

Polis – Does Iowa Matter?

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2008/01/04/does-iowa-matter/

2008-1-4

Why is the American election (which doesn't happen for 11 months) further up the bulletins than the Kenyan election which has just happened, and the Pakistan election which is about to? My former colleague, Channel 4 News Chief Correspondent Alex Thomson, has been rehearsing this argument in the programme's daily presenter [email](#) about why US primary elections are dull and irrelevant:

Well, we've a bit of a debate (well fierce row in fact) on here between those who say we should kick off tonight on Iowa and those (me) who say it's over-covered and under-significant, especially compared with NPower here hiking their electricity price by 17 per cent... So as things stand it's more blue skies and white snow as we assimilate the results in Iowa, even though I note Hilary Clinton's already out on the stump in New Hampshire where much of the action has now already decamped to Iowa already looks like what it is: a start in a pretty setting, but no more than that. Hold tight, you're in for 10 months of this...

I am sure Alex's colleague [Jon Snow](#), the former ITN Washington Correspondent and inveterate holidayer in Cape Cod, will disagree with Alex (who is presenting the show from London while Jon braves the snowy mid-West).

I know what Alex means. There is a long way to go in the US race. They haven't even chosen the candidates yet. It is quite possible that early leaders Obama and Huckabee will fall behind the better-funded alternatives pretty soon. Are we really going to cover every step of someone else's election just because the pictures are plentiful and they speak our language? Should we not be paying more attention to meltdown in East Africa and possible anarchy in the nuclear Muslim state of Pakistan?

I confess I am a US politics nut. I edited Channel 4 News' coverage from Washington last time around. That was exciting enough with the Democrats convinced that Kerry had unseated George W Bush until the horrible truth dawned. This time the prospect of a black/female/creationist/Mormon winner is fascinating and the race is genuinely open. And surely after the Iraq War and American policy on Global Warming there is no-one who will say that the occupancy of the White House is irrelevant to the rest of the world?

In the end it is not one or the other. You can't really cover Kenya or Pakistan *without* covering American politics. The real journalistic trick is to remind us all how they are all related.

- Copyright © 2014 London School of Economics and Political Science