

Obama: Our 22nd greatest president?

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As if President Barack Obama doesn't already have enough to worry about, a statistical analysis of presidential ranking surveys suggests that he is likely to be viewed as an "average" president by expert evaluators if he serves only one term, according to a Baylor University researcher.

Under these conditions, Obama is predicted to land at the 22nd overall spot on the ranking list — between William McKinley and George H.W. Bush. This would dash the President's self-professed hope of being viewed as "a really good one-term president" if he loses in November 2012, according to conclusions based upon research by Curt Nichols, Ph.D., an assistant professor of political science at Baylor University in Waco.

Nichols will present his research on Sept. 4 at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Seattle.

On the flip side, if Obama is re-elected and seen as the transformational president he seeks to be, he is likely to be viewed as a "Near Great" president and land at the fourth overall spot on the ranking list — one place below George Washington and one above Thomas Jefferson, Nichols said.

Nichols' research, using a statistical method known as regression analysis, evaluates presidential ranking polls conducted by The Wall Street Journal, C-SPAN and the Siena Research Institute. He found that eight factors are consistently used by experts to give presidents their rating scores.

The rating scores of presidents increase:

- With the number of years they serve
- When they are recognized as wartime leaders
- When they successfully transform the political landscape
- When they are a member of the founding fathers
- When they are considered a progressive in "pursuit of equal justice for all"
- When they are assassinated progressives, such as Abraham Lincoln or John F. Kennedy

The rating scores of presidents decrease:

- When the president is impeached, resigns or has an administration noted for major scandal
- When they either push the nation into political crisis or fail to lift the country out of one

"Even as one-term president, Obama would be expected to receive credits for serving four years and being both a wartime [president](#) and a progressive," Nichols said. "However, he most likely would be penalized for failing to lift the nation out of crisis."

Research reveals that expert evaluators do not make distinctions between presidents who cause crises, like George W. Bush, and those who fail to lift the nation out of them, like Jimmy Carter.

Nichols cautioned that the analysis only reveals the factors experts use in their evaluations. It does not suggest that these are the criteria that should be used.

Provided by Baylor University

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