Six Top Attributes: Election 2008 by Richard Quan

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GIVEN THE CURRENT STATE of our economy and our relationship with the world, we need a President with not only one or two but with as many of the following six attributes as possible: vision, judgment, experience, charisma, intellect, and good health.

I recently turned on my TV and the first thing I heard was a young American had hung himself with a tie strapped around his neck. A few hours after I heard the news I went to McDonalds to grab a burger. While I stood in line a man in front of me, a blue-collar American twice the young man's age, complained to a stranger to his left that the wage he will earn for that day will go directly to pay for the gas that will take him to work the next day. "I can't do this anymore," he said repeatedly. "I might as well sit home and collect an unemployment check." Not only has the price of gas skyrocketed while factories and businesses are shutting down and corporations filing for bankruptcy, there isn't enough gas to go around.

For nearly a week, almost all gas stations in town were empty. Those with supply had lines that stretched as far as the eyes could see. In a heated afternoon when patience was low, tempers flared. From my car window, I witnessed people shouting at each other as my car crawled at snail's pace toward the gas pump while a station employee stood by the edge of the road flagging another car to stop. The police arrived shortly thereafter. This is the state of our economy. In less than a decade we have gone from a nation with surplus to a nation with over a trillion-dollar deficit, including the Wall Street bailout plan. The state of our economy and our relationship with the world requires a political candidate with very specific characteristics to be the leader of this new but not so free world, a world with new alliances formed and new stresses imposed.

First, a candidate must have a clear vision. He or she must have the ability to look forward and backward, and reach a decision that a common man would not have reached. Great leaders have great vision and extraordinary men have extraordinary vision. Who has the greater vision, McCain or Obama? We will see.

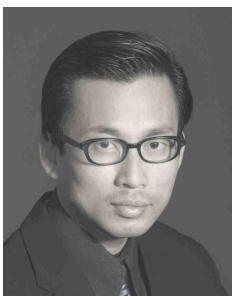
Second, the candidate must have exceptional judgment. Wisdom and judgment are Siamese twins. Those who are wise often make good judgments and those who make bad judgments are often unwise. Wisdom may come with age but an elderly man can also be a fool. Naiveté and youth are not too far apart, but a young man can be quite wise. Has McCain's initial support for the Iraq war overshadowed his support for the surge, or has Obama's reluctance to support the surge overshadowed his initial instinct of not going to war? The damage has already been done and the answer is clear. All of the king's men cannot put Humpy Dumpy back together again.

Third, the candidate must have experience. A chess grandmaster can destroy his opponent in one move and a seasoned politician can outmaneuver his opponent with a single whisper. But to get to that one move or unique whisper he or she must already have experienced a thousand moves or heard a thousand whispers. McCain's political experience may help him navigate through a tank of sharks, but he faces an equally impressive opposing force, Obama's colorful life experience. Obama's multicultural upbringing enables him to see beyond the horizon that most Americans are accustomed to seeing. Certainly, one cannot dwell in a cave and know what the world holds.

Fourth, the candidate must have charisma. The German sociologist Max Weber noted that charismatic leaders arise in times of psychic, physical, economic, ethical, religious, or political distress. Hitler and Churchill, two individuals with opposing political ambitions, were examples. Is 2008 the time for Obama, undoubtedly a charismatic individual who has inspired thousands in America and thousands more across the world? If chosen, can he inspire the leaders of this nation and the leaders of the world to push for better change?

Fifth, the candidate must have extraordinary intellect. The brain is what distinguishes man from ape. A man can retain information, process it, analyze it, and make innovative use of it. Whether from standardized test scores or which school a person attends, our society has created workable templates to measure human intelligence.

Finally, the candidate must have good health. An old man may be able to change the world with his wisdom, but a young man can carry the weight of the world on his shoulder with his strength. We all grow old and will one day die. With age come problems. Our reflexes slow down, our vision blurs, our heartbeat slows, our body weakens, and our mind deteriorates. Given the flurries of activities bombarding a President's life while he or she is in office, having good health, a sharp mind, and quick reflexes are critical factors that will enable him or her to do his or her job at maximum capacity.



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