

June 16, 2014

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After watching Clinton's performance this week, Jennifer Rubin thinks the GOP is praying Hillary is nominated.

At some point during Hillary Clinton's book rollout — perhaps it's already happened — some Democratic activists will look at one another and ask: Really? That's who we want to just hand the nomination to?

In the media blitz Democrats may be reminded of some old faults and some new problems that would plague her candidacy. She doesn't handle intense scrutiny very well. (Her first interview necessitated immediate damage control on her plea of poverty.) She too often plays the victim (broke, was she?). And her "accomplishments" on further scrutiny turn out to be slight. Her refusal to recognize her own failures suggests either arrogance or cluelessness, as we saw in her unconvincing Benghazi defense. There is a reason why her popularity goes up when she is not running for something. With no declared opponent, no negative ad and no real new information about her favorability has dropped five points in 4 months — and that is before her rotten interview performance has percolated fully. Imagine a few more of those interviews, an informed and capable opponent and a series of ads featuring nothing but Hillary's own words. You can see how beatable she might be. ...

Similar thoughts from Paul Mirengoff.

Democratic operatives must be nervous, if not panicked, after Hillary Clinton's interview with Diane Sawyer in which Sawyer, to quote the Washington Post's headline, "destroyed" the former Secretary of State. It's common knowledge that Clinton is anything but a natural on the campaign trail. But the tone deafness of some of her responses (e.g., we struggled to piece together the resources for mortgages for houses) suggests that Clinton may be a gaffe machine with little ability to connect with ordinary voters. ...

And from Jonathan Tobin.

... to speak of the Clintons as broke in 2001 is to engage in the kind of deceit that voters can smell a mile away. Like all ex-presidents and first ladies, but especially those who were both popular and engaged in heated controversies like the Lewinsky scandal, their financial prospects were, to put it mildly, rosy. In the 13-plus years since leaving the White House, Bill Clinton has earned more than \$100 million in speaking fees and both made fortunes writing their memoirs. They may have had a temporary cash flow problem in January 2001, but were soon rolling in it. Thus, for her to speak of their plight in 2001 when, as she put it:

We had no money when we got there, and we struggled to, you know, piece together the resources for mortgages, for houses, for Chelsea's education. You know, it was not easy.

No, I suppose it wasn't. But somehow with the help of generous donors, publishers, and those eager to pay six-figure fees for the honor of hosting the ex-president, they managed to pay their l'affaire Lewinsky lawyer fees as well as obtain multiple mortgages and houses that Clinton referenced when she used those words in the plural. But then again, Clinton had already gotten an \$8 million advance for her memoirs even before her husband's term ended. ...

Seth Mandel says Hillary's task is to spin the unspinnable.

Hillary Clinton's memoir, Hard Choices, was apparently assembled "with an assist"—according to New York Times reviewer Michiko Kakutani—from what Clinton calls her "book team." And if Kakutani's review is any indication, Clinton's team was burdened by its task.

The book is understood to be Clinton's campaign manifesto, and the book's release—officially, tomorrow—is being treated as a campaign launch. Clinton has been dogged by one question in particular: What did she accomplish as secretary of state? She has even been unable to answer the question herself. And though I (like Clinton, presumably) haven't read her book, early indications are that her book team was unable to answer it as well.

After an undistinguished and at times dismal term as secretary of state, the book had two basic objectives: show Clinton to have accomplished something—anything really; and dispel the image Clinton cultivated of using the prestigious perch as an Instagram-based travelogue. ...

Erik Wemple of WaPo on how Diane Sawyer "destroyed" Hillary in her ABC interview.

... In an interview with Clinton that aired last night on ABC News, anchor Diane Sawyer threw the ARB right back in the face of the former secretary of state. The two tangled over the preparedness of the U.S. diplomatic installation in Benghazi for a terrorist attack. In defending her work on this front, Clinton stressed that she had delegated the particulars of security to the experts in the field. "I'm not equipped to sit and look at blueprints to determine where the blast walls need to be, where the reinforcements need to be. That's why we hire people who have that expertise," said Clinton, who did the interview as part of the tour for her book "Hard Choices."

Sensing an opening, Sawyer cited the document that Clinton herself has so often cited: "This is the ARB: the mission was far short of standards; weak perimeter; incomplete fence; video surveillance needed repair. They said it's a systemic failure."

Clinton replied, "Well, it was with respect to that compound."

The anchor continued pressing, asking Clinton whether the people might be seeking from her a "sentence that begins from you 'I should have...'" Clinton sort of ducked that one. The accountability-heavy moment came when Sawyer's slow and steady line of questioning on Benghazi security prompted Clinton to utter this self-contradictory and sure-to-be-repeated statement: "I take responsibility, but I was not making security decisions."

For the record, possible-presidential-candidates-in-abeyance should never attach conjunctions to their declarations of responsibility-taking.

Another telling moment came when Sawyer placed before Clinton all the warnings that bad things were afoot in Benghazi. "Did you miss it? Did you miss the moment to prevent this from happening?" Sawyer asked. Clinton's response started with these two words: "No, but ..." ...

Jennifer Rubin posts on the Sawyer interview too.

Diane Sawyer is deservedly receiving kudos for her news-making interview with Hillary Clinton. In one interview she obtained more revealing information about Clinton's values and mind-set than we've gotten in literally decades of questioning. For other interviewers and for Clinton's Republican opponents-in-waiting, there are lessons to be learned:

1. Stop obsessing on what Clinton said; focus on what she did. The Benghazi talking points memo has been plowed and re-plowed, but Clinton's own culpability in the security failures and her management style more generally at the State Department have not. The latter goes to the heart of her legacy and her qualifications as president. She talks a good game about "inputs" — meetings held, countries visited and orders given — but is easily flummoxed when pressed to talk about what outcomes she achieved. Questions about her failure to speak out against the president or secretary of state are among the most useless. Who cares? (She is a loyal Democrat. Hardly news.) What matters is the policies she followed and favors.

2. Clinton's image as a protector of the needy, especially women and children, is overblown. Getting at her fixation with wealth (a fault line that runs back to the Whitewater and cattle futures scandals) puts a dent in that image of selfless protector of the weak. ...

Maybe Hillary was listening to Sam Cooke rather than studying. Remember his lyrics in the song Wonderful World? "Don't know much about history Don't know much biology Don't know much about a science book Don't know much about the French I took ..."

Free Beacon posts on her fail.

The terrible week continues for Hillary Clinton.

At Wednesday's Rahm Emanuel-Hillary Clinton show for her book tour, she was responsible for another unforced error.

"I actually write about Rahm in the book," Clinton said. "I asked him not to read it before we sat and did our interview! But it was in the very first chapter, the chapter I rightly call 'Team of Rivals'"

because that's what it was in the beginning. A senator from Illinois ran against a senator from New York just as had happened way back with a senator from Illinois named Lincoln and a senator from New York named Seward. And it turned out the same way."

Maybe Hillary is not 'ready' as Lincoln was never a senator because he lost that election to Stephen A. Douglas.

John Hinderaker posts on the fail too.

We have commented a number of times about Barack Obama's below-average knowledge of history. But he is not alone: his would-be successor in the White House, Hillary Clinton, wouldn't fare well in a high school American history class, either. The Free Beacon covers her book-promoting appearance with Rahm Emanuel. Note that her blunder isn't a mere slip of the tongue, but rather part of an extended analogy that she draws between herself and William Seward, which evidently had been thought out ahead of time:

"I actually write about Rahm in the book," Clinton said. "I asked him not to read it before we sat and did our interview! But it was in the very first chapter, the chapter I rightly call 'Team of Rivals' because that's what it was in the beginning. A senator from Illinois ran against a senator from New York just as had happened way back with a senator from Illinois named Lincoln and a senator from New York named Seward. And it turned out the same way."

Lincoln, of course, lost his Senate race to Stephen Douglas in 1858. Hillary is having a tough go of it these days.

IBD

[The message of Hillary Clinton's hollow 'Hard Choices' is whatever she says it is](#)

by Andrew Malcolm



AP (Bangladesh students prepare to burn Hillary Clinton in effigy.)

Hillary Clinton is doing everything you'd expect from someone setting up a presidential attempt in two years.

She's publishing a book today that's unlikely to offend anyone important. "A newsless snore," wrote Politico's Mike Allen, no doubt earning a prominent spot on Team Hillary's enemies list.

She's granting "exclusive" interview after "exclusive" interview with hand-picked questioners. *Oh, look* they're women, all ready to hear Clinton's message of double standards for female Americans! Diane Sawyer and Susan Page Monday, Greta Van Susteren next week. They could ask Sarah Palin about double standards. But they won't.

Clinton's traveling the country widely for weeks now, having honed her message these last 15 months in lucrative corporate speeches. Her poll numbers for the Democrat nomination are prohibitively positive, among Democrats anyway.

She'll do much smiling and deflecting in scores of public sessions, trying to define the new Hillary before others do. And trying to dim the memory of that strident First Lady who wanted to impose a new national health insurance plan on Americans almost 20 years before Who's-Its in the White House bolloxed it up royally.

A lot of people across the political spectrum are doing the same political preparatory work as HRC these days.

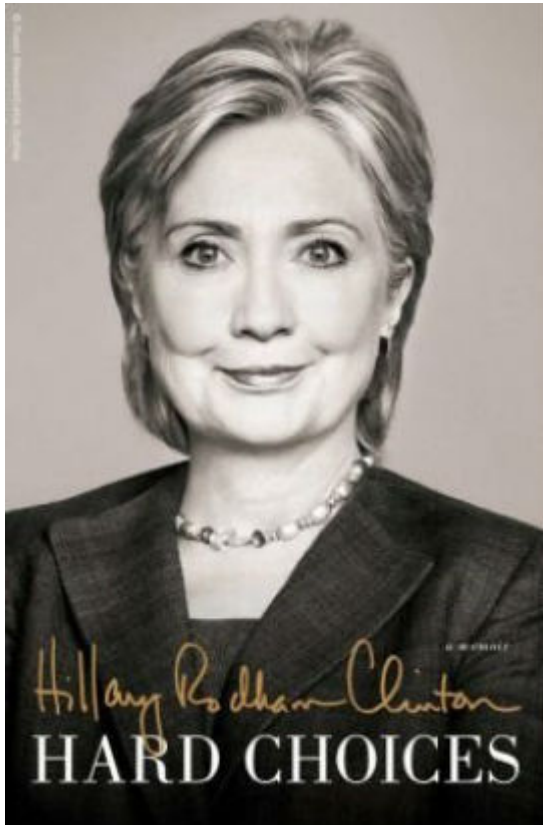
John F. Kennedy announced his candidacy on Jan. 3 of his election year. But that was 54 years ago. You must start much earlier now to be in position to make a realistic decision later.

But these others -- a couple of no-name Dem governors, a platoon of accomplished Republican governors and some self-appointed, self-important GOP members of Congress -- don't have the star power and mainstream media.

It was an easy choice for Clinton to write "Hard Choices" after her four years and million miles as Obama's secretary of State. Five-million dollars and a ghostwriter make a lot of things easier.

The reviews of the 656-pages have been not so good. "This volume," wrote the N.Y. Times, "is very much the work of someone keeping all her political options open." The New Republic slammed its "dullness and lack of critical energy." Slate said "Hard Choices" is a "low-salt, low-fat, low-calorie offering with vanilla pudding as the dessert. She goes on at great length, but not great depth."

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"A newsless snore"--Politico

These reviews miss the point. "Hard Choices" is less a book and more a political bus shelter awaiting the campaign. Anyone remember anything from Romney's book or Huckabee's or Obama's? (Besides all the drugs.)

Most Americans will not read the book. So, the message from the book is whatever Clinton says it is. She's got no grand peace treaty or accomplishment to cite.

But she worked hard as Obama's teammate, admires him. But, you know, she's been out a while now, so doesn't know a lot of inside details, despite her secret lunch with POTUS the other day.

As it happens, you should know she opposed the recent unpopular Taliban prisoner swap early on. But, you never know, something may have changed these last few years. She would never second-guess President Obama from outside. But stand by for more distancing from Obama in coming months.

Clinton's Mr. Magoo eyeglasses are gone now. Her health is great, thank you for asking. No problems whatsoever from last year's head injury. She's looking forward to talking with thousands of Americans.

Was she really paid \$5 million for the book? And her husband raked in \$100 million in recent years? You know, when she and Bill left the White House, they were dirt poor. Flat broke. In debt, in fact.

For a few minutes perhaps.

Clinton's toughest day? That's easy: The deadly Benghazi attack. Awful. Amb. Stevens was her good friend. Consulate security? She told underlings to take care of that. Look, she's no architect knowledgeable about where blast walls go, and details like that. She's Big Picture.

Anyway, that's pretty old news now, isn't it? The [State Department's Accountability Review Board examined it thoroughly. That inquiry, however, did not hold anyone accountable](#) for those four deaths. And, believe it or not, never got around to actually talking with the woman in charge that lethal night. Just another old detail.

Her proudest accomplishment? Restoring the United States to its proper respect around the world. No, *really*. (See photo at top.)

Maybe on the book tour someone will ask Clinton why she didn't go on the TV shows the Sunday after Benghazi, why Susan Rice from the U.N. of all places was sent out to deliver that video lie so seamlessly. And how did that phony tale morph from Clinton's attack-night news release into the administration's official defense?

And where did she reach the president that night?

Was Clinton really a major driver of Obama's war on Libya that turned that place into today's al-Qaeda playground?

Is Joe Biden qualified to become president? Is there any real difference besides party label between John McCain at 72 being too old to become president in 2008 and her being 70 in 2017?

Never mind her full-blown shadow campaign organization now under construction, Clinton says she won't decide on a run until late this year or early next. It's hard to believe that someone so steeped in politics so long could pass on a chance to become the first female president. But the question will help sell books now.

On the other hand, Clinton knows bitter first-hand from 2007-08 what it's like to be a shoo-in for her party's presidential nomination. And that party has moved way left since it didn't pick her.

Also, after Obama's inept, economically-disastrous, gaffe-prone, scandal-filled presidency, will Americans really fall for another presidential candidate from Chicago with only a short, unimpressive career in Congress? And a meaningless claim to possibly be an historic first?

Funny, Hillary warned about those very same things last time around.

Right Turn

[GOP prays Hillary will run unopposed](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

At some point during Hillary Clinton's book rollout — perhaps it's already happened — some Democratic activists will look at one another and ask: *Really? That's who we want to just hand the nomination to?*

In the media blitz Democrats may be reminded of some old faults and some new problems that would plague her candidacy. She doesn't handle intense scrutiny very well. (Her first interview

necessitated [immediate damage control](#) on her [plea of poverty](#).) She too often plays the victim (*broke, was she?*). And [her “accomplishments” on further scrutiny turn out to be slight](#). Her refusal to recognize her own failures suggests either arrogance or cluelessness, as we saw in her unconvincing Benghazi defense. There is a reason why her popularity goes up when she is not running for something. With no declared opponent, no negative ad and no real new information about her favorability has dropped [five points](#) in 4 months — and that is before her rotten interview performance has percolated fully. Imagine a few more of those interviews, an informed and capable opponent and a series of ads featuring nothing but Hillary’s own words. You can see how beatable she might be.

At this stage she is “inevitable” because the Democrats have decided she is, and no one substantial wants to challenge her. But imagine that her book tour highlights her weaknesses while suggesting her strengths (experience, familiarity) aren’t that significant. Consider that her polling likely will continue to go down, even with no rival. Wouldn’t someone, somewhere in the Democratic universe of potential candidates, get the idea that she could be beaten if someone fresher and minimally competent showed up? Once the aura of invincibility fades and her weaknesses are evident, running against Clinton no longer would seem crazy, as it has until now, or an illegitimate attempt to take the nomination she “deserves.” Then what?

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo has said he won’t run against his old ally, but he certainly would have pizzazz and generate interest. With no need to defend Obama or Clinton, he’d have breathing room to offer his own agenda and explain how a liberal administration can also be an effective one. Cuomo is not the only one who could conceivably step into that role. Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick could, as could some ex-senators, such as Russ Feingold of Wisconsin. Governors may emerge after the November election. Once one quality candidate comes forward, others may follow.

That’s one version, at any rate, of how the Democratic race may pan out. But it’s also quite possible Hillary Clinton winds up with the nomination by default. Despite a rocky book tour, no viable challenger may emerge. And so, baggage and all, Hillary Clinton will be handed the nomination.

This latter scenario is what a legion of Republican activists, operators, campaign aides-in-waiting and potential candidates are convinced — and to a large extent are hoping — will occur. The book and the tour, if anything, have convinced Republicans that Clinton is eminently beatable. They have the research and the arguments against her all ready to go. They’ve grown comfortable with the idea of tying her to Obama and watching her walk a tightrope between defending him and distancing herself from the Obama train wreck. They see her record as a 10-ton weight she’ll have to haul around the country. They may be underappreciating her assets, but the GOP is preparing — almost joyfully so — to run against her.

But what if someone shows up who doesn’t have the baggage, doesn’t need to defend Obama and isn’t familiar to the point of boring the Democratic electorate? *Gulp*. That might get dicey.

The irony then is that Republicans now want as much Clinton exposure as possible without dissuading her from running. Democrats would like the book tour to be over already, preserving their image of an invincible Hillary Clinton who is the only realistic nominee. Both sides get thrown for a loop if Clinton backs out or others enter the race. Both better count on Clinton’s (and her husband’s) insatiable desire for power and unrealistic assessment of her record. Otherwise, thing might get really interesting and — gasp! — unpredictable.

Power Line

Will voters eventually roll their eyes at Hillary Clinton?

by Paul Mirengoff

Democratic operatives must be nervous, if not panicked, after Hillary Clinton's interview with Diane Sawyer in which Sawyer, to quote the Washington Post's headline, "[destroyed](#)" the former Secretary of State. It's common knowledge that Clinton is anything but a natural on the campaign trail. But the tone deafness of some of her responses (e.g., we struggled to piece together the resources for mortgages for *houses*) suggests that Clinton may be a gaffe machine with little ability to connect with ordinary voters.

Clinton's answers regarding Benghazi give evasion a bad name. Her statement that Benghazi has contributed to her desire to become president so she can help the country avoid minor league ball is, as [Scott says](#), in need of translation. Did Clinton mean that protecting America's diplomats is a secondary matter, beneath her proper pay grade?

What constitutes major league ball in Clinton's view? The Russia reset, complete with fake button and improper Russian translation? Our Syria policy, complete with the triumph of Assad, the rise of al Qaeda, and 150,000 dead?

There is much that Clinton will have to defend. The Sawyer interview makes one wonder whether she is up to it.

The key to her defense will be pointing the finger elsewhere without appearing to be a finger pointer. Clinton has the first part down. Benghazi wasn't her fault; the security technicians were to blame. The various foreign policy failures of the Obama administration weren't her fault; they are down to Obama taking the advice of others.

Clinton's problem is that her finger pointing is transparent. Sawyer clearly thought so, as she pressed the former Secretary for a "sentence that begins from you 'I should have.'" The sentence quite never came.

Clinton even dragged past Secretaries of State through the mud. She stated:

Just like Secretary Shultz was upset when terrorists killed Americans in Beirut and Secretary Albright was upset when terrorists bombed our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, I mourn the loss of four patriotic Americans who served in Benghazi.

Did Shultz or Albright fail to respond to specific requests for beefed up security? Did either run for president?

And how many voters even remember, or ever knew about, Shultz or Albright? It's bad enough when a school child tries to defend herself by saying "Johnny did it too." But when Johnny last attended school 20 or 30 years ago, the defense becomes laughable.

Therein lies the question that may be starting to keep Democratic operatives awake at night: will voters eventually roll their eyes at Hillary Clinton?

Contentions

Hillary's "Broke" Gaffe and Inevitability

by Jonathan S. Tobin

When Bill Clinton was presiding over the American political scene, most observers understood that part of the key to understanding his ability to connect with voters was his legendary ability to “feel your pain.” President Clinton’s ability to make people think he not only cared about them but also actually understood their trouble was a natural talent and a form of political genius. But like most natural talents, this skill can’t really be taught or transferred to another person. Even if that person has been watching Clinton closely for more than 40 years as his wife. It is in that context that we should regard Hillary Clinton’s [cringe-inducing statement in the ABC interview with Diane Sawyer](#) that launched her book tour about being “dead broke” when she and Bill left the White House in 2001.

In the strict sense of the word, this statement was true. The Clintons did not have, as many politicians do, inherited wealth. While Hillary was a well-compensated lawyer before she became first lady, other than a brief stint as a law professor her husband hasn’t had an honest job in his entire life since he had been running for office since emerging from Yale Law School. But to speak of the Clintons as broke in 2001 is to engage in the kind of deceit that voters can smell a mile away. Like all ex-presidents and first ladies, but especially those who were both popular and engaged in heated controversies like the Lewinsky scandal, their financial prospects were, to put it mildly, rosy. In the 13-plus years since leaving the White House, Bill Clinton has earned more than \$100 million in speaking fees and both made fortunes writing their memoirs. They may have had a temporary cash flow problem in January 2001, but were soon rolling in it. Thus, for her to speak of their plight in 2001 when, as she put it:

We had no money when we got there, and we struggled to, you know, piece together the resources for mortgages, for houses, for Chelsea’s education. You know, it was not easy.

No, I suppose it wasn’t. But somehow with the help of generous donors, publishers, and those eager to pay six-figure fees for the honor of hosting the ex-president, they managed to pay their l’affaire Lewinsky lawyer fees as well as obtain multiple mortgages and houses that Clinton referenced when she used those words in the plural. But then again, Clinton had already gotten an \$8 million advance for her memoirs even before her husband’s term ended.

Should this influence anyone’s opinion of her qualifications to be president? Strictly speaking, no. [As Seth wrote earlier](#), her lackluster record as secretary of state, which her backers are furiously trying to rationalize, stands as a rebuke to her efforts to portray herself as ready for the presidency without our having to delve into their finances. The Clintons are now as rich as most of their peers, both Democrat and Republican, among Washington elites and may well be far less wealthy than the likes of John Kerry and John McCain, both of whom married money. But what this gaffe tells us is that while the widespread support for the idea that it is time we had a female president makes her the odds-on favorite for 2016, this Clinton still has the same tin ear for public opinion that hamstrung her 2008 presidential run.

Making speeches is not quite as easy as simply sitting back and letting your investments make money, as some wealthy folks do. But when most people think of working “very hard,” as Mrs. Clinton described her husband’s task, as well as her own ability to generate more than \$5 million in fees since leaving the State Department, they don’t generally mean giving speeches. Taking a first class flight to resorts and other exclusive venues where the hard worker must be subjected to non-stop flattery, luxury accommodations, an appreciative audience for any platitudes he’s prepared to

spin before accepting a huge check for his troubles, does take effort and a degree of skill—but it is not exactly working for a living. The same applies to writing a book with the help of staffs and researchers that ordinary authors could never dream of having.

The problem here is that Democrats do best when exploiting the natural resentment that most ordinary Americans feel about the rich. Filthy rich Democrats can play this card as easily as poor ones (see Roosevelt, Franklin and Kennedy, John, to name just a couple) but in order to do so they must never pretend to be anything other than what they are. For a person with multiple mansions, like the Clinton's humble cottage in Chappaqua, New York to complain about what they had to do initially finance these transactions is, at best, bad form, and, at worst, a clear misreading of public opinion. It is, in short, exactly the kind of a mistake that Bill Clinton would never make.

In other words, this foolish sound bite is a sign that Hillary is still a politician who is capable of the sort of unforced errors that her husband only made when it came to sex. While it is not clear whether this will encourage some intrepid left-wing Democrat to attempt to derail her coronation as her party's presidential nominee, it should alert Republicans to the fact that Hillary is vulnerable. Though she starts the 2016 cycle as the odds-on favorite, a candidate that could make a mistake like this should never be considered inevitable.

Contentions

Clinton's Task: Spin the Unspinnable

by Seth Mandel

Hillary Clinton's memoir, *Hard Choices*, was apparently assembled "with an assist"—according to *New York Times* reviewer Michiko Kakutani—from what Clinton calls her "book team." And if Kakutani's [review](#) is any indication, Clinton's team was burdened by its task.

The book is understood to be Clinton's campaign manifesto, and the book's release—officially, tomorrow—is being treated as a campaign launch. Clinton has been dogged by one question in particular: What did she accomplish as secretary of state? She has even been unable to answer the question herself. And though I (like Clinton, presumably) haven't read her book, early indications are that her book team was unable to answer it as well.

After an undistinguished and at times dismal term as secretary of state, the book had two basic objectives: show Clinton to have accomplished something—anything really; and dispel the image Clinton cultivated of using the prestigious perch as an Instagram-based travelogue. Readers of the *Times* review will encounter, early on, the following sentence: "The book itself, however, turns out to be a subtle, finely calibrated work that provides a portrait of the former secretary of state and former first lady as a heavy-duty policy wonk."

This sounds promising. A few paragraphs later, however, they will be told: "For readers who are less policy-oriented, there are personal tidbits strewn lightly throughout, like small chocolate Easter eggs." It is unthinkable that a great many readers will press on past that sentence, instead reaching for the ginger ale to calm the rising tide of nausea that accompanies particularly greasy Clinton-worship. For those who couldn't tough it out, spoiler alert: there are precisely zero examples in the review of anything that even approaches portraying Hillary "as a heavy-duty policy wonk."

Oh well. What about Hillary's other defenders in the press, perhaps those with a steady interest and experience in foreign affairs and issues relating to human rights? Enter Nicholas Kristof. He uses his [Sunday column](#) to defend Hillary Clinton's tenure at State. It is a brutally awkward attempted complement that begins to absentmindedly sound more like a personal indictment. It is the Michael Scott [wedding toast](#) of pro-Hillary columns.

"When politicians have trouble spinning their own glories, that's a problem," he begins. That is correct. He continues:

So it was bizarre that Hillary Rodham Clinton, [asked at a forum in April about her legacy at the State Department](#), had trouble articulating it. That feeds into a narrative — awaiting her memoir on Tuesday — that she may have been glamorous as secretary of state but didn't actually accomplish much.

In fact, that's dead wrong, for Clinton achieved a great deal and left a hefty legacy — just not the traditional kind. She didn't craft a coalition of allies, like James Baker, one of the most admired secretaries of state. She didn't seal a landmark peace agreement, nor is there a recognizable "Hillary Clinton doctrine."

Uh-oh. Is it possible Clinton "achieved a great deal and left a hefty legacy" yet that legacy was, at the same time, so subtle as to be unidentifiable even to Hillary herself? Apparently so. But what follows are a series of claims Kristof then, in the next breath, debunks himself.

For example, Kristof says "Clinton recognized that our future will be more about Asia than Europe, and [she pushed hard to rebalance our relations](#)." Yet here's his very next sentence: "She didn't fully deliver on this 'pivot' — generally she was more successful at shaping agendas than delivering on them — but the basic instinct to turn our ship of state to face our Pacific future was sound and overdue." She didn't accomplish her goal, but that's OK because she recognized, along with everyone else in the entire world, that China is important.

"She was often more hawkish than the White House," Kristof argues, and notes Clinton's support for arming Syrian rebels. This was "vetoed" by Obama, Kristof rightly explains, so it's a bit unclear what part of nonexistent policies established this "hefty legacy" we keep hearing about.

Later, Kristof returns to the well-worn topic of Clinton prioritizing (translation: giving speeches about) the rights of women and girls worldwide. And here's Kristof's example: "The kidnapping of the Nigerian schoolgirls in April was the kind of issue Clinton was out front of." Yes, well, here's the thing: *Clinton wasn't secretary of state anymore in April; John Kerry was.*

It appears Hillary Clinton's term as secretary of state was so forgettable as to be literally forgotten by her defenders. She is not in office currently, and her impact is, apparently, indistinguishable from when she was actually in office. This is the Clinton "legacy," such as it is. Even the best "book team" can only dress it up so much.

Washington Post

[ABC News's Diane Sawyer destroys Hillary Rodham Clinton on Benghazi](#)

by Erik Wemple

A standard defense for Hillary Rodham Clinton when facing questions about Benghazi, Libya, has been to cite her commissioning of a report from the State Department's [Accountability Review Board](#) (ARB), which took a deep look at the attacks that claimed the lives of four U.S. personnel on Sept. 11, 2012. In testimony before Congress in January 2013, [Clinton said](#): "I hurried to appoint the Accountability Review Board led by Ambassador Pickering and Admiral Mullen so we could more fully understand from objective, independent examination, what went wrong and how to fix it. I have accepted every one of their recommendations."

In an interview with Clinton that aired last night on ABC News, anchor Diane Sawyer threw the ARB right back in the face of the former secretary of state. The two tangled over the preparedness of the U.S. diplomatic installation in Benghazi for a terrorist attack. In defending her work on this front, Clinton stressed that she had delegated the particulars of security to the experts in the field. "I'm not equipped to sit and look at blueprints to determine where the blast walls need to be, where the reinforcements need to be. That's why we hire people who have that expertise," said Clinton, who did the interview as part of the tour for her book "[Hard Choices](#)."

Sensing an opening, Sawyer cited the document that Clinton herself has so often cited: "This is the ARB: the mission was far short of standards; weak perimeter; incomplete fence; video surveillance needed repair. They said it's a systemic failure."

Clinton replied, "Well, it was with respect to that compound."

The anchor continued pressing, asking Clinton whether the people might be seeking from her a "sentence that begins from you 'I should have...?'" Clinton sort of ducked that one. The accountability-heavy moment came when Sawyer's slow and steady line of questioning on Benghazi security prompted Clinton to utter this self-contradictory and sure-to-be-repeated statement: "I take responsibility, but I was not making security decisions."

For the record, possible-presidential-candidates-in-abeyance should never attach conjunctions to their declarations of responsibility-taking.

Another telling moment came when Sawyer placed before Clinton all the warnings that bad things were afoot in Benghazi. "Did you miss it? Did you miss the moment to prevent this from happening?" Sawyer asked. Clinton's response started with these two words: "No, but ..."

The fantastic grilling served up by Sawyer wasn't exceptional just because of its smartness, its civility or its persistence. It was exceptional for the way in which it upended the emphases of Benghazi "scandal" coverage. Ever since the issue roared to life amid the 2012 presidential campaign, media fixation has attached to how the Obama White House managed the post-attack phase. The allegation here is that Obama's advisers attempted to frame the events as a random spasm of violence in reaction to an anti-Islam video, as opposed to admitting right away that the United States had been victimized again by terrorism.

Instead of obsessing over that phase of Benghazi, Sawyer went heavy on the security questions: They came first, they dominated the nearly 10-minute Benghazi discussion and they may well fuel a new round of questions for the former secretary. Fox News, which interviews Clinton on June 17, might consider giving her a chance to clarify just what taking responsibility means.

Right Turn

The Diane Sawyer school of interviewing: Media 101

by Jennifer Rubin

Diane Sawyer is deservedly receiving kudos for her news-making [interview with Hillary Clinton](#). In one interview she obtained more revealing information about Clinton's values and mind-set than we've gotten in literally decades of questioning. For other interviewers and for Clinton's Republican opponents-in-waiting, there are lessons to be learned:

1. *Stop obsessing on what Clinton said; focus on what she did.* The Benghazi talking points [memo](#) has been plowed and re-plowed, but Clinton's own culpability in the security failures and her management style more generally at the State Department have not. The latter goes to the heart of her legacy and her qualifications as president. [She talks a good game](#) about "inputs" — meetings held, countries visited and orders given — but is easily flummoxed when pressed to talk about what outcomes she achieved. Questions about her failure to speak out against the president or secretary of state are among the most useless. Who cares? (She is a loyal Democrat. Hardly news.) What matters is the policies she followed and favors.

2. *Clinton's image as a protector of the needy, especially women and children, is overblown.* Getting at her fixation with wealth (a fault line that runs back to the Whitewater and [cattle futures scandals](#)) puts a dent in that image of selfless protector of the weak. Worth pursuing is her record on human rights. She gave some lovely speeches from time to time. But her reticence on the Green Revolution, dismissiveness of human rights as a front-burner issue with China and opposition to the Magnitsky Act (until its passage was inevitable) don't reflect well on her concern for the oppressed. Likewise, her recent thumbs-up for the freed Pussy Riot rock band members smacks of opportunism; she did virtually nothing for human rights in Russia when she had the chance. As Sawyer did in honing in on specifics, asking what she *personally did* for women and children and whether the status of women in China, Russia, the Arab World and Afghanistan improved when she was secretary of state would be revealing. By the way, other than the Foundation (funded by rich people and powerful entities), what charities does she give to and in what amounts? Does she match Mitt Romney's generosity?

3. *What policy ideas has she had, and what plans for the future does she have?* What came through in the interview is that Clinton has become a political celebrity by being in or close to power, not by dint of creative policy or bold initiatives. She has talked about her role in passing the baton to future secretaries of state, as if that is an accomplishment. She insisted that presidents don't have grand doctrines these days. *So what exactly does she bring to public service and to a future presidency other than her own celebrity?* What was her policy for the Arab Spring? (Silence. Birds chirping.) If the Middle East "peace process" was a dead end, what does she think is the role of the United States in the region?

4. *A delegator, not a leader.* President Obama pleads that he was in the dark on numerous scandals (e.g. the Internal Revenue Service, the Department of Veterans Affairs) and learned about these things in the press. In the case of Benghazi, he insists that he ordered his staff to protect our people; he then appears to have taken himself out of the loop on the night of the attack. Being a hands-off leader and blaming underlings aren't working out so well for him, and Clinton's assertion that ordering people to keep Benghazi secure likewise rings hollow. Insisting that barking bland orders is akin to proper management won't be received well by voters who see the perils of a president who practices plausible deniability on a daily basis. Pressing Clinton on what she did to

ensure that objectives were followed, what she did to ensure that key information flowed to her and whether all that travel really accomplished anything goes to a weak point for her — basic managerial competence.

5. *What about all that money?* Clinton got in plenty of [hot water](#) suggesting that she and her husband were struggling, at one point claiming that she was \$12 million in debt, and that she's been obliged to scrounge up speaking gigs (for \$200,000 or more a pop). The interview reminds us that the Clintons have an arm's-length relationship with financial propriety. Will Clinton reveal a list of all her speaking engagements, all the Clinton Foundation donors and an explanation for the debt they managed to ring up? Unlike Mitt Romney, for whom we knew how he earned his money, the Clintons' financial backers and generous friends remain a bit of a mystery. There is no excuse not to bear all, and reporters should ask her some basics (e.g. did foreign governments or entities owned by foreign governments contribute to the Foundation) and probe how forthcoming she will be if she runs.

6. *Don't let up.* Sawyer did what few congressional committee members, reporters and debate opponents do — stick with a subject, listen to the answer and press her for responsive and complete answers. This seems rudimentary, but in fact, it's rarely done. Clinton is so used to evading the question and giving flim-flam answers that a genuinely tough inquisitor throws her back on her heels. A persistent and prepared interrogator makes news and serves the public well.

Free Beacon

[Hillary's Historic Fail](#)

Clinton Calls Lincoln a 'Senator From Illinois'

The terrible week continues for Hillary Clinton.

At Wednesday's Rahm Emanuel-Hillary Clinton show for her book tour, she was responsible for another unforced error.

"I actually write about Rahm in the book," Clinton said. "I asked him not to read it before we sat and did our interview! But it was in the very first chapter, the chapter I rightly call 'Team of Rivals' because that's what it was in the beginning. A senator from Illinois ran against a senator from New York just as had happened way back with a senator from Illinois named Lincoln and a senator from New York named Seward. And it turned out the same way."

Maybe Hillary is not 'ready' as Lincoln was never a senator because he lost that election to Stephen A. Douglas.

Power Line

[Don't Know Much About History, Hillary Edition](#)

by John Hinderaker

We have commented a number of times about Barack Obama's below-average knowledge of history. But he is not alone: his would-be successor in the White House, Hillary Clinton, wouldn't fare well in a high school American history class, either. The [Free Beacon](#) covers her book-promoting appearance with Rahm Emanuel. Note that her blunder isn't a mere slip of the tongue,

but rather part of an extended analogy that she draws between herself and William Seward, which evidently had been thought out ahead of time:

"I actually write about Rahm in the book," Clinton said. "I asked him not to read it before we sat and did our interview! But it was in the very first chapter, the chapter I rightly call 'Team of Rivals' because that's what it was in the beginning. A senator from Illinois ran against a senator from New York just as had happened way back with a senator from Illinois named Lincoln and a senator from New York named Seward. And it turned out the same way."

Lincoln, of course, lost his Senate race to Stephen Douglas in 1858. Hillary is having a tough go of it these days.



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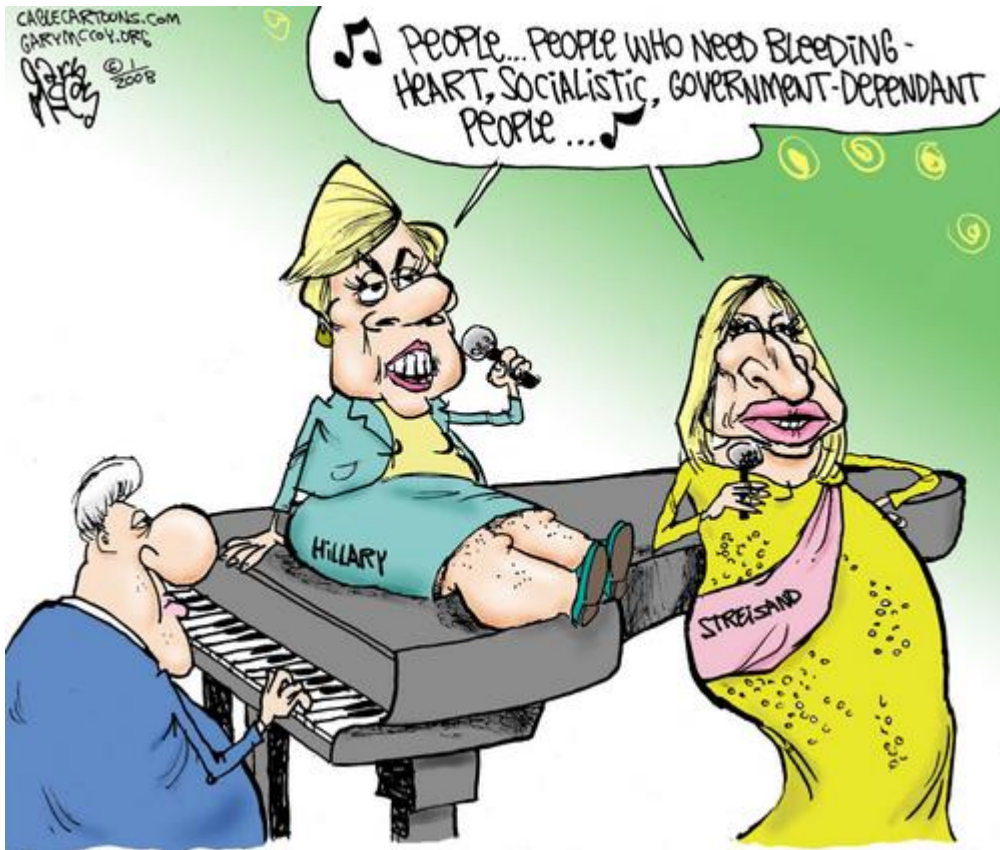
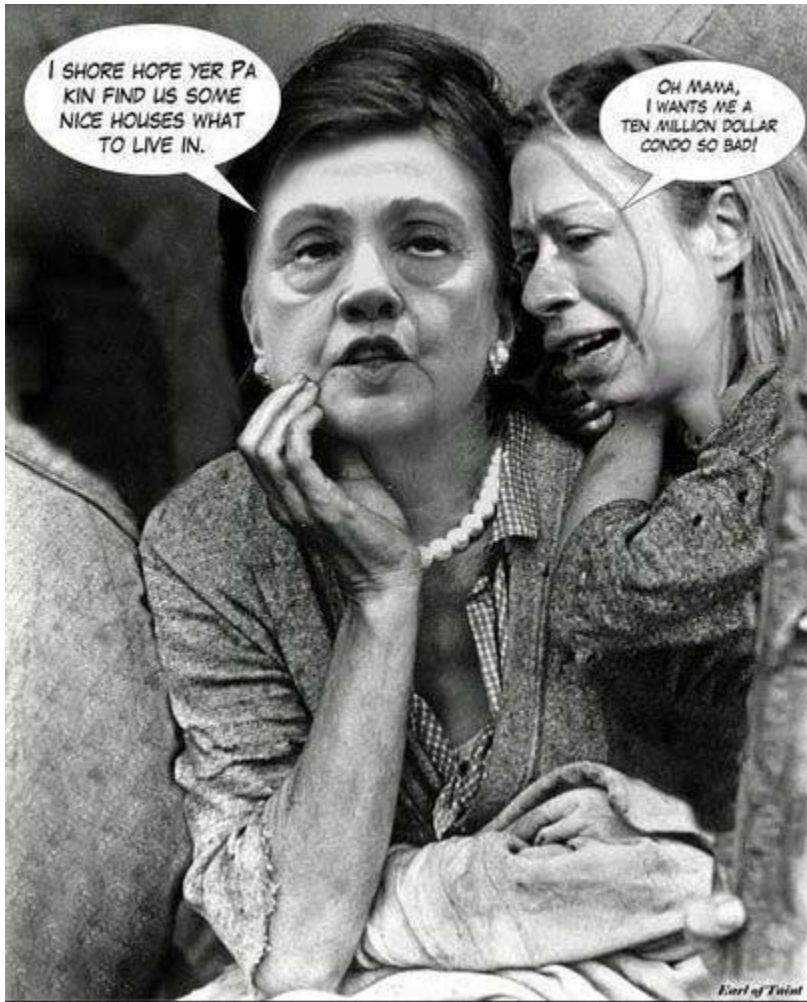
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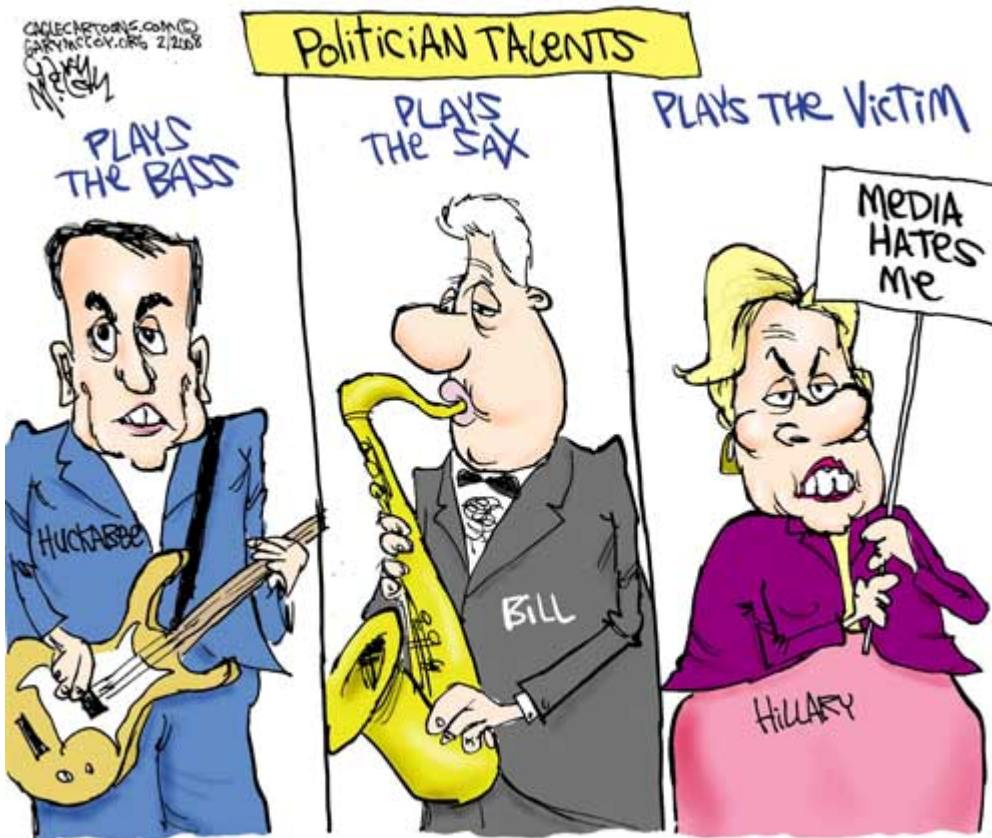
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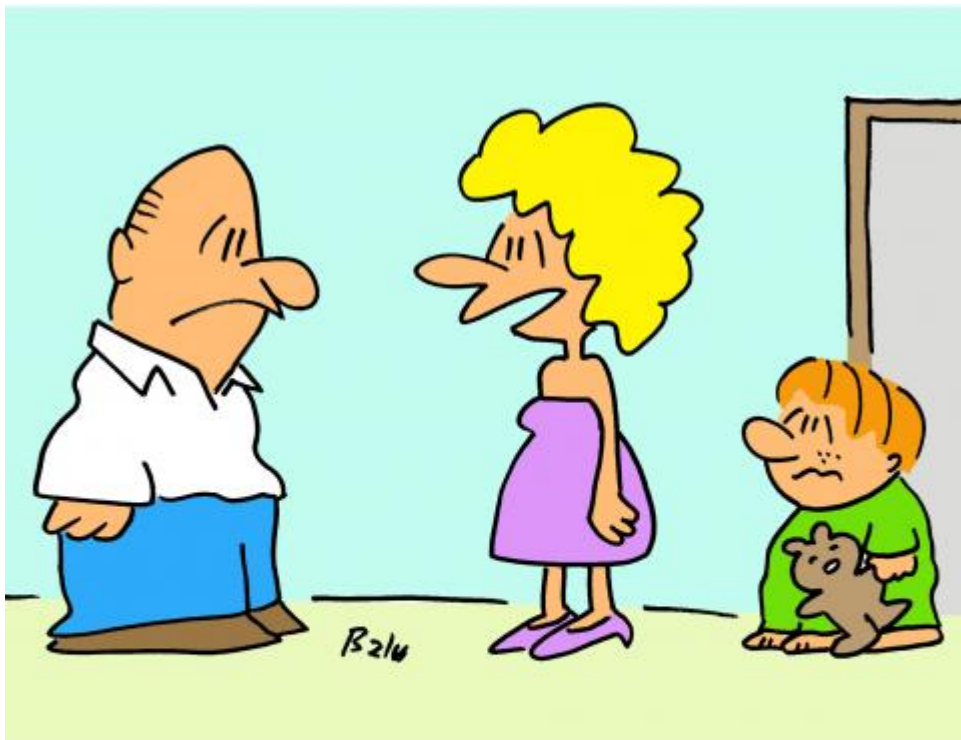
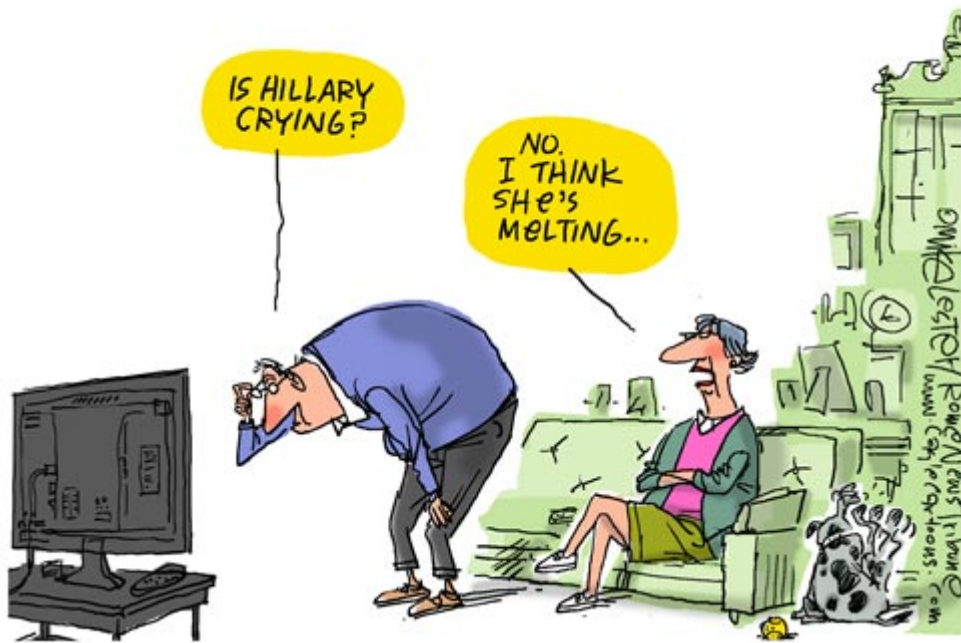
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"He thinks Hillary Clinton is hiding under his bed."