

In Yemen, Einstein tops 'Booosh'

George Bush and rival John Kerry could both have picked up a few good tips from the wild-haired genius.

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So, after one of the most divisive of U.S. elections in memory, George W. Booosh, as he's called here, is back for four more years. Yawn.

Plenty of folks needed a Valium after a campaign that shook them with anger and fear. Not here. Middle Easterners were placid. Seems nobody believed John Kerry would offer anything better for Iraq and Palestine.

A cab driver shrugged and asked me limply, "Booosh? Kerry?" Media agreed. One Syrian paper said they had "the same passion for Israel." A Lebanese paper noted "no difference" between the two. A Saudi paper based in London said Arab governments simply "waited for their next master."

And my Yemeni landlord? "Booosh is bad for the whole world because he's crazy." Regardless, he prefers him over Kerry.

Some Yemen Times editor wrote the headline, Who Wins? Who Cares? Then in a pre-election poll, the Times threw in surprise candidate Albert Einstein. Incredibly, hundreds of Arab and expatriate readers voted for him. Yes, Einstein got 34 per cent of votes, slightly less than Kerry but more than Bush.

Not bad for this demographic. Einstein is not only dead, but Jewish; he was once even courted to run for Israel's government. Sure, some Times respondents used him as a protest vote. But to win in 2008, U.S. Democrats could still learn from all this. Bush may be no Einstein, but he did get some things right. For the challengers, here are 10 tips for next time.

10. Have great hair. No joke. Bald is better than a poofy or matted look. This rule will help Hillary Clinton, but the candidate looking like they've stuck their finger in an electric socket, like Einstein, will be loved most.

9. Don't conform. Einstein, who liked to write poetry, knew that great ideas rarely come through the establishment.

8. Like Einstein, say something different. Kerry could have stuck to his early, anti-Iraq-war guns. The war has already cost America \$300 billion, three times its initial projection. No wonder Bin Laden and his hoods want to bankrupt the United States, \$7 trillion in debt. Now think of innocent civilians killed. And U.S. troops? If not dead, imagine life in a wheelchair, never knowing who your enemy really was.

7. Don't be afraid to share your spirituality. Some 18 million conservative Christians (a huge voting block that never questions anything Israel may do) gave Bush the White House because of his stance on domestic, moral issues. Einstein also brought God into his work. Like Newton and Galileo, he looked for the universe's secrets as if they're precious gems hidden by a Creator of beauty and order. Among his lasting quotes? "God doesn't play dice."

6. Tell the truth. Bush lied about Iraq. Americans cut him slack because Kerry was less believable. But have imagination. Every day in my office, I see an Einstein poster with his quote, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." Considering America needs to be a perpetual problem-solver, the Oval Office should have it.

5. Show humility. This is tricky because the Commander-in-Chief needs to exude unflinching confidence. But humility brings trust. Pacifist and humanitarian Einstein once said any peaceful co-operation among people is based on mutual trust first, societal institutions second. Kerry, who appeared to enjoy the sound of his own voice, didn't beat Bush on the humility-trust barometer.

4. Be warm. Bush beat Kerry here. The gentle, grandfatherly Einstein beats both.

3. Be simple. Bush (don't laugh) easily beat Kerry here. And Einstein made discoveries like nobody because he was able to see complex phenomena through the eyes of a child.

2. Have a sense of humour. Hey, Einstein chose that wild hairstyle. It was the outgrowth, maybe, of being Father of The Bomb. He once said, "If only I would have known, I would have been a watchmaker."

1. Understand the human heart. Einstein said the discovery of atomic power changed everything but our way of thinking. As it relates to this region, people here see nothing but suffering in Palestine and Iraq. They see Washington ignoring the first and plundering the second. It's a time bomb. It's ticking. And unless it's diffused, it can lead to the type of big bang that could kill us all.

Yemen Times
Nov. 22, '04