An Analysis of Obama’s Success in Winning the 2009 Nobel Prize

篇名：歐巴馬贏得 2009 諾貝爾獎之分析與探討

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I. Introduction

Obama, the 44th president of the United States, is the first African American president in American history. He, against all the odds, has succeeded in fighting against the discriminatory atmosphere that has prevailed for centuries in his country and become the leader that everyone looks up to. His success is a true realization of the American dream that Martin Luther King pursued for his whole life.

He is also an incredible man who won the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize. This surprised people a lot because so far he has just become the president and had very few concrete achievements. Owing to this, we are curious about the reason why he won this prize and what led to his success in winning the prize. To figure out the answer, we’ve tried to approach this issue from a few aspects. We’ve reviewed Obama’s family background, what he has said or done, and also reviewed the past Nobel Peace Prize Winners, in order to find out and analyze the cause that led to his success in winning Nobel Peace Prize.

II. Thesis Part

1. The Family Background of Barack Hussein Obama

1.1 The Family Diversity

Barack Obama was born in Hawaii on August 4, 1961. He is neither a black nor a white. He is a person of mixed blood. His father is a black from Kenya and his mother, Ann Duham, is a white from Kansas.

His parents separated when he was two years old and they divorced in 1964. Obama’s father returned to Kenya and saw his son only once before dying in an automobile accident in 1982. After her divorce, Dunham married Indonesian student, Lolo Soetoro, who was attending college in Hawaii. He is a Moslem.

Then, Obama moved to Indonesia with her mother. After four years, he went back to Hawaii and was raised by his grandfather and his grandmother. Years later, his mother’s marriage failed again. Then she went back to Hawaii to study and began to assist advancing women’s job and micro-financing. In his book, he has once written
“What is the family? It is between parents and children, is the directness that the gene has contacted? Or the society for a kind of the day after tomorrow builds and constructs, is it the economic unit that is most suitable for bringing up the offspring and labor division? Or at all, one place to share memory.”[1] From Obama’s statement of what the family is, we can perceive that he considers the family to be an important part of someone’s life. His family forms an important part of what he is now.

As what has been mentioned before, Obama came from a relatively diverse family, in which his father is a black and his mother is a white. His mom re-married to an Indonesian, with whom he lived for a while. Half of his siblings are whites, while half are blacks. Maybe it is because of this family diversity that he learned the importance of respecting people of different races and groups.

### 1.2 Influences from Obama’s Mother

Barack Hussein Obama thinks his mother influenced him a lot in all his life because his mother pursued the ideal, dared to change, but at the same time she was plain and low-key. She showed loving care for the society and was full of love without claiming credit for herself. And his mother’s philosophy of life in part gave rise to Obama’s political ideas “Hope, Change, and Empathy”.

### 2. Governmental Thinking

#### 2.1 Obama's Inaugural Speech

In Barack Hussein Obama’s inaugural speech, he stated, “…we will make great efforts to cooperate with old friend and rivals in the past untiringly, in order to lighten the nuclear threat, with the melting warmly of the earth. U.S.A. must play a who introduces new peaceful times role. We seek a new way of advancing, which is based on common interests and respect.[5]” In his inaugural speech, we clearly see that he advocated “cooperation”—with both friends and rivals—and the purpose of cooperation is to lighten the threat to the whole world.

In addition, in the part concerning American economy, he said that it’s a crucial time for all the Americans to take action. He suggested to “reduce the tax of the poor income family to bear, [and] improve the tax rate to the well-to-do family.”[5] Here, he is promoting an idea of fairness, which is based on the philosophy of sharing and helping each other.

He said to all the Americans that “Change” is all they need—the Americans need to cease war, and re-consider their relationships with their foreign countries. The relationship between the US and other countries should be based on peaceful negotiation instead of weapons. In contrast with the 43rd president, George Bush, he
appears to be much less aggressive on his foreign policy, because he knows that weapons can not solve all the problems.

In Obama’s inaugural speech, we can perceive that he is trying very hard to bring all the Americans a better life, a life that is free from fear— the fear of losing one’s life and losing one’s job.

2.2 Obama’s Speech in Cairo in June, 2009

In the very beginning of Obama’s speech in Cairo, he said, “…..I’ve come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition.[2]” He hopes to re-build a friendly tie to the Muslim world, and the speech in Cairo is a good beginning.

In his speech, he also stated, “I believe that America holds within her the truth that regardless of race, religion, or station in life, all of us share common aspirations: to live in peace and security, to get an education and to work with dignity, to love our families, our communities, and our God. These things we share. This is the hope of all humanity.[2]” From this, we can see his strong belief in peace as the final goal that all human beings pursue.

2.3 The Treaty with Russia to Restrain Nuclear Weapons

With the 1991 US-Soviet Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty to expire in December, Obama has decided to sign another treaty with Russia to limit their nuclear weapons to 1000 in each country. This, however, might pose threat to the US because the nuclear weapons in Iran were not reduced. If the US reduced their nuclear weapon, it is likely that they are reducing their self-defense military power. However, Obama considers this to be the first step to show his belief in peace. The weapons and wars could never bring about peace; only peaceful negotiation can.

3. The Nobel Peace Prize

3.1 The Criterion for Choosing the Nobel Peace Prize Winner

According to Nobel’s will, the criterion to choose the person for The Nobel Peace Prize is that “all have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses [6].”

The Noble Peace Prize is just like a mirror which reflects the world’s current situation. The prize is often given to those who lead and assist people toward a better
life without taking violent action, to those who give people hopes, and to those who realize people’s desires for peace. One good example is Jean Henri Dunant, who set up the Internation Federation of Red Crescent Societies.

### 3.2 The US Presidents Awarded Nobel Peace Prize

In trying to analyze why Obama was rewarded the Nobel Peace Prize, we reviewed the data of US presidents who had received the Nobel Peace Prize before. On record, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Jimmy Carter were the three American presidents who had received the Nobel Peace Prize before. Here is a short review of the reasons why they won the prize:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Reason</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theodore Roosevelt (the 26th president)</td>
<td>Roosevelt won the prize during his term of presidency. He Negotiated an end to the Russo-Japanese War, which was the main reason for his winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodrow Wilson (the 28th president)</td>
<td>Wilson also won the prize during his term of presidency. After World War I, Wilson made a famous speech introducing his “Fourteen Points”, in which he introduced the idea of a League of Nation, which helped preserve the territory sovereignty and political independence of a nation. His devotion to forming the league is the main reason for his winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1919.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy Carter (39th president)</td>
<td>It is amazing that Carter didn’t win the prize during his term; rather he won the prize 21 years after leaving office. He received the prize for his avocation for ending death penalty.</td>
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With the short review of the three presidents who were given the Nobel Peace Prize before, we can see that what they share in common is that they respect lives, and help people defend their rights for living. With this in mind, we move on to analyze what Obama has done.

### 3.3 Barack Obama’s Feat

It is so surprising that Obama should win the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize because so far he has very little concrete achievement. However, his inaugural speech and the speech in Cairo shows his concern for bringing about a more peaceful world.

He was given the prize possibly because his deal with Russia to reduce nuclear weapons and the speech he has made to the world. He has expressed his strong belief that all the humanity desires “to live in peace and security, to get an education and
to work with dignity, to love our families, our communities, and our God.[2]” He has expressed his strong wish to bring peace to the current unstable world. He has given his promised, and it appeared that the judges of the Nobel Peace Prize believe that he will make the world a better place for living in the coming years, though 2009 is just the first year of his term of presidency.

4. Conclusion

Obama has impressed the world with his famous motto “Yes, we can.” Indeed, he appears to have the confidence and the power to change the world. After becoming the president, he has devoted himself to leading U.S.A. towards a steady economic and peaceful condition—he has made it known to the world that the Americans want to re-build a peaceful and friendly relationship with the Muslim world. As he has stated, the relationship should not be built on weapons; rather it should be built on peaceful negotiation. His belief has been illustrated in his treaty with Russia in which they made an agreement that the nuclear weapon be reduced to 1000 in each country.

So far Obama hasn’t made a lot of achievements, but with his philosophy in equity and peace, the judges of the Nobel Peace Prize believe that he can make even more contribution to the world in the future, and the people in America as well as those all around the world do. This is why and how he got the prize.

III. Reference


6. 維基百科-諾貝爾和平獎
http://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-tw/%E5%92%8C%E5%B9%B3%E7%8D%8E