
Has U.S. President made a comeback?

by Matthew Rusling



U.S. President Barack Obama gestures during his news conference in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building at the White House in Washington December 22, 2010. (Xinhua/Reuters Photo)

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23 (Xinhua) -- U.S. President Barack Obama in recent days has been dubbed the "comeback kid" by some U.S. media, not long after taking a self-described "shellacking" in November's mid term elections.

Obama, some maintain, has done a sudden about face -- from a weakened president whose party lost control of the House to a commander in chief who took the bull by the horns and passed an extension of the Bush-era tax cuts.

The president also passed a trade deal with the Republic of Korea and on Wednesday scored another win when the Senate ratified the START treaty -- an agreement with Russia on nukes.

Columnist Charles Krauthammer, the first to apply the "comeback kid" moniker, said the day the tax deal was passed will mark the first day of Obama's comeback if he is re-elected, which seems likely.

But has Obama really bounced back? While many say yes, others are casting doubts.

Dick Morris, former political advisor to President Bill Clinton, said Monday on Fox News that Obama's deal with Republicans was a defeat, not a victory. Others contended that the president had no choice but to compromise with the GOP, as Republicans would not budge on their insistence that the cuts should include top earners, to the chagrin of some Democrats.

Daniel J. Mitchell, senior fellow at the Cato Institute, contended that Obama has angered his base and that the tax compromise could have consequences down the road.

"It does seem that the hard left is really bitter about what Obama did," he said. "And that's a complicating factor for Obama, if your base isn't motivated going into an election."

Another hurdle is that Obama is still perceived as being very left wing, and needs to do something to try to change that perception, Mitchell said.

Still another is that the next Congress, which will commence in January, will see a Republican-controlled House, and some pundits have predicted that the two parties will continue to be at odds over most issues.

Despite those obstacles, however, some contend that Obama is off to a positive start for next year.

Ryan McConaghy, deputy director of the economic program at Third Way, billed the tax compromise as a major victory for the president, adding that the deal shows leadership and pragmatism.

Obama can take the next step by heeding the message of the election and moving to the center by focusing on policies to drive economic growth, he said.

Obama is certainly able to re-brand himself as a moderate, he said. In many respects the President has already shown an inclination to be practical and work toward solutions, and can build on that over the next two years, he said.

There will be plenty of opportunities to achieve bipartisan success on pro-growth initiatives such as trade, immigration, education reform, tax reform, and efforts to reign in the deficit. There will also be constant pressure on the president and Republicans in Congress to put their differences aside and deliver more accomplishments such as the tax deal, he said.

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