

The Epic Ambition of Hillary and the Coming of a Second "Clinton Era"

Hugh Hewitt



New York Nashville Boston

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PART IV

WHAT YOUR FRIENDS, OPPONENTS AND ENEMIES ARE SAYING ABOUT YOU

You might be inclined to think it is just I, the GOP partisan and talk show host, who holds the concerns I have tried to help you address via this book. I assure you, it isn't.

Many of your advisors will say they have "talked" with so-and-so who said thus-and-such, but I began talking to "opinion influencers" about your campaign way back in October of 2013, certain even then that you were going to run, and eager to use my platform to put as many small pebbles in your path as I could. I thought of a plan, and executed it, wherein I would ask key Beltway elites—and a couple of other folks—about you and your campaign, and especially about the themes of this book: your glass jaw, your age and obvious weariness, your evident fatigue, Bill, and especially your dismal record at State and all your other failures.

I began with one of your inner circle's favorite reporters, Maggie Haberman (then of *Politico*, now of *The New York Times*), on October 28, 2013, and kept at it, finishing up on President's Day, February 15, 2015, with a conversation with Karl Rove exclusively devoted to you, eventually doing interviews about these themes with operatives and MSMers, especially those among the latter group whose publications and platforms will certainly move to try and put Humpty Dumpty together again a fifth time—Hillarycare, Monica, 2008 and Benghazi being the first four—should you smash up early in the campaign.

Among my guests on the "Hillary" beat were **TheVox.com**'s Jon Allen and *The Hill*'s Amie Parnes (your biographers in *HRC*), *The Daily Beast's* Jonathan Alter, Haberman, *The New York Times*' Nicholas Kristof

and Mark Leibovich, *The New Yorker*'s Ryan Lizza, *The Washington Post*'s Dana Milbank, MSNBC's Joy-Ann Reid and NBC's *Meet the Press* host Chuck Todd. These are ten MSM "voices" very representative of what the Manhattan-Beltway media elite are collectively thinking and murmuring about you.

Of course, I posed similar questions to folks like Senator Marco Rubio who, as I wrote in the main part of the book, would be your toughest opponent other than Romney, and even a "Bill question" for former President George W. Bush. Asking potential opponents about you allowed me to see if the critique I knew would be coming your way had begun to form among the right's standard bearers.

Three revolutionary political operatives—Rove, David Axelrod and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich also stepped up to the plate for their swings against your candidacy. I begin these transcripts with them, because they have won big battles. They know winning, and of course they know losing as well, as do you.

My plan, hatched back in the fall of 2013, was to lay up acorns via interviews for this very book. I didn't want anyone to notice what I was about for fear that guests from the MSM would stop agreeing to come on the show and talk about you—not behind your back, really, but right in front of your face—though perhaps they counted on the left's general disdain for conservative media to cover their sins against you and yours.

Doggone it if then *Slate*'s and now *Bloomberg*'s Dave Weigel didn't notice right away what I was up to. (He is a sharp one, young Mr. Weigel, and attentive to everything being said everywhere, and no ally of my party, or obviously of yours either, though, of course, he must be a man of the left working for *Slate* for a bit, or either the deepest of MSM moles.)

Weigel picked up on what I was doing immediately, and in a column titled, "The Hillary Clinton Knockout Game," on December 10, 2013, Weigel referred to my Haberman interview of six weeks earlier and wrote, "I don't see evidence that many reporters saw this interview,

but Hewitt did beat the trend and shape the narrative."

"Damn," I thought, "Weigel is going to ruin this plan." Especially since he pointed out that I wouldn't politely skip over the fact that Haberman didn't have any answers for the hardest questions about you. "Hewitt wouldn't let go," Weigel wrote. (This is an indictment not of me but of most Beltway journalists, of course, who always "let go" when one of their lefty elected friends is on a particularly hot seat and facing an uncomfortable line of questioning.)

I didn't see any evidence that many reporters read Weigel's piece though they all ought to be reading everything that scamp writes as he and the "new breed" I wrote about earlier will be around for decades unless you take my advice. The MSMers thank goodness kept coming on the show throughout 2014, like the *Babes in Toyland* toy soldiers. (See, you got that reference to the 1961 Tommy Sands and Annette Funicello movie and most every other reader did not, another proof of just how many years have piled up since your freshman year in high school when that movie came out. Anyone born in 1947 and making their wonderstruck way through their first year in the hallways at Main East High School in Park Ridge would have loved that flick. But you cannot allow such trick questions and references to remind young voters of your actual age.)

So the MSMers kept coming, and I kept piling up the acorns, like Mark Leibovich's interview in November of last year in which we pointed everyone—again!—to your college era letters to Professor Peavoy. Mark of course had a book to sell, *Citizens of the Green Room*, so of course he was going to come on to flog his book and once on, I could turn the focus wherever I wanted, which eventually, in the middle of the conversation, was to you and those letters, which reveal so very much.

"I read but few lives of great men because biographies do not, as a rule, tell enough about the formative period of life," wrote Ulysses S. Grant. "What I want to know is what a man did as a boy."

How 19th century, when boys and girls had to grow up quick. In the

middle of the 20th century they began "to grow up" in the college years. Nowadays they "grow up" in their early-to-mid 20s, if by "growing up" we mean to put on the identity they will wear their entire lives unless tragedy, addiction or religious conversion changes them completely and roughly.

Those Peavoy letters show you as you made that choice, show you in a very bright light, becoming the ambitious, oh so ambitious Hillary Clinton we see now. Comfort yourself with a bit of Alexander Hamilton who wrote that the "love of fame" is "the ruling passion of the noblest minds." You can see in those letters that passion taking hold, and you were testing out themes on Professor Peavoy.

But how could he give all those letters—your letters!—to Mark Leibovich, whose scalpel is sharpest of all? Of course you know. You dropped him, didn't you? Put him away like an old coat long out of fashion. Gave him to the thrift store where all your old friends pre-Bill went. Not even one or two invites to a White House event, one mention of "my old friend, now a professor…"? Had you really forgotten you poured your soul out to him?

So he got his revenge, just as you will get yours on all these folks who talked and talked and talked about you when they thought you were done, done or worse, not paying attention.

And all of these things were said about you just on my own show! When the speakers knew that they were talking to a center-right audience, aware that their words would carry farther because they were spoken outside of the sealed dome of the Beltway.

They didn't care that they were trashing your record and your abilities. Careful in how they limned your failures and your political vulnerabilities, but certainly not rising to your defense. They couldn't be bothered to.

This is, collectively, a foreshadowing. In many of their eyes, your DC "sell-by" date had passed and they figured you for finished. Or they just could not come up with answers to the obvious questions about you and your candidacy. There is an old saying: "Forewarned is forearmed."

There is another old saying, this one Irish: "If everyone says you're drunk, you'd better sit down." Note the themes that emerge from all these conversations, and then consider sitting down. Consider getting out.

Because it is going to be brutal. Truth be told, you did fail at State, you are worn out and getting wearier and older by the day, there are abundant joys in being a grandmother and a revered, if somewhat dusty, elder statesman. (How often do we hear from Madeleine Albright after all? Out of the game is out of the game. Can you stand it? That's the problem, isn't it? Read When The Cheering Stopped: The Last Years of Woodrow Wilson by Gene Smith, but don't worry that the same silent days of the still-stroke impacted Wilson living out his days on S Street would be similar to your last decades. There are many more past times, many more joys. You just have to give up the need for power...)

Of course you won't sit down. There is the dynasty. There is the legacy. There is that "first of firsts," and the first woman in the Oval Office is actually going to seem far more remarkable after a century or two than the first African American because it had to be earned without an economic collapse wafting you up, and two wars weighing down your opponent. You will have to do what George H. W. Bush did, win a third term for a tired, talent-depleted party. Only you aren't following the Gipper. You are following the worst president in American history,

So you will go forward and try to start the new age, a second "Clinton Era," and if you go about it the right way, as advised above, you may pull it off. But read these interviews or snippets of interviews carefully. They are the best debate prep ever but also a window into the world of Manhattan-Beltway media elites in the post-modern era when the byline is the brand and the true believers of the left not credible enough to carry a campaign. The MSM are, God love them, vampires of a sort and they need people like you to feed on.

Unless, of course, you turn out to be a combination of Caesar Augustus and Abraham Van Helsing. A few will suspect the former, but only those who take this book seriously will anticipate the former.

If you get to 1600, I hope my assistance won't be as forgotten as

Professor Peavoy. I don't need much, just an exclusive sit-down or two early each year, a token display of your willingness to engage with the center-right even as you are laying out the plan and putting it in motion. No one will believe any of it until the first Supreme Court vacancy comes along and Justice Kirsten Gillibrand is replaced in the United States Senate by Chelsea. Then they will begin to wonder....

CHAPTER 28

Interviews about you with Three Political Svengalis: Karl Rove on February 16, 2015; David Axelrod on February 11, 2015; and Former Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Newt Gingrich on January 6, 2015

With Karl Rove:

HH: I want to begin, five days ago. I talked to David Axelrod, your counterpart, in many respects, as a person who successfully advised a candidate for and then the reelection of a president, about Hillary. And I wanted to ask you where you think the former Secretary of State stands vis-à-vis the possibility of her winning in 2016 as of today in early 2015.

KR: Look, I think it's very early. The early polls that are out there show her ahead. What's interesting to me is that rarely is she above 50% against Republican candidates. I think this is one of the things that is going to, this election is going to depend upon the quality of the candidates and the quality of their campaigns. And if you look at the arc of the last two years, if you're inside the Clinton campaign apparatus, you can't be happy. Her favorables, when she was leaving the office of Secretary of State, much higher than they were than they are today, her likability was much higher, she has had a bad year and a half, nearly two years since leaving the Secretary of State's office, and particularly since she launched her book last summer. I thought it was probably one of the most ill-timed and ill-prepared and ill-executed sort of strolls on to the national stage. "We were dead broke." You know, she takes apart a National Public Radio personality who attempts to give her a chance to talk her way out of her previous opposition to gay marriage. She goes out on the campaign trail and says it's businesses that don't create jobs. She does virtually no good for any Democratic candidate on the campaign trail, and then she ends just before Christmas by saying insofar as it's possible, we ought

to have "empathy for our adversaries." I mean, come on, she's getting worse, not better as a candidate.

HH: Do you think Elizabeth Warren could beat her if Elizabeth Warren got into the race?

KR: I think she might. She would certainly give her a scare. Remember, this contest opens up in some places that are not particularly friendly to Hillary Clinton. She came in third, as you may recall, in Iowa eight years ago. And so you know, I think this, Elizabeth Warren's hard left prescriptions on the economy sing to the heart of Democratic primary voters. So yeah, I think she could give her a run for her money. I don't know at the end of the day if she could beat her. I mean, Clinton is going to have a lot of money. She does have an expert political advisor in the form of her husband, and she's about ready to get a mastermind of her presidential campaign in the form of John Podesta, who's tough enough to probably, I think, keep the warring factions that always make up a Clinton campaign together.

HH: What David Axelrod told me last week, Karl Rove, was, "My strong feeling is that if she, Hillary, is a candidate, she can do well. If she's the first candidate, if she retreats back into the cocoon of inevitability and is cautious, then she'll have a much harder time." Do you agree with that?

KR: I agree with it totally. And in fact, that's my point. Her instinct is to say...what's her message? She went out and tried to borrow Barack Obama and Elizabeth Warren by saying corporations and businesses don't create jobs, and it was so transparently sort of unnatural to her that she didn't get any applause from anybody. So yeah, I think the problem with Hillary Clinton is what is it that she wants to do as president that gives the American people a sense that she'd be up to the job? What is it that she has done? She can't point to the success as Secretary of State. That's going to be a huge problem for her. Does anybody think that in a year or eighteen months that the world is going to look a lot safer and a lot more peaceful and a lot more calm than it is today? I don't think so.

HH: Does she carry any of the burdens, Karl Rove, of the nightmare we see, the 21 beheadings over the weekend in Libya by the Islamists of Christian Copts, or of the attack in Denmark, or the attack in Paris, or just general chaos as the Islamic State metastasizes? Is any of that burden on Hillary's back?

KR: Look, the burden of that is Barack Obama's foreign policy. President Obama, when he came into office, admitted that Iraq was relatively stable, relatively peaceful, and moving in a democratic way. And what did he do? He withdrew all US forces from Iraq. He initially said he wanted to have a stay-behind force. His vice president talked about how a stay-behind force was necessary in order to combat, you know, conduct targeted counterterrorism efforts. But then he screwed it all up by demanding of the Iraqis that they give parliamentary approval of any status of forces agreement. We've never required that from other governments. But he required parliamentary approval at a point where he knew Maliki could not get that, because of the nature of the parties in the parliament, and the moment right then that he was trying to form a new government. So what we've seen with the explosion of ISIS across Syria and Iraq is I think a direct result of the lack of an American presence in Iraq. Can you imagine what would happen if we had 15 or 16, or 19, or 20,000 American troops in Iraq when ISIS, if ISIS began to move across the border of Syria into Iraq like it did last year? I mean, they would have been quickly, the United States and the Iraqis would have quickly moved. We would have stiffened the Iragis' spine. We would have had sufficient forces on the ground between them and us in order to stop this from happening. And instead, what they have sensed is weakness of the United States in the region, and they've seized upon it.

HH: Now, but that's the President's foreign policy. How much of that sticks to Secretary of State Clinton?

KR: She was his Secretary of State during those critical years. 2009 through 2013, early 2013, she was there. She was the one who was there as he made these critical decisions to precipitously withdraw from Iraq, and precipitously draw down in Afghanistan. Now to her credit, there is evidence that she argued against the precipitous decline of forces in Afghanistan, and encouraged him to keep US forces there longer. She clearly agreed with and supported the decision to conduct the surge in Afghanistan in 2009. Having said that, though, she was his Secretary of State, and when all of these chickens come home to roost in a very ugly way, how does she differentiate herself? Does she say all the good decisions that have paid off at the State Department and in our foreign policy I was part of, and I opposed him on all the bad decisions? She can't do that.

HH: What does she have to say about Russia, Karl Rove, because she gave the Putin reset button, not to Putin, but to Sergei...

KR: Lavrov.

HH: Lavrov. She gave him the reset button, and now the reset button's being reset again and again and again in Ukraine with every new round of talks. Does she own that one as well?

KR: Well, absolutely. In fact, and she bears an even bigger responsibility, because you had the sense in the early months of the Obama administration that this was how she was going to make her mark. She was going to remake the relationship that we had with Russia, and her mere presence there was going to remove any of the difficulties that had emerged during her predecessor's time in office. And it was clearly, you know, the sense was this was all our doing to screw up the relationship, and it could be my leadership in order to solve the problems in this relationship. And instead, she got taken to the cleaners. Look, this guy, Putin, Bush knew this early on, that this was a guy you had to endeavor to have a relationship with so that he could see your resolve. And what happened is Hillary Clinton took half of that lesson. He needed to get to know her. And his people needed to get to know her. But they didn't see resolve. They saw somebody who was desperate to win their accommodation and their approval, and shows up with a toy. As you may recall, it, they had the reset button that they got from I guess at Staples, but they had a mistranslation on the document they gave with it so that it didn't even say reset the relationship. It had something even, that didn't make any sense.

HH: Well, given all these handicaps, and we could catalog her failures at State, and they go on for a very long series, Karl Rove, if you're Elizabeth Warren, how could you not take advantage of the opportunity that what may be a glass jaw is sitting right out there waiting for a hard punch?

KR: Well, Elizabeth Warren can't attack her on foreign policy. I mean, Elizabeth Warren is to the left of Hillary Clinton. Hillary Clinton did argue for we don't need to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan as fast as that. In fact, we ought to add to them temporarily. She was in favor of that policy. Elizabeth Warren, I don't know where she was on this, but I find it hard to believe that she was in favor of it. Elizabeth Warren is to the left of Hillary Clinton on many of these questions. Hillary Clinton's vulnerability is on the domestic side where Elizabeth Warren can come at her and say you're the person who's taking hundreds of thousands of dollars from Wall Street

firms for speeches. You're the, the Clintons are the people who are in bed with Wall Street in the 1990s when we had deregulation. Remember, this is one of the interesting thing to me, President Obama and Elizabeth Warren share something in common. They blame the collapse of 2008 not on Fannie and Freddie's misdeeds, but upon the deregulation of the Clinton years in office, of getting rid of Glass-Steagall and other changes that President Clinton made. They don't blame it on Fannie and Freddie, as I think you and I do. You and I, I think, share the view that you know, when you've got the good credit of the United States taxpayer being leveraged by organizations like Fannie and Freddie to where they were holding mortgage instruments, they were leveraged 70 to 1, which means a 1.2% decline in the value of their assets bankrupts them, that's exactly what happened with Fannie and Freddie. They don't blame, Obama and Warren don't blame Fannie and Freddie for that. What they blame is...

HH: I...

KR: ...what Clinton did.

HH: I agree with that analysis, and what I want to go to, though, is can Elizabeth Warren borrow from President Obama his playbook in 2008?

KR: Sure.

HH: In other words, can she do to Hillary what Obama did to Hillary?

KR: Yes. She can enter late, because Hillary's entering late. And if she comes with a focused message that says the Democratic Party has to cut its links to Wall Street and the financial excesses of deregulation that we saw under the Clinton regime, she's got a chance to really do some damage to Hillary Clinton. Whether she's ultimately successful in that, I don't know. But my personal view is that I don't think Elizabeth, I think Elizabeth Warren has a sense of time. I think she feels that she can be emboldened by serving in the Democratic Party, in a Democratic caucus in the Senate, and pulling them to the left, and that she's got time and a future if she wants to exploit it. But you know, who knows? If she's willing to go out there and say I'm 1/64h Indian in order to get law school appointments, she's certainly capable of saying for months and months and months I'm not running, and then change her mind at the last minute.

HH: Will the money keep her off? Earlier today, or actually, two days ago, Tracy Sefl tweeted out the news that they had raised \$1.2 million dollars for Ready For Hillary from 13,000 supporters in January. In other words, trying to portray that the Clinton money machine is so vast and so deeply net-rooted that no one need apply for the position of taking on Hillary. Is that a false bravado?

KR: Well, it certainly is a sign that they are a little bit nervous about this. But look, they will have plenty of money. The money is not going to be the problem. It's going to be properly spending the money, because they wasted a lot of it last time around, and more importantly, having a proper message, spending the money to share a message. And that's where, look, the Clintons may have a big bank account, but when it comes to Hillary Clinton's intellectual treasure, that's bare. I mean, we've had every chance...when she, she, in my opinion, made a mistake by putting the book out in 2014. If I were her, I would have taken 2014 and avoided the campaign trail, and avoided getting the book out and instead said you know what? I'm working hard on my book, and I hope to get it out in early 2015. And I would have spent 2014 figuring out what it is that I wanted to make the campaign about, and get rested, and getting prepared, and thinking through these things, and practicing them so that when you emerge in 2015 with the book, you not only had a good book and a good book tour because you were ready and prepared and rested, but you also could flow naturally into the message that you wanted to lay out in 2016. But having, you know, that was my view last year. She obviously had a different view. Having done what she did last year, and by getting out in the world with the book and the book tour and the campaigning and the campaign stops, she's given us a preview of what her mindset is. And right now, it is I'm entitled to this, I'll be the first woman, I had to put up with Bill for eight years, it's my turn, I'm the person. And that's not a very substantive message.

HH: All right, last question, it's a two-parter, Karl Rove. Can she be beaten by a Republican? And when will the super PACs begin to hammer her as the Democrats hammered Romney in 2012? How early will they open up on her with the big guns in media and social media, etc.?

KR: Let me take the second part of that first. They will begin to open up, or they should begin to open up when she becomes a candidate and not before, because most of the American people, the people that are going to

have to be reached, are people who are paying not much attention to politics, and will not pay a lot of attention to politics until next year. But once she becomes a candidate, they will begin to pay more attention to her, and to things that are being said about her. Having made that point, though, I'd say this. She's not a federal office holder. So they're going to all have to go out and raise 527 money in order to attack her. That's going to be hard in 2015, because a lot of the people who are willing to write checks to Super PACs are going to be more interested in writing checks to the Super PAC of their favorite candidate for president for the Republican presidential nomination. The first question, though, that you asked is the important one—can we beat her. And the answer is ves. However, here's the big question mark for Republicans. Will they be able to be articulate and optimistic and hopeful conservative vision for the future of the country that causes people to say you know what, I know what you're running for. We're really good at knocking around Obama. And there's going to be a role for doing that. We're going to be really good about knocking around Hillary. And there's a role for that. But at the end of the day, simply being the best person to knock around Obama, or to knock around Hillary, is going to be insufficient to either win the nomination, or more importantly, to win the general election. They're going to, you know, look, Ronald Reagan spent some time in 1980 kicking around Jimmy Carter. But he spent an inordinate amount of time sharing a vision of what he thought America's promise and possibility was. And he talked about it, and sometimes in very specific fashion. You and I both remember it, Kemp-Roth. He was out there talking about supply side economics in 1980, as well as kicking around Jimmy Carter for presiding over an economic debacle. That's an important lesson for us. We win when we have an optimistic and positive conservative agenda that causes people to say I know what you're going to do. We can attack them, but that serves as an entry point to discuss our values and views, and to draw people to us, not simply push them away from the opposition.

With David Axelrod:

HH: But speaking about the Secretary of State for just a moment, what did Secretary of State Clinton accomplish when she was secretary of state?

DA: Well, I think that you, a lot of what the President was working on was also her work. So as I said, you know, we went around the world and worked

very hard to cobble together a coalition against Iran. She was very much a part of that effort. I know that she comes under attack now on the issue of the reset. But the reality is that in the first two years of the president's administration, when Dimitri Medvedev was the president of Russia, there was a different opportunity, and we took advantage of that opportunity in terms of arms treaties and a whole range of other issues that were good for this country. It is unfortunate that President Putin has decided to take the kind...his country backward. But both President Obama and Secretary Clinton deserve credit for the advances that were made in that period.

HH: Now you've been advising Hillary for years, though—all the way back to 1992. It was a revelation to me in [Axelrod's memoir] Believer that you advised against her infamous milk and cookies appearance, right?

DA: Well, you know, what happened was I was informally advising the Clinton campaign at the time, and Bill Clinton came into Chicago, and I was involved in putting the debate negotiations together in the primaries. He was debating Jerry Brown. And Jerry Brown went hard after Bill Clinton about what would later become known as the Whitewater issue, and drew Hillary into the discussion. And there was a very vituperative exchange, I'll say, between Clinton and Brown in which Clinton said you know, you can say whatever you want about me, but you aren't even worthy of being on the same stage with my wife. And after the debate, there was a meeting, because the next day, both Clintons were due to campaign in Chicago, and my suggestion was that he go out alone, because if she were there, it would elevate that debate exchange. And I was overruled on that, and I was sort of a minor player. I was an interloper, so I didn't have the ability to make a very strong argument or winning argument. And she went out and she did make that comment. That was unfortunate, and something that dogged her for some time after that.

HH: It's going to do her, too, in this next campaign. But since you've given her advice before, you know her so well, you know her record at State, and you're the message maestro, you're the guy who crafts the 30-second pitch, how is she going to craft her 30-seconds on what she did at State? What's she going to say?

DA: First of all, Hugh, I think she'll have plenty to say what she did at State. She just wrote a whole book on it. But this election is going to be, as every election is, where you're going to take the country? Where do you want

to take the country? What is the future going to look like? And I think the greatest imperative for her, and frankly, every candidate, and I know Marco Rubio probably was talking about his views about the American middle class on our program—this is the fundamental issue of our time. Are we going to create an economy in which work pays and which people who work hard can get ahead? That value is honored, and or are we going to be a country where people work harder and harder just to try and keep up?

HH: Well, I've got to argue with your premise, David Axelrod, and I want to use the authority of David Axelrod to do so. On Page 194, this is the most important page in Believer, you reproduce your late 2006 memo to the president, then-Senator Obama, about running for president. And you write, "The most influential politician in 2008 won't be on the ballot. His name is George W. Bush. With few exceptions, the history of presidential politics shows that public opinion and attitudes about who should occupy the Oval Office next are largely shaped by the perception of the retiring incumbent. And rarely do voters look for a replica. Instead, they generally choose a course correction, selecting a candidate who will address the deficiencies of the outgoing president." So it's not as you put it, it's about being not Obama. So what are the...

DA: But Hugh, I think, let's separate this out, because a lot of this has to do with the style and approach of a president. You know, one of the reasons Barack Obama got elected was because there was a sense that George Bush was too Manichean in his thinking, too bombastic, saw the world in terms of black and white, didn't see the gray, and people wanted a president who could. And they also wanted a president who was very much outside of the system, who would challenge Washington in a way that they felt Washington needed to be challenged. I think that the prism is a little bit different in 2016 because of what I said. I think that they will, people will choose someone who has different qualities than Barack Obama. And I think the candidate they choose will be someone they see, someone who they feel can master the system in Washington, operate in the system in Washington, not necessarily, you know, operate apart from the system in Washington. They're going to choose someone who is a little less nuanced in their thinking than the President, more direct in their approach or perceived as more direct in their approach. I actually think that's a climate that is much better for Hillary Clinton than it was in 2008, because her qualities are not Barack Obama's qualities. They're friends, they agree on issues, on many issues, but they have

different approaches and different backgrounds and experiences. And I think that her profile is much better for 2016 than it was for 2008.

HH: Well, you're taking one for the team there. But I'm telling you, Believer has got a, it's like a game plan for going after Hillary. You talk about "Hillary unchained," how Hillary was "affronted," Hillary and Bill using the race card, playing the old, Southern, white Democrat after the South Carolina primary when Clinton said "no big deal..." He didn't say it, you write [of Bill Clinton's attitude about Hillary losing South Carolina to President Obama], "No big deal, the black guy had won the black primary" [and] "Hillary was baggage you didn't need as veep." This is like a gift to the Republicans, David Axelrod.

DA: Well, if they think it is, and I hope they buy it and read it in large numbers, I really don't think of it that way. The one thing that I've said, Hugh, publicly is that you know, Hillary Clinton was an ineffective candidate in 2007, because she was kind of cocooned in this presumption of inevitability, and very cautious. And once we won the Iowa Caucuses, she was a different candidate and a different campaigner. She threw the caution away. She was much more visceral in her campaigning. She connected very well with people. Her sense of advocacy came through very clearly. And she herself was more revealing of herself. My strong feeling is that if she is that candidate, she can do well. If she's the first candidate, if she retreats back into the cocoon of inevitability and is cautious, then she'll have a much harder time.

HH: Can Elizabeth Warren beat her?

DA: I don't think Elizabeth, I know Elizabeth Warren well, and my strong feeling is she's not going to run. I think she's trying to influence the direction of the party, and you have more influence as a potential candidate than you do if you take yourself out. So she's allowing, she's sticking to this language of I'm not running for president, and titillating people with it, because it gives her more leverage. I don't think she would beat her. I have high regard for Elizabeth. I don't think she would beat her. Look, look at the polling, Hugh. Hillary is probably as well-positioned within her own party as any open seat candidate has been in our lifetime. And you know, she's going to have to go out and work for it. If she assumes anything and doesn't go out and work for it, and earn it, and make her case and present her, a rationale for a candidacy that resonates with people, then anybody is vulnerable under those circumstances. But you know, I know the team she's assembling. I have

a high regard for them. I have some sense of the kind of thinking she's doing. I think she's going to come out of the gate very strong.

HH: But then you're saying, you have to be saying, I don't mean to corner David Axelrod, I can't corner David Axelrod. You're saying that Elizabeth Warren is the candidate that Barack Obama was, because Barack Obama was in the same position vis-à-vis Hillary in 2007, and he beat Hillary, and you're saying Elizabeth Warren couldn't beat Hillary?

DA: No, what I'm saying is that 2007 was, is not 2015 or '16. There was a dominant issue within the Democratic Party in 2007 and 2008, and that was the war in Iraq. Obama had opposed it, Hillary had voted for it. That gave him an enormous edge in the race. This is a different time. And so there isn't that kind of galvanizing issue, particularly if Hillary comes out of the box, as I expect she will, talking very clearly about how to buttress the middle class, how to create greater opportunity, how to restore the value that says if you work hard in this country, you can get ahead.

HH: I'm going to try a third time, though, but you're the message guy. How does she capture what was, in my view, a completely achievement-free four years at the Department of State? How do you give me 30 seconds that avoids the reset button, the collapse in Egypt, the Libyan fiasco, the Syrian civil war, the drift with our relationship with Israel, the utter chaos that's become America in the world? How does Hillary escape that anchor?

DA: Well, she'll make her case, Hugh, but as I said, I think there are lot if, there are number of other important advances that she had on her watch, which ended four years ago, that went to helping put together the international coalition in the midst of the financial crisis, putting together international coalitions around arms control, making sure that we had supply routes open so our troops could be resupplied in Afghanistan. There were a wide, you know, she dealt with a broad number of issues on which we had success. And you know, she'll make that case. I do not believe, and you know, and I invite, you know, if folks on the other side want to try, they should. This race is not going to be about that. This race is going to be about the economy, about whether you can be a middle class person in this country and get ahead, whether you can be a striving person who is not well off, poor, and can work hard and make something of your life. That's what this is about. We've got a profound challenge, and every developed economy has that chal-

lenge today because of the changing nature of the economy, technology and globalization. We either rise to that challenge or we're going to have great, great disparities of opportunity in this country. And that fundamental value that is the American value, that if you work hard, you can get rewarded for that work and get ahead, is going to be in jeopardy.

HH: You know why I smell weakness there, David Axelrod, is because you have such a command of detail. You wrote at one point that when you picked the voiceover for Spanish ads in the Chicago mayoral race, you found a Colombian-accented spokesperson so as not to upset the Puerto Rican voters on the north side, or the Mexican voters on the south side. That's on Page 90. And when I read that, I realized you know the detail. This is granular. And if you can't get Hillary to 30 second ads on State Department, she's lost. And you can't do it, because no one...

DA: I think she's going to be able to, I think she's going to be able to make a great accounting of her record in the State Department. What I'm telling you, Hugh, is that if that's the fight that the Republican Party wants to fight, and I'm just telling you this as a clinical matter. I'm not saying this...

HH: I get it, I get it.

DA: ...for rhetorical purposes. I think that they're going to be, they're, it's going to be a dry hole for them. And I think they know it, because when you see these Republican candidates, this isn't what they're talking about. What they're talking about, you know, Jeb Bush is talking about the right to rise, Marco Rubio is talking about the middle class, Mitt Romney in his brief flirtation was talking about poverty. The Republican Party is talking about economics and middle class economics. And if they're not, they're not going to win this election.

HH: I think they're going to be talking about Reagan's peace through strength, because the President's gutted the military. And we'll come back to that in a second But let me go to the campaign itself.

DA: So you must be for lifting the sequester levels.

HH: I am. Amen. On the Department of Defense only. I've been arguing that for a long time. David Axelrod, a couple of quick questions. Why didn't you guys ever release the President's transcripts from Harvard Law School and Columbia and Occidental?

DA: You know [long pause] honestly, I've got to, I'm not fundamentally focused on that. It's not something that I wrote about. And I'm not sure how relevant it is. What was it that you were looking for in there?

HH: Oh, I just wanted to know how he did. Like. I went to law school at Michigan, and I want to know how he did in Contracts, Crimes. I want to know how he got on the law review. At one point, you know, you're so specific in your book that I notice little things. On one page, for example, you refer to the president as the first black editor of the Harvard Law Review. Of course, he wasn't that, on page 118. But then on page 142, you correct it. You call him the first African-American president of the Harvard Law Review. So you got it wrong when you called him the first black editor. You got it right when you called him the first black president of the law review. So you're very careful. So you had to have made a decision not to let those grades out, and I'm just curious why? It wouldn't have mattered if he was a C or a D student.

DA: You know, well, I'll tell you something. First of all, the book is about my experiences. And so, you know, I wasn't around when he was at Harvard. But I'll tell you what, I did go and interview some of the people who were his professors at Harvard, and to a person, they said he was perhaps the best student that they had ever encountered there. So you know, I mean, if that's what you're going for....

HH: No, I'm just curious as to why not?

DA: I mean, because I don't think they would, you know, like I don't remember what all the discussions were around these things. But I didn't feel any necessity to go back to law school, college, high school, grade school, because it was apparent that this guy was a bright, accomplished guy, and anybody you talk to or who had dealt with him over the course of his career would tell you that, including the people who I filmed for commercials who were professors of his at Harvard.

HH: Yeah, if you don't remember that, that's the only thing you don't remember, David Axelrod, because you remember, I mean, I found the conversation that you had with Blair Hull, when he was thinking about running for Senate, and he says there's no paper on that with regards to the allegations of domestic abuse. You've got one hell of a memory. There's not much that you've forgotten...

With former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich:

HH: I was very surprised to hear Mrs. Gingrich say Hillary's formidable, and maybe the party needs to move to the center. Do you agree with her?

NG: Well, I think the point she's making is you can't just take for granted that women are automatically going to vote against Hillary Clinton. And I agree with that. I think Secretary/Senator/First Lady Clinton is formidable. If you look at her numbers in the Democratic primaries, they're stunning. And I think we've got to be aware of that as we put together our ticket, and we've got to realize for a lot of women, particularly younger women, there is an attractiveness to the first woman president. I think anybody who thinks that's not real is just out of touch with reality. So we've got to be careful not so much about right versus left, but we've got to find a ticket and a platform that says to younger professional women, who by the way, voted Republican in 2014 in much bigger numbers than anybody expected, a key part of our victory in 2014 is that we were doing very well with people between 18 and 35, much better than we have done in a decade. And I think we want to continue to appeal to those folks as the party of the future.

HH: What is Hillary's greatest weakness, Mr. Speaker?

NG: Boring! She's just, you know, she's a celebrity like Kim Kardashian. But I mean, tell me what she's done, and tell me what she stands for I mean, she currently stands for the idea that it's time for her to be president because she's been standing around waiting for the time for her to be president. So she'd like to be president, because after all, I mean, she and Bill think it would be good to be president, and why don't we make her president. Well, that's not a ticket. I mean, I have no idea is she going to be different than Obama, or if she's going to be Obama's third term. If she's going to be different than Obama, can she take the heat of disagreeing with the incumbent Democratic president? And if she's going to be his third term, do you really think the country's going to vote for four more years of this mess? I mean, I just think her candidacy has some big internal contradictions.

HH: She sits down for like a quarterly interview with Thomas Friedman or Charlie Rose, or one of the reliables for the safe interviews. Can she keep that up? Will the American media allow her to waltz to the nomination without actually having to answer

questions about Libya, about Egypt, about Russia and the reset button? Does she get a pass?

NG: Oh, I think to some extent, she gets a pass, because the elite media's giddy at the idea that there's finally going to be a woman president. Don't underestimate in these newsrooms among the elite media how many of them are not just liberal, but they think boy, wouldn't this be just a wonderful moment in history? You know, we have our first African-American president, now we can have our first woman president. This will be just fabulous. And it's almost like asking the question, so what kind of president would she be? And that seems to be for a lot of these folks irrelevant, because they're voting symbolically in their brains. And that's why you see the elite media pull so many punches with Secretary Clinton. I mean, your point, which is I think very funny, we did research on this. I mean, the reset button story is hysterical.

HH: Yes.

NG: You know, they're in Geneva, they want to do something fancy. They actually get a button from, apparently, a Jacuzzi. It's a red button. They then paint in Russian what they think is the word *reset*, which turns out to be the word *overcharge*, because their translator got it wrong. The Russian foreign minister is standing here looking at a Jacuzzi button with the word *overcharge* on it, turns and says I don't think so. I mean, that was the beginning that led to Crimea. That was a reset? No, that was a joke. That was Keystone Cops. It was the Three Stooges. And nobody holds her accountable and says gee, how can you run a State Department so incompetent that your translator doesn't know the word in Russian for *reset*?

CHAPTER 29

Interview with Mark Steyn, December 11, 2014

HH: Mark Steyn, making news earlier this week, Hillary Clinton, who gave an address at Georgetown University, which includes this memorable paragraph.

HRC: This is what we call smart power, using every possible tool and partner to advance peace and security, leaving no one on the sidelines, showing respect even for one's enemies, trying to understand and insofar as psychologically possible, empathize with their perspective and point of view, helping to define the problems, determine the solutions. That is what we believe in the 21st Century will change, change the prospects for peace.

HH: Now Mark Steyn, I think you may be the most notably unempathetic of all columnists when it comes to our enemies. What did you make of the former Secretary of State's declaration of the need for a universal empathy?

MS: Yeah, I think the first part of that—I'm with her up to a point when she says we should respect our enemies. We should respect our enemies, and we should take seriously their desire to kill us. And we should act accordingly. But the empathy business, I think, is what has led Hillary and this administration so badly astray. And I don't really want to empathize with the head-hackers of ISIS, for example. Far too many young Western Muslims living in Dearborn, Michigan, and Toronto and London and Lyon and Rotterdam empathize and sympathize with them already. I'm far more interested in defeating them. And I think defeating your enemy requires a clear

understanding of what's different, what differentiates you from them. And that's where she and the whole smart power thing have completely failed. I'm a believer in smart power in part because we don't do warmongering very well anymore. So you have to use the other levers of power. You have to use economic, cultural power and all the rest. This is what we have signally failed to do in Iraq, in Afghanistan, during the Arab Spring, in Syria, in Libya, in Russia and Ukraine. Where is the evidence for the smart power? For Hillary, smart power means racking up frequent flyer miles and standing there next to the Russia foreign minister with a reset button that some idiot, overpaid idiot at the State Department mistranslated, and turned out to mean something else entirely. That's pretty stupid smart power. But smart power properly deployed is what means you don't have to go to war all the time. And that's what this administration has been so signally inept at.

HH: Bret Stephens, who will join me later in the program today, deputy editorial page editor at the Wall Street Journal, wrote about this Hillary Clinton passage that it shows that Mrs. Clinton is as tineared as she is ambitious. It cannot be used except as a GOP political attack ad if and when she runs for president. I'm beginning to really question, Mark Steyn, whether she's viable. Everything she touches turns to stone in terms of appeal to the public.

MS: I think that's right. I think she's one of these people you're always having to explain. She's also, she's not just tin-eared. She's also, to go back to what we were talking about earlier, thin-skinned, so that even friendly interviewers like Terry Gross at NPR, rub her up the wrong way. If you can't handle Terry Gross at NPR, the idea that you're going to be able to withstand a primary campaign and then a general election, I think is slightly dubious. But I think it's actually a, this is a serious flaw. This is someone who has not thought about what's gone wrong in the last four years. You know, Chris Stevens, who died in Benghazi, in part because of the negligence of Mrs. Clinton's State Department, empathized with the Libyan people to an extraordinary degree, and he's dead, and his body was dragged through the streets of Benghazi. In the streets of Cairo, in Tahrir Square, we called it the Facebook revolution, and thought that somehow they all wanted, all the big, bearded men wanted to be like nice, little Obama pajama boys, and all the covered women wanted to be like Sandra Fluke. And it turned out they wanted something entirely different. She's got a tin ear when it comes to empathy. She doesn't, she's not actually capable of getting inside the head of

Iranian mullahs who seriously believe in Islamic imperialism, and exporting their nuclear technology around the world. She's seriously incapable of getting inside the head of Czar Putin in the Kremlin who wants to reconstitute a Russian empire and a Russian protection umbrella over Eastern Europe. And you'd be surprised how far west his definition of Eastern Europe goes. She's totally incapable of empathizing of any meaningful empathy with what is psychologically driving those guys.

HH: Could her presidency turn out to be even worse than Obama's abroad?

MS: Well, I think there's a difference in that I don't think she's as ideological as he is. And in that sense, I don't think she's driven by the same antipathy toward American power. But the fact of the matter is she is largely, she is largely incompetent. And the idea that she has a problem in that she was basically some guy's wife for most of her life, and then she parlayed that into a Senate seat. And then she got her first executive position in which American power drained in almost every corner of the world. And what is she going to say about that? Is she going to say oh, that was all Obama, that was nothing to do with me, I was flying around, I was eating the peanuts and pretzels in the executive jet, so I didn't actually, I wasn't involved with any of that? That's all she's got to run on. For the rest of the time, she's just got this phony-baloney foundation that exists to principally to fly her and Bill and Chelsea to give six and seven figure speeches to bored Saudi princes. And that's a resume for becoming president?

HH: Well, she's got the family business to protect. It's really about Bill's third term and making the way for Chelsea in the world, isn't it?

MS: Yeah, and I really, I've got no time, you know, one of the advantages of a monarchy is that at least it means your political class is non-hereditary. You know, in Ottawa, Stephen Harper's wife, who is a delightful lady and very smart, has got no plans to become prime minister. In London, Cherie Blair is not interested in becoming prime minister. And in Canberra, John Howard's wife does not feel entitled to be prime minister as Hillary feels.

CHAPTER 30

Interview with Bret Stephens, Deputy Wall Street Journal Editorial Page Editor, December 11, 2014

HH: I am now joined by Bret Stephens. Bret is of course the deputy editorial page editor of The Wall Street Journal. He is also the "Global View" columnist at the Journal and the author of a brand new book, America In Retreat, which we spoke about extensively last week. Bret, welcome back to the Hugh Hewitt Show. It's great to have you.

BS: Good to be on the show, Hugh.

HH: I called you because of your column on Hillary, and I want to talk about Hillary, and I want people to hear first and foremost what it is we're talking about. This is Hillary Clinton earlier this week at Georgetown University making a comment heard 'round the blogosphere, cut number five:

HRC: This is what we call smart power, using every possible tool and partner to advance peace and security, leaving no one on the sidelines, showing respect even for one's enemies, trying to understand and insofar as psychologically possible, empathize with their perspective and point of view, helping to define the problems, determine the solutions. That is what we believe in the 21st Century will change, change the prospects for peace.

HH: Now Bret Stephens, your column is titled "Hillary Clinton's Empathy Deficit." What did you make of those remarks?

BS: Well, the first thing is you know, just listening to her voice, I'm think-

ing is that the voice I want ringing in my ears for four or maybe eight years? I'm not so sure. But leaving aside just the sound of her voice, what was very striking to me about the comment, I guess two main things, Hugh. Number one, the choice of the word *empathy* was just so politically misjudged. I mean, any one of her speechwriters must have known, or should have known that to say, to talk about empathizing with our enemies was going to be a political soundbyte for her opponents from now all the way up until November, 2016, assuming that she runs for president. The second thing is well, yes, in a sense, it's correct. You want to try to understand your enemy from his own point of view in order to know him better. That's a dictum of war going back all the way to Sun Tzu, the great Chinese military theorist of the 5th Century BC. But when you actually think of Hillary's record when it comes to getting in the headspace of someone like Vladimir Putin, or the ayatollahs of Iran, she did a pretty bad job of it.

HH: You said in your column that she is as tin-eared as she is ambitious. And I have to agree with that. I wrote a book this year called The Happiest Life, in which I devoted an entire chapter to the glories of empathy, which is actually a harder to develop emotional response than sympathy, because you actually have to have walked in the shoes of the person you're empathizing with. Only someone who's lost a child can empathize with someone who's lost a child. You can sympathize for them if you haven't, but you can only empathize if in fact you've had a shared emotional experience. It makes, what Mrs. Clinton said makes no sense, Bret.

BS: Yeah, I mean, look, but let's assume, you can, there's a kind of a metalevel of empathy where you can at least assume that your adversary is not simply stupid and ill-informed, and is operating from a deeply-held sense of certain political convictions. And let's just think about that. Let's take a case like, say, the Iranian ayatollahs. We keep negotiating with them with this idea that what they want at the deepest level is to be reintegrated into the global economy, they want better educational opportunities for their kids, better roads for their drivers, and so forth and so on. And that's just a complete failure to accept that the Iranian regime has sincerely-held goals and beliefs that are just at complete variance with our own. And so it's a failure to sort of understand that your adversary is coming from a place of profound philosophical conviction. Now it happens to be convictions I think are odious convictions, but it's coming from a place of profound philosophical conviction. And he's not about to be bought off in the lingo of what

Westerners or all human beings are supposed to want. The Iranian regime wants nuclear weapons because it wants prestige, it wants power, and it wants to defy the great Satan, which is the United States. Give them the benefit of the doubt. Show them that, the other word she used in that interview, Hugh, was respect. Respect them enough not to think they're stupid.

HH: I want to go back and use a different context to illumine her remarks, because we just passed Pearl Harbor day. Can you imagine FDR talking about respecting the Nazis or empathizing with the Japanese, Bret Stephens?

BS: Well, as a political matter, it would have been completely stupid for them to do. That being said, certainly with the Japanese, it was very important, I think, for the Americans to really to try to think carefully about Japan's mentality. And by the way, this went especially when you think about the end stages of the war where we seemed to think that, or some people seemed to think in retrospect that we could have defeated Japan without the shock of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And that required really thinking seriously about the Japanese warrior mentality and what would be required in order to break it. But again, this is a matter of politics, too. I can't imagine FDR or Harry Truman speaking about it, because Americans aren't rallied in the language of empathy and respect. And if that's what her notion of smart power is, it equals dumb politics.

HH: So tell me what you think she was attempting to accomplish, because I have been probing for a year and a half people about Hillary, because I'm writing a book about her. And I keep asking the same question—does she have a glass jaw? Are her political flaws so manifest in this speech overcomeable?

BS: You know, Hugh, a year ago if you had asked me who's going to be the next president, I would have said it's going to be Hillary. And now, I really, I just, I am being reminded on a regular basis with the publication of her book, with comments about her being "dead broke" when they left the White House, one comment after another, I'm reminded that she is not as smart, at least not as politically smart, as is advertised. And sometimes, you know, I am a dear student of William of Occam. And "Occam's Razor" tells us, in effect, that the simpler explanation is the likelier explanation when you're faced with two alternatives. I think the simpler explanation here is a woman who's slightly out of her depth trying to find a higher purpose for a political candidacy that is driven solely by personal ambition. So what higher purpose

is that? Well, there's smart power, the justification for her time in office. And yet the application of smart power turned out to be a four year foreign policy disaster.

HH: After the break, I want to review an earlier speech that she made at Georgetown from five years ago. But the short question, which I probably posed before to you, Bret Stephens, is what exactly did she accomplish at State?

BS: Nothing. That's the short answer.

HH: That's, I think, the answer.

BS: That's the short answer.

HH: I think that is...how do you run for president except on the assumption that the American people won't care, because it's really Bill Clinton running for his third term?

BS: Because this is the Jonathan Gruber view of America—we're stupid.

HH: Yeah, that is, she really does come down to that, because when you look at this paragraph, I don't know what she was attempting to accomplish. And 30 seconds to the break, Bret, what could she have been attempting to accomplish at Georgetown this week?

BS: Well, whatever she was attempting to accomplish, she accomplished the reverse. If it was to polish her brand as a smart diplomat, it didn't work.

HH: I'll be right back with Bret Stephens. He is the deputy editorial page editor of the Wall Street Journal.

HH: Bret, when I read the excerpt of Secretary Clinton's speech at Georgetown this week, I was reminded of a speech she gave at Georgetown five years ago. And I've gone back and grabbed four audio clips. This is at the beginning, only shortly after President Obama had received the Nobel Prize. I thought I'd get you to comment on some of her comments from five years ago, Cut number one:

HRC: Today, I want to speak to you about the Obama Administration's human rights agenda for the 21st century. It is a subject on the minds of many people who are eager to hear our approach, and understandably so, because it is a critical issue that warrants

our energy and our attention. My comments today will provide an overview of our thinking on human rights and democracy and how they fit into our broader foreign policy, as well as the principles and policies that guide our approach.

HH: I play that excerpt, Bret Stephens, because there is quite a lot of effort in Hillaryworld to distance herself now from President Obama. Is that going to be possible, because she's speaking in the collective we here in Georgetown.

BS: Well, right, and I think whoever runs against her is going to constantly try to remind Americans of the, of just how closely they worked, or at least pretended or claimed to work. You know, I'm just shocked by the human rights case for the Obama administration. You know, we were talking a little bit about Iran just in the first segment, and remember when Iranians rose up in revolt against the stolen election, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's so-called reelection in 2009. And you remember the images of Neda, Neda Agha-Soltan, the young, brave woman who was killed by Iranian thugs, regime thugs in the streets. And this is a regime that sat on its hands and did nothing. No, excuse me, this isn't an administration that sat on its hands and did nothing. This is an administration that has sat on its hands for two and a half, three years and watched 200,000 people get slaughtered, including a thousand people in one day in Damascus from Sarin gas get slaughtered, and has done nothing. The Sarin gas, it's true, took place after she left the administration. But when it comes to human rights, it's hard, I'm hard-pressed to think of an administration that has a worse record than this one in standing up for basic human rights around the world.

HH: Given what you've just said, listen to this clip from her 2009 Georgetown speech, cut number two:

HRC: This Administration, like others before us, will promote, support, and defend democracy. We will relinquish neither the word nor the idea to those who have used it too narrowly, or to justify unwise policies. We stand for democracy not because we want other countries to be like us, but because we want all people to enjoy the consistent protection of the rights that are naturally theirs, whether they were born in Tallahassee or Tehran. Democracy has

proven the best political system for making human rights a human reality over the long term.

HH: "Whether they were born in Tallahassee or Tehran," Bret Stephens, the irony given what you've just said is pretty profound.

BS: Right, and by the way, just take two cases. What is the country that gets the most ire from this administration? It's the one genuine liberal democracy in the Middle East, and that's Israel. It's the one country that actually gets senior administration officials to mouth obscenities to reporters when it comes to talking about their democratically-elected leadership. And we were talking about empathy earlier in the show, Hugh, and it's, Israelis must be scratching their heads and asking where's the empathy towards them? But at the same time, take another country in the Middle East, which is Turkey, which is moving very quickly away from a democracy or at least a liberal democracy, into something much more closely resembling a dictatorship. When was the last time you heard a senior official in this administration, or certainly Mrs. Clinton get up and start to speak clearly about what is happening to liberalism and democracy inside of Turkey under the long rule of now-President Erdogan?

HH: It of course has not happened. And when I come back, a couple more clips from Hillary Clinton's December 14th, 2009 speech at Georgetown. I go out by giving you a repeat of what she said just this week at Georgetown. Here's Hillary just a few days ago:

HRC: This is what we call smart power, using every possible tool and partner to advance peace and security, leaving no one on the sidelines, showing respect even for one's enemies, trying to understand and insofar as psychologically possible, empathize with their perspective and point of view, helping to define the problems, determine the solutions. That is what we believe in the 21st Century will change, change the prospects for peace.

HH: I'll be right back with Bret Stephens of the Wall Street Journal.

HH: I doubt, Bret, you could have written your book five years ago

and imagined as bad a five years as we have experienced. I don't think it was...

BS Yeah, even with my distrust of the administration, it would have sounded like science fiction, and here we are.

HH: And here we are. But at the time that it began, it wasn't that way. Here's Hillary from December 14th, 2009, cut number three:

HRC: Sometimes, we will have the most impact by publicly denouncing a government action, like the coup in Honduras or violence in Guinea. Other times, we will be more likely to help the oppressed by engaging in tough negotiations behind closed doors, like pressing China and Russia as part of our broader agenda. In every instance, our aim will be to make a difference, not to prove a point.

HH: Now Bret Stephens, I bring this up because it reminds us of the first ill-fated step of the Obama-Clinton years...

BS Yeah, Honduras.

HH: Honduras.

BS I mean, dreadful. What...the government of, the people of Honduras stood up against the possibility of a new Hugo Chavez and save themselves from a dictatorship, and the United States was simply in the wrong in not accepting that Honduras, for all of its problems, actually has a rule of law, that its then-Chavezista president was attempting to violate. I mean, it's just a stunning, it's just a stunning comment. And again, I get back to this conceit, Hugh, of smart power, you know, this self-belief that they are so smart. And yet on so many levels, not only are they not smart, they're not even well-informed.

HH: Oh, she says she would press China and Russia behind closed doors to make a difference, not to prove a point. She gave them the reset button. They tried to get it back, it was revealed, in HRC, by Jon Allen and Amie Parnes. And in fact, it's a total debacle what's happened with Russia since then. And that's smart power on display, where the really smart guy, unfortunately he's evil, has eaten their lunch.

BS: Well, and you know that that smart button literally had the word *reset* mistranslated in Russian. They used the wrong word. So from the get-go, the State Department didn't even have the linguistic prowess to get the language right. And it was just a kind of a symbol of everything that came after it. This idea that you could charm a KGB agent like Vladimir Putin into being a cooperative member of an international community where as in fact he's hell bent on restoring the glories of the Soviet Union.

HH: One more quote from, in the wayback machine, 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is laying out the agenda ahead at the end of the first year of the Obama administration. And here's what she says about what we'll hear a lot about in the next two years as she runs for president—women. Cut number four:

HRC: On my visits to China, I have made a point of meeting with women activists. The UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 inspired a generation of women civil society leaders who have become rights defenders for today's China. In 1998, I met with a small group of lawyers in a crowded apartment on the fifth floor of a walk-up building. They described for me their efforts to win rights for women to own property, have a say in marriage and divorce, and be treated as equal citizens. When I visited China again earlier this year, I met with some of the same women, but this group had grown and expanded its scope. Now there were women working not just for legal rights, but for environmental, health, and economic rights as well.

HH: Bret Stephens, I imagine we'll hear a lot of this stuff, and we'll hear a lot about the one Chinese dissident that she did indeed get sprung from China in the course of her four years as Secretary of State. But I don't think we'll be hearing much about what's going on in Hong Kong, and I doubt really, I really doubt that these women that she met with in that dramatic moment in the 5th floor walk-up in the crowded room that was no doubt full of infiltrators and listened to every word by listening devices are actually making much of a difference at all in China.

BS: It reminds me a little bit about her description in one of, during the 2008 campaign, of walking into a hail of gunfire when she landed in the

Balkans, I think in Sarajevo back in the mid-1990s. That should be checked. I would, my instinct as a journalist tells me I want to go back and check on that. Notice, by the way, what she omitted: the greatest human rights violations, or women's rights violations in China, the one-child policy, the forced abortions that go into enforcing it.

HH: And the inability to religious, to worship religious...

BS: Oh, the list is long, but I'm sticking to the women's, you know, specifically the women's agenda, and unbelievably cruel treatment of women who cannot afford to bribe their way out of the one-child policy.

HH: And you mentioned Turkey in the last segment. Women are being pushed back into the veil in Turkey at an alarming rate. They've never gotten rid of it in some places. And her great foreign policy push for Libya has left that country in utter chaos, Bret Stephens.

BS: No, look, I mean, this is one of the hypocrisies that drives especially those of us who are concerned about Israel's well-being and its security, the constant harping on alleged Israeli human rights violations, and the complete failure to take note of what is happening to women, to minorities, to gay people in Muslim societies, to Christians, to people with different religious beliefs all over the Muslim Middle East where this administration walks on eggshells.

HH: Yeah, ISIS threw a gay man from...

BS I mean, it's a disturbing double standard.

HH: Yeah, ISIS threw a gay man from a bridge yesterday and then stoned his broken body. That's who we're dealing with here, and I'm just curious, we have a minute left, Bret. Does the mainstream media indulge her in these fantasies of competence? Or do they attack the narrative as she's attempting to construct it? Not you and me, but the mainstream media.

BS: You know what? I don't know if you saw that *Times* story based on her time in as First Lady. It was a remarkably harsh story. I was struck that on the front page of the *Times*, there was this really pretty dim view of her political savvy or lack thereof during her time as First Lady. I think there are a lot of people on the left who just as in 2008, so, too, going into 2016, are really sick of the Clinton brand of politics, which is about personal ambition above everything else, and all of the policies, all of the ideas, opportunistically con-

structed to suit that vehicle of their ego and their interest. And I think a lot of, don't be surprised, Hugh, don't be surprised if one of the other candidates who throws his or her hat in the ring, maybe the governor of Maryland or even Joe Biden, might do surprisingly well.

An Interview with *The New York Times'* Peter Baker, December 9, 2014

HH: Okay, second part of the conversation goes back to a story that you and Amy Chozick wrote on Sunday [in the New York Times].

PB: Yeah.

HH: "Hillary Clinton's History As First Lady Powerful, Not Always Deft." Remarkable story, very interesting, and I want to begin with a lot of the source material, which is this oral history project. One of the critiques of that oral history project, it was paid for by Clintonworld. Did that bother you at all in using the sources?

PB: Well, *National Review* made a point of that, and let's just clarify. They didn't pay for the oral history project. They did give some contributions to the Miller Center. That appears to be the case. That was not fully funded by them or something like that. And the Miller Center is an institution that's affiliated with the University of Virginia, you know, a public institution, and they've done oral histories for every presidency going back to Jimmy Carter. So I think you know, it's a relevant fact that we should know, I supposed, that the Clinton Foundation gave them money. Fair enough. It's also relevant to know that the director of the Miller Center from 1998-2005, the one who did this oral history project, was Phil Zelikow, who was a well-known historian who worked for both Bush presidents in the White House and the State Department. So you know, I read the interviews. I don't see anything in there that suggested to me that they were done in any different way than the ones I've read from the Reagan and the Bush 41 administrations. And they produced a lot of interesting material. And we looked through them. We were looking for quotes or stories or anecdotes that told us something from people who were inside the room. By definition, those are going to be Clinton people. But what was interesting about it is it wasn't all, you know, like flatter-

ing and you know, puffery. I mean, there were a lot of sort of sharp edges to the portrayal of Hillary Clinton as the First Lady.

HH: Oh, absolutely there were. And in fact, I want to talk about that. You referred to the health care debacle of Mrs. Clinton's time as first lady, and those are the first two years of the Clinton administration. Is she going to be able to avoid in her presidential campaign, Peter Baker, being called Obamacare's grandmother, because it really is her, not her baby, but her grandchild that we're living with now.

Yeah, yeah. What's really interesting is how much she has managed to evolve her political persona from that time as first lady, right? In the gos, her identity and public perception was a very liberal figure, the liberal voice inside the White House, promoter of health care, government involvement in the economy, you know, a skeptic of welfare reform and so on and so forth. And in the years since then, really, you know, transformed herself into sort of this centrist figure, somebody who's criticized on the left. Gosh, there's the liberals who would like to get Elizabeth Warren out there, and she's seen as a more hawkish figure even than President Obama when it comes to national security. So she's done a remarkable job of sort of changing that perception over time. But any campaign, especially one that will be as hard fought as this one is going to revisit history. That's why we thought it was worth going back, looking at that time that people have kind of forgotten about, and reminding us where she came from, how she got from there to here. And I think health care's going to be a big issue, particularly if the administration can't get it working right by then. It had some success lately, they would say, but there's still two years to go. We'll see what the perception of it is two years.

HH: What's your understanding of Hillarycare compared to Obamacare? Wasn't Hillarycare—it's my understanding—I won't put it in terms of a question. It was my understanding that it was even bigger and more intrusive than Obamacare.

PB: Yeah, yeah, no, much more government-oriented. In fact, Obama's is arguably closer to what the Republican alternative was at the time when Senator Dole and Senator Chafee were arguing for a little bit more of a market-oriented approach. That's closer to what Obama ended up with. It's still obviously perceived by a lot of people as too much government in their health care choices. But it does, you know, provide subsidies for people to buy private insurance, not government insurance. And Hillary Clinton's version of it was much more government, much more bureaucracy. It was famously

lampooned on the floor of the Congress with a big chart showing all the boxes and everything. And I think that was one of the things that really brought it down, because the perception that it was going to be the big states coming into your health care choices.

HH: Now Peter Baker, you also noted in the December 5th piece in the New York Times that throughout the White House years and since she created her own team, her insiders, her Hillaryland, and that it's insular. Does she take advice from anyone not in Hillaryland seriously?

PB: Yeah, that's a good question. You know, she's suffered over the years sometimes from having advisors who led her in a direction she might not have wanted to have gone. Obviously, her 2008 campaign advisors overestimated their capacity to take down this young newcomer named Barack Obama, and they didn't compete in a lot of the caucus states. They presented her as this, they were trying to address the issue of being a woman and whether she's tough enough, when everybody pretty much thinks that Hillary Clinton's tough enough, and they didn't address the issues that they really had. She gets caught in, as any politician does, in the network of people you've got around you. The question is in 2016, is she going to have some of those same people, or is she branching out and bringing in a fresh crop? And we'll see. I don't know whether we really know the answer to that, yet...

HH: You know, you wrote in your piece that she was unsparing in her calculations about her husband's political prospects, and you just mentioned the need to freshen herself. One of the big critiques is that she's past her DC sell-by date. That she's old and tired. Has she heard that? Is she aware of that?

PB: Oh, I think she's aware of it. She's certainly heard it, yeah. I do think that's an issue. You know, I went back and looked. With the exception of Ronald Reagan, we haven't elected a president since James Buchanan who was ten years older than the outgoing president, right? We tend to move on from generations forward, not backwards. And so she's going to have to address that. She's going to have to make the case for why she's not a retread. Having said that, as my wife reminds me, she has the advantage in some ways of seeming fresh because if she were to win, she'd be the first woman, and that is a barrier-breaking kind of thing. And that, to some extent, is different than if she were a 69 year old man running for president at this

point. She can argue that she is moving the country forward in a way that a younger person might. She's got to explain what at 69 she's offering. And I think that even young women who are excited about the idea of a woman being president are still asking the generational question is she somebody who understand where we're coming from at this point. And she's going to find it's going to be a challenge for her.

HH: You mentioned that national security and foreign affairs don't much matter in presidential elections. But what exactly is she going to say she accomplished while Secretary of State?

PB: Well, it's a good question, right? She's a very cautious Secretary of State. She didn't have, you know, a swing for the fences kind of diplomatic breakthrough, you know, a Middle East peace or things like that. I think she'll argue that she took the right side, in her view, on Afghanistan, on Iraq, on being tough with Putin.

HH: Putin?

PB: That's what...

HH: Putin, Peter Baker? I mean, she gave him the reset button.

PB: She gave him the reset button, but it was a policy that was really the President's, and she, within the circles, and you hear Bob Gates talk about this, she always thought it was kind of, you know, not necessarily likely to succeed, and was, had a tougher point of view on him.

HH: She did push Libya. Doesn't she own that? You know, "You bought it, you break it"?

PB: Yep. She did. She did push Libya. That's an area where she'll be criticized. Obviously, Benghazi will still be an issue at least for some people. And I think that you're right. She doesn't have like sort of a bumper sticker kind of accomplishment she can point to. "I was the Secretary of State who did X." I think probably, maybe, the one she would say is "I'm the Secretary of State who helped restore America's position in the world after the Bush years," which will appeal to a lot of Democrats. But I think Republicans will probably argue, well, the Obama years have had their own, you know, problems in terms of international credibility.

HH: Now Peter Baker, you noted in Days of Fire Bush was a pretty robust retail campaigner. He was good at it.

PB: Yeah.

HH: Hillary had a terrible book tour, said some terribly flat speeches or controversies about her speaking fees. Does she have a glass jaw that you know, Obama found, and that the next, whether it will be the Republican or primary challenger will also find when it comes to retail politics?

PB: Yeah, I mean, part of the downside for her of being so dominant on her side of the spectrum right now, in other words, she's probably better positioned to get her nomination any non-incumbent president has been in decades. But the downside is you don't get to go through the paces, right? You know, one advantage of having a rough and tumble primary campaign is you come out of it pretty, you know, pretty warmed up for the general election. You've been hit, you know how to take a hit, you know how to respond to a hit, you've gotten some of the harsher criticisms sort of out of the way, and people absorb them. She's not going to have that, at least it doesn't look like it at the moment. And she does have, you know, she's had some issues, as you point out, with the book tour. It's probably better for her that she got them out of the way with the book tour than when she starts campaigning for real. But it's probably a reminder that campaigning is an art, and something that you can, you know, you need, you get rusty on.

HH: Last two questions, the role of Bill in the White House, some people say we're not running for Obama's third term. It's really Bill Clinton's third term. What do you think?

PB: Well, it's a good reminder, right? You know, it, the idea of Bill Clinton as first husband is entertaining and mystifying. What would he be like, a former president in that role? And he's such a character to begin with, and prone to his own issues from time to time. And you can imagine her trying to find ways of keeping him under control politically. But you know, third term, I think they would rather argue the third term of Clinton rather than third term of Obama, because you know, rightly or wrongly, we look back today with Clinton, on Clinton's time as being better than we do right now for Obama's time, you know, much like, you know, people today are very positive on Reagan, even Democrats. I think Clinton has kind of turned the corner, historically, a little bit, and that people forget how much they were polarized at the time.

HH: Okay, last question, who's going to be her vice president, Peter Baker?

PB: That's a great question. Well, we're already, it tells you a lot about her position in the party.

HH: Sure, it does.

PB: We're already talking about that, right?

HH: It does.

PB: You know, a couple of names, obviously the new HUD secretary, Castro, is a possibility. Senator Tim Kaine, I wonder, in Virginia, might be an interesting choice, right? He's Catholic in a purple state. He's been critical of Obama on some things. You know, it's an open, jump ball.

HH: What do you think of Deval Patrick?

PB: Maybe. Maybe. I mean, he comes from Massachusetts, which is a state presumably you're supposed to get anyway. But you know, he's an attractive figure, and then they would argue that that would look new generation as opposed to...

HH: Well, he's my class. He's class of '78 at Harvard, so he's...

PB: Young guy, then.

HH: Fifty-eight-years-old. Yeah, young guy. But I mean, the African-American vote has been so central to President Obama's electoral majorities.

PB: Yeah.

HH: Do they have to, in essence, either put one of the Castro brothers or Deval on there in order to energize that community?

PB: Well, they would energize that community. And I think they would probably energize, to some extent, the youth vote that she otherwise has to have a way of selling, right? Now her argument would be, you know, look at this, this is not your grandfather's ticket or your father's ticket. It's a new generation ticket. And we'll see. You know, I mean, I think that the danger, of course, is you don't want to look anything like the last administration when you're trying to sell a new administration, but you know, Deval Patrick is a very talented campaigner, and would probably bring something to the ticket.

An interview with your biographer, *The Hill*'s Amie Parnes, who co-authored *HRC* with Jon Allen, December 4, 2014

HH: An interesting article appeared in The Hill by my guest, Amie Parnes. She is the co-author, along with Jon Allen, of HRC, that wonderful biography of Hillary Rodham Clinton. And today, she wrote in The Hill about the people that Hillary fears most. Amie, welcome to the program, it's great to talk to you.

AP: Thanks for having me, Hugh, I really appreciate it.

HH: Now it's very interesting to write that piece today. I wonder if you've heard anything from Hillaryworld about it.

AP: It's been silent ever since this piece came out. But I did talk to them quite a bit before the story came out. So I know, I knew exactly where they were all coming from.

HH: So summarize for our audience who the four people Hillary should be most afraid of come 2016 are.

AP: So what we have are Jeb Bush, Rand Paul, Chris Christie and Scott Walker, who many are labeling a dark horse. But, you know, they're taking him rather seriously, actually.

HH: In Hillaryworld, they're taking Scott Walker very seriously?

AP: They are. You know, I first started hearing rumblings there was a Ready For Hillary meeting in New York two week ago where lots of donors came, hundreds of donors, and staunch Hillary supporters, and a lot of them talked to the press. And we were sort of picking their brains on who they were most concerned about, and who had a good shot at becoming the nomi-

nee. And you started hearing rumblings of Scott Walker. And I started looking into it, and sure enough, you know, that Democrats are very interested in what he has to say. And you know, this is someone who has run successful, a successful campaign in a Democratic-leaning state, and someone that they are very concerned about.

HH: Now Amie Parnes is my guest, author of HRC with Jon Allen, author of a piece in The Hill today. Do they worry about my guest from last hour, Senator Ted Cruz?

AP: I'm not hearing that name so much. You know, I actually talked to them about Ted Cruz. You know, there are these four guys that I mentioned, and they're really focused on them. I think the DNC is keeping, you know, they're making books, as they call them, on all these different candidates, but their focus is basically on these...people.

HH: Amie Parnes, what does she perceive as her own vulnerabilities?

AP: I think they're quite a few when you talk to people. I think inevitability is one of them. It's a huge factor, and we heard that again and again at this Ready For Hillary meeting a couple of weeks ago. They think that inevitability could hurt her in many ways, and they saw how it hurt her in 2008. And I think, you know, I think people are just, they have Clinton fatigue. And I think a lot of aides are very concerned about that. So they're looking to repackage her in a way that makes her sort of seem fresh and of the moment. And I think they're going to have to, you know, work hard on that. It's hard for her to seem, you know, of the people, and not seem, and not have that Clinton name with her. So they're going to have to work on kind of humanizing her, if you will, and making her into a candidate that people want to have a beer with, as they say.

HH: Oh my gosh. Isn't that impossible?

AP: I don't know. It remains to be seen, but yeah, I think a lot of people would agree with you that you know, it is tough for her, because she does seem so, you know, behind the scenes, she can be very kind of funny and candid, but she's unwilling to let that side show. And I think that hurts her....

HH: And does she have a record that she's proud of? I mean, what are they going to say about her years at State other than trying to get people to look the other way and play Burma Bingo?

AP: I know, I think they're going to have to try to really play that up, because there is no real bumper sticker issue, you know, where, that she can campaign on. You know, I think that they're going to play out, as we talk about in our book a lot, you know, there were certain moments where the President really counted on her—the bin Laden raid, for instance. She was instrumental in sort of making that all happen. And Leon Panetta came to her very early on and wanted her buy-in to make that happen, because he knew that she sort of had these hawkish views. And I think they're going to play that up a little bit, especially in a general election. I think that would play well for her....

HH: Here's my last question. What will Bill's role in the White House be if she wins her first election?

AP: I have a feeling she would use him as, you know, he would be the guy, he would be the conduit between Capitol Hill and the White House. She would send him, he has so many contacts on Capitol Hill, on both sides of the aisle, and I think she would use him effectively in that way.

HH: Would he be co-president?

AP: No, I think she would work very hard to sort of make sure who the president is, and I don't think that would happen. But I think he would be almost like a senior advisor to her.

HH: They must be vetting VP's already. We have one minute. Who's on that list?

AP: Oh, that's a good question. We're still trying to figure that out. You know, Jonathan and I are working on a second book right now, and so that's at the top of our list.

HH: And if you had to just speculate, give me three.

AP: Three? That's a tough one. I would say maybe a Castro, maybe, you know, it's hard to say. It would have to be someone. I don't think it's going to be an Elizabeth Warren, for sure.

HH: Could Deval Patrick be on that list?

AP: Maybe, maybe. I think someone, I don't know, I'm not quite sure. I think he might be on the list. It's hard to say at that point.

Interview with Dr. Charles Krauthammer, November 27, 2014

HH: [Hillary] immediately signed on and endorsed the President's, in my opinion, lawless immigration executive order speech earlier this week. What did you make of her decision to endorse that action, and of her positioning for the 2016 election?

CK: Well, I think, Hugh, the key word there is *positioning*. I think she made a choice. I think she believes, I would guess, as most people do, and particularly if you're a liberal Democrat, that the policy was a good one. I don't agree, but I can see how many people do, but that the process was abominable. But thinking of her electoral prospects for next year and the year after, particularly among Democrats, and for the general election, that it would be more advantageous to her to grab onto the policy and to get the support from many liberals, and from, of course, many Hispanics, rather than to dwell on the process, because I don't think she would calculate that the process is necessarily going to be determinative, and it may not, since she isn't the one who made the decree, it might not hurt her. So she's on the right side of the issue, wrong side of the process, and I think that if that's her calculation on balance, I think she made the right, in other words, the more accurate calculation of what would help her.

HH: With Benghazi back there and her immigration position, do you think former Senator Webb is in a position to give her any real problems?

CK: You know, I think that Democrats are in such a swoon over Hillary, it's sort of all, it's not at the level, the emotional level of the 2008 swoon for Obama, but they are committed. I mean, they've already, they are betrothed. You know, this marriage has already been set. I don't think anybody's going to give her serious trouble. I think Webb might actually just be an interesting

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counterweight to her, but I don't see it as a serious challenge to her getting the nomination.

HH: Then what do you guess she's going to run on? Or are we in fact really just electing Bill for the fun of it for a third term? Or does she actually have a platform that we can expect to see?

CK: Well, you know, I think she's running on nostalgia for the gos. I don't think there's a platform at work here at all. And it's not as if she's the only one. You know, George W. Bush sort of ran under the aura of people who thought you know, maybe we should have reelected his dad. People, Kennedys all run on the Kennedy name. With her, it's not so much on her husband, but on the feeling the gos was a time of peace and prosperity. It was that decade, that holiday from history, between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the fall of the Soviet Union, and of course, g/II. It's a time that people remember as a good time, and it was, in fact. So that's what, you know, that's the subtext of her entire campaign.

HH: All right, two last questions, then. Has she been around too long? I don't mean in age, but she's been around DC for a quarter century.

CK: Yeah.

HH: She's been in reruns a long time. Is it too long for the American people?

CK: Well, except for the fact that she's Clinton, and that she's the wife of the president who people remember as being a really good decade. So I think that works somewhat against her. But it's not as if she's a hack politician like a Harry Reid who's been around forever, and people say do we really want him in high office? You know, it's a person associated with a certain time. I'm reading the biography of Napoleon by Andrew Roberts, and I'm thinking of, you know, his nephew, Napoleon III, who came around 50 years later. I don't know what Louis Napoleon's platform was, and I'm sure he was running on the Napoleon name, and a bit of gauzy nostalgia for his time.

Conversation with President George W. Bush, November 25, 2014

HH: [T]his is very interesting, the relationship between the Bushes and the Clintons. And at every level, it's very interesting. And your father and former President Clinton, and you and former President Clinton get along well, and they call them the black sheep of the Bush family. Is that going to mean hands behind your back if Hillary's up against Jeb in two years?

GWB: Well, if that happens, and I don't know if it is, I of course will be all in for Jeb, and I'll still maintain my friendship with Bill, as will Dad.

An Interview with Josh Kraushaar, the Politics Editor of *The National Journal*, November 22, 2014

HH: Here is the most significant tweet of the night following President Obama's speech. Less than 10 minutes after it concluded, Hillary Clinton tweeted out thanks to POTUS for taking action on immigration in the face of inaction. Now let's turn to permanent bipartisan reform immigration action. Were you surprised, Josh Kraushaar, that she moved that quickly to endorse the President's sweeping and unprecedented action?

Not entirely surprised. I was actually more surprised that it took this long for her to take a position, but you know, the President's speech sort of forced her hand, to some extent. And to me, her positioning vis-à-vis the President in the next year is going to be one of the most fascinating political stories, because she sees the polling as closely as we all do, and she sees the disparity between most Americans, you know, if you ask them broadly do they support comprehensive immigration reform, you do see it. It depends on how you ask the question, but you see majorities of the public expressing sympathy towards that position. But then you see the two polls that came out in the last week when it comes to the executive order, and you have large pluralities, 48% opposing, and 38% approving in the NBC/Wall Street Journal poll that came out this week. She is trying to thread that needle. She wants to make it seem like she's for that legislative process to take place, but she's not against the actions that President Obama undertook. She needs that Obama base. She needs the Hispanic vote when she runs for president in 2016, and she needs to have the base enthused. But she also needs to broaden the coalition beyond just the base. So this is one of many, you know, tactical decisions she'll be making to sort of try to stay with Obama, but also keep a little bit of space. She's tied in more with Obama, though, than keeping the space on this one...

HH: What is going to be her claim to success at the Department of State? What's her record at State that she can tout as an achievement?

JK: Well, I mean, she and her advisors have talked about how she's visited a whole lot of countries, and actually being the first woman, or I guess the second female secretary of state...

HH: Third.

JK: ...and trying to promote issues that are of importance to women. I mean, that's something that she's talked about, that she's traveled quite a bit to make that case. But you know, look, Benghazi's going to become an issue. The Republicans are already bringing it up in the run up to 2016, and you know, she doesn't, in terms of, I think a lot of what happens in the second term for President Obama, whether there's an Iranian deal reached, and that was something that sort of began under her watch as Secretary of State, diplomacy with Iran. So I think she is going to have a lot to answer for. Foreign policy is, I think, going to be a significant issue in 2016, and isn't always in a presidential election. But I think if she runs on her record as Secretary of State, and runs on foreign policy, she's really going to have to answer to a lot of the President's foreign policy decisions.

HH: And is there, by third Secretary of State, I meant Madeleine Albright, obviously, Condoleezza Rice.

JK: Oh, right, right.

HH: Yeah, but when you, if you're the writer's room, if you're a fly on the wall in the writer's room for Hillaryworld, what do they put on the white board as having been an actual honest to goodness achievement? Forget Benghazi, about which she has to answer the questions, but Libya's a mess, Egypt she got wrong, the reset button with Russia was a disaster, Ukraine's been carved up. How in the world does she run on competence?

JK: I mean, it's a challenge when it comes to foreign policy. I mean, it's hard for any, someone in anyone's administration to create that space when a president is facing vulnerabilities on that specific front. So the president, when you look at the specific issues and job approval, and President Obama and all the various areas, foreign policy is one of his lowest points at this moment. It was higher when she was Secretary of State, but I think she's

going to have to answer, and perhaps bear some responsibility for some of the decisions that the President has made. So it's going to be a challenge. There's no doubt about it. You know, I think they're going to talk about the fact that she traveled, that diplomacy was emphasized, that she tried to work with a lot of other world leaders. She's going to point to a lot of her travel. But I think she's going to have a challenge to really defend the President's foreign policy at a time when a large majority of Americans are very skeptical about it.

HH: With Webb in, O'Malley moving around, Joe Biden still there, Jerry Brown may be running as Yoda for president, does she have a glass jaw, Josh?

JK: You know, the thing that she has going for her is that she does have a brand. I mean, generic Democrat running as a third term of the president might have a bigger challenge than someone like Hillary Clinton, who is well-identified, for better or for worse, with the American public. But you know, and I think that she's been able, we've seen through polling throughout the last few years, her numbers have gone down somewhat, but she still has higher approval ratings than President Obama. She still has higher favorability numbers than, say, Joe Biden. So I mean, she, and she definitely has an experienced political team who's been through the trenches, who went through a very tough 2008 presidential campaign. So I mean, I don't think she has a glass jaw. I think she's, you know, she's prepared for 2016, and she's very well-attuned to all of the vulnerabilities that she faces. But she also sees her campaign as a real opportunity to be the first female president, and to forge a new coalition for the Democrats.

HH: But with her tweet, you know, she's sort of mini-me on immigration. And I'm just, I'm curious, because I'm not referring to the fact that she'll be 69. I'm wondering if her brand is so old. She's been around DC for a quarter century. Young people don't get excited by Hillary Clinton. It's like getting excited about your grandma running. And she's the grandmother of Obamacare. How in the world does she refresh the brand? We've got about a minute.

JK: Well, the big question, I mean, I think that's the big question. A lot of Republicans, I mean, there's a lot of debate within Republican circles over whether they want to nominate someone like a, say, Marco Rubio, who's a younger, less, you know, a lot less experienced compared to Hillary Clinton, but someone who's a fresh face who can almost, you know, argue the Bill

Clinton 1992 campaign theme about talking about the future, and really being a contrast. But other folks think that Jeb Bush or someone with more experience is a necessary type of challenger Republicans should nominate against Hillary Clinton, because that will, you know, people are worried about the state of the world – foreign policy, you know, it seems like the Middle East is falling apart, you know, we have the instance of Ebola just a month ago. So there's another alternative Republican point of view that thinks that Hillary Clinton probably, her experience can be an asset in this type of volatile environment, and Republicans might actually need to match her experience with someone like a Jeb Bush...

HH: I didn't want to let you go, Josh, because I wanted to get you live in the middle of sort of Grand Central Station of politics, and this goes to branding. Is Hillary stale?

JK: I don't think that she's stale. I think that part of branding is coming up with strategic ways to, I mean, there are a lot of brands that have been around for a long time. And smart marketers have been able to refresh those brands and make them more relevant going forward. I think that's the big challenge, though, for her campaign team. Do they have, I mean, you brought it up first, Hugh, like what is their message? What is going to be the argument for Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign? I think it could be fresh. I think it could be, she could be coming up with something that talks about her experience, but also talking about how she differs from previous presidents, and how she, say, a third way, a different approach from President Obama and President Bush. But we haven't heard that from, she hasn't announced her campaign, we haven't really heard that from any of her advisors at this point. So I mean, I think it remains an open question.

HH: Do you think we're really going to end up being asked to put Bill Clinton back into the Oval Office a de facto third term for Bill, not really a first term for Hillary?

JK: I think it'll be fascinating to see how active a role Bill Clinton plays on the campaign trail. I mean, that was an issue in the 2008 primaries. And he was as smart and savvy of a politician as he is. He would get the Clinton folks, the Hillary Clinton folks, in trouble quite a bit for making off-message comments. And I think that will be the biggest question for her campaign going around. I thought it was also notable that you know, a lot of people have made the connection between Hillary's campaign and Bill's late in

the '90s. But you know, if you look at the Senate races where both of them campaigned in, I think there was a lot of hope that the Clintons could sort of make some inroads in blue collar parts of the country, states that they won, or states that Bill Clinton, rather, won in '92, '96—Arkansas, Kentucky, in those two big Senate races in 2014. And they didn't make inroads. And the working-class voters that supported Democrats back in the '90s ended up voting Republican in this past election. So I think that's a big warning sign for both Bill and Hillary, in terms of their ability to kind of recreate that magic from the early 1990s. It's going to be a lot harder this time around....

HH: You know, there was a very famous exchange in British politics in the 19th-century where Disraeli charged his great rival, Gladstone, with being an exhausted volcano. Do you think that's what Hillary might be, exhausted?

JK: I mean, she's had time off from serving in the White House, so I don't think she's exhausted. I think she's actually been preparing and thinking about how she's going to run a campaign, and she hasn't told us much. And her staff hasn't been very open, either, even when she's going to announce, if she does announce a 2016 campaign. But I do, I don't think she's exhausted. I actually think that she's been very strategic, and has been resting and relaxed and ready to launch this....

HH: Last question, then. She's inextricably bound up with his foreign policy failures, probably with the Iranian deal. And I just want to know if you think she can unglue herself from this immigration executive order if it becomes operational, as I think it will, as bad a rollout as the Obamacare website. I think it's going to be phenomenally difficult to administer this. It's going to be a practical nightmare as well as a Constitutional fiasco. But can she get away from it now? Or did she flypaper herself to the President's lawlessness, in my view? I know that's not your view, but my view, lawlessness, is that stuck to her in such a way that it cannot be unstuck?

JK: And I would never say, I mean, there's a lot of time to go before she even announces her presidential campaign. The point, I think one of the other reasons why the President did what he did is he thinks he can bait Republicans to saying out of the mainstream type comments, things that make them do things, threat of impeachment or the threat of a government shutdown.

HH: No one's going to do that, though, right?

JK: It'll make it easier for someone like Hillary to run against. So I think there's a lot left to be determined. I feel like it's too early to really make a judgment on how the immigration play turns out. But I think if Republicans don't self-destruct, if they don't do things that hurt their own brand, I think the burden is on Hillary. The burden is on the Democrats to really show how they're in the, how they get the majority back with supporting this executive order, with supporting the process of this executive order.

An Interview with NBC's Chuck Todd, November 21, 2014, November 9, 2014, and March 26, 2015

Interview, November 21, 2014

HH: Are you going to cover Webb, because I think James Webb presents a very interesting problem for Hillary Clinton.

CT: To a point, I do think he could. He could. He presents, put it this way, if you were to go into a factory and say who's the perfect potential challenger for her, I think the only thing, the only problem is I think demographically, having, he doesn't necessarily, a southern white guy isn't necessarily the perfect primary challenger to her. But he's to the left of her in economics, will come across as stronger on national security, even as he's more to the left of her, less hawkish, certainly will be incredibly critical of her, particularly on Libya. He's been, he was from the beginning critical of the entire Libyan operation, and being somebody who wore the uniform doesn't hurt. The question is, can he raise money? I thought it was fascinating, if you saw the Jim Webb news, within 12 hours, Tim Kaine puts out a PAC email talking about being ready for Hillary. It tells you that, you know, I think the Hillary people, that wasn't an accident. I think they are nervous about him if he ever got traction.

HH: And I have been watching, I put in an interview request which has not been responded to earlier today of Senator Webb's office, because I am curious about...

CT: I would bet you he comes on.

HH: I know, and he told me to contact the office. And I am curious as to what he's going to do on immigration, because it seems to me the opening against Hillary.

CT: Right, he was not in favor, you know. I'm old enough to remember when there were a whole bunch of Democrats who weren't supportive of some of these immigration reforms, particularly having worried about the idea of basically wages going down. And that suddenly, you know, and there were a lot of labor unions members worried about that.

HH: And jobs being taken. So I'm curious, were you surprised that former Secretary of State Clinton, it took her less than 10 minutes to issue a full-throated endorsement of the President's action

CT: Oh, if it's not a reminder that this was, look, I know we're all shocked that everybody plays politics with issues, but this was pretty, I mean, that the politics of this has been pretty obvious from the get-go, which is the Democratic Party, and look, and if you look at it from Obama's point of view, he broke promise after promise with Hispanics. And he felt like he had to come with something, or they risked alienating Hispanics for a long time, which is why I think you saw Hillary Clinton so quickly do that. But I have to say there's another part of this story that we haven't talked about enough, and I think we're going to play the demographics game, and that is white working class voters are, you know, dealt a thumping to Democrats in 2014, and immigration is one of the reasons. So you know, yes, for every gain they make, and maybe long term, the demographic trend will be better off for the Democrats, but they also have a white working class problem. I think a Minnesota, I think Iowa, I think Wisconsin, I think you're going to start seeing that for every Arizona that the Democrats think they're going to bring into play, I think some of the northern Midwestern states are going to come into potentially being in play for the Republicans.

Interview November 9, 2014

HH: I want your take on what [Tuesday's vote] means for Hillary.

CT: You know, I've been thinking about this a while, and I think, I'll tell you, she's got pressure on her to now get in earlier maybe than she wanted to. I think there is a sense, there's the sense of some Democrats are looking for somebody to sort of start rallying the party. But I have to say, I think a long presidential campaign's not going to be healthy for her. Like I don't think that's a good, it's just not good for anybody to be in the spotlight for as long as she's going to be in it. And I think a bigger problem for the Democrats this election is the fact that Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi, everybody decided

to run again. You know, the fresh faces, the young faces in Washington are Republican faces. And the old faces or sort of the veteran faces are Democratic faces. And so I think that's something that the party in general, and you wonder if you're Hillary Clinton, you know, she's the youngest of that group of Harry Reid, Nancy Pelosi, Steny Hoyer, Jim Clyburn, those folks, but you know, I think you want to present yourself as the next generation, you know, sort of the party of the 21st Century. And maybe demographically they feel like they're there, but I think their leaders, I think the faces of the party, I think that's something they have to think about.

Interview, March 22, 2015

HH: Would you be surprised by a 69 year old at the time former Senator and Secretary of State declining to run, because boy, the news today was bad on her. And Gawker's got a story out with Pro Publica about the Sid Blumenthal story. The Washington Times has Trey Gowdy, who you had last week, blowing up because she wiped her server clean and she's not turning it over. Hillary's at the center, and this new poll shows only 26% of Americans now have a favorable view of her, 37% unfavorable, another third are undecided. And it's dropping like a rock, Chuck Todd.

CT: Well, and this is the pattern of Hillary Clinton, something I brought up last week. The pattern of her political career is when she is front and center, the polarizing view of Hillary Clinton comes into focus. And when she is off the front pages and is sort of a player but on the sidelines, like when she was a Senator or when she was Secretary of State, her numbers go up. And as a presidential candidate, and when she's at the center, you know, I think all of a sudden, there is, and she might blame that press, that the press has old habits die hard, they only cover her like she's a Clinton from the 90s, and so it doesn't matter. But all of a sudden, I think this is such a big challenge in the email story, is not the email story itself, it's the idea that it creates the 'oh, there they go again, this is the 90s all over again.' And if Clinton fatigue, which is already a disease in the press corps, actually becomes a problem with the voting public, and these polls, maybe this is the first time that it's becoming a problem, that is doom for her.

HH: It is a rumbling drum in the background. Now the Blumenthal story is different. I thought until today, actually earlier

this week when I began to get wind of this, that Blumenthal would send her emails and she would write him back, and it was the kind of thing where you had a former aide, a hanger-on, and you stay in touch with everyone. No. He's running a private intelligence operation on the Libyan-Tunisian border through former CIA operatives. Chuck Todd, if W. had done that, or actually, Condi Rice or Colin Powell would be the appropriate analogy...

CT: Yeah.

HH: ...people would be tearing their hair out.

CT: And yet I have to say nothing involving Sid Blumenthal surprises me. Zero. And I agree. I think this, I saw this Gawker stuff. You know, you've got, it's Gawker and all this stuff, but I've learned over the years, nothing involving Sid Blumenthal is surprising. And you know, for some reason, they've had, he's blindly loyal to them, and I think the Clintons have always had a blind spot with him, because he skirts the rules.

HH: Yeah, this is going to...

CT: He's, you know, he likes to leak stuff. He likes being described, I think, as a practice of the dark arts in politics.

HH: Well, Murray Chotiner...

CT: And this goes right into his pattern of practicing dark arts. And in this case, instead of politics, it's world diplomacy.

HH: Yeah.

CT: I agree it's, if proven, and I think more of us are looking into this, I think it just, it only, all it does is no one thing will take her down. It's the accumulation of bits like this that then feed the narrative of oh, do you want ten more years of what you didn't like about the Clintons.

HH: You know, Richard Nixon had Murray Chotiner. Reagan had Lyn Nofziger. Lee Atwater was George Herbert Walker Bush's guy.

CT: Yeah.

HH: But Sid Blumenthal is known as Sid Vicious for a reason, and none of those people, to my knowledge, ran a foreign private intelligence operation, because it raises, Chuck Todd, and this would go...

CT: Well, I don't know about Nixon. Don't forget ol' G. Gordon. But when he was around...

HH: Well, he was [acting] domestically, domestically. But here's what [the Sid Blumenthal story] raises. If [Hillary Clinton has] got a private server and a private citizen collecting private intel [and sending it to her], it is highly likely it's compromised going into the Secretary of State's server. I mean, it's just going to raise all sorts of fun. If there was on the right someone with the chops of some of the famous investigative reporters for The New Yorker, this would be keeping them up all night.

CT: I think, and look, I think all things Sid are going to become a big part of our, I think this is going to get a lot of attention. And I don't think it's a right, left, right, center. And you know, this is going to be, I think, the more explosive part of the first time she testifies on Benghazi. I mean, I think the Blumenthal stuff is going to be the stickiest wicket for her.

An Interview with the *New York Times*' Mark Leibovitch, November 19, 2014

HH: Mark, let's talk about Hillary. You have these letters, these Peavoy letters. Did you copy all of them?

ML: I did.

HH: That's just...

ML: I mean, I think all of them. There was all, the one that filled the box were about 30 of them. And yeah, no, I have them in a file cabinet about 10 feet from my desk right now.

HH: Now one, you might get a break-in very quickly, but you wrote in your profile of Hillary from July 29th of 2007, that once she became aware of them, she respectfully wrote Mr. Peavoy, Professor Peavoy, and requested copies, which he dutifully sent to her.

ML: Yes, it's true. So she knows they exist. I mean, she obviously knows after I published some of them. But no, I think he then told me that like he kind of dropped off the White House Christmas card list.

HH: You also update, though, your portrait of Hillary by noting in the introduction a 2014 speech that she gave that there is, "a relentless scrutiny that now stalks not only people in politics, but people in all kinds of public arenas, and it gives you the sense of being kind of dehumanized." You're struck by the words stalking and dehumanization.

ML: Yeah, those are pretty strong words. I mean, *dehumanize*, especially, is the kind of word you would associate with people who have been exploited, who have been, you know, imprisoned or abused, or something like that. So yeah, you don't very often hear someone worth a hundred million dollars

using terms like that, but I see what she means. I mean, it is not a dignified exercise to go through the scrutiny that someone at that level has to go through. But at the same time, you know, this is what they're signing up for.

HH: It's also another reason to read Citizens Of the Green Room. I had missed this entirely, this speech that she gave, which was apparently fairly self-reflective, saying as well, "You can't really ever feel like you're having a normal day. It can be done, but you never forget that you're in that public arena." As I thought about that, you really don't want to be a 69 year old woman who's going to get photographed in their bathing suit, do you, Mark?

ML: You know, I wouldn't know, just because I've never been a 69 year old woman, but I'm guessing that that wouldn't be her first choice of photograph attire. But I can't say for sure.

HH: But it also applies to everything else that she does. You remark that all public people are almost always on.

ML: Right.

HH: She can't be anything but on, on, on.

ML: Well, that's the thing. I mean, I think in a case like the Clintons, you just, I mean, you have to wonder do they even know what normal looks like, or what does normal look like. I mean, forget the things that people fixate on, like she hasn't had a driver's license in X number of years and all that. I mean, that's, part of being an ex-president and an ex-first lady, and being Secretary of State. I mean, it's just the bubble of public life. I mean, that's one thing you can sort of intuit that it not something any of us will ever identify with. But no, just knowing, and being accustomed for, what, I mean, she was first, they first went to, he was first elected governor in '78, right?

HH: Yeah, but being first lady of a state, it's really '91 that she becomes part of the public possession.

ML: Yeah, right. And you know, 23, but not only just part of the public possession, but being arguably the most famous woman in the world. Now she was always saying I'm the most famous woman in the world, and nobody really knows. And I think that's fairly common for a lot of politicians to think that they're fundamentally misunderstood and shallowly drawn. And I think that it's true to a point, but at the same time, it's a familiar lament. I mean, I actually have a profile of Governor Christie that's coming out this weekend,

and he says something similar about how he has been portrayed. But no, I think look, it is not an easy thing, I imagine, to be defined publicly in just sort of the shorthand of modern journalism and the internet and TV and so forth.

HH: Yeah, no know is ever known, but just a very few are studied. My question is they all choose it, right? It's their choice. She could vanish tomorrow.

ML: Sure.

HH: She could go Salinger if she wanted to.

ML: Yeah, I don't know if she could go Salinger, but she could certainly just, you know, make a definitive statement that she is done with public life and ask everyone to leave her alone, and I'm guessing that quite a few people would. So yeah, she can opt out.

HH: Would you have been up to the profile of Jackie O.? Do you think you could have cracked the code?

ML: Oh, sure, I would have loved to have tried. I mean, you know, it doesn't always, you don't always... First of all, that would be a case where I doubt she would have let me in. I mean, it would probably been done despite her. But sure, I mean, there's always someone else who can tell you something. And I think people give up too easily.

HH: Good note to young journalists. I agree with you a thousand percent.

ML: Yeah.

HH: If you have editors who will let you hunt long enough, right?

ML: Yeah, I think so. I mean, look, I am extremely lucky. I mean, I do have, in many cases, a lot of time and a lot of space to explore this stuff. But I think the principles are the same for everyone, whether you have a couple of days or a couple of hours to work on something, or a couple of weeks or a couple of months or whatever.

HH: Having studied so many adults who've lived in the spotlight, do you think this is why so many young stars go crazy, spin out, do stupid things, because they're just, they have no maturity on which to handle this?

ML: I think that's a great, great question. I think yes, I think it's absolutely

true. I can't imagine a worse scenario in which to try to grow up and to try to learn about the world. I mean, I suppose it's possible. I mean, always, I'm always amazed by the relative normalcy that a lot of presidents' kids seem to sort of emerge from, whether it's the Bush daughters or the Obama daughters or Chelsea Clinton or whoever. I mean, obviously, it's not a picture book childhood that anyone would consider typical by any stretch. So yeah, no, it's tough, and I think that's why you see so many problems, especially out in Hollywood.

HH: Would you use the word ruthless in connection with Hillary?

ML: Yeah, I think in some ways. I think they want to win. I think they're willing to, you know, fight pretty hard to win. I don't, I mean, *ruthless* is, maybe it's a pretty strong word, but I think these are as competitive and combative a public, couple of public figures as you can imagine.

HH: See, I don't, I just think it's a descriptor, sort of like Margaret Thatcher, I think, was ruthless, and I think Golda Meir was ruthless. But I think women are afraid of that adjective more than men.

ML: Yeah, I mean, Bill Clinton was ruthless. I think George W. Bush was ruthless. I mean, I think, you know, in order to be elected president, or even to be close, you have to, you've got to be a killer. I mean, Mitt Romney, I mean, these are very, very competitive people, and I think that that's part of, you know, what gets people elevated to that level.

HH: Now I'm talking with Mark Leibovich. His brand new book, Citizens Of The Green Room, must reading for anyone who cares about 2016, if only because Jeb Bush, Rick Santorum and Chris Christie are all in here, and they're all going to be part of that...

ML: And Hillary, don't forget Hillary.

HH: And Hillary, of course, and Hillary.

ML: Yeah.

Excerpt From An Extensive Interview with Chuck Todd, November 13, 2014

HH: Chuck Todd, host of NBC's Meet the Press is with me. Chuck has just put out his brand new book, The Stranger: Barack Obama In the White House. It's linked over at HughHewitt.com. It's an incredible read. Chuck, welcome back to the Hugh Hewitt Show.

CT: Thank you, sir.

HH: How many times did you sit down with Joe Biden to talk about The Stranger?

CT: (laughing) I did not have any official book interview with him.

HH: (laughing)

CT: So the answer is no.

HH: I tried my little Meet the Press trick there, Chuck.

CT: Yeah, nice try. Neither the president nor the vice president ever did a book interview with me....

HH: Hillary was badly banged up by the elections of 2014. She went to Kentucky and held a fundraiser for Alison Lundergan Grimes. She held a fundraiser for Mark Pryor, and Bill actually went to Arkansas three times for Mark Pryor, and Tom Cotton wins by 17, and Mitch McConnell wins by 15. Does [Hillary] have a glass jaw?

CT: I don't know. You know, look, I think that surrogates are always overrated in general, right? At the end of the day, are you going to tell me that all the work Rick Santorum did for Joni Ernst is the reason why Joni Ernst is the new seantor from Iowa? You know what I mean? So I do think that we take

the surrogate stuff, you know, we overrate it. But I think that she didn't use, what I would say that Hillary Clinton didn't do in 2014 that she should have used 2014 to do, I didn't feel like she campaigned. I didn't feel like she, you know, instead she was doing fundraisers. Instead, she was trying, you know, I didn't see her doing retail politics. I didn't see her sort of taking batting practice, essentially, when it comes to retail politicking, that you know, that has been a weakness of hers. It was a weakness of hers in '07 and '08. And so why not use 2014 to start honing a message, and more importantly, to also start doing some campaigning, doing some retail campaigning. So instead, she just simply was somebody to show up at a rally in order to get TV cameras to show up.

HH: Does she have a message? Does she have a platform?

CT: Well, you know, that's a great question. I don't think she does, yet. Like what is, you know, she's got to answer the why, right? She's got to answer the whole Roger Mudd question. Why do you want to be president? And maybe it is to break the glass ceiling. That is a reason. And that's going to be a reason for a lot of people. That's going to matter to a lot of voters, which is you know, let's, it's time to have a woman president, and that is a reason. She needs another why.

HH: You know, a lot of people say she's too old, and I don't mean chronologically. I mean that everything has a sell-by date in DC when it gets stale.

CT: You know who is a great, who sort of coined this in politics? Jonathan Rauch.

HH: Oh, sure, and one of the great proponents of same sex marriage.

CT: He has said that there is a sell-by date for politicians, and he figured it out once. He said basically, it's somewhere between, the sweet spot is something like eight to fourteen years on the national stage. And once you've been on the national stage more than fourteen years, then if you look back, you just have a higher hurdle in order to be seen as the future candidate, the change candidate.

HH: And was Rauch one of the big proponents of Obamacare as well, Chuck Todd?

CT: I don't remember on that.

HH: I can't remember, either. I think he might be. He's a Yalie, and I've been following his career for a long time. But I think he was also, which brings me to this question. Is Hillary the grandmother of Obamacare? Is she going to get tagged in 2016 for the ongoing collapse of this fiasco?

CT: Well, and it's funny, it's like that's, I think that's something she's got to get her arms around, because the irony is, of course, is candidate Obama campaigned against the [individual] mandate. Candidate Obama campaigned against taxing the big health [plans], you know, basically campaigned against two parts of Hillary Clinton's health care plan in 2008, and a part of John McCain's health care plan in 2008. And then he adopted both of them. I think she has to own it. I think she can't run away from it. I think the lesson for Democrats in general in '14 is if you try to run away from it, the voters are going to say well, you know, then what are you for? You know, I think that she's going to have to own it, and I think in an interesting way that you're going to call it grandmother, that's going to, some people are going to take that the wrong way. But I do think that she's going to have to own it and figure out how to be the person that says okay, this is how I would fix it. This is how...you know, Democrats have to stop saying they want to fix health care. They actually have to say what they want to fix.

HH: As she is to her granddaughter, so she is to Obamacare. I mean, she started it. And no Hillary, no Chelsea, no granddaughter. No Hillary, no Obama, no Obamacare. Let me ask you about State. What is she going to say about State, Chuck Todd? It was a fiasco?

CT: Well, I had one former Democratic senator say to me, "You mean the Secretary of Myanmar," that basically, that that's her best...

HH: Yeah, we call that Burma Bingo.

CT: Right.

HH: Whenever I ask this question, we wait for someone to bring up Burma, and then we yell Bingo.

CT: And that's the, and you know, that's the best, that's the best part of her record to tout. And I think that that's, you know, at the end of the day, I think that the best thing going for her is that it's Obama's administration, it wasn't hers. And I think one thing that I think I made clear in the book is that you know, he directed foreign policy, she represented it.

HH: You know what's interesting, in The Stranger, Jon Allen's been a guest for a lot of time as well when he wrote HRC. He had part of the Benghazi story. You've got another part of the Benghazi story. But you both put Hillary in the room with Cheryl Mills in the State Department Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility, or SCIF. She was right in the middle of it, and then she goes home at some point, and she never calls back Greg Hicks. She called him once, but after they confirmed Stevens was dead, and the embassy burned, she never called back her number two in the country. Does she have explaining to do?

CT: I don't know if she thinks she does anymore. I think she feels like she did it during the book tour. I think it really, I think when it comes to Benghazi, I think that the bigger problem she has to answer for is the Libyan intervention, right, which was the decision to intervene without leaving a footprint, and was there a rush to intervene? Was it necessary? Should it have been done? And I think that that's, you know, that to me is the larger question. That, to me, is the larger debate. And I've always thought, frankly, Republicans have spent too much time worried about Benghazi as an incident and not enough time asking larger questions about the decision to go in and not have a, if you're going to go in, then you need to have some sort of footprint after the fact to stabilize the situation, because guess what we got?

HH: You know, Chuck, though, that always strikes me as like my saying I think Democrats have always spent too much time on the 17 minutes of tape that are missing, and you know, it was those 17 missing minutes of tape that cooked Richard Nixon's tail, right?

CT: Well, I'm not saying, but look, and I think it certainly shines a spotlight on a larger policy issue.

HH: Exactly, or a set of competencies.

CT: Okay, which was intervening in Libya without a plan to win once you've toppled Qaddafi.

HH: Now I also want the audience to know, one of the reasons I think they need to read The Stranger is I think whoever it was that gave you the Thomas Donilon account of what happened that night, this is the first time I've seen anywhere an account of what the president was doing that night. And it's not much of an account, but it's more than we've got anywhere on page 418. Donilon says

he kept the president informed throughout the evening, and that Martin Dempsey had ordered military units, and he had ordered Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the joint chiefs, to get military units into the area as fast as possible. It doesn't really make sense to me, Chuck, because he's not the combatant commander. I mean, you can call up your JCS chairman, but you should be calling the guy at CENTCOM, whoever it was at the time, I think it was Mattis, I'm not sure, and saying what have we got, what do we have, and that's not happening here. And nevertheless, someone gave you an account that no one else has had, yet, of what was going on in the White House that night.

CT: Well, I mean, you know, I'd like to think it was putting some more pieces together. I mean, look, I think that there was, there has been, I think there is more attempts at assuming conspiracy, and I think it was not a conspiracy. I think there were just mistakes made in the heat of the moment.

HH: Oh, I agree with that. I think it shows that she broke. They sent her home at 1:00, according to Jon Allen, and I think that the 3:00 AM phone call ad from 2008, which you talk about in The Stranger, is going to come back around to the Secretary of State when she runs for president, if she runs. Do you think she's going?

CT: I can't imagine she doesn't. I, you know, look, I think she is really, though, in a weird box, because she's getting advice that says if you're going to run, run early, because you need to put up an infrastructure, because frankly, you know, the Republicans are ready to go. They want to, there is going to be a concerted effort to not let her have a free ride. If she's not going to have a competitive primary, and if Republicans are going to be busy beating each other up in a primary, somebody's going to focus their fire on her. And that's certainly, I think the RNC has made it clear that that's what they view their job in 2015.

HH: Has the White House's political operation, which you detail so well, polling, polling, polling, has that disbanded now? Or is being shifted over to Team Hillary?

CT: There's not, I mean, I was just going to say if they have a political operation, it's not a very thorough one anymore. I mean, basically, once Plouffe left, so went the political operation, for what it's worth.

Interview with *The New Yorker's* Ryan Lizza, November 11, 2014

HH: I begin today with Ryan Lizza. Ryan is the chief Washington correspondent for The New Yorker, the cover of which is this rampaging elephant. I love the cover. But Ryan's article is actually about Hillary Clinton and her inevitability problem. Ryan Lizza, welcome to the Hugh Hewitt Show.

RL: Hey, thanks for having me. I thought you'd like that cover.

HH: I love that cover. In fact, I think I'm going to frame that cover. But I loved your article as well, because if Hillary Clinton has an inevitability problem, the Republicans have got a shot at winning the White House.

RL: I think so. Now you know, I'm sure the people in the Hillary camp would say well, we'd rather have the inevitability problem than not have it, right? But yeah, I'd say look, it's really hard. Republicans have a shot to win this in 2016. It's hard to win a third term in politics. We all know that, and you know, you look at all these forecasting models that look at the fundamentals, and they always, you know, they give a few points off for the party that's been, if you've been in power for two terms. Historically, it's hard to pull a three-peat off, right?

HH: Now your piece, Ryan Lizza, begins by talking about Hillary being next to Jeanne Shaheen, one of the few Democratic victories on November the 4th. But Hillary's record of delivering the goods was not very good in 2014. She was in Kentucky and [Bill was in] Arkansas on the last weekend campaigning for Alison Lundergan Grimes, and Mark Pryor, respectively. The former lost by 15 points, the latter by 18 points. And that's Hillary's second home state. [Bill

Clinton in fact campaigned for Pryor in Arkansas three times in the last month of the campaign.]

RL: Well look, let's be forthright about this. No Democratic surrogate was good at helping any other Democrat anywhere in the country, right? I mean, you can't really point to anyone who was out on the stump and made a difference for Democrats. So you know, Martin O'Malley, one of the people I focus on, he's campaigned all over the country, and he didn't win any races, either. But you know, the one that I happened to go to, the one event that I happened to go to in New Hampshire is where you know, the two statewide Democrats did win, right? So Maggie Hassan, the governor, she got reelected, and Jeanne Shaheen, the Senator, beat Scott Brown, one of the few bright spots in the whole country. So I think you know, if you're Clinton, you probably take a little bit of solace from that, because obviously, New Hampshire's always been good to the Clintons. And the two female candidates won there that she stumped for. But you're right. There was no magic in the Clinton's surrogacy this campaign.

HH: More than no magic. Going to Arkansas, and Mark Pryor's a storied name down there.

RL: Yup.

HH: He's a legacy candidate, Tom Cotton, a freshman Republican Congressman, and yes, a war hero and a Harvard Law, Harvard undergraduate. But Hillary manages to, what she'd go? Did she drive Pryor down? 18 points is the worst loss.

RL: You know, you probably disagree with me on this, but Hugh, I basically see the Senate races, I think the gubernatorial elections are much, much, different story on the gubernatorial side. But the Senate races, I basically see as a hardening of the red and blue divide, with the obviously important exceptions of Iowa and Colorado, and you know, arguably North Carolina. Basically at the federal level, we are turning into two countries, right? And the Senate is looking a lot more like the presidential divide. And it'll bounce back depending on who's up every two years. It'll bounce back and forth, excuse me.

HH: Does Hillary have a glass jaw?

RL: You know, I don't think she does. I mean, she's been in politics for a quarter century. And you know, everything's been thrown at her. She's still

surviving. She's the overwhelming frontrunner for the Democrats. I don't know. I mean, what's the evidence that she has a glass jaw?

HH: That she cannot help these candidates when she is supposedly the prohibitive frontrunner, and she goes into Arkansas. This is, to me, the most telling race about Hillary's lack of appeal.

RL: Yeah.

HH: She lived there for 15 years.

RL: Yeah, and I think you know, it's an open question of whether she's actually on the ballot in a general election, could she and her husband actually win Arkansas. And you know, I think that's an open question. I haven't looked at any polling about her down there. But you know, but Hugh, you've been around long enough to know that no surrogate can pull a weak candidate in a bad period for his party over the finish line, right?

HH: Well, I agree with that, but an 18 point loss isn't pulling them over the fishing line.

RL: Maybe he would have lost by 25 without her.

HH: It's impossible. It's actually impossible to lose worse than Mark Pryor did. I think Hillary was an anvil, that they threw Mark Pryor an anvil in the form of Hillary, and that...

RL: You know, I'm not convinced. I think surrogates are overrated. People don't vote on whether someone comes down and says, you know, and campaigns for someone.

HH: Okay, let me put it this way then. Is Hillary Clinton too old? And I mean not just chronologically, but in terms of DC sell-by date? She's been there.

RL: I think that is the number one most important question, and that is her biggest vulnerability. You know, as Howard Dean told me in this piece, and Howard Dean, this is a person who is already saying if she runs, he will support her. He made the point that we rarely go back a generation in presidential politics, which I thought was very interesting. And he pointed...

HH: Thought he was quick to say but I'm not talking about you, Hillary.

RL: He was very quick to clarify that you know, he still thinks she can pull

it off, because he thinks that the Republicans will nominate someone too far to the right. But I think it's a good point. You know, that being around in politics, a public official at 25 years in an age where everyone is very excited about something that's new and shiny is something that she's going to have to overcome.

HH: She doesn't strike me as particularly supple.

RL: Yeah.

HH: We're going to get to the competitors here.

RL: Yeah.

HH: When it comes to new media, she doesn't get it, in fact.

RL: No, I don't think so. And you know, I don't know this for sure, but the sort of conventional wisdom is that none of that matters in the Democratic primary, that there's no Barack Obama on the horizon, and sure, she will have some kind of testing by someone, but basically could run the same campaign she ran last time, and she'll win it.

HH: Ryan Lizza, let me begin by asking you what is she going to run on? She had a horrific four years at State.

RL: I don't think we know. I don't think we know. I think on foreign policy, I think you'll probably have some, look, she doesn't know what she's going to run on, because she doesn't know who she's running against, both in the primary and in the general election. And let's be honest. Candidates don't like to figure out their exact campaign agenda until they know what the contrast is going to be with the other side. And so she has some idea that the challenge in the primaries is going to come from the left as it always does if you're the establishment candidate, and she has some idea what the general election Republican might look like. But there's no incentive for her to lay out anything until she sort of has a clear sense of the battlefield.

HH: So her campaign until then will be as boring as her memoir from State?

RL: (laughing) You know, I don't know if I agree with you about the memoir. I thought there were some moments in there that I found interesting. But I think so. I think it's going to be very, very vapid, and not a lot of detail until she absolutely has to fill it in. And she's not going to listen to us in the press who pressure her into filling in those details before she's ready.

HH: She's been around forever, and still new stuff pops up. The Washington Free Beacon found her Alinsky letters.

RL: Yeah.

HH: And they found her files down at the University of Arkansas. And I thought there wouldn't be...

RL: Yeah, I wasn't really impressed with the Alinsky letters are far as, like, you know, proving that she was at the heart of some crazy, left-wing conspiracy, to be honest. But it was a very interesting reportorial find.

HH: Yeah, but it's just that something can show up this late in the game. I mean, maybe we'll find...

RL: Well, fair enough, and it's a bad, it's a statement about the press, frankly, that it's been sitting around and nobody found it before now.

HH: The Whitewater files may show up again. Who knows what we'll find with her? But is she, is in fact the fact that we won't find anything make her boring?

RL: I think it's part of it. I think you know, the communications consultants, the political consultants always say it's, the views of someone who's been around a long time are set in stone, right? So there's not a whole lot of new information that I can tell you, Hugh, about Hillary Clinton that's going to get you to change your mind about her, and there's not a whole lot of new information that you can tell about her to get some unpersuaded voted to change his or her mind. And that's sort of her burden, but it's also, it might be what, you know, an advantage, depending on who she's running against.

HH: Well, some people buy day-old bread to save money, Ryan Lizza.

RL: But if she's running against someone who's got, from a reporter's perspective, an interesting history and a lot to uncover and learn about, that can be an advantage going against someone who's been around so long that nobody cares about anything in her history.

HH: Absolutely true. What about Benghazi? Will it matter at all?

RL: I thought we were going to get through 15 minutes without Benghazi?

HH: Never, and that's one of her problems, right?

RL: You know, my view of Benghazi is, and I don't know what this says about the press, but it's one of those issues that is almost completely now seen through a partisan filter. And the right will view it one way forever, and the left will view it one way for another, and there are almost no facts that can come up, the new facts that'll change people's minds about it. I don't think it's going to be a big deal, Hugh, to be honest. I think in a Democratic primary, nobody will care about it, and in a general election, people will care more about what is she going to do about troop levels in the world, how's she going to handle Iran, how's she going to handle North Korea.

HH: I'm going to talk about the three people profiled along with Hillary in Ryan Lizza's brand new New Yorker story. And one of them will bring up Benghazi.

In that piece are profiled the three candidates who are thinking about running in the Democratic primaries for president in 2016, 2015 and 2016, one of whom will almost certainly bring up Benghazi, Ryan Lizza. Which one do you think I'm talking about?

RL: Webb will bring it up.

HH: Webb will bring it up. James Webb, and the reason, do you know that he wrote Rules of Engagement, the screenplay, for that movie?

RL: That's right. No, you know, I did know that, and I'd actually forgotten that until you just brought it up. I wrote a much more extensive profile about him for *GQ* in 2007, and I read all of his books back then.

HH: Well, Webb served with my brother-in-law in Vietnam. And I've known him, I don't know him well, but I've met him.

RL: Is that right?

HH: And I've had him on the show a number of times. He'll be a tough candidate. And he will bring up Benghazi, not because of scandal, but because I think Hillary cracked that night and she went home and wasn't in command and control of the situation.

RL: Look, I think the case for Webb, you know, here's the big, missing

component for all these guys, is what demographic group in the Democratic primaries can they pull away from Hillary Clinton, can they steal. We all know what group Barack Obama stole in 2008. He did what no, you know, he did what no sort of, for years, the challenge to the establishment candidate always won over the college-educated whites in the Democratic primaries. But there was never enough to win the whole thing, right—Gary Hart, Jerry Brown...

HH: All the way back to Eugene McCarthy.

RL: All the way back to McCarthy, right?

НН: Үир.

RL: And that group has grown on the Democratic side, but nobody until Obama could pull in another group. And obviously, Obama pulled in African-Americans. And so that's the demographic box that frankly any of these, you know, white, male candidates have in running against her. So you know, and I think that's the problem that O'Malley has. Webb arguably, maybe he can cut into her appeal among white working-class voters, because remember in 2008, people forget this, Obama was sort of the candidate of the, you know, what the strategists sometimes called the wine track, right? And Hillary was the candidate of the beer track. She did better with white working-class Democrats. If Webb can steal that in addition to the more college-educated liberals, that would be an interesting coalition.

HH: There's also, Ryan, a growing concern, and this surfaced in the 2014 cycle, about international chaos. Whether it's Ebola—the impersonal killer—or ISIS—the very driven killer—having someone who can speak directly to national security.

RL: Yeah.

HH: And I thought your comments from Webb about the three kinds of national security candidates out there are very revealing. He intends to be in category three, behind door number three, and there might be national security Democrats and some Republicans, if the isolationist wing of the party spring up who would love a James Webb.

RL: Yeah, and I don't know if you got it from the quotes, but in my conversation with him, he is really close to Rand Paul on foreign policy right now. He's dead set against any kind of humanitarian intervention. He would not

have bombed Benghazi, or excuse me, not bomb Benghazi, but he would not have bombed Libya's, Qaddafi's forces that were outside of Benghazi. He, you know, he didn't believe in any of the humanitarian interventions of the Clinton 90s. And you know, he believed in Congress having a stronger role when we go to war. He's definitely not an isolationist, but he's much more of a non-interventionist than a lot of Democratic elites saw.

HH: But he'll be for a very big stick.

RL: Exactly.

HH: And Hillary Clinton, do you think she has any credibility on defense issues in terms of, you know, a 350 ship navy, or a steroided-up Marine Corps or anything that would normally go with a national security Democrat that Webb would have?

RL: I don't know. I mean, the armed forces, when you look at the opinion polls, they're mixed, ideologically are much more mixed than people usually assume. and I think they're, you know, I think Hillary would have quite a bit of support, if you're just talking about...

HH: Democratic primary voters.

RL: Well, not, even in a general election.

HH: Oh.

RL: Remember in 2008 how well Obama did with military voters.

HH: Again, that's disputed, but it's also the national...

RL: Well, it was certainly not 90/10, right?

HH: No, it wasn't go/10. But the national security voters are a very small slice of the electorate. But in a Democratic primary, it could have an enormous resonance if Webb is running both for the NRA vote and for the DOD vote.

RL: I think, what happens if Hillary Clinton runs against Rand Paul? What happens to national security voters in that race?

HH: I think they split decidedly. That's what Howard Dean told you. He's counting on that, actually, for the Democrats.

RL: Yes.

HH: Let me turn to the other two you profiled, and we'll talk about the two that you didn't. Bernie Sanders...

RL: I only put, look, my rule was I was only profiling people who are openly talking about running.

HH: And there are two who are kind of openly talking about that you gave them a pass.

RL: Not open enough.

HH: Martin O'Malley and Bernie Sanders. First, Bernie Sanders. Now this is a joke. This is like Ben & Jerry's ice cream meets the presidential campaign.

RL: Oh, I can't believe you're not a Bernie Sanders fan.

HH: Oh, no, I love the guy. But it's just a joke. It's like Peter King running for president, right?

RL: Well, of course, but you know what? I think it's, I'm honestly a little, I think this is a little bit of a media bias going on with covering the Democratic side. Anyone who goes on TV and says they might run for president on the Republican side gets all this coverage, you know, Ben Carson, King. And on the Democratic side, these guys are like screaming from the sidelines they want to run for president, and nobody's covering it.

HH: That's because Bernie Sanders is a self-described socialist.

RL: Yeah, but so what? Ron Paul was never going to win. Ron Paul ran as a third party candidate on the Libertarian ticket, which was pretty radical, and still was covered...

HH: You don't really know the answer? Come on, you know that answer. The reason that Ron Paul was covered and Bernie Sanders isn't is that Ron Paul coverage hurt the Republicans, and the MSM wants to do that.

RL: Well Hugh, well, I'm surprised that, I'm actually surprised that conservatives are not making more of a media bias case on this, saying hey, Why isn't the MSM covering Bernie, Webb and O'Malley, who are willing to go after Hillary? Everyone's just saying it's over, it's a coronation. Hillary won.

HH: Well, because generally, we're realists. And the MSM have agendas. We're fair and balanced...

RL: Well look, I state very clearly in the piece that you know, Sanders will be like Ron Paul of the Democrats. He's not going to win, but he will raise issues that will speak to certain Democratic voters, and that the frontrunner, Hillary Clinton, will have to address, especially if he's in the debates, as he surely will be.

HH: Now the most interesting bit of the piece is, I think, about Martin O'Malley, about whom very few people know much. I only know that his anointed successor got crashed in Maryland.

RL: Yeah, big problem for him.

HH: Martin O'Malley apparently is running a very successful campaign for vice president already.

RL: You know, that is a good point. Is he jumping, do you jump in the race against Hillary to try and become her running mate? And you know, the Democratic strategists have argued this both ways to me. Some say that is the worst way to become her running mate, because the Clintons, as soon as you start attacking her and running against her, and give her any bit of a hard time in a primary, you have been put on the naughty list, and you're not going to be her running mate. Other people say well, if you run a clean race and you acquit yourself well, then maybe you can heighten your profile, and since the Democratic bench is so weak right now, maybe that is the route to the...

HH: Are you saying that she's not a Team of Rivals type?

RL: That's the reputation. And you know, that's the conventional wisdom. But you could run a race where you're not necessarily attacking her, you're just being positive, putting out your own issues, and maybe not whack the Clinton hornet nest....

HH: Two people not there who should have at least cameos are the ancient of days, Jerry Brown, and the new Elizabeth Warren lefty insurgent type. What about those two, Ryan?

RL: I think Warren is still a question mark. And I sort of dealt with her simply by saying she's insisting she's not running, so she's not talking about running. And I actually wanted to talk to the candidates who are thinking

about running. But the piece is really about in general insurgents, and what you have to do, and the sort of rules for insurgents. And so if you read the piece, you know, it's sort of a strategy guide to an insurgent run against Hillary, and it would apply to Elizabeth Warren, right? You've got two big ways to run against Hillary. One is new/old, right? You've got to be the new, tag her as the old. And the other is an ideological challenge, you know, challenging her from the left. And Elizabeth Warren would be able to do both of those...

HH: Okay, so let's just limit it to, if Elizabeth Warren gets in on the left, and James Webb runs as a national security, traditional Scoop Jackson Democrat on the right...

RL: Yup.

HH: Hillary's in a vise.

RL: I think so. I think she's going to have to decide where does she come out on these questions that liberal Democrats care about more than ever, inequality, right, too big to fail? What is she going to say about the banks? What is she going to say about Clinton era deregulation? What is she going to say about Clinton era policies that don't look so good to liberals in hind-sight, like the Defense of Marriage Act?

HH: Ryan, what is she going to say qualifies her to be president? Is it because Bill is her husband?

RL: Experience.

HH: Experience at what: leaving the State Department on the night of Benghazi? Experience...

RL: She's going to have to deal with Benghazi for people like you. There's no doubt about it. But she's also going to say hey, I've been around. I've seen two White Houses now, I've been, traveled the world as Secretary of State, and there will be a lot of people who say you know what? We can't afford someone new. Even people who think Obama was a failure will say yeah, maybe the reason was he was too new. Maybe we should try someone who's...

HH: Ryan, that's an argument for making the White House chef the president. They've been there longer than anyone. It matters what you do. And I'm serious here. What has she done?

RL: She's been first lady. She was a partner in what is regarded historically as a very successful presidency, in the Clinton administration. And as Secretary of State, you may disagree with this, Hugh, but she does have something she can brag about. Some of the policy in Asia, I think, doesn't look so...

HH: Give me a country. Give me a country.

RL: Well, look, and this is one I mention in the piece, and you can, although Obama's going to be there this month, but the opening to Burma has been more of a success than a failure.

HH: You just played Hillary...Duane said Yahtzee. I was going to say Hillary Bingo. Burma always comes up. They have a genocide underway in Burma, Ryan Lizza.

RL: Look, there was a genocide...turning Burma into an ally rather than a country completely isolated in China's orbit is better for America. Am I right or wrong about that?

HH: It's our genocide partner. You're wrong. It's a friendly genocider. You know, that is...

RL: Whether it's genocidal has nothing to do with whether we are more allied with it than China is, right, Hugh?

HH: Well, no. It does, because her own husband said Rwanda was the biggest mistake of his career.

RL: Let me ask you this. How can you, what's a better way to have influence over a country that's genocidal? If it's completely isolated and there's sanctions against it and you have no influence, and it's in China's orbit, which doesn't care about genocide? Or if it actually listens, you actually have a relationship...

HH: It's a great question for her on the debate stage, because I think she'll stand there and go, "Dabba dabba dabba, what about the girls?"

RL: Yeah, if Rand Paul's the nominee, what's he going to say about that?

HH: Oh, well, if Rand Paul's the nominee, whoever they nominate is going to have a more robust foreign policy interventionist, right?

RL: Yeah, and look, let me make the other case. I'm not saying that Burma, you know, Hillary Clinton running on a Burma policy is what gets her

elected, but having eight years in the Clinton administration, which is what will be regarded historically, even in 2016, and perhaps more so after the, depending on where Obama ends up, I think it will be more of a plus than a negative in a general election.

HH: Ryan, so we're really voting for Bill Clinton, aren't we?

RL: Do you agree with me there?

HH: No, I don't. I think we're really voting for Bill Clinton.

RL: Hugh, wait, so of the three, the last three administrations, you don't think the Clinton administration is looking pretty good right now?

HH: Absolutely not. Oh, absolutely not, back to the gos. But very quickly from you, we're really voting for Bill Clinton, right?

RL: I think she's going to have to deal with that. I think she's going to have, she can't do what Gore did, right? She can't pretend to run away from Bill Clinton. And she's got to run on Clinton's record for the most part.

HH: She's got to attach herself at the side of Bill if she wants to win. Ryan Lizza of The New Yorker.

CHAPTER 40

Interview With Guy P. Benson and Senator Marco Rubio, June 9, 2014

HH: Joined now by United States Senator Marco Rubio. Senator Rubio, great to have you in studio, thank you.

MR: Thank you.

HH: Now I want to talk to you about Hillary Clinton's memoir, but the very first and most important question, the Browns drafted Johnny Football. What do you think?

MR: I think it was a nice move by them. They'll sell a lot of tickets. He might go play baseball.

HH: No, he's not going to go...

MR: Did you see he was drafted in the 180th round or something?

HH: He's not too short?

MR: I think he'll be all right. He's a unique player.

HH: All right, just...

MR: Yeah, did you read the leaked report the Patriots have the last scouting report?

HH: I did indeed.

MR: Yeah. And you're not concerned with that?

HH: I'm not worried. Bill Belichick was just messing with our mind.

MR: You're right.

HH: Now I want to talk to you about Hillary Clinton's memoir. What do you think? Is this the first time you've seen Hillary's memoir?

MR: Well, the cover, yeah. I haven't read it.

HH: What do you make of her using on the back flap a picture of the return of the dead from Benghazi?

MR: Yeah, well, I mean obviously, I think many people are going to guestion the use of a photo like that. And by the same, I mean, especially when it's surrounded by just about everything else there is in the picture, other than the bin Laden raid, all are upbeat things. But I think more importantly, is what she'll say about it or has said, and I haven't read that account. But I think that's a huge unanswered question, as far as her time in the State Department. Look, here's what's, I think, not been covered nearly enough, certainly by the mainstream media, and that is one of two things is true. We either should not have been in Benghazi, there should not have been a facility there given a consistent threat stream that had been arriving at the State Department, or they decided to still be there. Remember, the Brits had pulled out by then, the Red Cross, if they decided they were still going to be there, then they should have had a sufficient security plan in place not just to protect the people on the ground, but to be able to extract them. And that clearly was not the case. So I think it's questionable whether they should have been there. You sit there now and look at that stream of reports that were coming in, and it was clear how dangerous it was, but at a minimum, should have had sufficient security, which certainly was not the case, and no extraction plan.

HH: I'm going to have you put on the headphones so you can listen to a conversation that Secretary of State Clinton had with Diane Sawyer earlier today about the security situation in Benghazi. Diane Sawyer posed it this way.

DS: Is there anything you personally should have been doing to make it safer in Benghazi?

HRC: Well, what I did was give very direct instructions that the people who had the expertise and experience in security...

DS: But personally, you...

HRC: Well, that is personal, though, Diane. I mean, I am not equipped to sit and look at blueprints to determine where the blast walls need to be or where the reinforcements need to be. That's why we hire people who have that expertise.

DS: I wonder if people are looking for a sentence that begins from you "I should have..."

HH: Do you think they are, Senator? Diane Sawyer's question, are they looking for Hillary to admit responsibility and accept it?

MR: Yeah, I mean particularly because no one at the State Department's been held responsible for what occurred on that day. Clearly, at some point, and I actually, when we had a hearing that she appeared before us, tried to dig into the bottom of that in terms of understanding why it is that they didn't take this more seriously, but here's what was pretty clear, is that no one did, that it didn't happen, and no one's been held accountable for it. So at some point, someone made the decision that what they had in place in Benghazi in that consulate facility was sufficient. That buck needs to stop somewhere, and it never has.

Guy Benson: Senator, good to see you.

MR: Good to see you.

GB: If you were in the House, hypothetically, and on this Select Committee...

MR: Yeah.

GB: And if Secretary Clinton were to show up, what is the number one question you think that she hasn't sufficiently answered that you would put to her?

MR: And I think that question would be explain to us the process by which the decision was made to keep that consulate open, given all of this information that's out there, and I think it'll be very important to see whether this Select Committee will be able to hold hearings in a classified setting, where the details about some of that reporting stream will be, they'll be able to delve into. And then the second question I would have is tell us at which point you were involved in that decision-making process, or how much you had individually gotten involved in it, and I'll tell you why that's relevant.

During our committee hearing in the Senate during the Foreign Relations Committee where she appeared before us, I asked her about some of the meetings she had had with Libyan officials where this idea that we had outsourced a lot of the security for that facility had been outsourced to Libyan militias. I mean, people have forgotten this, but a lot of the perimeter security in that facility was being handled by Libyan militias. And they were the first people to leave as soon as any of the fighting started. So again, I think the buck, we need to understand who made that decision, and how high up the chain did that reach.

HH: She mentions in this book that she talked with Gregory Hicks along with eight other members of the State Department, confirmed some of his decisions, and said, stay in touch. She never called him back. We know that there's got to be a recording of that, because there was a transcontinental phone recording. To your knowledge, has anyone subpoenaed that conversation?

MR: No.

HH: Should it be?

MR: And again, I'm not sure that there is a transcript of that conversation, certainly probably a read out of some sort. But I wouldn't assume that there is. But again, that was, you're talking about now once it was underway?

HH: Yes.

MR: Yeah, and so that specific question, I'm not sure, has ever been posed in terms of any sort of subpoena. Certainly, the Senate's not issued any subpoenas for anything from this White House or the State Department.

HH: You think the Select Committee should go and ask if that recording occurs?

MR: Sure, I think we need to understand, and I'll tell you why this is important. This is not just about embarrassing Hillary Clinton like some people say or what have you. It's about, the bottom line is that we have multiple facilities around the world, including in Tripoli right now, that are in a dangerous place. And is the same process being used to make decisions there?

HH: Senator Rubio, in this book, and you spent a lot of time on foreign policy in the last few years, Hillary writes in page 470, "It is impossible to watch the suffering in Syria, including as a private citizen, and not ask what more could have been done." How does that strike you?

MR: Well, again, I mean, I've read excerpts where she said she actually argued that in meetings within the White House about what the steps should be taken in that regard. So I'd say two things about the Syrian conflict. Clearly, the humanitarian aspects of it are important, and we need to care about that. But more important from the political perspective, or from an administrative perspective, is the national security interests of the United States. Is it not in the interest of the United States for Syria to become a vast ungoverned space where foreign fighters stream in and use it as a base of operations like they used to use Afghanistan? That's what it's becoming. That's why I argued in the early stages of that conflict that we should try to identify the more modern elements, and ensure that they were well-equipped and armed so that there wouldn't be a vacuum created. That didn't happen. And I know she argues in the book that she advocated for that. That may or may not be, but the White House didn't pursue that track, and now what you've seen is that the majority of the rebels that are fighting in Syria are not Syrians. They're coming from all over the world including Europe, and they're radical jihadists.

HH: If it turns out that she runs for president, and it turns out that you run for president, will you be afraid of debating her foreign policy record with her?

MR: You know, anyone, whoever runs for president against Hillary Clinton, I think, is going to have ample space to criticize foreign policy. What is the signature foreign policy achievement of this administration? If you look at the world today from where it was a few years ago, doubts about America's leadership have never been higher, certainly in the last decade. You know, with George W. Bush, people can disagree about different decisions that he may or may not have made with regards to foreign policy. But there was never any question that the US was going to lead the free nations of the world. Around the world today, perhaps, the most common theme is one of serious doubt about the US' willingness to lead or ability to lead, whether it's in Asia or Europe, or in any part of the planet, so what is the signature achievement of her four and a half years at the State Department?

HH: Do you think there is one?

MR: I do not. In fact, I think if you look at the administration's foreign policy especially during her watch, it completely lacked any sort of strategic vision of what America's role is in the world in the 21st century.

HH: Before I turn this over to Guy, on page 205, she writes that, "Many in Europe were put off by the 'you're either with us or against us' style of President George W. Bush's administration, exemplified by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's dismissive description of France and Germany as old Europe at the height of the Iraq debate in early 2003. By 2009, positive views of America across Europe had eroded significantly. We had our work cut out for us." True or false?

MR: Well, again, there might have been elements in Europe that didn't like the direction George W. Bush headed, but at least they knew where he stood, and they respected it. I think the even worse problem that we face now is the significant doubts among our allies around the world that the US is still capable of living up to their defense obligations. You look at Asia as an example, and this is a promising development, in my mind, but the fact that Japan is now spending more money and trying to define their Constitution in a way that allows them to participate in collective self-defense, is, one of the reasons why that's occurring is because of significant doubts about whether the US is still willing or capable of playing the role that it has historically in the Asia Pacific region.

Guy Benson: Senator, the Clinton camp has sort of pushed back, and sort of trying to have it both ways on the Bergdahl situation, where Secretary Clinton has been supportive of the deal. But then there is reporting in The Daily Beast that said she was skeptical about the deal and wanted more out of it. A: Your take on that trade?

MR: Yeah.

GB: And more specifically, B: Where do you come down on the argument about the president was bound by law to inform Congress, versus he had as commander-in-chief executive power, he didn't have to do that?

MR: So he does have executive power to act in a national security interest. So for example, if there was clear evidence that the sergeant was in imminent threat for his life, that some dramatic instances had changed and he

wanted to move forward on a deal for whatever reason, he certainly had the constitutional power to do that. They've offered no evidence of that. And in fact, their story, just the health concerns they had about the sergeant, have now changed a couple of times over the last week since this deal has been announced. Beyond that, my take of it is that for American service men and women around the world, they're in greater danger today than they were before this deal was made. There's been a very clear message and incentive sent now that if you get your hands on an American service man or woman, it proves greatly valuable. I'm not making that up. The Taliban has said that, including last week in an article in *Time* magazine. And then beyond that, I would argue that we've released five extremely dangerous individuals, some of whom have been accused of atrocities, war crimes, and I say accused, but quite frankly, they did it, they admit to this, have been released, and by the administration's own assessment. You can anticipate almost all of them, if not every single one of them, will return to the fight against America fairly soon.

HH: Senator Rubio, there is exactly one reference to Valerie Jarrett in this memoir. Do you understand Ms. Jarrett's role to have been more significant than that in the last five and a half years? And if so, what do you think her role is?

MR: Well, I don't know what it is. They've certainly, I'm not an insider in that White House, so I would probably be the last one to know what her role is. I know she's a prominent player in the White House, but at the end of the day, I would imagine her role cannot extend beyond making, giving advice. The ultimate responsibility is on the President, and on the members of his cabinet, like Hillary Clinton, who guide policy and who make decisions on management and so forth with regards to the decisions that were made with security at this facility in Benghazi. And for the President, he's the one who has failed to lay out a strategic view of what America's role in the world is. To the extent that there is one, it seems to have been that America's problems around the world were created by a robust foreign policy through the Bush administration, and that his job was to extract us from these things around the world. I think that's proven to be a disaster.

Interview with United States Senator Marco Rubio, March 24, 2015:

HH: I begin today's show with United States Senator Marco Rubio.

Senator Rubio, welcome back to the Hugh Hewitt Show, it's great to have you.

MR: It's great to be on, thank you.

HH: You know, my tradition, I always start with a couple of sports questions with you.

MR: Yeah.

HH: The Heat are at 33-37...

MR: Yeah.

HH: The Dolphins are drafting 14 after an 8-8 year. The Marlins only won 77 games last year. The Gators lost five games. I mean, are the sports gods auspicious for a presidential run for you this year?

MR: (laughing) It's been a good year, I mean, a bad year, but I think that's always the beginning of a good one. So the Marlins have actually put together a Major League roster. I mean, so they're excited about that. The Heat is struggling, of course, because they've had a lot of injuries. But they've made some, you know, Dragic, the Dragon, who they've just added, is a real point guard and gives them, they hadn't had a point guard on that team in ten years. So the combination of that and Bosh coming back next year hopefully from the blood clot, I think they're one good scorer away from being a very legitimate contender. And the Gators just had a tough run, but they'll be back.

HH: All right, then a second question, the MVP debate is hot. Westbrook-LeBron, you do remember LeBron, right?

MR: I remember LeBron. We beat him last week, actually.

HH: (laughing)

MR: We beat him for the second time this year. I do remember.

HH: Westbrook-LeBron-Curry-Harden, who's the MVP, Senator Rubio?

MR: You know, I think Westbrook's had a great year. LeBron can be the MVP any year, but you know, Kyrie Irving has really been more of, has kind of really stepped up and taken leadership on that team in ways that no one had anticipated. Now you could argue that that's LeBron opening up the

floor for him, but you know, it's interesting. I just think Westbrook means more to his team right now.

HH: All right, now to the serious stuff. I see that you and Senator Cotton have co-authored an amendment. I have been talking about Defense spending for the last two weeks on this show. Tell us about the amendment and about the prospects for a serious return to serious funding limits for the Pentagon.

MR: Well, let me begin by saving that the fundamental obligation of the federal government, beyond almost anything else, is the national security of our country. That doesn't mean you just throw away money on programs that don't work. But I do believe that when you put together a federal budget, your number one object should be how can we protect the country from foreign adversaries, threat of terrorism, etc.? And once you've funded that, then I think you begin to fund the other things. But it should not, it is not an equal part of the budget when it comes to the federal government, and we're not doing that now. We are well below, you know, \$487 billion dollars over ten years are the cuts that have happened under this administration. It'll add up to over a trillion over the next decade as you move forward. These, this is just an incredible decline in spending at a time when the risks are continuing to grow. This country has tried to take peace dividends in the past, after Vietnam, after the Cold War. But at least, that was not a good idea. We had to come back and reverse all that, and it costs more money. But at least at that time, there seemed to be some sort of prospect for peace. This is not in any way a peaceful time. This is a time of increased threats, whether it's the Asia Pacific region with China's growth and militarily, in the Middle East with the threat of both an Iranian nuclear weapon and also the threat of ISIS/al Nusra/al Qaeda and all these other related jihadist groups in the region. And of course, NATO needs to be reinvigorated as well. So these cuts couldn't come as a worse time. So we just want to take it back to the numbers proposed in the Gates budget that was offered up in 2012. And it reflects what the bipartisan, Congressionally-mandated National Defense Panel stated was the minimum required to reverse course and set the military on a more stable footing.

HH: Do you have the votes for that, do you think, on the Senate side? The House will be different. There'll be a conference. But first, you've got to get serious funding out of the Senate to at least get to the conference to get to serious Defense funding?

MR: Well, we hope we do. Obviously, it's going to be a heavy lift, because we'll need some Democrats to come on board, and we'll need all of our Republicans. And we do have some fiscal hawks in our conference that don't want to see anything that isn't paid for. My argument is I want to balance the budget, too. But we can only balance our budget through entitlement reform. You can't do it by cutting Defense spending. There's just not enough money there when you're talking about an \$18 trillion debt, and it's a very dangerous thing to do in terms of putting us at risk. So it's unlikely we'll get to 60 votes. Maybe we can convince some people, and of course, Democrats, some even the pro-Defense ones, are insisting on a commensurate increase in domestic spending to support any increase in Defense spending. So that proves to be problematic. But we at the very least have to lay down, we need to know who's who around here when it comes to making Defense spending a priority.

HH: All right, now you mentioned NATO as well, and I asked Dr. Ben Carson this last week, I want to ask you as well. Putin does not appear to be checked by anything. There is a threat to the Baltic states. Do you believe NATO would back up their commitments to their Baltic members if Putin made an aggression there, and ought they to?

MR: Well, a couple points on that front. The first is that I think we've got some European partners that quite frankly are not excited about the prospect of having to have someone invoke the common defense agreement, the collective defense part of NATO, and they're worried about that to begin with. You've seen some of that already, although Ukraine is not a NATO member. You've seen some reluctance there to do things like arming the Ukrainians, beyond just the capability argument. I mean, almost all of our NATO allies have significantly reduced Defense spending over the last few years. Virtually none of them except Poland, and I might be mistaking one other country, is meeting at the threshold number that's been set for NATO membership. So part of it is just a capacity argument. And the notion that America, there's never been a NATO without America. You really can't have it. We're still the cornerstone of it, and we have our own capacity issues that we're facing. So I would hope that NATO would live up to its defense agreements. It certainly, I think, says it would. But the question is one of capacity, and cost benefit analysis for a lot of these countries. And I think that it's a challenge, because Putin has made a very clear decision, and that is he wants to rewrite the European order in the aftermath, and he wants to rewrite post-Soviet Europe.

And I think Moldova is the next target, and you're already starting to see moves in that direction in terms of supporting separatist groups in Transnistria and other places.

HH: Now today, the President announced that he is going to delay the departure of at least half of the 9,800 troops that remain in Afghanistan. Did he make the right decision today? And ought he to extend that decision through 2016 as it seems the Afghan president is asking for?

MR: Yeah, I think he made the right decision, but I think the better decision would have been to follow some of the military advice that he'd gotten in terms of troop strength. And I hope he's learned from the mistake of Iraq, where the rapid exit of American troops left behind a vacuum that was ultimately filled by these radical elements that now find themselves there, these, through ISIS and others, and has created basically an Iranian invasion of Iraq in terms of being on the front lines of controlling these Shiia militia, which they do, and have an increasing and exorbitant influence over Baghdad and over the Iraqi government. And you could make the argument that had the U.S. remained, it would have been a check on Maliki's abuse that certainly occurred when his abuses of the Sunnis in the country, which created the conditions for a lot of what we're facing. So back to Afghanistan, absolutely, I think it's important. And by the way, something that's not being covered enough, there is a growing ISIS presence in Afghanistan. They are actively fighting with, not warfare, but they're actively competing with al Qaeda and Taliban elements for influence in a post-U.S. Afghanistan. And you worry about where some of the mid-level Taliban officers are in terms of their true allegiance at this stage.

HH: Well now, speaking about the ISIS threat, I spent an hour yesterday with Benjamin Hall, who wrote Inside ISIS: The Brutal Rise Of A Terrorist Army. He spends a lot of time talking about the fact that Qasem Soleimani, the head of the Iranian Quds Forces, actually got operational control over the Shiia militia. Petraeus mentioned this, General Petraeus mentioned this last week in the Washington Post. It appears as though we've lost Baghdad, Marco Rubio, and that in fact, it's already under the operational control of Khamenei. So if that is in fact the case, why in the world are we negotiating with them in Switzerland?

MR: Yeah, and that's the argument that I've made. I mean, first of all, I

believe a lot of what's happening in terms of U.S. strategy against ISIS and Iraq is being driven by our desire not to turn off the Iranians, because they certainly don't want us there at all. And I know John Kerry testified to the opposite. He's wrong, and he knows he's wrong. They don't want us there at all. They're suspicious of what we're doing there now. And they foster all sorts of conspiracy theories and lunacies about who we're really helping, and accuse us of double playing and so forth. So I think that's a big problem. And the second problem is the one you've outlined, and that is that the Iranian influence over the government in Baghdad has grown exponentially in the absence of a stronger American presence on the ground. I still think there are elements of the Iraqi government that are distrustful of Iran, and would want to work with us. But we don't have the footing to do it. And I think long term, our personnel there are in potential danger from the Shia militia, who aren't fans of the United States, and could easily turn on us at any moment.

HH: Should we walk away from these negotiations in Geneva right now because of the conduct of Iran in other places than that negotiating room?

MR: Well first of all, we need to remember what's not being covered by these negotiations, which are just as important as their nuclear ambition, and that's the intercontinental ballistic missiles that they're developing. And it's very reasonable that before the end of this decade, Iran could possess a long range rocket that could reach the United States, the Continental U.S. They're rapidly, that's not even being covered by these negotiations. They're not even the subject of sanctions. And I think that alone is a reason to be imposing sanctions on Iran, not to mention their state sponsorship of terrorism. That being said, any agreement that allows Iran to retain enrichment capability, leaves in place the infrastructure they will need in five, ten, eight, whenever they decide to ramp up enrichment and produce a weapon, if the only thing standing between them and a nuclear weapon becomes, and the ability to deliver it through a long range rocket becomes the ability to enrich at a higher level, that's the easiest switch to flip. And you saw the North Koreans follow a model such as this. So I just think the deal is premised on an agreement on something that is totally unacceptable, and quite frankly, abandons almost a decade of sanctions built on the idea originally that they would not be allowed to enrich. And by the way, the Saudis, the Turks, the Egyptians, even the Jordanians have made very clear that whatever Iran is allowed to do under this agreement, they will expect the same. So if Iran is

allowed to enrich up to 5%, 20% for research, the Saudis are going to insist on the same capability. HH: Then let me ask you the three ifs. If that deal is in fact signed by President Obama that allows them to retain enrichment, and if you run for president, and if you win, would you revoke that deal?

MR: Yes.

HH: Would you go on record and just let them know that's not going to...

MR: Absolutely, and I already have. And the point, because it's not, first of all, it's not an enforceable deal as we made clear in the Cotton letter. It won't survive this president in terms of you know, a future president will have to decide whether to live by it or not. It's not enforceable. It doesn't have the force of law. Now if he brings it to the Congress and can get it passed, that's a different story. He's indicated that he prefers to take it to the United Nations instead of the U.S. Congress. The second point I would make is that I think it'll be difficult to reassemble the international sanctions if this falls apart, but nonetheless, we should be willing to lead unilaterally. And I think others will ultimately see it. And the third is I anticipate the Iranians will take advantage of any loopholes they can find in the deal, and I think they'll flat out try to violate portions of it. You know, Iran has other challenges ahead. They're going to have a succession fight fairly soon when the Supreme Leader passes from the scene. And it's very possible that the new leader of Iran, after the current leader vanishes, could be someone even more radical. as hard as that is to imagine. And that's something to keep an eye on as well.

HH: Now Senator Rubio, next hour, I've got Dan Balz coming up. Last night, he was honored with the Toner award for excellence in political journalism. And when he accepted, he looked out and he saw former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sitting there, and here is what he said.

Dan Balz: Please, thank you very much. Secretary Clinton, thank you for continuing to sit here through this. I didn't expect that you were going to be here. I'm happy to yield my time back to you if you want to take some questions.

HH: And Senator Rubio, she shook her head and she took no questions. Now she tweets occasionally. Is it admissible, is it acceptable

for the former Secretary of State and probably Democratic nominee to say nothing about these Iranian negotiations as they unfold right now?

MR: Well, I don't think it is, but ultimately, as of today, she's still a private citizen that has no formal obligation. The minute she enters the race for president, she'll have to answer plenty of questions. And she's the chief architect of the failed foreign policy. I mean, in essence, during her time as Secretary of State, the U.S. has no measurable real achievements in terms of making the world a safer place. And in fact, many of the causes, the root causes of what is global instability from a U.S. perspective were put in place during her leadership at the State Department. The reset in Russia was a failure. The inability to follow through and complete the mission in Libya left behind a vacuum that's now turned into one of the premiere operational spaces in the world for global jihadists to operate from. The list goes on and on.

HH: I asked your colleague and friend, Jeb Bush, a couple weeks ago if he would be hampered if he became president by the legacy of Bush War I and Bush War II in Iraq. And that actually is for all Republicans. Republicans carry that burden of having to prosecute war in the face of what is alleged war worriedness. What would Marco Rubio say about having to persuade people to go abroad again in defense of interests that may not be so obvious to people?

MR: Well, part of the leadership is explaining what the interest is. And certainly, the American people are not a war-loving people. We really don't want to be in war, and we would prefer these things not to exist. I would prefer ISIS never to have existed. I would prefer for Assad never have to govern Syria. I would prefer for Iran to by governed by normal people and not a radical jihadist cleric. But that's the world we have, and we have to confront it. Now here's the question. If we don't lead the world in confronting it, who will lead the world in confronting it, because the truth is, no one can. The United Nations can't do it, the Russian obviously are in many ways supportive of some of the things that are happening. China has no interest in it. There is no substitute for American leadership on the global stage. And you can ignore our foreign adversaries, but they won't ignore us. And eventually, you're going to have to deal with them. So more often than not, the choice before us is do we deal with them now, earlier, when they are easier, not easy, but easier to confront, or do we wait for this problem to grow bigger, costlier, more expensive, and more difficult to confront? And that's one of the lessons

of foreign policy. When you do something is almost as important as how you do it, in many instances. And again, we're not looking for wars to be engaged in. We'd prefer not to. And in some instances, we don't have to be involved in war in the traditional sense. As an example in Iraq today, I mean, we should have really taken a lead early on in putting together a Sunni coalition in the region to confront ISIS on the ground with U.S. air support. Instead, we've outsourced it to Shiia militias under the control of Iran, and I think we're going to pay a terrible price for that in the years to come.

HH: Do you still see the opportunity to find people left in Syria under the banner of the Free Syrian Army or any that would stand both against Assad and al Nusra and ISIS?

MR: I still think there are individuals that are capable of that. I think it's harder than ever. They've been decimated by attacks from both the regime and competing other groups on the ground. My argument always was that we wanted to get in front early and in power some group that would not be a radical group, and make them the strongest and best-armed group, because if we didn't, that vacuum that it left would be filled by a more radical group. That's exactly what happened. ISIS is a result of that vacuum, stepped in, flooded the region with foreign fighters, and as a result, we've seen what's happened. I think it's more difficult than it's ever been. It's still worth trying, but it's no longer the linchpin of our strategy in the region, because those groups have either folded up under the groups that actually have guns, or are dead, or have left the battlefield.

HH: Last question, Senator Rubio, your speech about Israel last week, I replayed most of it, it was warmly received by most people. Today, the President got a question about his relationship with Benjamin Netanyahu. This is what he said:

President Obama: I have a very businesslike relationship with the Prime Minister. I've met with him more than any other world leader. I talk to him all the time. He is representing his country's interests the way he thinks he needs to, and I'm doing the same. So the issue is not a matter of relations between leaders. The issue is a very clear, substantive challenge. We believe that two states is the best path forward for Israel's security, for Palestinian aspirations and for regional stability.

HH: Senator Rubio, do you believe him on the "businesslike relationship"?

MR: No.

HH: And what about this two-state solution at this time in this place?

MR: No. First of all, he's wrong on both counts. Number one, he can't say he has a businesslike relationship or that it isn't personal when his entire political machine, virtually, some of the top people in his political operation were in Israel, on the ground, trying to defeat Netanyahu, which is unprecedented. You know, he didn't send anyone in any other country to try to influence the outcome of those elections. And from Jeremy Bird down to others that were deeply and intricately involved in his campaigns in the past, he sent them down there to start the equivalent of a superPAC to try to oust Netanyahu. So I mean, what he's saying is absurd in terms of it not being personal. That sounds pretty personal to me. As far as the two-state solution, I would say what many Israelis say, which is yeah, that's the ideal outcome. It's also the least likely. And here's why, because you don't have the conditions today for that to happen. You have a Palestinian Authority that has no interest at this point. Certainly Hamas has none, but the Palestinian Authority has no interest at this moment on being a serious partner for peace. They continue to reward and elevate people they call martyrs, who we call terrorists, who have killed Israelis and even Americans. They've walked away from very generous offers over the last, at least twice over the last 15 years that have been made by the Israelis. The conditions just do not exist at this point. They teach their children to hate Jews, that it's a glorious thing to kill Jews. These are the sorts of things that make it impossible at this moment to have an agreement. And in fact, if you're standing from the Israeli perspective, what you see is the possibility that that second state that some are calling for would be nothing more than a launching pad for further attacks against Israel in the future.

HH: Senator Marco Rubio, always great to talk with you.

CHAPTER 41

An Interview with then-Bloomberg's Washington Bureau Chief now with TheVox.com. and co-author of HRC, Jon Allen, April 18, 2014, discussing comments about Hillary Clinton from The New York Times' Mark Leibovich, The Washington Post's Dana Milbank, The New York Times' Maggie Haberman (then of Politico), MSNBC's Joy-Ann Reid and The Daily Beast's Jonathan Alter

HH: I'm talking about Hillary Rodham Clinton. Specifically, I'm talking about a brand new New York Times bestseller about her titled HRC: State Secrets And the Rebirth of Hillary Clinton by Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes. And I want to begin by saying it's an absolute must-read for the center-right, especially for conservatives who are interested in 2016. It is the best portrait of Hillary available that is not comprehensive, because it begins in 2008 through the present day. But it is detailed, it is insightful, and I am pleased to welcome the co-author, Jonathan Allen, who is the Bloomberg White House correspondent. Jon, welcome, it's great to have you.

JA: Thank you.

HH: I want to begin at the end of the book, because you tracked down Jason Chaffetz, who's the rising star of the House Oversight Governmental Affairs Committee, and I think he got it exactly right. Prior to the attack, he said Libya could have been Hillary's swan song. It could have been her major achievement. But the whole deck of cards fell out from underneath her. Is that the widely shared view on the right?

JA: I don't know that it's the widely shared view on the right.

I think one of the reasons that we spent so much time talking to
Congressman Chaffetz is he seemed to have a handle on the big overall question which is what was driving all of this, and what was motivating Secretary Clinton. And you know, I don't know, people can make a judgment about what they think was motivating her based on all the evidence, but you know,

Congressman Chaffetz took a shot at that, and had a theory about. And I think it's actually a more important question than whether or not there was extra security in Tripoli. You know, we talk about rejections of requests for security, but very seldom does anybody point out that those requests were for Tripoli, not for Benghazi, and that it may not have made a difference on the ground that night. But the bigger impact in question, of course, is why did we go in, in the first place? Were we ignoring dangers on the ground? Were we trying to do too much there? And I think Congressman Chaffetz is really focused on those larger questions, and they apply, I think very importantly, to Secretary Clinton's perspective on the world and the United States' role in the world.

HH: We have a lot of ground to cover about Hillary, and I'm starting with Benghazi only because I want to assure my conservative audience that you are thorough, fair and detailed, and that you do not spare the criticism or the insight into it so that they'll not believe that it's a Beltway book for Beltway insiders, but in fact, it does dig in to the good, the bad and the ugly of HRC's four years at State. So I want to start with Benghazi, but we'll move on from there fairly quickly. Chapter 15, Pages 283-309, is all about Benghazi. Earlier, you quote Hillary as saying we came, we saw, he died, referring to Qaddafi on Page 252. But the attack begins on Page 283, and I'll summarize so that we can save your voice for your response. Stephen Mull goes into Hillary's office to inform her of the attack at 4:05 p.m. DC. You go on to write when she heard Benghazi had come under attack, Hillary gathered several of her staff in her office on the 7th floor to get a full briefing on what was happening in Libya and give orders—Mills, Sullivan, Burns, Boswell and an aide from their Near Eastern Affairs Bureau, were among the group assembled. By the way, Jon, was Philippe Reines there?

JA: You know, I'm not entirely sure. We listed the people we knew were there, and in fact, it's interesting. We said one of the aides from the Near East Bureau, because were two women who worked in that bureau, and we talked to people who were aware of that meeting, and there were disagreements about which of the two women were in the room.

HH: Interesting, interesting. Very careful. Was Huma Abedin there?

JA: I don't know for sure.

HH: Do you suspect that she was?

JA: You know what? I couldn't say.

HH: All right.

JA: We really put all the people that we knew who were there into the book

HH: You go on to give the narrative. Around the same time, one of Pat Kennedy's subordinates told Hillary Clinton that Smith had been killed. That's one of the people at the embassy who was with Ambassador Stevens, and that Stevens was missing. Hillary called Tom Donilon, the NSC advisor. We have an issue here, we need you to be on it. She called David Petraeus, and then you say by 5:30 DC, an hour and a half into the attack, deputies meetings began, a rolling teleconference run from the Situation Room—Brennan, Biden staffer Blinken, Ben Rhodes, Tommy Vietor. "Mills represented Hillary from the 7th floor of the State Department, but at one point, Hillary walked into the Operations Center to participate in the meeting." Now here's where it gets interesting to me, Jon. You write on Page 295, "People got fairly frantic, particularly when they couldn't find Chris." And between 4 pm and 8 pm, we really don't know what Hillary is doing, do we?

JA: Between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m? I mean, I don't have a minute by minute timeline of what she's doing. What I do have is pieces of that timeline. I know there were conversations with foreign officials. I know that she was on these teleconferences with American officials. I know she called Petraeus. I know she called Donilon. But it's true, like, it's not like there's a transcript of every minute that is available. I do know the State Department put together a timeline for people who had to testify on this, and nobody was willing to make it available to me or my co-author. So there is a timeline that exists. I don't know how much more detailed it is than what we got into the book. But I presume that there's probably more detail into her account.

HH: This is the most detailed timeline of the most important night of her Secretary of State tenure. And you did the best job of reporting it. That's why I like HRC, including the fact she called Gregory Hicks at 8 pm in DC, and she never called back. Does that strike you as odd, Jon Allen, that she never called Hicks back that night?

JA: I think there was a lot going on. It doesn't necessarily strike me as odd, but again, without knowing what she was doing minute by minute, you're

having to figure out what are the priorities. And if somebody else is in contact with him, is able to handle that end of the discussion and she's needed for something else, then it might make sense. If she's kicking back and drinking lemonade by the poolside and not calling him back, I think it does sound odd. And without that full timeline, it's hard to know. I do know that of the public, of the major public officials involved in that incident, we know more about her timeline than anybody else's.

HH: We certainly know more about hers than the President's. But I have always asked the question out loud to people both involved with the investigation and not, your number two is in the middle of Tripoli. They've got the axes out. It's like a scene from Argo. They're smashing up the computers in Tripoli. Benghazi's under attack, Stevens is missing, you talk to Hicks at 8 pm, he gets the okay to retreat to their CIA annex. A few hours later, SEALs are dead, another attack is underway, and you never call back your number two on the ground. It just seems like a massive leadership default.

JA: It's a good question, Hugh. I mean, you're right. You're right that as Chris Stevens is missing, the head person in charge there, and de facto, because Chris Stevens is in Benghazi, but if he wasn't missing, you know, Greg Hicks is the one that's in charge. And I think it's reasonable to ask that question and it's not one that I have an answer to. If she runs for president, I think it's one she'll get.

HH: Again and again... We'll move on from Benghazi fairly quickly. But this does not spare Hillary. She goes home at 1a.m. She checks in with Cheryl Mills, her chief-of-staff, at 2:30 a.m., and it is not a flattering portrait. You bluntly state the attack at the annex begins, officials were shocked by the second-round attack, you quote. Administration officials didn't anticipate the second strike. People got fairly frantic. You know, at one point, I wrote in my notes, I wonder if they sent Hillary home. Do you think she stressed out, and they just said go home?

JA: I don't. I think at that point, they, and remember, this is now, by the time she goes home at *1:00* in the morning, we're talking about, forgive me, after putting together that timeline, it's escaping me right now. But I think it's about 7:00 in the morning, 7:30 in the morning in Benghazi. They know that Chris Stevens is dead by that point. I mean, they're waiting for the official confirmation, but at that point, they know that he's dead. They know about

the second attack at that point. And so my guess is that they were pretty confident, there were no other American outposts to attack. The group that had been at the CIA annex was on its way to the airport or had arrived at the airport by the time she left. So I don't think it's a matter of them shooing her out of the building so much as her role in being able to affect anything at that point was probably somewhat minimal. I will say this, though. I think it's shocking, as you do, that nobody in the American government anticipated that there might be an attack on the CIA annex a mile or so from the diplomatic compound. It never occurred to them that this could be more than a one-off. I mean, I think it's a startling admission that they were caught flat-footed. And obviously, we know that, obviously.

HH: And you do not spare that. And I want my listeners to realize that's why HRC is like crack cocaine for political junkies, but this is also very, very good reporting.

[Tape transcript of congressional hearing]

Senator Ron Johnson, (R-WI): We've ascertained that that was not the fact, and the American people could have known that within days, and they didn't know that.

HRC: And with all due respect, the fact is we had four dead Americans.

RJ: I understand.

HRC: Was it because of a protest? Or was it because of guys out for a walk one night or decided to go kill some Americans? What difference at this point does it make?

HH: That, of course, is Hillary Clinton sparring with Senator Ron Johnson, an exchange which is deeply detailed and backgrounded in the brand new book, HRC: State Secrets And the Rebirth Of Hillary Clinton, co-authored by Jonathan Allen, Bloomberg's White House correspondent, Amie Parnes of The Hill. It is a New York Times bestseller, and with good reason. It is absolutely riveting on the entire tenure of Hillary at State, not just Benghazi. But I do want to finish up that conversation about Benghazi. Your book opens, and no one noticed this, Jon Allen. I did. With Hillary watching videotape

with senior staff, including the very controversial figure of Pat Kennedy, in early April, 2010, this was 30 months before the Benghazi incident, and the video she's watching is about embassy security in Peshawar, Pakistan, where the compound was almost overrun. And so at the very beginning and the end of the book, you open with her duty as the steward of the professional FSOs, and being aware of the problem, and then not having acted in a way to prevent the murder of four Americans.

JA: Yeah, I was shocked that people didn't make more of a big deal out of that when the book came out. And maybe it's because it's in the introduction, and people sometimes skip the introductions to books. But yes, she's, in 2010, an attack at the Peshawar compound in Pakistan sort of, like Benghazi, one of these outposts sort of in the middle of nowhere with a lot of terrorist activity around, it comes under attack. The attack was thwarted by some of the defenses of the compound which were better than what we had in Benghazi, and she wants all of her aides to watch this, to see what happened, to know that the diplomats were in these places, are in peril, to know that safety measures can thwart attacks, but to be aware of the general situation, because in Washington, I think it can be easy to forget that a lot of the diplomats, a lot of the people in the Foreign Service are, you know, under threat. They're in places that don't like us, and necessarily sometimes in places that don't like us. And I was a little befuddled that that wasn't one of the big headlines coming out of the book.

HH: Jon Allen, I actually don't think conservatives have read your book, yet. And I'm trying to urge them to do so, because I think it is so fascinating and detail-filled. And they may not have read it, because the New York Times reviewed it favorably. They said it's a largely favorable portrait of Hillary. I just think it's a largely objective portrait of Hillary. And you, like me, have been a partisan in the past, and so maybe conservatives don't think you're bringing the dish. But I mean, the dish is here, starting with the story that did get a lot of play, the enemies list. And I love this line. "Special circle of Clinton hell, reserved for people who had endorsed Obama or stayed on the fence after Bill and Hillary had raised money for them, appointed them to a political post, or written a recommendation to ace their kid's application to an elite school." It includes Rockefeller, Casey, Pat Leahy, I love seeing him on that list, Chris Van Hollen, Baron Hill, Rob Andrews. There's even a sub-basement in hell, and that's for Claire McCaskill.

JA: Yeah, she's never getting out of there.

HH: (laughing)

JA: She's like the walking dead to the Clintons. Put her in the basement and don't ever let her out.

HH: There is a quote. "Hate is too weak a word to describe the feelings that Hillary's core loyalists still have for McCaskill." But I must say, the arc of the story of Jason Altmire, which begins on page 16 and ends on page 274 that was a creative decision that you and Amie Parnes made. You use him as a sort of a totem of what happens when you cross Team Hillary.

JA: Yeah, we loved the idea of drawing that out and sort of, because one of the big themes of this book is the way in which Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton interact, and how their operations support each other and are integrated with each other.

HH: She drops the F-bomb. And that, by the way, is itself a story. Hillary seems fairly comfortable with the use of that term.

JA: Yeah, I think she uses it a lot.

HH: And see, that's going to, you know, when Nixon's tapes came out and all the expletives were deleted. They should have left them in, because they weren't the F-bombs people thought they were... Let's go out with a little [of The New York Times'] Nicholas Kristof on what he thought of her accomplishments:

NK: You know, the...the gains were in many ways fairly modest. You had, you know, the success at Burma, which as you say, sort of pales next to some of the difficulties. On the other hand, we did de-escalate, we did move down from a mess in Iraq. And for now, it's a somewhat better mess than it was. That may also be true of Afghanistan. And the crisis in the Middle East was, I don't know that it was handled brilliantly, but it was a mess for anybody who would have been dealing with it. Likewise China, North Korea, I don't think that those are shining successes.

HH: Look in the dictionary under faint praise and you'll see Nicholas Kristof on Hillary.

HH: Jon, I have made a habit over the last few months of asking a variety of people, and I'll play some of these clips for you today, what they thought of Hillary's tenure... the last segment with Nicholas Kristof damning with faint praise. Here's Jonathan Alter of Bloomberg, one of your colleagues there, and a pretty good historian himself:

JA: It's a really good question. You know, I traveled around the world with her when she was secretary of State for an article that I wrote about her for Vanity Fair. And I gave her, you know, decent marks for essentially for being a goodwill ambassador. You know, she was met very enthusiastically every place she went. She did these town meetings that were very effective in building goodwill for the United States in many countries around the world. That's an important part of the Secretary of State's job. It is not, however, fair to call her an historic Secretary of State. Now part of that is not her fault. You know, the stars were not aligned properly for her to make peace. The truth is that you have to go back to Richard Holbrooke, who wasn't even secretary in the Clinton Administration to find an American diplomat who was actually, really brokered peace in a real way, which he did in the Balkans. So I have a feeling that when we look back on it, if John Kerry catches a break and his persistence pays off in one of these areas, that we will see him as being a more historic Secretary of State than Hillary Clinton.

HH: And Jonathan Allen, one more for you to comment on, Mark Leibovich of The New York Times, a shorter one, cut number 8:

ML: Geez, look, I think, I don't cover the State Department. Look, you have that look on your face like you expect me to duck this question.

HH: No, I expect you not to be able to say anything, because she didn't do anything.

ML: I actually didn't, I don't, here's the deal. I have not written any stories on Hillary Clinton since 2008. About, what's like the graceful way to duck a question?

HH: Not even ducking, just this is, we're playing Jeopardy!

ML: Yeah, I honestly don't know.

HH: Nobody can come up with anything, Mark.

ML: Yeah, let's see, what did she do? Yeah, I mean, she traveled a lot. That's the thing. They're always like, well, she logged eight zillion miles. It's like, since when did that become like, you know, like diplomacy by odometer?

HH: Jonathan Allen, this is where your book is a great assist they think, because you chronicle what she did. But boy, the conventional wisdom, Kristof, Alter, Leibovich, it's pretty settled that it was an undistinguished four years.

Yeah, she's no Thomas Jefferson or James Monroe when you look back historically. So you know, I agree with you. We put together what she did do. I think there are things you do as a diplomat that are important that are not a marguis peace deal creating a harmonious Middle East. Obviously, everybody goes in wanting that. I think averting problems is a big part of the Secretary of State's job. I think advising the President is a big part of the job. I think being a goodwill ambassador for the United States is part of the job. All those things are part of the job. But let's not forget making big strides on big issues are also an important part of the job. And you know, for that, there is no big deal. There's no Clinton doctrine, not that Secretaries of State really have doctrines. They're usually the President's. But there's no doctrine, there's no big deal to create peace, to extend peace. A lot of what she did was to, I think, you know, particularly in war-torn areas, was to keep partnerships going, to try to keep the Pakistanis on board so that our intelligence community could work in Pakistan. But again, yeah, it's fair to criticize her or fair to look at her record and say there's no big agreement there.

HH: 956,733 miles traveled, 112 countries visited. You're very careful to include the specifics of that. But you know, cruise directors go farther than that. Is that going to actually become a negative? We've got about a minute to the break Jon, for her to bring up the odometer diplomacy? Or is it going to remain a positive?

JA: I think it's a mistake to bring up the odometer diplomacy. It just invites the contrast of what she accomplished to how many miles she logged, and nobody really thinks that's the measure of what a good Secretary of State is. You know, we make the point in the book that her aides are very quick to

point that out. They were very quick to keep a record of it and put it on the front page of the website. But you know, when you examine her record in deeper detail, it definitely invites comparison of what she actually got done to how many miles she went, and that's not good for her.

HH: Jonathan, voice-challenged though he is, he sounds like those days when I would come in and put lemons on my desk and take steroid packs. And I sent him a note this morning when he was struggling to get ready for the interview. I said you know, Carville played hurt on a Dallas debate that I moderated with Mary Matalin the day after the Denver debate between Obama and Romney, and I complimented him on it. He said if you can't play hurt, don't get in the game in his typical Louisiana drawl. And then I noticed Jon Allen, that Carville's not in this book. And I'm kind of amazed by that. The old team is sort of gone from Hillary's new team.

JA: Yeah, it's really interesting. Carville and Begala win two elections for President Clinton, and they are not part of the inner circle of Hillary Clinton. That said, their voices are still influential. They still can get Bill Clinton on the phone when they want to. If they had some advice for her, I'm sure they could get it to her. But it's not like they brought those guys back. And you know, I think both of them are pretty good political strategists. And the people that she had running her 2008 campaign were not particularly good political strategists as it turned out. So there may have been a mistake there.

HH: Here is Dana Milbank of the Washington Post talking with me about what Hillary got done, and I think he is just absolutely pin perfect on his assessment:

DM: Well, she, I suppose what she accomplished for her reputation was she increased her standing to the point of invincibility.

HH: But what did she actually do, Dana Milbank?

DM: Well, I don't know. What did Lawrence Eagleburger do? You know, I don't believe we had any major peace treaties under her. We had some brief military actions, but basically cleaning up the ones that were in play. So I don't...

HH: You're a columnist. I'm just asking. Do you think she accomplished anything? Or was she basically a non-entity at State?

DM: I think she was successful in the sense of projecting a strong American image abroad, and of restoring American standing and reputation in the world. But these are nebulous...

HH: Dana, how do you get there? How do you measure that? How do you, I mean, under that talking point, what are the data points?

DM: Well, right. What I was saying before you said that is these are, that's sort of a nebulous notion of American standing. You know, and so whether we are more popular in European and foreign capitals, I'm not sure whether that particularly matters. But you know, I mean, I certainly didn't come on this call to be a defender of Hillary Clinton.

HH: And he wasn't Jon Allen.

JA: No....

HH: Jon, I want to talk just briefly about the people who aren't there. Now did you watch The Sopranos?

JA: I did.

HH: You know, Big Pussy was a big character in the first couple of seasons. Then he's gone, right?

JA: I don't want to, I don't want to know where this is going.

HH: Well, I'm just saying, people like Mark Penn, Patti Solis Doyle, Howard Wolfson—they're like Big Pussy in The Sopranos. They're gone. They're put over the side.

JA: Yeah, they didn't do a very, well, let's put it this way, they were unsuccessful in a campaign. And that usually means you didn't do a good job, or at least you get blamed for not doing a good job. Hillary's, some of her aides came to her after the campaign and tried to outline what had gone wrong. She had a bunch of one-on-one meetings in her Senate office and at home, and they told her what they thought she had done wrong, and what others had done wrong. And some of those big name people were considered to be toxic. Mark Penn was certainly considered that way. Patti Solis Doyle was considered to be less than able, less than up to the job, in over her head, if you will, and also, if you will, a bit arrogant. So some of these folks, you know, they're not going to, they weren't around for her time at State. They're not going to be back around if she runs for president.

HH: And you know what's fascinating about that...

JA: And by the way, some of it's by choice. Howard Wolfson, for instance, her communications director, became a deputy mayor of New York under Bloomberg, who I work for, full disclosure, Michael Bloomberg. But you know, so he had a second act in politics, just not with the Clintons....

HH: Jon Allen, I want to go back to a couple of quotes about what she did and did not do before we turn to her substantive record at State. Let's do E.J. Dionne, of course, Washington Post columnist, friend of the show, cut number 9:

EJD: I think there are, first of all, her accomplishments inevitably are going to be linked to what we see as Obama's accomplishments. And if you see, as I do, ending the war in Iraq, knowing the place is a mess now in many ways, but getting our troops out of Iraq, that's part of it. I think that for the period she was Secretary of State, opinion of the United States rose in the world. I think that she did a lot of work on human rights and women's rights around the world. I think that you know, and you and I will just plain disagree on this, I think at the end of her four years, we were in a better position in the world than we were when she took the job. And that is the old Ronald Reagan question.

HH: And here is Lanny Davis on my show answering the same question, cut number 16:

LD: Well, the biggest thing of all is goodwill around the world, which is what secretaries of State do. I don't know what any...

HH: Like in Syria and Egypt and Libya?

LD: I don't know, well, Libya and certainly the intervention in Libya, getting rid of Qaddafi, you would say is a pretty good achievement for the President. But these are presidential achievements with a partnership with the secretary of State. What do secretaries of State do? For example, she was very instrumental in the details of the Iranian sanctions program, which has produced apparently some results. I'm very skeptical about this deal in Iran on the nuclear weaponry, but the credit she deserves on this sanctions program, which literally was her program in the State Department to enforce, but in partnership with Barack Obama.

HH: Let's go right there, Jon Allen. You spend a lot of time on Iran sanctions in here, and you know it's falling apart. I'm not sure she wants to run on this. But you write that she was caught in an administration that did not believe in the blunt force of sanctions, and that she also kind of botched the Green Revolution, because while Jared Cohen got the Twitter thing going, they didn't really stand with the Green Revolution. How is Iran going to play when HRC gets evaluated for president?

That's a great question, Hugh. I mean, I think there are a couple of things to look at here as far as the Green Revolution goes. I think it's hard to step out from where the President is. If the President is saving we're not going to interfere in their elections, and you're the secretary of State, if you go out and talk about interfering in elections, if you talk about supporting the Green movement, you're being disloyal to the president of the United States. And that could be a problem. What we saw in the book, and we go into this story in detail, is that one of her guys, Jared Cohen, who was actually a Condi Rice protégé, and is now at Google Innovation. He's the head of Google Ideas. He had basically gotten in touch with Twitter, and tried to get them to help with the Iranian Green movement, revolutionaries being able to keep in touch with each other. And you know, we go through this sort of dramatic thing in the book where there's a big question at the State Department over whether he should be fired for contravening what the President had said in terms of not interfering. He was supporting the Green movement. The President said we're not going to do that. And ultimately, Hillary Clinton comes into the room the next morning after the New York Times has written a little bit about this, and plops the paper down on a table and says this is exactly what we should be doing.

HH: And that is, by the way, for people who want to know from the foreign policy specialist standpoint, the chapter on the Twitter revolution in foreign policy is worth the price of the book, because very few people understand how this has dramatically altered. You know, I got into this, Jon, working for Richard Nixon in San Clemente in exile writing the book, The Real War. And so I've been following foreign affairs for 30 plus years. And Twitter has changed everything, and Jared Cohen got that. And Hillary kind of gets that she needs to get it, and you illustrate that. I'm not sure she managed it very well, but on page 188, you summon up the final judgment. "She was always for turning up the heat on Iran. She just took a more nuanced view of

it when she got to the Department of State." You quote an unnamed State Department official, or a national security official saying this. It looks like a White House source. You know, whatever her nuance is, Iran's going to be nuclear when she runs for president, and that's going to have happened on her watch.

JA: Yeah, I mean, so we don't know obviously where this latest round of negotiations is going. And frankly when we wrote the book, we didn't know that there were these back channel communications going on with the Iranians, which was reported I think either at the beginning of this year or very late last year. We'd already gone to print with the book at that point, or were about to go to...somebody did some good reporting on that. But there's no doubt that the sanctions were aimed at dragging the Iranians to the table. And I think they were successful at that, but the question is, is it good to have them at the table. If they're not good faith negotiators, if they're stalling for time, if they are going to nuclearize while negotiating, then of course that's a problem.

HH: Yeah, huge.

JA: So they accomplished the goal, but the question is whether the goal was the right one.

HH: Yeah, it reminds me of the '94 negotiations with North Korea led by Bill Clinton and Madeleine Albright. They got the North Koreans to the table, and they got taken to the cleaners when they got to the table. So they managed to get the poker game going, and then they lost all of America's chips. I mean, it's going to be ugly when it's over. Let me play for you one more cut, I'm trying to save the Allen voice here, Maggie Haberman, your old colleague from Politico, who came on the show and talked to me about Hillary's accomplishments. Nere's that cut, number 12:

HH: How long you been with Politico? Five years?

MH: Four years, three and a half years.

HH: Okay, so almost her entire tenure at State, and I've been on the air since **2000**. And I can't think of anything, and I'm giving you the floor if you can come up with anything for her on her case, lay it out

there, just from the top of mind. It should be front shelf, right?

MH: It certainly is not, there is not a giant list that I think people can point to.

HH: There's no list.

MH: And I think are a couple, and I think there is a couple of reasons for that, like I said. With the major issue of dealing with Israel, she was not front and center. And she certainly received some criticism early on in terms of how the US dealt with Russia. I think these are all going to be issues that she is going to have to address, and I suspect she is going to get asked about them repeatedly, and by many, many outlets.

HH: Well, we're done, but go around the bullpen at **Politico** and ask them what did she do, and it's going to be a giant whiteboard, and there's not going to be anything on it, Maggie.

MH: I like the invocation of whiteboard, though.

HH: It is a whiteboard.

HH: Now Jon, I wasn't very fair, because you can write on here Burma and Chen Guangcheng. So she's got...

JA: (laughing)

HH: You detail that, right? You give a lot of space to Burma and Chen Guangcheng. But what else is on the whiteboard?

JA: Well, I mean, there are some smaller things. And in fact, it's interesting in the Middle East...

HH: Smaller than Chen Guangcheng?

JA: No, no, I meant smaller than the big things that you're looking for. No, Chen Guangcheng is a very small thing compared to most countries. But I think if you look, for instance, the last temporary peace deal between the Palestinians and the Israelis was one that she went to the Middle East. She broke off of a trip with Obama, actually to Southeast Asia, and went and negotiated a temporary ceasefire that has held since the end of 2012. So I mean, there's an example, but you're right. If you're looking for the big things, and

I know you're probably going to play me as a cut for somebody else at some point, if you're talking about the big things, they're not there. One other measure, I know you're asking for metrics, I think it was with Dana Milbank earlier, one of the clips you played, one metric is that when she took over, the United States approval rating in the world was 34%. When she left, it was in the 40s. I think it was 41% at the very end. There was an uptick. The United States regained the place of being the best approved of country in the world in terms of leadership role. And I think that matters. I think the public liking the United States in the country gives us leverage with their leadership. It matters. It doesn't matter on the scale, it's not a bumper sticker. It just took me five minutes to come up with an explanation. Certainly not the kind of thing you can campaign on, even competent leadership at the State Department—not a bumper sticker. The best thing that she did was spend four years at the State Department without, with the exception of Benghazi, without major disasters. And so Benghazi is the one thing...

HH: Well, you know, that's interesting. We're going to talk about Egypt and Russia, which I believe are major disasters, and sort of epic failures, like Iran for Jimmy Carter, that are unfolding in real time. And so I do think we've got a couple of epic disasters that are happening, and I've got to say about HRC, you chronicle them, Egypt less so than Russia. Russia actually, Philippe Reines, is never going to read HRC, he's going to be so embarrassed by this book. Have you heard from him since it came out?

JA: I have. I have.

HH: Is he a happy camper?

JA: He's alright with it, because he knew what was going to be in it. I mean, in terms of, we asked him the hard questions. We gave him the opportunity to present his side of things.

HH: Man, it's tough.

JA: So he wasn't surprised by it.

HH: It's tough. I'll tell you about that.

[Coming back from commercial break, I play Allen a tape of MSNBC's Joy-Ann Reid]

Joy-Ann Reid: Thank God she didn't do what Kissinger and others did. We've had some secretaries of state who really messed things up in the world. I don't think she did that.

HH: But what is anyone going to say about her? She was an abject failure?

JAR: Managed, she did what secretaries of state are charged with doing, which is manage the foreign policy priorities of the president she's working for, which in the case of Hillary Clinton's tenure, was the Arab Spring, keeping the United States from...

HH: Did she do a good job in Egypt?

JAR: Really? I think in Egypt, absolutely. We saw a change of regime in Egypt. Egypt is obviously a troubled country when you have a dictatorship for forty-something years. You're not going to have any smooth transition. But I think the United States actually managed that pretty well. We managed to keep our troops out of there. We didn't get involved on the ground in Libya or in Egypt. But that transition in terms of management....

HH: But Joy, is Libya better off today than when Hillary took over?

JAR: What could we do? We're still in...excuse me?

HH: Is Libya better off today than when Hillary took over? And is Egypt better off today? I mean, which Egypt do you like? The one with the Muslim Brotherhood or the one with General al-Sisi?

JAR: Excuse me, if you don't think Libya is better off without Muammar Qaddafi in power, then maybe you want to revisit your views on Iraq.

HH: That was Joy Reid of MSNBC... And let's go to Egypt, Jon. I love the fact that you point out the Clintons' relationship with the

Mubaraks dated back to April, 1993. You quote Hillary as saying "I consider President and Mrs. Mubarak to be friends of my family." That's another Sopranos quote right there. But you do leave out the kind of clown show that went on. They sent Frank Wisner over to Egypt, and then he made an announcement, and they pulled it back, and we ended up toppling Mubarak. And then we ended up being with the Brotherhood. And we got it so bollixed up that al-Sisi is now dealing with Putin. I mean, Egypt is a colossal failure, isn't it?

Yeah, you need more than a scorecard to figure out how many teams the United States was on during all of that. I mean, it was embarrassing. It was a disaster in terms of our foreign policy, one of a series of things over the last few years that I think points out that American, the American ability to influence world events is somewhat less than certainly the President gives it credit for, and I think that most of the American people give it credit for. And so we sit there trying to figure out how to look like we're on the winning side instead of doing something that actually promotes whoever is in our best interest, if we can figure out what that is. And you know, we have a scene in the book, I think this is one of my favorite scenes in the book. Mubarak goes out and speaks to the Egyptian people, and he says something, this is like early February of 2011, and he basically says I'm not going anywhere, and he says some pretty inflammatory things. And in the Situation Room, all of the big leaders—Obama, Clinton, Gates, they've all stopped, and they're watching this on television together in the Situation Room. And Obama's like this guy's gotta go, like what he's just said will inflame the Street. He's going to be going anyway. Let's get ahead of it, and let's put out a statement that pushes him out. And so his speechwriter, Ben Rhodes, writes up a statement that basically says it's time for Mubarak to go. There needs to be a process immediately to like get that going. And Hillary Clinton and Bob Gates, two of the people who were much more hesitant to want to push Mubarak out, start editing the remarks on the table in the Situation Room. They're hand-editing it. It's like, if you saw that in a movie where the Cabinet secretaries are handediting a statement before the President gives it, you would think to yourself there is no way that happens like that.

HH: No way, yeah.

JA: And American foreign policy was being made on the fly in the Situation Room, and not with like an unpredictable event. I mean, this was something that they could have prepared for. So they go out and they say it's

time for Mubarak to go. We push Mubarak out. The revolutionaries come in. Turns out we're not real big fans of the Muslim Brotherhood leadership, and neither are the Egyptian people. And now we've got the military leadership there again. There were three possible factions. We picked two of them, and it was the third that ended up winning.

HH: Yeah, it's shockingly amateuristic, And Hillary's, of course, running State through the whole thing. On page 143, you write in HRC, along with Amie Parnes, "Within the State Department, some senior level foreign policy experts strongly believed at the time, and still do years later," I made a note of that, "that Obama's White House aides were a bunch of piker neophytes whose desire to keep a tight leash on foreign policy wasn't nearly as limited as their real world experience. These are not your Kissingers or Brzezinskis, one miffed former State Department official said." You know, Jonathan, Condi Rice, fluent in Russian, PhD in Russian studies, Colin Powell put his time at the NSC after the Pentagon. The guys who ran Bush's NSC were extremely deep in their experiences. This really has been a clown show for the last five years when it comes to foreign affairs. And how does Hillary manage to deliver the message, which I think this State Department official is trying to say, it wasn't our fault, those bozos at the White House don't know what they're doing?

JA: I think that's a real difficult message to deliver certainly herself. I think there will probably be people who try to put that message out on her behalf. I mean, I would ask you, Hugh, and you know, obviously it's not my job to interview you, but I would ask you, what do you think it would have been like if Hillary Clinton wasn't in the room from the foreign policy perspective of conservatives?

HH: It's a great question, and you're right. It's not a debate. It's an interview. But I do think that a powerful voice for strength in the world would have been, a realist would have been good. I actually think Hillary was as much of a neophyte as the White House staff. She isn't anymore, but I think that that showed up time and time again, and that Gates, Gates' memoir, and I interviewed the former Secretary of Defense, he was very gentle on Hillary for whom I think he likes. And I told, I called an old Clinton staffer yesterday before I interviewed you, and a pretty senior staffer, a very good friend of mine, I'll tell you off air who it is, and I said boy, I put this book down, and she is tough, tough, tough. She is tough as leather. She is the toughest person I think in politics that I've ever come across

other than my first boss, Richard Nixon. But that didn't make her competent to run State. I mean, that's what I think it comes down to. She didn't really have a vision of the world. She had a vision of political rehab, Jon Allen.

JA: Yeah, I mean, as you point out, she's not somebody with the academic credentials in foreign policy. She's not somebody who has spent years toiling at the National Security Council or the State Department or the Pentagon for that matter. Her knowledge of foreign policy is, you know, acquired and learned, is studied. And there's nothing wrong with that, but I think you're right. I mean, to the extent that she has experience, it's coming out the door, not going in the door.

HH: Yeah, and in fact, you provide a nice catalogue of the failures of the "smart power doctrine." She sent Ross and Cohen off to the Congo. They tried smart power. They came back empty. She sent them to Syria to threaten Assad. They came back empty. Egypt, empty, Libya, a fiasco. I mean, "smart power" sounds good, and I had Joe Nye in college, by the way, so I've been hearing this for like 40 years.

JA: (laughing)

HH: But it doesn't work. I mean, when we come back from break, my guest, Jon Allen and I will continue. Now we're going to turn to Russia, which is the worst part of the Clinton legacy. And believe it or not, HRC: State Secrets And the Rebirth Of Hillary Clinton, is toughest on Russia, and on Hillary and her team's absolute, complete bollixing up of Russia, which is why HRC is a book you ought to read. You ought to memorize it. It's like oppo research for us going into 2016, even though conservatives, they refuse to believe that anything good can come out of Nazareth or Washington, DC. Well, this is good, and it came out of the Beltway.

HH: But now I come to, actually, it is painful to read, to me, "the reset button." It's the red button's episode. It is so painful to go back over how Lavrov played her, and how Putin and Medvedev and Lavrov have played her and Obama. And you don't spare the ink on this, Jon Allen. You've got the details here. This was ugly from the beginning.

JA: It's almost comic how they botched that from the beginning. And you know, we're seeing, the reset button itself is a funny story. It's a little bit of an alarming story, but it is also one of the things that I think sets the table

for what we're seeing right now with the United States' inability to influence events in Russia, with the United States' inability to really assert itself.

HH: Philippe Reines is Hillary's senior aide who comes up with the red button, the reset button that has the wrong translation. He tried to get it back. That's the stuff I didn't know about that's in HRC. And the Russians won't give it back. I think it's on Putin's desk. I think he looks at it every day and laughs as he invades Ukraine. Honest to God, I do, Jon.

JA: (laughing) Yeah, I have no idea what actually became of that reset button, but you could certainly picture that. Maybe there'd be a good comic strip with that as the end, Putin laughing and looking at this reset button that says *overcharged* instead of *reset*. They put it through a couple of Russian speakers who were at the State Department, but not exactly the experts on that stuff. And it was just a last minute gambit that was intended to be warm and gracious, and instead was just a, kind of made the State Department look like a clown car.

HH: Now so tell me at the end of all this, before we turn to sort of the politics and the staffing in Hillaryland, which is the other fascinating part of this, the geography of Hillaryland is charted here. It's like Captain Cook for the first time for me laying out the various players in Hillaryland. But we've been through Benghazi, Libya, Egypt, Russia, the failures in Congo, the failures at...you know, there's just nothing there except Burma. So I want to give you like one minute to, you know, here, hey, let's talk about Burma, because you know, we've got to give her her due, Burma.

JA: Yeah, I mean, this is an issue that she brought to the President. The Burmese junta has been extremely repressive for many years, a lot of political prisoners. It's an issue that people on the right and the left care about, the kind of thing that brings together Mitch McConnell and Nancy Pelosi, actually, and for years, we've been sanctioning the regime in Burma. And Hillary Clinton's idea was if you give them an off-ramp, if you say to the Burmese military officials that we will release sanctions or will relax sanctions if you start moving toward democracy, we will bring businesses into Burma that wouldn't otherwise be there, if you start relaxing your stranglehold on your people. And the Burmese actually listened to that. And by the way, Burma is within China's sphere of influence. So even though it's a country we don't think about a whole lot in terms of geopolitics, it holds some significance to,

at least symbolically, in tearing a country away from China's circle a little bit.

HH: Yeah, that's interesting, although the downside is I just finished interviewing Robert Kaplan in reading Asia's Cauldron, and China is pushing the Philippines islands around, they're claiming the Japanese islands, they're surging a blue water navy and an anti-navy navy out, and vis-à-vis China, we've got peeling off Burma a little bit, and she ran a successful Shanghai Expo. I mean, that's it. China played her, too.

JA: Well, and to me, the real story in the Shanghai Expo isn't that it was a success, although that is a story. We were not going to have a pavilion at the World's Fair. Congress had decided to cut off money for that some years back. The Chinese told her that they would take it as a great insult if we didn't have something there. She raised a lot of money to get that to happen. But the real story to me is how she raised that money, which is she tapped a couple of long time Clinton fundraisers, and they went to the corporate friends of Bill Clinton who were big donors to the Clinton Foundation, and asked them for money. And so when you talk about potential conflicts of interest, when you talk about the ties that bind the Clinton operation to a whole lot of people in the world, you know, that was the way they went about it. It was this whole big deal about how Bill at CGI was going to step away from what she was doing at the State Department. Instead, the very first thing she does out of the box is get her fundraisers to start calling the people that he raises money from to get money for this World's Fair...

HH: Jon, I almost blew right past, and I've got to go back on Russia. You detail Hillary's deep involvement in the New START Treaty, including how she worked Corker and Johnny Isakson, Senators from Tennessee and Georgia respectively, and it makes it sound like Corker could just be bought for the nuke industry in Tennessee. But here's the problem. New START's a disaster. It turns out that the Russians have been lying to us on the development of their intermediate nuclear weapons. Jon Kyl was right. I mean, New START's not something she's going to be able to walk around tattooed on her forehead, is it?

JA: I think she'll try to do that. I think they'll talk about it. We're already seeing her minions, the Super PAC group, Correct The Record, has put out stuff on the New START Treaty. But you know, as is the case with all foreign policy, it's very fluid. And the thing that looks good for you today could very

much look bad for you tomorrow. I think the START Treaty is certainly one of those things. It's something that I think, while she probably cared about it, it was really something that Barack Obama wanted desperately. He had campaigned on doing nuclear non-proliferation in a bipartisan way in the Senate, with Dick Lugar, the former senator from Indiana, and I think he wanted to put his money where his mouth was. And so I think it only works if the Russians are allowing us to verify, not just trust.

HH: Yeah, Ukraine and New START together, plus the red button's reset button, that's, it's a bad...here's a few more quotes about Hillary. Governor Scott Walker on my show talking about Hillary:

SW: I have a hard time pointing to many successes. I mean, you look at, you mention the problems around the world, I mean, she was good at flying around and traveling, but I have a hard time seeing any major victories for this country.

HH: Here's Bill Kristol talking to John Heilemann on *Morning Joe* about Hillary, cut number 14:

BK: What achievement of Hillary, I'm serious, what achievement, one sentence, what has Hillary Clinton done? What's her achievement in politics that qualifies her to be president of the United States?

JH: I'm not going to do a Hillary Clinton ad...I think they will say that she did a big, she repaired, had a big role in repairing America's battered image around the world through all of her travels around the world.

HH: And here's Chuck Todd, no apologist for anyone, on again, Hillary's accomplishments on NBC:

CT: I think that they wouldn't try to do it as one issue. I think they would say that she was pushing her passions of expanding women's rights, she'd talk about what happened in Burma. She'd talk about the de-escalation that they had in Gaza preventing at the time when they thought that there was going to be an escalation in Gaza between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and getting Egypt to back off. So, but look, there isn't, is there a one, big, crowning achievement where you see her right there and then in a crisis moment as secretary of State,

especially compared to, for instance, John Kerry? I mean, in many ways, the problems she's got about her four years as secretary of State is the comparison to John Kerry, who's been, he throws himself into every controversy. And Secretary Clinton, she'd get involved, but she played a much more quiet role. She never liked to play as public of a role as John Kerry. So I think that that comparison is going to be something she has to deal with on the campaign trail....

HH: I'm going to get sued by Jonathan Allen's employer, because I'm going to ruin his voice by keeping him one more hour to talk politics and Hillary Clinton. I want to finish the foreign policy conversation with Jon Allen, the co-author of HRC, New York Times bestseller, by playing Hillary on stage with Thomas Friedman, cut number 16 from a couple of weeks ago:

HRC: Look, I really see my role as secretary, and in fact, leadership in general in a democracy, as a relay race. I mean, you run the best race you can run, you hand off the baton. Some of what hasn't been finished may go on to be finished. So when President Obama asked me to be secretary of State, and I agreed, we had the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. We had two wars. We had continuing threats from all kinds of corners around the world that we had to deal with. So it was a perilous time, frankly. And what he said to me was, look, I have to be dealing with the economic crisis. I want you to go out and represent us around the world. And it was a good division of labor, because we needed to make it clear to the rest of the world that we were going to get our house in order, we were going to stimulate and grow and get back to positive growth and work with our friends and partners. So I think we did that. I'm very proud of the stabilization and the, you know, really solid leadership that the administration provided that I think now leads us to be able to deal with problems like Ukraine, because we're not so worried about a massive collapse in Europe, and China trying to figure out what to do with their bond holdings, and all the problems we were obsessed with. I think we really restored American leadership in the best sense that once again, people began to rely on us, to look at us as setting the values, set-

ting the standards. I just don't want to lose that because we have a dysfunctional political situation in Washington. And then, of course, a lot of particulars, but I am finishing my book, so you'll be able to read all about it.

HH: Now Jonathan Allen, put aside the Alice In Wonderland, allow us to deal with things in Ukraine. When she writes about, when she says she had a good division of labor with the president, that is at odds with HRC's account of her first year, year-and-a-half when the White House just didn't trust her as far as they could throw her. He didn't turn the world over to her. They basically tried to keep placing people in her inner circle.

JA: Yeah, I mean, one of the very first staff decisions that was made was to make Jim Steinberg her deputy secretary of State. And her people accepted that. He'd worked in the Clinton administration, but that was not who she would have chosen. I think she would have chosen Holbrooke, perhaps, for that job, certainly wouldn't have gone with Steinberg. I think you know, the foreign policy, generally speaking, was run by the National Security Council. Now I don't think that's all that unusual. I think in most presidencies, that really is the case, that the NSC gives the Secretary of State as much latitude as it wants to, as much of a leash as it wants to, but is really the master of that. With Hillary Clinton in particular, they kept a pretty tight rein on her early on. I think it's one of the reasons that she really cozied up to Gates and Petraeus and some of the other military leaders, because that allowed her to get their support for things that she cared about. And we sort of go through that in the book, too.

HH: Oh, in great detail. I'm just saying that her line to Tom Friedman, and he didn't follow up, and maybe he hadn't read HRC, yet, it's just not factual.

JA: Right. It does not hold up.

HH: It does not hold up at all.

HH: Today, I want to talk about politics. And Jon Allen, I want to begin with a funny place. I want to begin with a purse. Now you and I, not that there's anything wrong with that, do not carry purses. But women do. And you have a little anecdote in HRC about Hillary and the purse gambit which I think people just, you've got a bad voice,

you've been out promoting the book, but tell people this story, because it's why she's so good, and why Republicans especially had better be prepared for a masterly retail politician.

Well, there was a woman who was interviewing for a job in Hillary IA: Clinton's Senate office, and was very, very nervous about it. She was meeting Hillary Clinton for the first time, and whatever you think of her, just like anybody else you've seen on television a lot, but don't know, you get a little neryous the first time you meet them. So this woman's in and she's interviewing for a job, so even more so. So Hillary Clinton walks in, shakes her hand, and immediately picks up her purse and says this is such a wonderful purse, look at this beautiful purse, turns to him and says look at this great purse. And where do I get one like this? Can you fine me one, makes a big deal about this woman's purse. Well, the effect of that is to make the woman feel at ease. The effect of it is that the person who is interviewing for the job suddenly feels like oh, okay. She's a normal person, like I can have a normal conversation about something like purses rather than deep policy intrigue and things like that. And then the woman, who ultimately takes the job watches Hillary Clinton do this time and again with people....

HH: Yeah.

JA: ...that this was, and you know, it wasn't a one-off thing where she loved the woman's purse. She'd pick out a purse, a necklace, a tie—make a big deal about how much she liked it. And so it's calculated, but also something that makes people feel good. And I think Hillary Clinton's kind of the master of calculating those things that are intended to make people feel a certain way, positively inclined to her, generally speaking.

HH: There is nothing like saving someone who you could crucify to make them grateful towards you, and there's nothing like sympathizing with people. And there are a couple of anecdotes in HRC that I want to call out. One, Jon Favreau is the president's chief speechwriter, and he gets in his cups. And he gets photographed—dumb kid move—cupping the breast of Hillary on a cut-out. And she calls him up and says I haven't seen the picture, yet, but I hear my hair looks great. Great story, page 61 of HRC. Another story, young Tommy, is it Vietor?

JA: Vietor.

HH: Vietor, breaks his arm, or dislocates his shoulder when she

breaks her arm. She, you know, he's young and he's intimidated. He sees her in the West Wing, and she's got a sling with a State Department seal on it. And he's nervous and makes small talk. Your sling is so much cooler than mine. Two days later arrives a State Department sling for Tommy. These are the sort of things, the forgiveness of Favreau, the sling for Tommy, these are very artful details of a masterful politician. Bill gets all the credit, but she's awfully good.

JA: Yeah, he's got that mass charisma, and even the one-on-one charisma. He doesn't have to do that kind of stuff. He doesn't have to say thank you to people. They watch him, and they're like excited to see him. She's the exact opposite. She has to work people that way. I think she likes to do it as well. I mean, I think she sees it as being polite, good company, good manners. But she needs to show people that little extra bit of attention, that little extra bit of affection for them to really grow on them. And I think some of it's genuine, all of it's strategic, but people, even when they're being worked over that way, tend to appreciate it. I mean, it's just like you get a thank you note from somebody. It may be political, and it may be them trying to get something from you, but at the same time, you appreciate they made the effort to write the thank you note. A lot of people would try to get something from you and not do that.

HH: Yeah, there's a very great difficulty in HRC of keeping score between Hillaryland, the Planet Bill and Clintonworld, and the overlapping territory between them. Doug Band, for example, lives in Billworld. Huma Abedin lives in Hillaryland. How do those worlds get along right now?

JA: I think better than they have in a while, in part because Doug Band is gone. He was the longtime gatekeeper to Bill Clinton, and I think he caused a lot of irritation within Hillaryland about the way that Bill dealt with the Hillary staff. And I think him being pushed out of the picture, and in part, that occurred simultaneously with Chelsea Clinton coming into the Clinton Foundation. I think that's had an improvement on some of the relations, but they're still pretty scrambled. I mean, it is three different entities. It is Hillaryland. It is the Billworld, and it is the Clinton universe, which is the conjunction of those two things. There are people who have worked for both, and there are people who are loyal to one or the other and not the other, and it is a very hard thing to unscramble, not just for us as viewers, as observers, as voters, but also for the people who are involved in it.

HH: Now at the middle of the web, and I called my friend to compliment this person, is Cheryl Mills. Now Cheryl Mills is Hillary's Haldeman. She is really the center of her political, she's the consigliore. She ran Benghazi night. She keeps her informed. She's brilliant, and I don't know that anyone's really reported on her much other than HRC.

JA: Yeah, the other time that she was in the news, she was defending Bill Clinton in the Senate during the impeachment. And she gave, she was very young at the time, early 30s, and gave an impassioned defense of him. And she was in the news then in the late 90s. And the most people that pay much attention to her, she was brought into the 2008 campaign when it was sort of going overboard to help rein it back in. She was brought into the State Department not just in one top job, but two. She combined the jobs of chief of staff and counselor, which were the two top jobs on the secretary's personal staff. She did both of them. There's nobody who is more important to Hillary Clinton than Cheryl Mills in terms of her political future, and in terms of her ability to manage when she's in government.

HH: Am I right about the Haldeman gatekeeping function?

JA: Yeah, I think there's a part of that, although a lot of the gatekeeping actually falls to Huma Abedin. You know, I think it's both of them, to some extent. But you know, in terms of being completely trusted aide, somebody that gets the unvarnished Hillary Clinton, and is there to try to guide her away from pitfalls, Cheryl Mills is that person.

HH: Yeah, you know, when you talk about Mills and Abedin, I'm thinking Haldeman-Ehrlichman, that there is, I was going to bring up Huma in just a minute, but you know, I worked for Richard Nixon. I knew Richard Nixon. Richard Nixon is no Hillary Clinton when it comes to revenge politics spread over 30 years. I mean, he usually gave up and let it go after a while, because he was always running again. They've got a memory in Hillaryland, which is deeper than any when it comes to keeping score, don't they?

JA: They do. In fact, you know, one of the fun things, I think, in the book that was the first time it was ever revealed is they kept this, after the 2008 campaign, kept this enemies list. We call it in the book a hit list. You can call it what you want. But there were, every Democratic member of Congress was assigned a score from 1 to 7, and the 1's were people that they felt were

most loyal to them, followed by 2's who were little less loyal, 3's who were a little less loyal, 4's who were somewhere in the neutral, sort of Dante's hell of neutrality, 5's who were disloyal, 6's who were very disloyal, and 7's were the most disloyal, the people who should be never given anything, the people who should be gone after if ever the opportunity presented itself, particularly on the political battlefield. So yeah, they have long memories, and not only that, they have Microsoft Excel spreadsheets.

HH: But you know what's interesting, and I point this out to people, they are not obsessed with my side. You know, I looked in. I looked for Limbaugh, for Hannity, for Levin, for any of the critics, for George Will, for Krauthammer. They're not here. They don't worry about the other team. They beat the other team when the time comes to beat them. They worry about Democrats. That's where they run their operation.

JA: Absolutely. I mean, you know, are there people on the right that the Clintons don't like? Of course, but that's not where they spend their energy. They expect that their opponents are going to hit them. What they worry about, and what they were so angry about in 2008, is they felt like longtime friends had done it, too.

НН: Үир.

JA: You know, they could name, you know, a million different things that they had done for each of these people. Not everybody had been, you know, had gotten some gift or whatever from the Clintons over time. But they had employed some people. They had given them jobs within the administration. They had written letters to schools to get them in, you know, to get their kids into school. They'd done all these things for people, and then they watched these folks endorse Barack Obama. And they think to themselves, you know, what is wrong here, and we have a point at which Bill Clinton says if you don't have a loyalty in politics, what do you have? And that is their motivating force.

HH: And loyalty, by the way, defined Nixon as well. I never want Cheryl Mills to get into a big, black limousine and pick up the phone and say "We have to talk about Hewitt." I don't ever want that to happen, America. Jon Allen is my guest. HRC is his brand new book, along with Amie Parnes... When you, did you get access to Hillary, Jon? Did she give you time?

JA: So I have to answer this carefully. We got access to every level of the Clinton operation from the very bottom to the very top....

HH: Page 68, "Informal power gained through Hillary's favor is far more important than the formal power of a particular title." Now this is hardly new. Harry Hopkins defined this, right, for FDR? He's only, he had no title, and no job. He just lived on the second floor of the White House. And so there's this informal power network. Jake Sullivan is the name that I had never seen before. And you know, I kind of know who Huma is. And Cheryl Mills, I've been following since impeachment. But tell people about Jake Sullivan, because that's a new player.

Yeah, Jake Sullivan kind of came out of nowhere. He's a very young guy. He worked on Hillary's 2008 campaign. He had previously been on the Hill working for Senator Amy Klobuchar, so he did a lot of the foreign policy stuff on, the national security stuff on the Clinton campaign. He was headed back after the campaign to go back to Minnesota, and he wanted to run for a House seat, and he was asked if he wanted to take over a new job that was being created essentially for him, a deputy chief of staff for policy. Once he got in there, he proved himself. Hillary Clinton loved him. She thought he was extremely sharp. I think he shared some of her nerdiness on policy. really wanted to get into the weeds. And he was a turf eater within the State Department. And by that, I mean he started out as the deputy chief of staff. By the end, he had subsumed the policy planning office at the State Department, which is basically the office that does all the future planning for State. He was heavily involved in speechwriting. He was the person that the White House went to. So he became the liaison between the State Department and the White House. And I think he could channel Hillary Clinton's thinking on policy as well as anybody else. When he left the State Department, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama called him and asked him to take a job as Vice President Biden's national security advisor. And he is there to this day. So somebody who is extremely well thought of in Democratic circles, and who is pretty young, he's still in his 30's, I think mid-30's right now.

HH: Yeah, I think if people look back to the early days of Reagan when the troika—Baker-Deever-Meese—was there. If they look at Mills, Abedin and Sullivan, you're going to have the same sort of situation develop in a Clinton White House 2.0 if that happens. And do you quarrel with that assessment, Jon?

JA: Well, you know, I wish that I was better at making that comparison. I think you know, having obviously watched that time period a lot more closely than I did as a youngster...

HH: Yeah, I lived it. I was there. It works, I'll tell you. But now let me ask you about Obamacare. You have a great section, and I'm not sure that they like the title "Obama Girl" of the chapter. And I don't know if you've heard anything about that, because you're referring to her all-in on Obamacare.

JA: That's where it comes in handy to have a female co-author. If you're going to title a chapter Obama Girl, you've got to...

HH: Yeah, and you quote the Secretary of State saying, "I believe strongly that the President needs to forge ahead," when there were rumblings about dumping Obamacare and pushed it through in 2010. On page 177, the first time she saw Obama after Congress passed the health care law months later, it was in the Situation Room. She told him she was proud of him, and she was uniquely positioned to affirm him. Now you know, that's a two-edged sword, Jonathan Allen. She owns Obamacare. I always call her, she's the grandmother of Obamacare. But here in your book is the record that she was all-in. She wanted it.

IA: Yeah, absolutely, and that's not something that had been reported before. I mean, if you go back to the time period, she was doing everything she could to demonstrate that she wasn't going to be involved in domestic politics. And frankly, Barack Obama was doing everything he could to demonstrate that she was not going to be involved in domestic politics. One of the reasons to make her secretary of State is to get her out across the world and not make her toxic to the things you're trying to do domestically, which I think he thought she would have been. But behind closed doors, she was advising Jim Messina and Rahm Emanuel about how to approach health care. She even lobbied a few members of Congress on behalf of the health care law. The way that she viewed it was when someone came to her, she'd give them her view as opposed to dialing 100 names. I mean, I have no idea what the truth of that is, but you know, she's acknowledged that she, in the book, that she did lobby some members. And of course, this cabinet meeting right after the Tea Party summer, if you will, in 2009, a lot of the cabinet secretaries were very angry about how much of the Democratic agenda was being subsumed into this maelstrom of health care. They wanted to get

their things done, and they thought we're never going to get anything done, because everybody's stuck on this health care thing. The Republicans are against us. And there was a lot of grumbling going on, and she got up at this Cabinet meeting and basically said look, I've been through this before, and you know, I know what it takes, or I certainly know what it looks like to lose. I know what it looks like when the President's people abandon him. This is our time. It can get done. The Democrats have majorities in the House and Senate. Let's get behind the President, and let's move forward. And you know, people in the Obama White House thought that was a big moment if you think about it from the perspective of a Democratic Cabinet member, Democratic member of Congress. If Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton are both telling you you've got to do this, there's nowhere else to go in the Democratic Party. So it's a big, it's symbolic. It's not an actual vote on the floor, you know, but I think it mattered to the Obama people that she did that. I think for whoever she lobbied on it, I think it probably mattered to them. And now she owns health care that much more than she did before.

HH: Yeah, I mean, that's what the reporting of HRC comes clear to me, is that if Obamacare is soaring in 2016, as they're saying right now it's going to be, she's going to be in a great position. But if it tanks like I think it is, she owns it as much as Obama does. And when we come back, we're going to talk more about the fascinating Obama-Clinton relationship, not just Hillary and Barack, but also Bill and Barack when we return....

HH: Okay, now look, there's a great story within a story here of how Hillary merged with Obama. And it's in the person of Capricia Marshall. There's also a warning for young women everywhere about wearing Manolo [Blahnik] heels to a formal state dinner. But in this person, you get how she operated the bridging of the rift. Tell people about it.

JA: So Capricia Marshall is as diehard a Hillarylander as it gets. She's as close to Hillary as any of the women around her. And when Hillary came into the State Department, she wanted the president to appoint Capricia Marshall to this job of chief protocol officer. And if folks don't know too much about that, it's the job at the State Department where you do all the protocol, and it's actually something appointed by the President. It's an ambassador rank. And the person travels on all the foreign travel that the President does, not necessarily the secretary of state, but actually travels on

Air Force One with the president. And the Obama people were completely against Capricia Marshall coming into their fold. They hated the idea of one of Hillary's best friends being sort of in the inner circle on these foreign policy trips, of actually being on Air Force One with her. And they had a vote. His vetting team had a vote about it. And they all voted no. And then Jim Messina tells the group, breaks the bad news, and says look, guys, this is a Hillary Clinton pick, and we're going to have to take it to the president. Hillary Clinton goes to the president, goes to his aides, and says look, you guys, you have her all wrong. Once she's working with you, you'll understand she's great. Obama decides to back down. He promised to let Hillary Clinton appoint her people. Capricia Marshall gets the job. She turns out to be somebody that the Obama people really like. They appreciate her on Air Force One. They watch dirty movies with her on Air Force One, as we tell the story in the book. And there's even a point, as you note, at a state dinner where she falls down. She's at this formal thing. She's in a nice dress. She's got these Manolo heels on. She's leading the president and the first lady out, and she catches her heel. And she goes down, and you know, it's being photographed, and it's being videotaped. And the president says to the press, don't take that picture. And then Michelle Obama says don't print that picture. And they're trying to save Capricia Marshall the embarrassment of this fall. And then later on, the next time they have a state dinner, they're lining up to go out again, and Capricia Marshall can hear behind her the president lowering his voice like a golf announcer and says, "Here she is on the approach. Will she fall down?" And Michelle Obama says, "Shut up, Barack, Leave her alone."

HH: It is a great story, but it's also, they, Hillary put inside the Obama circle one of her best people who served well, and as a result, built a bridge that helped smooth this relationship out. But what's going to happen with people like, look, Samantha Power called Hillary a monster. You quote that on page 95. One Clinton aide referred to Dan Pfeiffer as a"zero who had ended up in the White House by happenstance." You quote that on page 100. You say on page 116, Tom Donilon is scared blankless of her. That's the Obama national security advisor. There's a lot of that still left over percolating. And then Biden wants to be president. When do all the knives start to get thrown at each other?

JA: Well, I think the Clinton people are very much hoping that they don't have to throw knives in a Democratic primary. I mean, their view is, I believe, they'd like to stomp everybody down so much that there isn't a contest. They

may not have that luxury. You know, Joe Biden and Hillary Clinton get along well. Joe Biden and Bill Clinton get along well. That'll be tested if they run against each other. But I don't know necessarily that it would be nasty. They've run for president against each other before. Their friendship has survived it. You know, some of the other, you know, I really would not expect to see Sam Power in a Clinton administration unless it was in some ridiculously cold outpost like ambassador to Greenland or something.

HH: Moldova, yeah.

HH: I want to cover just a couple more things with him. On page 180 of the book, you quoted Glenn Kessler of the Washington Post interview where he asked Hillary about 2016, and she says please, I will be so old. You detail her broken elbow, which you said was a metaphor for her first year. You detail her concussion. You detail her explosion before the Senate Benghazi Committee. Is age a factor here? I mean, she seems relentless. She seems a force of nature. At the end of HRC, as I told you, I called an old Clinton hand and said wow, she's just as tough as leather. But I mean, 69 is 69, Jonathan Allen.

JA: It is. You know, you'll recall President Reagan was running for president at 69-years-old, I believe. It's, I think it's more of a factor for the American voter than it is for Hillary Clinton herself. I don't think she's going to make that decision based on age. I think she might make a decision based on health if there's some health issue that makes it difficult for her to run. But I don't think age is going to stop her. I do think that it might in voters' minds. If she gets up on stage, and she looks old, or she looks infirmed, or she looks like she's not all together there, then yes, age will be a factor for voters. If she seems vibrant and capable, then you know, I think that'll recede in most voters' minds. But that's the important place, and it's one of those things that's I think almost impossible to poll. How many people want to tell a pollster they feel like they're not going to vote for the person because they're too old? I mean, you know, there are worse things to say to a pollster, but I don't know that you would get real read on that in polling.

HH: Yeah, when she said that, I will be so old to Kessler, I thought maybe at that moment she was thinking that. But in the background here, there are two very strong women–Huma Abedin and Chelsea Clinton. And Chelsea, of course, you treat her very gently, and I think appropriately so. She's not an official person. She's a child of. Huma

is a public figure, and you deal with her less gently, though not, you know, sledgehammer or anything like that. And you leave the worse charges against her out. What do those two women want her to do?

JA: That's a great question. You know, we did not talk to Huma for this book, or to Chelsea Clinton for this book, so I can't speak, and can't claim to know their mind. But you know, I think generally speaking, the people around Hillary Clinton want her to do what she wants to do. I mean, and I don't think many of them think that they're going to be able to talk her out of doing whatever she wants to do. I think most of them think she's already two feet into a race. You know, the way we put it in the book, and I think we lay out the case for this in the book over the course of the chapters, is she's been running ever since the 2008 campaign. And it's just a matter of whether she says stop at some point, and I don't see that happening right now.

HH: Let's go back to what will be the most famous clip used in the 2016 campaign if she get in, cut number 1:

Sen. Ron Johnson: We've ascertained that that was not the fact, and the American people could have known that within days, and they didn't know that.

HRC: And with all due respect, the fact is we had four dead Americans.

RJ: I understand.

HRC: Was it because of a protest? Or was it because of guys out for a walk one night or decided to go kill some Americans? What difference at this point does it make?

HH: Now Jonathan Allen, you reveal on page 349 that Philippe Reines plants this seed at a briefing. "Everyone is briefed or testified as wanted to stand up and scream what the hell difference does it make," he said during a prep session. Well, it made a lot of difference to her political future. That is a damning quote.

JA: It is. It's, you know, I think people watched that and they thought, look at this reaction. Somebody got under her skin, and she got angry, and it's raw emotion. And to some extent, that's good for Hillary Clinton, because there's so many people who see her as robotic. So even if it's not the reaction

that they would like to see, generally speaking, the show of emotion can be a good thing for her. But in this case, what Philippe is telling, is saying behind closed doors to her is an acknowledgement that this was preplanned, or at least it was something she was thinking about ahead of time. And it gives it a manufactured feel once you know that.

HH: And it also, but it makes it more damning, because it was such a bad strategic choice. Let me ask you about...

JA: That's it. Right, that, too.

HH: Yeah, I mean, just, yeah, okay, preplanned. Preplanned like the red button's button was preplanned, and that was another Philippe question. Bill Clinton – Page 249. Bill offered his opinions for Obama. It was too much for Obama, who said he could only take Bill in doses. Can they contain him? I mean, the whole Clinton rewrite speech, we talked about it yesterday, he took her concession speech, rewrote it without telling her. He goes places, he does things. He is a force majeure in American history. People, as you write, she got great advice about her numbers will plummet the moment she starts running. His whole eight years come back. He left with that endless press conference with the pardons of Marc Rich. I mean, there's so much. Can they contain Bill Clinton?

JA: You know, it's one of those great questions, and I think it'll be, if she runs, I think we'll get the answer to that. I think it's hard to contain him, and I think it's particularly hard to contain him if you're Hillary Clinton. She's shown no aptitude for that in the past, although I do think during her years at the State Department, he did recede a little bit. I think he's starting to learn how to be if not secondary, at least not sort of tromp all over the scenery behind her and take all the attention of the public. Al Gore in 2000 distanced himself from President Clinton, and that was a terrible mistake. President Clinton's approval ratings were pretty high. He should have found a good way to use him.

HH: Now you write in here that when Osama bin Laden was killed, the president called Bill Clinton. I think it was the President. Maybe it was Panetta, to tell him, and he said I don't know what you're talking about, implying that Hillary had not told him that the raid was going down. Do you believe that?

JA: I do believe it. Maybe that's naïve of me, but yeah, I can believe. Look,

the two of them have kept a lot from each other and from the public over the years, so the ability or the desire to keep a secret doesn't necessarily surprise me. And the other thing is one of the things that Hillary Clinton was very worried about behind closed doors was how many people had been informed that we were seeking out a potential bin Laden raid, and that we were doing all the preparations for it. She was very concerned that if it didn't happen soon, it was going to leak out. So there's something to be, there's something to be said for there being a little bit of evidence at least that that was her feeling, that it should be shared with fewer people, not more. But who really knows what goes on in the conversations?

HH: It's a fascinating bit of reporting, one of the many. One last segment with Jonathan Allen.

HH: I want to thank my guest, Jonathan Allen, who along with Amie Parnes, have produced really a terrific book, HRC: State Secrets And the Rebirth Of Hillary Clinton. I want to close, Jonathan, by going to an obscure part of the book, page 151. When Hillary got to State, she knew about the QDR, which Defensenicks know about-the Quadrennial Defense Review. And she wanted to produce, and got organized, the Ouadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, which has turned out to be, and I'm quoting now, "In the end, they had a 242-page blueprint for elevating diplomacy and development as equal partners with military force in the conduct of American foreign policy. The first QDDR's goals included making ambassadors CEOs for American agencies in foreign countries, bolstering soft power tools like economic assistance, improving the lives of women and girls around the world, reorganizing the Department's bureaus to better reflect modern challenges, insuring that diplomats had up to date computers and handheld devices, reforming the Foreign Service exam to bring in sharp, new diplomats, increasing diplomat direct-engagement with the people of their host countries, not just their governments, and using technology such as social media platforms for diplomacy. The exercise was aimed at strengthening the institution, even if the medicine tasted bad going down." And my margin note is that's it? They did a strategic review, and they came up with handheld devices? And it goes to my biggest critique. I don't think she has a strategic vision.

JA: Yeah, I think of her biggest problem in 2008, I would agree with you. I

think her biggest problem in the 2008 campaign is she didn't make an argument for why she should be president. And Barack Obama went around the country and he gave speeches, and he would give out his policy prescriptions. And then at the end, he would say and that's why I'm running for president. And the people believed that he had a vision, and I think not only Democrats, I think there were independents and even Republicans who didn't agree with him or agree with his vision, would say look, this guy...and a lot of people would say he didn't live up to it in the presidency. But I think you know, in 2008, people looked at him and said here's a guy with a vision. Here's a guy with a way that he wants to do things that is different than what we are doing. And he can make some sort of explanation of how you get from where we are to his vision. And she failed at that in 2008.

HH: Well, my last comparison, I wrote a column in the Washington Examiner that made this argument. She's George Herbert Walker Bush. She's the one who was bested, who comes back eight years later, gets hit on the vision thing, but wins 40 states and 424 Electoral Votes, because after a revolutionary figure, Reagan, the Republican case, and Obama in the Democrats' case, you want a consolidator. You want a pro's pro, and they're not exhausted. They still have the team.

JA: Hugh, I'll tell your listeners. I sent you a note when I read it. It's a brilliant column. I think it made eminent sense. There's a really great parallel there. It is a, George H.W. Bush was somebody who had been entrusted with a lot of jobs in the past, was a pretty competent manager of them, did not have a big vision for where he wanted to take the country, and in a lot of cases, disagreed with his own party where he wanted to take the country. And so it was a great column. I think everybody should read it.

CHAPTER 42

An Interview with *The New York Times*' Nicholas Kristof, March 5, 2014

HH: Now yesterday, former Secretary of State Clinton compared the Russian aggression to actions taken by Hitler in the run up to World War II. What do you think of her assessment?

NK: In the narrow sense, I mean, there is some analogy to the seizure of Sudetenland in 1938 in the sense that, you know, it was with the excuse of protecting the Germans in the case of Sudetenland and Russians in the case of Crimea. So that parallel in terms of the excuse holds. I don't think the parallel holds in terms of where this is going to go. I mean, I don't think that the seizure of Crimea is the first step toward Russia waltzing into Western Europe, for example. But it is, you know, absolutely a violation of Russia's international obligations. And it also bodes ill for Russian-American cooperation in all kinds of things. I mean, it's going to make it harder to, Russia is going to be less cooperative, even though it hasn't been very cooperative, on Syria, on Iran. It may work a little more closely with China. And ultimately, I think this is going to be bad for Putin, because he doesn't want a pro-Western success on his borders, and I think ultimately this is going to mean that Ukraine is going to be more of an anti-Russian force on his borders, and ultimately, it may take a while, but it is going to be a success, and that is going to undermine the Putins or the Putin successors in Russia.

HH: Well now there are two lines, then, that follow. One is geopolitical, and one's political in the United States. Let me take the latter first. For former Secretary of State Clinton to use that language, she's the one that presented the reset button.

NK: Right.

HH: It's sort of like Samuel Hoare condemning the Hoare-Laval Pact five years after he signed it. Isn't that odd for her to be doing this?

NK: Well, I mean, I think the Russian reset may have been, I don't know that there was a huge downside in trying to reset things. We do need to work with Russia. I do think it's important even now to continue to talk to Russia about Iran, about Syria, about North Korea. It kind of depends on how much faith she had that it was going to work or that she could trust Putin. And I just don't have a sense of that.

HH: When she made that declaration five years ago and gave the reset button, your colleague, Peter Baker, told me yesterday, Nicholas, that the Russians simply do not have much respect for President Obama and his team. Do you agree with that assessment?

NK: You know, I just don't know. It's hard to know. I do, I mean, the only time I met Putin I was just struck by the fact that he really seemed to be kind of in his own world, and living in his very kind of strong ideological world. Very, very smart guy, but getting information from his advisors, and with a very kind of skewed view of the world, so I think it probably is fair to say, though, that Russia and China and in the Middle East, there is a sense that Obama has focused inward and focused on American domestic problems, and I think that there is some feeling there. I don't think that would have changed Putin's judgments about whether to grab Crimea. I mean, after all, he grabbed parts of Georgia on George W. Bush's watch, and Bush was very engaged worldwide. But there may be something to that.

HH: Now when you look at it, though, at the former Secretary of State, she's clearly running for president, but we've got Putin unleashed, Libya in shambles, Syria using gas, Egypt is alienated from us, the PRC is cresting, the Norks are nuking up, the mullahs are on the brink, did she get anything done as secretary of State that was good?

NK: You know, the gains were, in many ways, fairly modest. You had the success in Burma, which as you say, sort of pales next to some of the difficulties. On the other hand, we did deescalate, we did move down from a mess in Iraq, and for now, it's a somewhat better mess than it was. That may also be true of Afghanistan. And the crisis in the Middle East was, I don't know that it was handled brilliantly, but it was a mess for anybody who would have

been dealing with it. Likewise, China, North Korea, you know, I don't think that those are shining successes. I don't think they're shining failures. In the case of North Korea, I would, and maybe China, I would say that they were perhaps [handled] marginally more successfully by Hillary than in the Bush administration, although it kind of depends on the moment.

HH: Yeah, because what I'm getting at is the five years that we've had of the President Obama-Clinton-Kerry approach, I think the world is much worse off than we were post-financial crisis. The financial crisis is a standalone event that we can debate endlessly, but geopolitically, isn't America screwed around the world right now?

NK: I don't know about that. I mean, I think that al Qaeda is less of a threat now than it was before, although, I mean, it's all complicated. And in North Africa and West Africa, you have more localized al Qaeda-related affiliated threats. You have the Middle East in greater instability than it had been. On the other hand, in the case of Iran, you have a process that may lead to resolving that crisis, and Iran is no longer kind of rushing on a trajectory toward a nuclear weapon, which it had been for years. And in the case of North Korea, you have a regime that for a long time had, and North Korea is one of the things that really worries me the most. I think now we have a really unstable leader with Kim Jong Un, and he's one of the people I would really lose sleep over. And we'll see where that goes.

CHAPTER 43

An Interview with Maggie Haberman, then of *Politico* now of *The New York Times*, October 28, 2013

HH: Joined now by Maggie Haberman of Politico.com, who had a huge story this morning on Hillary Clinton's potential 2016 run.

Maggie, welcome. It's good to have you on The Hugh Hewitt Show.

MH: Thanks for having me.

HH: Did the reaction to your column flow in today and raise questions about whether or not she's actually running? Or does everyone assume she's running?

MH: I've heard a mixture of reactions. I think that most people think the preponderance of evidence is that she is running. I had actually been among those who had thought she wasn't running, and I no longer think that. It's hard to think it after some of the speeches she's given recently. I think most people think that there is a chance that she won't run, that those would be for, you know, mostly personal reasons, or the unforeseen. But that chance seems pretty small at the moment.

HH: Now this is a process story that turns primarily on the argument that the biggest complaint about Clinton in 2008, and I'm quoting now, was that she ran a campaign of entitlement, showing feistiness and emotion only after Obama had surged when it was already too late. Is that what you consider, or what your sources consider to be her biggest potential problem this time around? Or is it her record as Secretary of State?

MH: Well, I think that there are two different issues. And I certainly think that her approach to a campaign will be very significant in terms of how she handles it. I think that her record as Secretary of State is obviously her most

recent, and it is one of the pieces of her curriculum vitae that have been the least looked at, certainly in terms of repeated, in terms of the crux of a campaign and the crucible of a campaign. And I think that it's relevant. I think that it's going to come up a lot. I think that people around her are certainly prepared for that, or at least prepared for it to be an issue. How they handle it remains to be seen.

HH: What is her biggest achievement as Secretary of State?

MH: I think that the folks around her believe that among the biggest achievements was, and you've seen this pointed to a lot, was the amount of travel time she logged. They felt very good about the Chinese dissident, and how the disposition of that case went in 2012. I think that what they, and what most people are prepared for is a lot of questions about the aftermath of Benghazi, and I think there was a 60 Minutes piece about that, that went out yesterday. I think there's going to be a lot more of that. I think that this is where the fact that most people believe she is running, but she has not set up a team of any kind in any meaningful way, potentially becomes problematic, because if her folks believe that they have something to say in response to that and they're not, they're sort of letting time slip away from them.

HH: But pause for a moment with me on the achievement side.

MH: Sure.

HH: Articulate further. What is it that people say is her achievement? That she logged a lot of miles? What, is she running for George Clooney's role in Up In The Air?

MH: (laughing) That has been certainly one of the focuses that her folks have talked about. They've also talked about how she ran a functional effort at State. Look, I think that when you hear from her world about what her accomplishments were, I think that they genuinely believe that she had made progress in terms of how America was perceived. People can agree or disagree with that. I think that that is obviously been coming into question now, and this is again something I think she's going to have to talk about more. She's clearly aware of that, but she's not saying much about it so far, on the NSA issue. It's very, very difficult for a former Obama administration official to run a sort of smoke and mirrors campaign on foreign policy. She's going to have a very hard time doing that.

HH: Well, I know all the critiques, because I'm a conservative talk show host. So I know what all the vulnerabilities are.

MH: Right.

HH: I'm just curious as to what they think her strengths are, other than, you know, frequent flyer miles.

MH: Look, they think that she was an effective diplomat. They think that she was good at helping America's image globally. They have a couple of cases like the case of the Chinese dissident where they think that State played a very effective role. She was among those who was pressing for more action in Syria of a restricted type earlier on than what you saw the Obama administration ultimately do this year. But you know, look, she was not, she certainly was not part of the team that, say, was dealing with Israel. She was not integral in that way, and so I think for some of the issues that are the hottest right now, globally, she was not a key factor in them.

HH: So a Chinese dissident? That's it?

MH: Well, I think we will see what they issue as her biggest strength as Secretary of State. That has not been a case they've been emphasizing so far. You've, I'm sure, read the *New York* Magazine piece, like everybody else, where they talked about again, her time as Secretary of State which was largely mechanical, at least in the focus of that piece, and how they thought she had run an effective effort. Everything with Hillary Clinton gets looked at through the prism of how she manages whatever team she's running, and that's been where a lot of the focus has been.

HH: Well, it's very interesting to me, though, as you report early on, they are going to try, Team Clinton is going to try and give you the talking points, which they hope then enter into the bloodstream, and into the circulatory system of Washington, DC that is Politico, and then out through the rest of the country. And what I'm hearing you say is they've got a Chinese dissident.

MH: No, I think, but I think that when you've asked me off the top of my head what are some of the things that her folks have pointed to over the last two years, that has certainly been one of the cases.

HH: Anything else, Maggie?

MH: Yes, there are others, but I'm just not coming up with them at the moment, but, and I'm not trying to avoid the question.

HH: Oh, I know you're not. I just don't think there's anything there. I think, actually, her biggest problem is that there is no there there. She occupied the State Department, and there's nothing to show for it. I guess there's this Chinese dissident, but I'm, that's not, that's not a name that's tripping off of my tongue right now. Do you know his name?

MH: I think that, no, at the moment, I actually cannot think of his name. I think that they're, I think this is going to be an ongoing problem for her. I think that showing sort of a body of work at State is going to be something that she's going to be pressed to do increasingly, and I think that running sort of a shadow campaign through paid speeches and free speeches over the course of the next year, I think is going to not cut it eventually, not just for conservative critics, but I think on the left. I think she's going to have a problem.

HH: But doesn't this sort of underscore the major problem? Here I am, a conservative critic, and I know the critique. And you're a mainstream reporter, and as far as I know, you have no ideology. You're one of the people at Politico that I don't put on the left or the right, you're just down the middle.

MH: Yeah.

HH: And neither of us can come up with any claim that she has to having succeeded at anything, and they are not able, they didn't spin you, because they've got nothing to spin you with. It's like the washing machine's broke.

MH: Well, we'll see. I mean, I think we need to see what they ultimately come up, to be fair. I think that since she's not yet running, I think looking at how they present her and present what she did there is an open question.

HH: They'll come up with something. What I'm getting at is, how long have you been with Politico, five years?

MH: Four years, three and a half years.

HH: Okay, so almost her entire tenure at State, and I've been on the air since 2000. And I can't think of anything, and I'm giving you the

floor. If you can come up with anything for her case, lay it out there. Just from the top of mine, it should be front shelf, right?

MH: It certainly is not, there is not a giant list that I think people can point to.

HH: There is no list.

MH: There are a couple. And I think there's a couple of reasons for that like I said. With the major issue of dealing with Israel, she was not front and center. And she certainly received criticism early on in terms of how the US dealt with Russia. I think these are all going to be issues that she is going to have to address, and I suspect she is going to get asked about them repeatedly, and by many, many outlets.

HH: I mean, it's just a big, we're done, but go around the bullpen at Politico and ask them what did she do, and it's going to be a giant whiteboard, and there's not going to be anything on it, Maggie.

MH: I like the invocation of whiteboard, though.

HH: It is a whiteboard. Maggie Haberman, great piece today, great process piece. But boy, she's got problems if after writing it, you don't have the list at the tip of the tongue. The Clintonistas had better come up with a list, because there's nothing on it. Really, nothing.