

Hello Everyone,

This is another in my occasional series on the Obama Campaign.

Here are excerpts from two recent *New York Times Magazine* and *Atlantic Monthly* articles that capture the essence of Barack Obama as well as any I have seen. They offer insights into why Barack is the only presidential candidate I have worked for over the last 40 years.

Each article talks about the dramatically different “face” Barack brings to America’s political leadership.

(The complete articles are attached – I strongly urge you to read them. I’ve also included the attachment from the “National Journal” which I failed to include in my last Obamagram. It shows how John Kerry was being completely written off just before the 2004 Iowa caucuses – which he then won.)

James Traub wrote in the *New York Times Magazine* on November 4:

“If I am the face of American foreign policy and American power,” Barack Obama mused not long ago, “(and people in other countries see that) we have a president in the White House who still has a grandmother living in a hut on the shores of Lake Victoria and has a sister who’s half-Indonesian, married to a Chinese-Canadian, then they’re going to think that I may have a better sense of what’s going on in (their) lives and in (their) country. And they’d be right.”

The great project of the foreign-policy world in the last few years has been to think through a “post-post-9/11 strategy,” in the words of the Princeton Project on National Security, a study that brought together many of the foreign-policy thinkers of both parties. Such a strategy, the experts concluded, must, like “a Swiss Army knife,” offer different tools for different situations...must pay close attention to “how others may perceive us differently than we perceive ourselves, no matter how good our intentions;” must recognize that other nations may legitimately care more about their neighbors or their access to resources than about terrorism; and must be “grounded in hope, not fear.” A post-post-9/11 strategy must harness the forces of globalization while honestly addressing the growing “perception of unfairness” around the world; must actively promote, not just democracy, but “a world of liberty under law”...In mainstream foreign-policy circles, Barack Obama is seen as the true bearer of this vision. “There are maybe 200 people on the Democratic side who think about foreign policy for a living,” as one such figure, himself unaffiliated with a campaign, estimates. “The vast majority have thrown in their lot with Obama.”

Andrew Sullivan writes in the current *Atlantic Monthly*:

...the fundamental point of (Obama's) candidacy is that it is happening now. In politics, timing matters. And the most persuasive case for Obama has less to do with him than with the moment he is meeting. The moment has been a long time coming, and it is the result of a confluence of events, from one traumatizing war in Southeast Asia to another in the most fractious country in the Middle East. The legacy is a cultural climate that stultifies our politics and corrupts our discourse. Obama's candidacy in this sense is a potentially transformational one. Unlike any of the other candidates, he could take America—finally—past the debilitating, self-perpetuating family quarrel of the Baby Boom generation that has long engulfed all of us.

A generational divide...separates Clinton and Obama with respect to domestic politics. Clinton grew up saturated in the conflict that still defines American politics.

Obama did not politically come of age during the Vietnam era, and he is simply less afraid of the right wing than Clinton is...

A Giuliani-Clinton matchup, favored by the media elite, is a classic intragenerational struggle—with two deeply divisive and ruthless personalities ready to go to the brink.

Of the viable national candidates, only Obama and possibly McCain have the potential to bridge the widening partisan gulf.

It isn't about (Obama's) policies as such; it is about his person.

What does he offer? First and foremost: his face. Think of it as the most effective potential re-branding of the United States since Reagan.

Consider this hypothetical. It's November 2008. A young Pakistani Muslim is watching television and sees that this man—Barack Hussein Obama—is the new face of America. In one simple image, America's soft power has been ratcheted up not a notch, but a logarithm. A brown-skinned man whose father was an African, who grew up in Indonesia and Hawaii, who attended a majority-Muslim school as a boy, is now the alleged enemy. If you wanted the crudest but most effective weapon against the demonization of America that fuels Islamist ideology, Obama's face gets close. It proves them wrong about what America is in ways no words can.

The other obvious advantage that Obama has in facing the world and our enemies is his record on the Iraq War.

It is worth recalling the key passages of the speech Obama gave in Chicago on October 2, 2002, five months before the war: "I don't oppose all wars. What I am opposed to is a dumb war. What I am opposed to is a rash war...I know that even a successful war against Iraq will require a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences."

The man who opposed the war for the right reasons is for that reason the potential president with the most flexibility in dealing with it. Clinton is hemmed in by her past and her generation.

If you believe that America's current crisis is not a deep one...Clinton will do. But if you sense, as I do, that greater danger lies ahead, and that our divisions and recent history have combined to make the American polity and constitutional order increasingly vulnerable, then the calculus of risk changes. At a time when America's estrangement from the world risks tipping into dangerous imbalance, when a country at war with lethal enemies is also increasingly at war with itself, when humankind's spiritual yearnings veer between an excess of certainty and an inability to believe anything at all, and when sectarian and racial divides seem as intractable as ever, a man who is a bridge between these worlds may be indispensable.

We may in fact have finally found that bridge to the 21st century that Bill Clinton told us about. Its name is Obama.

"Please pass it on."

Chuck