

# Obama vs. Bush

America is a fascinating country, and if you don't believe me, consider this: In the space of just ten years, we have elected two men to the presidency who could not be more opposite. That fact was clarified for me last week when I spent some time with George W. Bush.

After disappearing for almost two years, Mr. Bush is back in the public arena with a book about his decision-making during the eight years he spent in the Oval Office. But the former president is not interested in commenting on Barack Obama, nor does he want to re-involve himself in the political process. He simply wants to sell some books and go back to the golf course. In a televised interview, he told me that he would most likely not campaign for Republicans in 2012 and will only offer private advice if it is sought.

Also, the former president feels no obligation to comment on his policy decisions (or lack thereof) that continue to this day—things like Iraq, Afghanistan and the brutal economy. Simply put, George W. Bush did his time and believes he has no further obligation to the public.

This was my fourth televised conversation with President Bush, and it is clear to me that he is a reactive guy, not a proactive person. His major decisions were all made after something happened. They were not foisted upon the country. The one exception is Social Security reform. He tried to change the system and got hammered. Aside from that, Mr. Bush basically watched events dictate which way his presidency turned.

Contrast that to Barack Obama's administration, and you have two different galaxies. President Obama is proactive to the max, seeing his mandate as reshaping the nation into a more just society. Mr. Obama has a huge agenda and is not shy about

blaming the country's problems on his predecessor. It is hard to imagine President Obama going quietly into the night once his tenure is over. He sees himself as a reformer, a person who must fight for change he can believe in. I don't think that will stop when he returns to private life.

President Bush did not seek much social change because he believes it is not needed. He's a traditionalist, a man who thinks the country is noble and doesn't require an extensive overhaul. President Obama is the exact opposite, believing that United States policy is flawed both at home and abroad and a new set of rules must be instituted. Both men are sincere, but they could not be more opposed in their points-of-view.

But we the people elected both of them. What does that say about us? Well, it says we are open to suggestions and are willing to give different philosophies a chance. We remain, however, a performance-driven society. The folks want results from our elected leaders.

Both presidents have felt the sting of those expectations. That may be the only thing they have in common.