
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THE OBAMA ILLUSION UNRAVELS

The background of the entire image is a stylized American flag with a dark, textured appearance. The stars are white on a dark blue field, and the stripes are red and white. A piece of aged, yellowed paper is torn across the middle of the image. The paper has a rough, deckled edge and contains the text 'We the People' in a large, elegant cursive font. Below this, in a smaller cursive font, is the text 'insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the y and our Posterity, We ordain and establish this Constitution for the United S'. Below that, 'Article. 1.' is written in a similar cursive font. At the bottom of the paper, 'Section. 1. All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a C' is visible. The paper is set against the flag background, and the overall tone is serious and patriotic.

PROGRESSIVE POLICIES ON DISPLAY
AT HOME AND ABROAD

GAYLE STRICKLAND

**THE OBAMA ILLUSION
UNRAVELS**

*Progressive Policies on display
at home and abroad*

Gayle Strickland

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Introduction

President Obama spent his first four years deceiving the American public, creating an illusion in most every aspect of his administration by saying one thing and doing another. Obama used Harry Reid and Congressional Democrats to cover his actions by keeping potential legislation from being considered for six years, and by keeping budgets from even being voted on in the Senate for six years. In his last two years in office, President Obama said he wanted bipartisan cooperation after both the House and Senate were controlled by Republicans, but his actions clearly demonstrated what he meant was complete capitulation to his liberal, progressive beliefs. With no election before him, Obama was free to do what came most naturally to him without pretense; even his verbal protests were followed quickly by threats of lone executive action to go around Congress in any and every way he could, whether or not it was lawful.

The ‘Obama illusion’ resulted in disaster at home and abroad. President Obama came into office promising to change America. He also promised hope but the change that he instituted dashed that hope. Under Obama’s policies at home and abroad, the U.S. experienced a number of changes, but not what Obama promised in his endless campaigning before and during his two presidential terms.

At home the U.S. experienced:

- The weakest recovery from a recession since WWII;
- An extremely slow, jobless recovery with mostly part–time jobs available and the lowest employment participation rate since 1978;
- Increased regulation and federal intrusion in business and state affairs;
- More difficulty in starting and running a business thanks to increased regulations and federal oversight;
- An unprecedented expansion of entitlements with food stamps, disability, Medicaid, and welfare recipients at an all-time high and no solution to the looming insolvency of Social Security and Medicare;
- Lack of executive leadership in Washington that could bring compromise;
- Gridlock in Congress with a high degree of distrust and partisan activity resulting in no ability to compromise and solve problems;
- Health care pandemonium with policies disappearing, mandates overturned, costs going up, access to doctors and hospitals diminishing, and companies not hiring due to uncertainty and regulation;

- Veterans dying while waiting for treatment in the government-run VA health care system; wait times of months and even years coupled with fraud and mismanagement were rampant in a system Senator Obama vowed to fix during his 2008 campaign – a system that epitomized the problem with government-run organizations;
- The IRS (whose head is appointed by the President) used as a political tool to silence conservative voices before and during the 2012 election cycle as the IRS targeted conservative groups, denying their requests and initiating audits.

President Obama looked first to government to solve problems, and used regulation and taxation to try to achieve his goals. He spoke of tax reform when it was politically advantageous, but never worked with Congress to implement this. He spoke of immigration reform but never worked with both parties to come to an agreement; in addition, the actions of the President led Republicans to not trust that President Obama would follow the laws that Congress did pass. This distrust led the House to sue President Obama in 2014 over changes to ObamaCare. Obama's confrontational approach to anyone who didn't agree completely with his ideas led to gridlock during a large part of his presidency, especially after Republicans took control of first the House in 2010, and then both the House and the Senate in 2014. None of the policies passed in Obama's first two years with a Democrat controlled Congress included Republican ideas or votes – this was unprecedented, as previously all important laws that passed in Congress had some level of bi-partisan support.

It was clear from the beginning that Obama's philosophy of withdrawing the U.S. from the world and from its position as world leader would embolden the 'bad guys' and open up space for them to take over difficult situations around the world. This clearly happened as the world became a much more dangerous place than when Obama took office in 2009, with al Qaeda affiliates (including ISIS), Putin in Russia, Assad in Syria, Iran, China and North Korea aggressively pursuing their global power. In response to aggression, Obama spoke and was ignored. President Obama spent two terms ignoring the reality of issues around the world, pursuing friendship with rogues, ignoring or opposing allies – the results were obvious to everyone but President Obama.

Abroad the U.S. has experienced:

- Al Qaeda and affiliates, especially ISIS, greatly expanded in the Middle East and Northern Africa, killing tens of thousands and kidnapping young girls.
- Four Americans dead in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012. Most of the killers of four Americans in Benghazi were still at large in spite of Obama's

promise to bring them to justice; the one killer / terrorist who was identified was captured in the summer of 2014 after a prolonged attempt to build a court case that allowed the terrorist to be tried in a U.S. civilian court instead of a military court. In the meantime, the American embassy had to be closed in Tripoli in 2014 as Libya dissolved into chaos in spite of Obama's wish to claim Libya as a victory in campaign speeches.

- Iraq fell into chaos and war after the U.S. completely withdrew in 2011; Iraq was constantly under the threat of ISIS terrorist activity, thanks to the inability of the Obama administration to agree on a status of forces agreement that would have allowed American troops to stay in Iraq to support the Iraq military with training and intelligence. Iran became increasingly influential in Iraq and often took the lead in Iraq's fight against ISIS.
- Obama gave a date for the full withdrawal of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, following in the same steps he took with Iraq; after ISIS took over large portions of Iraq and public opinion forced Obama to act in 2014 (albeit too little and too late), the administration announced an agreement with Afghanistan to keep almost 10,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan until the end of 2016.
- Putin threatened neighbors by taking Crimea and supporting a war against Ukraine in Eastern Ukraine, making a joke of the Russian RESET that Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attempted in 2009; Obama refused to provide needed military assistance to Ukraine in its fight against Russia and Russian separatists.
- Syria continued to slaughter over 400,000 citizens while turning over only declared chemical weapons; both Iran and Russia armed Assad in his civil war. Obama ignored repeated requests for assistance from the Syrian rebels for several years until they were forced to turn to al Qaeda affiliated groups for assistance; finally in 2015, Obama started a tepid program to train Syrian rebels which eventually failed, too little and too late.
- Iran gained sanctions relief from a US / western country 'deal' while only giving promises to not produce a nuclear weapon; Iran marched closer to a nuclear weapon while Middle Eastern neighbors threatened to obtain nuclear weapons in response.
- Hamas threatened Israel as Hamas continued to send thousands of missiles into Israel in 2014, causing an all-out war, with Palestinian civilians in Gaza the losers as they were used by Hamas as human shields; Obama and his administration did not condemn Hamas and the Palestinians that elected Hamas for their use of civilians in a military engagement, but proposed cease fires (based on Hamas demands) that Obama's team must have known Israel would not accept.

- China threatened Japanese and Vietnamese territory in the South China sea; China claimed international territory and air space there as Chinese forces moved to an offensive military position and expanded their military reach.
- North Korea issued threats to South Korea and the U.S. while firing missiles and expanding their nuclear program, including miniaturization of nuclear weapons; North Korea supported Iran in their nuclear plans.
- Central America sent their unaccompanied children by the tens of thousands to seek refuge in the U.S. thanks to Obama's promises to allow these children to stay, causing a humanitarian crisis on the southern U.S. border.

President Obama had a pattern of ignoring issues until he absolutely was forced to address an issue, often too late to have reasonable options. He did this consistently throughout his two terms, in all areas of his administration, including:

- The rise of ISIS/ISIL terrorism;
- Iran's nuclear weapon program;
- Syria's civil war and center for terrorist training;
- Russia's taking over of Crimea;
- Russia's invasion of Eastern Ukraine;
- China's activities in the South China Sea;
- The implementation of ObamaCare;
- The IRS scandal;
- The VA scandal;
- Reducing corporate taxes to keep American companies from heading overseas;
- Reducing unemployment, especially for young people.

In many cases, the Obama administration covered up the truth to support the political interests of President Obama over the interests of the American public. This occurred most egregiously in 2012 prior to the presidential election when a number of cover-ups occurred to support Obama's campaign slogans and not to bring reactions that would affect the election negatively. These cover-ups included the myth created for the Benghazi killings, the IRS scandal and employment numbers; a myth that the war on terror was 'won'; the myth that Iraq was stable and doing well without U.S. residual troops; the myth that relations with Russia were positive; the myth that Syrian chemical weapons were 'under control'; the myth that the Colombian prostitution scandal had no White House connection, and others.

President Obama was passive and indecisive throughout his terms as President; he seemed unable to make difficult decisions, especially decisions that may not be politically popular,

and often looked for cover for those decisions; he also deferred decisions until a situation became especially dire. A basic element of Obama's inability to make a decision was his unwillingness to accept responsibility for anything that wasn't already completed – if it was over and it turned out well, President Obama was happy to take credit for it. He never wanted blame for a decision gone wrong and he constantly blamed others for any problems; President Bush was a favorite target for years, but President Obama also blamed his own intelligence community, the U.S. military, ATM machines and other people or situations for all manner of bad outcomes. Further, he sought cover for any decision he was forced to make: the Congress, the UN, the international community, allies. President Obama always sought a coalition to deal with international issues, including acts against the U.S. (such as the beheading of American hostages by ISIS), but he lacked the leadership to bring others into an effective coalition. This was true in the international community as well as with the U.S. Congress. But, if the United States was directly affected, the U.S. must act even if others do not follow:

“Teddy Roosevelt said ‘speak softly and carry a big stick.’ President Obama said ‘speak incessantly and carry nothing’.”¹

Russian President Putin took over Crimea and invaded Eastern Ukraine while President Obama and Europeans imposed weak sanctions that did nothing to stop or even slow down Putin's aggression, despite any effect on the Russian economy those sanctions may have had. Obama appeared to be reluctant to offend Putin as he refused to help Ukraine with the military support obviously needed to stand up to Putin, primarily not to put at risk Russian support of the Iran nuclear talks. The Russian / U.S. relationship was a perfect example of how President Obama's policy of appeasement and withdrawal changed the world dynamic, and not to the benefit of either the United States or the free world.

President Obama did not surround himself with the ‘best and the brightest’ in their fields, but rather those that supported his campaign and those that would support his political positions. This led to a number of problems in both domestic and foreign policy as people like Susan Rice were responsible for key policy input. By not bringing in people who would stand up to him, Obama did both himself and the nation a disservice, especially given the severe lack of experience and knowledge Obama had for the job at hand. President Obama had four Secretaries of Defense; the first three disagreed with him on critical issues and were let go for their input.

President Obama hoped to ‘manage, control or contain’ the bad guys – unfortunately, history has shown repeatedly that evil cannot be ‘managed or contained,’ and those who

¹ Bill O'Reilly, September 3, 2014

hope for the best without the military power and strength to back up that hope never succeed. President Obama hoped for nuclear non-proliferation – and actually received a Nobel Prize weeks after his first inauguration for that *hope*; he succeeded in creating an environment that promoted nuclear proliferation as a result of his weak and passive policies as the world rogues took advantage of a policy of words without action. He presided over the largest reduction to the military since WWII in an ever dangerous world.

President Obama made a habit of misdiagnosing the problem and coming up with solutions not related to the real issue. He did this with:

- The war on terror in general and ISIS specifically, refusing to name Islamic terrorism and acknowledge its religious foundation;
- Health care, implementing a model for consolidation and then going after that consolidation;
- Dodd-Frank regulations that did not address the real problems of the 2008 financial crisis but created onerous new requirements for financial organizations that hurt small businesses;
- Infrastructure spending that did not stimulate and left the taxpayer with a massive bill as the money went primarily to public unions and Democrat supporters;
- The Russian takeover of Crimea - Obama watched passively as Putin entered and took over an entire area;
- Iraq stability as Obama pulled all forces out of Iraq causing new chaos and leading to the rise of ISIS and then going back to Iraq gradually;
- Syria when he used only rhetoric to warn Assad not to ‘cross a red line’;
- Removal of Gadhafi in Libya without a plan for what followed;
- The Keystone Pipeline, rejecting the project for political reasons despite multiple State Department findings;
- And many more.

His solutions didn’t work because they didn’t deal with the ‘situation’ or problem he was addressing.

Obama also ignored bad results, doubling down on the same failed policies. He did this with:

- Government regulations;
- Investments in green energy companies;
- Education, going against school choice and for-profit colleges for political reasons to support public unions that supported him;

- Tax increases on individuals and companies, going after companies when they responded logically to Obama's regulations and taxes with mergers and relocations;
- ObamaCare;
- His incremental approach to fighting terrorism;
- The VA scandal, allowing frivolous spending on artwork when veterans were dying waiting for care.

His rhetoric was lofty and full of promises but his actions and results were poor or non-existent in many cases. A great example was Obama's promise of "no red or blue America, but one United States of America" – his actions as President created the most polarized country in decades as race relations and bipartisanship disintegrated.

By the middle of his second term, President Obama's popularity plummeted as his poll numbers dipped at times to the high 30's and scandals and crises became the norm. Fueled by losing against ISIS, the ObamaCare fiasco, the Ebola crisis, and numerous scandals (IRS, VA, Benghazi...), phrases like 'incompetent' and 'too little, too late' became common in reference to Obama policies, the Obama administration and the federal government in general. Obama's poll numbers improved at the end of his second term as people looked ahead to the next presidential election.

The midterm elections of 2014 resulted in a tsunami for Republicans as they took the Senate with seats to spare (plus 9 seats for a total of 54 Senate seats), increased the Republican majority in the House by 13 for the largest Republican majority since 1929, took additional governor's positions (even in liberal states like Massachusetts, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan and others) for a total of 32 Republican governors starting in 2015, and increased the Republican hold on state legislators to 70%. President Obama emphasized that his policies were 'on the ballot' prior to the election and disavowed that idea after the 'tromping.' The Obama White House appeared to be the only place that didn't understand that Obama's policies were clearly repudiated, as President Obama remained committed to his agenda and was unable to bend to the will of the American voter. Obama promised to continue to escalate his use of executive orders and regulatory agencies to implement his own policies instead of working with the new Congress and acknowledging the midterm voter message. When Senator Obama won the Presidency in 2008, he came into office with a complete disregard of Republican ideas, saying that "elections have consequences"; when Obama and the Democrats lost by a landslide in 2014, Obama decided that elections didn't have consequences as it didn't support his personal objectives.

President Obama's policies at home and abroad provided ample material for the 2016 election, and even Democrat candidates ran against the 'current poor results' of the Obama's policies at home (poor economy, rising cost of health care, limited job opportunities and decreasing income) and abroad (emboldened rogues, chaos in the Middle East, rise of ISIS and increased terrorism around the world).



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