



http://www.salon.com/2009/04/29/100_days_3/singleton

WEDNESDAY, APR 29, 2009 10:50 AM UTC2009-04-29T10:50:00ZL, M J, Y G:I A T

Obama's 100-day report card

Bloggers, activists, economists and writers grade the president's performance so far. Featuring Sen. Russ Feingold, Dan Savage, Markos, Michael Pollan, Gloria Feldt and many others.

BY VINCENT ROSSMEIER, MARK SCHONE AND GABRIEL WINANT



It has been 100 days since Barack Obama became the 44th president of the United States. The 100th day of a presidency is traditionally a time for taking stock of what the new occupant of the White House has achieved — especially when the nation confronts a crisis, as in 1933 and 2009, or when there has been true ideological regime change — again, as in 1933 and 2009. Salon asked 21 writers, politicians, activists and economists for their assessment of the Obama presidency so far. The state of the

president's report card is (mostly) strong. He earns a high GPA, though there are critics both left and right ready to give him failing grades in a few crucial areas.

DIGBY, [political blogger](#)

On the economy, I give the administration a **B**, if only because of the extreme difficulty and urgency of the problems they face. They deserve credit for the quick passage of the stimulus, although as Obama himself admitted, their negotiating skills were less than perfect. Unfortunately, it appears the administration still fails to see the necessity for systemic reform of the financial system, and that could derail everything.

On foreign policy and national security they would get an **A+** for Obama's successful outreach to other nations and commitment to changing America's global image. They get an incomplete on the promise to withdraw from Iraq and close Guantánamo. Releasing the OLC memos is laudable, but the president's ruling out prosecutions and threatening to block inquiries, which are not subject to presidential authority, clouds his moral authority here and around the world. They get an **F** for expanding the Bush state secrets arguments.

Overall, I am most impressed with their recognition that post-partisanship is useful in name only, as is exemplified by their willingness to play hardball on healthcare. However, I continue to be

concerned about their rumored willingness to entertain the idea of "entitlement" reform as some sort of compromise.

GROVER NORQUIST, president of Americans for Tax Reform

Economy: **D**. Spending too much money is not left-wing, it is stupid. Borrowing a dollar and spending it now does not create wealth or jobs or income. Killing the school choice program for lower-income children in Washington, D.C., was simply mean. His kids can wave at the plebes when they travel to prep school in style.

Foreign policy/national security: **Incomplete**. The Iraq occupation continues apace. Now we are going to do in Afghanistan what Bush couldn't do in Iraq. Bad ideas moved north and into the mountains don't become smarter. Obama's tone in dealing with Europe and the rest of the world is refreshing after eight years of Rome hectoring the provinces. Still, the apology tour was a tad much. Hairshirts are things you don yourself, not place on your predecessor.

Overall: Glad to see by his Cabinet picks he isn't all that concerned about rich people paying lots of taxes. Also, nice to live in a country whose government doesn't torture people.

RUSS FEINGOLD, U.S. senator from Wisconsin

When President Obama took his oath of office, it came with enormous challenges, including an economy in peril and wars in two countries. I supported the president's economic stimulus package because it was obvious that the crisis required bold action, and I give the president high marks for that. On foreign policy, however, it's more of a mixed bag. I am pleased the president has finally put a plan in place to end our involvement in the war in Iraq, although not as quickly or definitively as I would like. But I have serious concerns about the administration's Afghanistan plan, and how it will affect Pakistan.

One area where I have closely observed the Obama administration is its efforts to restore the rule of law, which was so damaged under the Bush administration. Today, I unveiled a report evaluating the administration's record so far. The president earned several **A's**, particularly in the area of detention and interrogation policy. The area where I am most concerned, and where the administration earned a **D** in my report, has to do with the administration invoking the state secrets privilege as the Bush administration did before it.

The Obama administration has made a clear break with the recklessness of the Bush administration, and the swift actions that President Obama took in his first days in office were a triumph for the rule of law. But as evidenced by the report, the job of fixing the damage done to our Constitution during the previous administration is far from finished and must continue to be a priority.

KIERAN SUCKLING, executive director of the Center for Biological Diversity

Foreign policy/national security: **A-**. Obama has made great strides in restoring America's credibility as respectful, coalition-oriented member of the international community. Reengaging on international solutions to global warming is a big step forward, but his commitment to withdrawal from Iraq and rescinding Bush policies on surveillance and enemy combatants has been poorly messaged and inconsistently executed.

Economy: **B**. Allocating significant portions of the stimulus package to development of clean, low-carbon energy technologies and infrastructure development show a strong commitment to keep a forward-looking agenda rather than falling back to quick fixes. Playing hardball with Detroit is similarly forward-looking. He has stumbled though, in presenting a confident, unified message.

Environment: **C**. Obama's appointments have been all over the map, which will make the development of a consistent environmental stand very difficult. Decisions to strike Utah oil leases, slow oil shale permitting, and rescind Bush Endangered Species Act regulations are positive, but issuing corporate fuel efficiency standards below those proposed by Bush, failing (so far) to rescind Bush policies preventing the protection of polar bears from global warming, stripping federal protection for wolves, and reversing himself on mountain top removal and guns in national parks are disappointing.

JONATHAN ALTER, Newsweek editor and columnist, author of "[The Defining Moment: FDR's Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope](#)"

Economy: **A-**

Foreign policy/national security: **A-**

Overall: **A-**

Obama deserves an A- in all three areas, but the grade should come with an asterisk denoting "incomplete for the term." On the economy, Obama has moved quickly to invest more than \$2 trillion into the country, through a stimulus package that required congressional approval (no easy thing) and aggressive leadership from the Treasury Department that could be done unilaterally. Such investment was essential to keep a deep recession from becoming a depression. He acted where other presidents might have muddled through.

More specifically, he has matched his emphasis on short-term problems like foreclosures and the ailing auto industry with a focus on longer-term economic challenges like controlling the cost of healthcare and transitioning to a green economy. Fiscal discipline is important but a lesser priority amid a recession, as he recognizes. He could have done more for small business and likely will. We don't know yet if the specifics of the bank rescue plan will work. Probably not.

On foreign policy, Obama effectively began job one, which is to restore America's prestige in the world. This is essential, because all of the major global problems nowadays require cooperation. Before getting it, Obama needed to "reset" relations, which he has now done. He was also lucky that

the one crisis of his first 100 days — piracy — was resolved successfully. He shouldn't have bowed to the king of Saudi Arabia, but he has otherwise performed flawlessly on the international stage.

The reason he doesn't get the full A is that in both areas we don't know yet how things will turn out. But so far he has developed the vision and the communications and management skills required for top-flight presidential leadership.

MICHAEL LIND, Whitehead senior fellow at the New America Foundation

Economy: **B**

Foreign policy/national security: **A**

In his first 100 days, Barack Obama has been a transitional president, not a transformational president. The transition from the failed policies of the conservative era to a new, yet-to-be-defined progressive era has been most rapid in the area of foreign policy, where the president deserves an A for drawing down U.S. forces in Iraq to focus on Afghanistan, changing America's tone toward Iran, calling for nuclear disarmament and allowing the public to learn some of the details of the Bush administration's un-American torture policy. His timely stimulus program, which funded promising ideas from evidence-based medicine to Build America bonds, compensates for his administration's too-timid approach toward the Wall Street mess and wins his economic policies a B.

Most important of all, President Obama not only has maintained his personal popularity but also has helped to rehabilitate progressivism while marginalizing the increasingly eccentric Republican minority. At this stage in their presidencies, Abraham Lincoln was still a Henry Clay Whig and Franklin Roosevelt a Woodrow Wilson progressive. Obama is still a Clinton neoliberal, but over time the pressure of events may make him a transformational Obama progressive.

JOHN JUDIS, senior editor at the New Republic

Overall: **A-**. My one great misgiving about Barack Obama's presidency does not have to do with him but with the circumstances in which he finds myself. The current downturn is the worst since the Great Depression and is going to require a delicate balancing act at home (where even loyal Democrats are going to wince at the amount of money the government will eventually have to spend) and abroad (where imbalances threaten the dollar and interest rates at which we borrow the money to spend).

I don't have any brilliant alternatives to Obama's policies in Iraq and Afghanistan, but I fear Iraq will blow up after we leave and that we'll never be able to leave Afghanistan on terms we are happy with. So my question after 100 days is not whether Obama is doing a good job, but whether any mortal president could extricate us from the mess we are in. He has had a sure hand (except maybe on banking), and has pointed us in the right direction. You can't ask any more, but it may not be enough.

THOMAS SCHALLER, author and associate professor of political science at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Economy: **A-**

Foreign Policy/National Security: **B-**

Overall: **A**

Not since FDR have we seen anything in terms of an expansion in the size and roles of the U.S. government — and the (re-)regulatory side to prevent future economic calamities is yet to come. Though the stimulus could backfire on Obama by being big enough to hamstring the Treasury yet too small to solve our economic woes, and despite the fact that bailouts for or public ownership of companies like AIG and Citibank rightly worry populists from both the left and right, overall Obama would get a B+ for managing the damaged economy he inherited. Because he dared to wrap all the education, healthcare and environmental investments liberals have long wanted into the budget and label them, somewhat deceptively, as just another part of the credit, bailout and regulatory economic recovery program, well, let's bump him to an A- for sheer fiscal audacity.

On the foreign policy and war fronts, ramping down Iraq in favor of more troops in Afghanistan is not just the right thing to do, but fulfills a oft-repeated 2008 campaign pledge. And the Iraq visit was a nice gesture, though gestures were mostly what Obama brought back from the G-20 summit. Despite the refreshing humility and new attitude he demonstrated (and expected in return from allies) while in London, the slow-footing on Guantánamo and soft-pedaling on torture back home are markdowns. So, on the international side of the ledger he gets a B-.

As for party and electoral politics, and presidential optics generally, other than the Special Olympics bowling gaffe and his continued fantasies about the Bulls or White Sox winning anything this year, he gets a solid A for proving he's both capable of managing the White House and bolstering the DNC, which tripled its fundraising totals in the 2009 first quarter compared to the same period in 2005. (Plus, he correctly picked my beloved Tar Heels to win the NCAA tourney.)

ANGELA GLOVER BLACKWELL, author and chief executive officer of PolicyLink

Economy: **B+**

Foreign policy/national security: **A-**

Overall: **A-**

The \$787 billion stimulus package was an enormous step forward in strengthening the social safety net and building a foundation for real, sustainable economic growth in all our communities.

However, I would like to see a greater focus on communities that have been hit “first and worst” by this crisis — low-income communities and communities of color. By empowering mayors and community groups to take control of their own recovery — rather than centralizing power in the

hands of governors — the recovery could truly harness the ideas, talents and innovations of all our people.

These vulnerable communities must be considered in every recovery discussion. They have, for instance, suffered disproportionately from foreclosure, disinvestment and lack of access to banking services, yet they have been totally absent from the conversations about the trillions of dollars that have flowed to the banking industry. Attention must be paid.

Though I lead a domestic policy organization, I know our national security depends on Americans feeling they have a voice in their government and other nations feeling they are being seen and heard by a fair, engaged America. Barack Obama's commitment to listening and bringing all sides to the table has enhanced our security both here and abroad.

The Obama administration should be commended for their commitment to soliciting and pursuing smart, innovative, proven and equitable public policies. But there is still more he can do to help lead a equitable economic recovery. The White House seems ready to move this nation in a truly inclusive direction ... now what they need is the full support of Congress.

MARCY WHEELER, political blogger

Obama gets a **B** overall from me — but that's really just the average of A's and C's. In foreign policy, his A for engaging with the world and ending torture averages with a D for continued attempts to hide criminal behavior behind state secrets and the pabulum of "looking forward." So overall foreign policy and national security he gets a **B-**.

In domestic policy, his **A** for funding schools and light rail averages with a **C** for letting Wall Street flunkies continue to protect Wall Street in the bailout. So overall domestic policy he gets a **B**.

The brightest area overall is in environmental policy, where his Environmental Protection Agency and Department of the Interior have reversed the horrible policies of the Bush administration. Plus, Michelle started an organic garden!

My biggest concern is the way Obama has empowered conservative Democrats like Evan Bayh who now threaten to block or water down important legislative efforts of Obama's, like mortgage cramdown and a public health insurance option in healthcare.

DAN SAVAGE, sex columnist and editorial director of Seattle's the Stranger alternative weekly

Before parceling out my grades, Mr. President, a confession: I'm a deeply partisan Democrat. I found your efforts to make nice with the Republican minority — to get all bipartisan on their asses — absolutely infuriating. I wanted to scream when you visited Capitol Hill like a supplicant to beg the remnants of the GOP to support your economic stimulus package; and if you were going to bury the

hatchet with Joe Lieberman, Mr. President, I strongly felt you should've buried it in the back of Joe's head.

But... you was right, and I was wrong. Americans give you credit for reaching across the aisle; your popularity shot up. Which is why you're the preznet and I'm the sex-advice columnist. All of us bloggers and commenters and pundits have consistently misread or underestimated your political instincts. So maybe you should be issuing grades to all us and not the other way around.

That said:

On the economy I'd give you... **an extension**. We can't know right now if your economic policies are working; we won't know for a while. So it's a little soon to be grade your efforts to revive the economy. Personally, though, I'd like to see you nationalize the banks and get it over with. Also, I'd like free checking.

On foreign policy, an **A-**. Top marks for hugging Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, for reaching out to the Iranians, for bringing a touch of sanity to the Cuba mess, and for reminding the country what a world leader looks like at the G-20 summit. But you gets a big, fat minus for refusing to embrace reality and end the war on drugs. Wanna do something to end drug violence in Mexico?

Decriminalize pot possession, cultivation and sales. It's not a joke, Mr. President, and you of all people — an admitted past drug user — should be able to see that. (One arrest for possession in your youth and you wouldn't be sitting where you are now, your potential would've been squandered, and it would've been the country's great, if unknown, loss. But who knows how many other Barack Obamas there are out there right now sitting in prison or saddled with criminal records that prevent them from getting student loans?)

Finally, if I may, a grade on gay issues: **D-fucking-minus**. Great rhetoric during the campaign — if you'd gotten your tongue any further up Melissa Etheridge's butt during that gay debate you would've been French-kissing her — and while we had to endure the bigot preacher on inauguration day, and we alone among Democratic constituencies didn't get a shout-out, gay issues were prominently featured on the new White House Web site — and under "civil rights," not under "gay rights." Nice touch, very thoughtful, thank you for that. But your defense secretary has been walking back your promise to end Don't Ask, Don't Tell; you haven't moved to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act; the HIV travel ban is still in effect. Point these things out and your supporters scream that in the grand scheme of things gay issues are unimportant! Trivial distractions! Agreed: Gay issues are trivial distractions when compared to the economy, war, etc. But that could just as easily be an argument for moving on our issues. If gay issues are distractions, moving on them is quickest way to end the distraction once and for all. We can't be distracted by an issue that's been resolved, now can we? And if not now, when? Next year? Nope, midterms. 2011? Nope, that's the beginning of your reelection campaign, right?

PAUL MASLIN, Democratic pollster

Overall: **A-**. Americans elected Barack Obama as much for his cool as his promise of change, and so far he is delivering both quite nicely. The confidence the public is showing in him, the fact that the national mood, if not yet the economy, has ticked up substantially, and how unremarkable his historic ascendancy to the nation's highest office now seems are all testament to his leadership prowess.

Economy: **B**. And the reason to withhold a higher grade is that this assessment is more tentative than all attempts to grade the NFL draft — on both, we won't really know for another three or four years, will we? Obama has taken a couple of significant calculated risks — that he can expand his agenda beyond simply the economy and include a healthy set of policies from healthcare to energy; and that the banks do not yet need a major overhaul/takeover/RTC-like solution. The second may prove more dangerous than the first.

Foreign policy/national security: **B+** Joe Biden said they would test him, and on everything from the Taliban to a North Korean missile launch, Chavez's book to pirates in the Indian Ocean, the veep was right. All we can yet say is that he is filling the shoes of commander in chief quite nicely, and on his way to restoring the world's respect for America. The tougher tests loom ahead.

ROBERT REICH, professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley and secretary of labor during the Clinton administration

I give the 10-year budget plan an **A**. The budget is a remarkable vision of what America can and should become. It includes universal health insurance and environmental protections against climate change. It also features some redistribution from rich to poor and lower-middle, which seems appropriate given that the income gap is wider than it's been since the 1920s. The budget would merit an A+ if its economic projections weren't far too rosy. Still, a fine job.

I give the stimulus package a solid **B**. It's good as far as it goes. But it doesn't go nearly far enough. To be sure, \$787 billion over two years is a lot of stimulus. But the U.S. economy is operating at about a trillion and a half dollars below its capacity this year alone. And considering that the states are cutting services and increasing taxes to the tune of \$350 billion over this year and next, the shortfall is even greater.

I give the bank bailouts an **F**, at least so far. The bailouts are failing. So far American taxpayers have shoveled out almost \$600 billion. Yet the banks are lending less money than they did five months ago. Bank executives are still taking home princely sums, their toxic assets and nonperforming loans are growing, and the banks are still cooking their books. And now the Treasury is talking about converting taxpayer dollars into bank equity, which exposes taxpayers to even greater losses. This is a provisional grade, though. The administration can improve it if it adopts more sensible policies for the banks in the future.

MICHAEL POLLAN, author of "In Defense of Food" and "The Omnivore's Dilemma"

That there is anything to report about food and farming in the first 100 days is striking in itself, considering how many pressing issues Obama has on his plate. But the president and, perhaps even more, the first lady have said and done some very encouraging things in this area, though there has been one notable misstep.

Tom Vilsack has sounded a welcome new note at the Department of Agriculture, where he has appointed a proven reformer — Kathleen Merrigan — as his deputy, and emphasized his commitment to sustainability, local food systems (including urban agriculture); putting nutrition at the heart of the department's nutrition programs (not as obvious as it might sound), and enlisting farmers in the fight against climate change. He has been meeting with the kinds of activists and farmers who in past administrations stood on the steps of the USDA holding protest signs.

The misstep was a half-hearted effort to trim crop subsidies, by limiting direct payments to farmers grossing more than \$500,000 a year and redirecting those funds to childhood nutrition programs. This was framed as a contest between “rich farmers” and “hungry children.” If so, the hungry children promptly lost. The unfortunate framing united *all* farmers against reform, especially since even some of the smallest commodity farmers gross a half million a year — this is capital-intensive agriculture after all. The plan was quietly dropped after the old guard on the House and Senate agriculture committees dismissed it as a non-starter. Obama will have to develop much smarter proposals to reform subsidies, ones that divide the farm bloc rather than unify it.

Perhaps the most encouraging action so far has come from the East Wing, where Michelle Obama has been speaking out about the importance of real, fresh food, home cooking and gardening. By planting an organic garden on the White House lawn, she launched a thousand victory gardens (vegetables seed is suddenly in short supply), gave conniptions to the pesticide industry (which wrote urging her to use some of their “crop protection products” whether she needed them or not), and at a stroke raised the profile and prestige of real food in America.

RICH GALEN, former press secretary to Dan Quayle and Newt Gingrich

The Economy: **B.** If anyone knew what to do about the economy, we'd be doing it. I suspect the “keep throwing things against the wall to see what sticks” approach is the best anyone's got. The reason this is not a higher grade is because of the non-economic-stimulus packages he and his allies in the Congress keep throwing into the mix.

Foreign affairs/national security: **C- and sinking.** Using national security and foreign policy as a domestic political lever, Obama is making the same mistake as the Bushies. The recent flap over the torture memos will have a much more damaging effect on Nancy Pelosi than on George W. He came away empty handed from our NATO allies on Afghanistan. The North Koreans lit off their missile while everyone was hugging and mugging for the cameras; Hugo Chavez is still making deals with

Iran, Russia and China; and now the swine flu. The flu isn't Obama's responsibility, but that's the kind of thing which piles up when things aren't going well.

General presidency: **B**. He's still on his honeymoon — George W. had about the same numbers at this stage in his first year — so good news is good news. Check back with me in the fall!

MARKOS MOULITSAS, blogger and founder of DailyKos

Economy: **B**

Foreign policy/national security: **A-**

Overall: **A-**

Obama has given us an overtly progressive presidency, of the sort progressives mostly hoped for and conservatives feared (hence their epic meltdown and silly talk of “secession” and whatnot). What's more, the administration is showing the capacity for quick learning — such as abandoning the hopeless and destructive quest for “bipartisanship” after Republicans voted en masse against both his stimulus and budget bills. The administration now acts like it won the stunning mandate that it did, and Republicans are being treated like the mostly powerless fringe Southern regional party it has become.

Where the administration has run into most problems, however, is in holding those responsible for today's problem accountable. Whether it's coddling the CEO and executives who engineered our current economic woes, or his desire to give a pass to Bush administration officials who made America a torturing nation in the futile hope of finding evidence — real or otherwise — to justify their invasion of Iraq.

But ultimately, one has to look no further than current opinion polling to see that Obama's first 100 days have been a success. People don't just love him (outside that Southern GOP fringe), but the nation's right-track, wrong-track numbers are at levels unseen since the first couple of years of the Bush administration. Given the GOP's impotence, there's little reason for Obama to slow down.

ROBERT BOROSAGE, president of the Institute for America's Future

Is the grading on a curve? If so, then surely Barack Obama's first 100 days receive an **A-** (with A reserved for FDR). Compared to the first days of Reagan, Daddy Bush, Clinton and Junior, Obama is exemplary. A straight scale is tougher because so much is incomplete. On the economy, the bold if inadequate recovery plan and the transformational budget were praiseworthy; the bank bailout avoids failure only because of effort. **B** on average. On foreign policy, a new direction, withdrawal from Iraq, embrace of allies, gestures on Cuba and the gag rule, engagement in Middle East and Iran, sense about global recovery, and the reset with Russia and nuclear disarmament all to the good. The commitment to Afghanistan most fraught. Again the latter brings down the average.

Elegant and eloquent, composed and intelligent, Obama scores off the top for presidential presence. He makes us proud of ourselves. He represents us with dignity and grace. In comparison with other leaders or congressional Republicans, he is the adult in the room. On these vital leadership qualities, he is the top of the class.

NOAM SCHEIBER, senior editor at the New Republic

I have quibbles with certain details of the stimulus package — for example, I consider the real price tag to be closer to \$700 billion rather than the \$787 billion headline number, since alternative minimum tax relief ate up about \$70 billion but would have happened even if there were no stimulus bill. Having said that, the stimulus was a major legislative achievement; there's little doubt in my mind we'd be much worse off without it. On top of which, the White House managed to spend heavily on investments that will pay long-term dividends — high-speed rail, broadband access, research on the effectiveness of medical treatments — so we're not just burying money and asking people to dig it up. And speaking of healthcare, I'm very, very encouraged that the administration and congressional Dems are willing to use reconciliation (i.e., the budget measure allows passage with only 51 votes) to win on healthcare if it comes to that.

On the banks, I was initially concerned about the Geithner plan to purchase toxic assets by way of a partnership with private investors, mostly because I thought seizing the most troubled banks — the Citigroups and Bank of Americas — would be quicker, less painful, and cheaper in the long run. But, as time has gone on, I've been persuaded that the logistical and political complications of nationalization are massive. The AIG bonus fiasco convinced me Congress would be forced (by political circumstances) to second-guess every major decision a nationalized bank made, which is a terrible way to run a business. I now think the Geithner plan was worth trying even if it doesn't end up solving the problem, if for no other reason than to demonstrate that we've exhausted the alternatives.

I'm pleased with the early efforts to engage Iran, thought Obama acquitted himself nicely at the G-20 summit and demonstrated that his global popularity is a bona fide foreign policy tool. I think beefing up our presence in Afghanistan is worth a shot, but I'm also encouraged by Obama's pronouncement that it won't be "an open-ended commitment." (We'll have to see how scrupulously he sticks to that — walking away from sunk costs is much easier said than done.) Still, with rising Sunni-Shia tension in Iraq, and the jihadis getting closer to Islamabad every day, one doesn't sleep too easy. And it's tough to point to any real tangible successes so far, unreasonable as that expectation is.

GREGORY SMITH, New York City doorman, Obama supporter

Overall: **A-**. Let me hasten to say I'm no expert, not even close. However, having fully immersed myself over the past 21 months and to a large extent my whole family in the singular pursuit of electing Sen. Obama our president, I must admit I feel a bit flattered that you are soliciting my opinion on President Obama's first 100 days. I'll jump to the chase. In my humble opinion, President

Obama has not only expertly addressed the many concerns all Americans have, he has shown the wisdom these problems require to solve. But more importantly, he has kept his word. On the campaign trail he talked about our need to be more fiscally responsible. He was right then, and his approach to remedying the economy will take time as this colossal mess was not his making and he/we will certainly need more than 100 days to fix it, but I like his reasonable approach and for that I give him an **A**.

Foreign policy/national security: An **A**. I simply feel safer, here and abroad!! With his first trip to Europe and more recently his trip to the Americas. What stood out for me was, the undeniable fact that the world is indeed looking to America for leadership, and they see him as able and a capable leader. Not as one bulling orders, but rather, listening to the concerns of all. If we are to get ourselves out of this mess we're presently in, and I'm certain we will, it will require help from both friends and adversaries, who now appear to recognize that we're all in this together. President Obama on the campaign trail said it best, "America is the last best hope for us all." If she fails, we all fail.

GLORIA FELDT, women's rights activist and author

Economy: Content: **C**, Conduct: **A**

Foreign policy/national security: Content: **A**, Conduct: **A**

Overall: Content: **B**, Conduct **A**

Remember in elementary school we got grades for both content and conduct? Obama's first 100 days need a similar grading system: what he substantively accomplished and the way he accomplished it.

He hasn't turned things around, but he's made us feel lots better. Geithner and Summers were uninspired appointments. His stimulus mimics FDR's roads and bridges approach, which doesn't fit today's information (and less gendered) economy. Sadly, he's missing his moment to lower healthcare costs 25 percent by failing to bite the single-payer, everybody-in-the-pool bullet.

The world sighs with relief that the U.S. has a culturally competent president who can string a cogent sentence together and chooses handshakes over Cheney-esque snarling. Plus, Hillary Clinton in the bargain. Woot!

Extra credit: Reversing the global gag rule; liberating stem cell science from ideology, Ledbetter Fair Pay Act; Council on Women and Girls, multitasking, smiling.

Demerit: Failing to push the Prevention First Act when 90 percent of Americans support access to birth control.

JOSEPH ROMM, senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, where he oversees ClimateProgress.org.

Overall: **A+**. Future historians will inevitably judge all 21st-century presidents as failures if they don't spare the nation the worst impacts of global warming and peak oil.

In that sense, what team Obama has accomplished in its first 100 days is nothing less than an unprecedented reversal of decades of unsustainable national policy forced down the throat of the American public by conservatives:

Obama jump-started the transition to a green economy with the stimulus — the biggest clean energy funding in U.S. history. He achieved huge increases for energy efficiency, renewable energy, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, batteries, mass transit and high-speed rail.

The Obama EPA declared carbon pollution a serious danger to Americans' health and welfare, requiring regulation. This regulatory breakthrough opens the door to blocking most new dirty coal plants and boosting the fuel efficiency of new vehicles.

Obama has begun the process of pushing comprehensive energy legislation that will make global warming polluters pay and create millions of sustainable green jobs.

Obama has a serious chance to remake the country through his positive vision. If he achieves even half of what he has set out to, he will likely be remembered as “the green FDR.”

Vincent Rossmeier is an editorial assistant at Salon.

Mark Schone is Salon's executive news editor.

Gabriel Winant is a graduate student in American history at Yale.

Copyright © 2011 Salon.com. All rights reserved.