National Issues Forum

Assessing Bill Clinton's Legacy: How Will History Remember Him?

Panel I

Tuesday, January 09, 2001
The Brookings Institution

INTRODUCTION:
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Panel One:
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Isabel V. Sawhill
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Moderator:
Jonathan Rauch
National Journal and The Brookings Institution

Panel Two:
Ann Compton
ABC News
Michael Isikoff
Newsweek; Author, Uncovering Clinton
Lanny Davis
Former White House Special Counsel
David Maraniss
The Washington Post; Author, First in His Class: A Biography of Bill Clinton

Moderator:
Stephen Hess
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Event Information

With just under two weeks remaining in Bill Clinton's presidency, his supporters and detractors are already hard at work crafting two very different versions of his historic legacy. And no one is working harder to leave a favorable mark than Bill Clinton himself.

Will he be remembered for an unprecedented economic boom? For his foreign policy record, including the conflict in the Balkans and his tireless efforts to mediate peace between Israel and the Palestinians? His extraordinary political skills, questing intelligence, and engaging personality? His policy toward gays in the military? For leaving a decision on a national missile defense to his successor? His failed national health plan? Or for the Monica Lewinsky scandal and his subsequent impeachment?

This forum will examine the tumultuous, controversial, and sharply partisan years of the Clinton presidency. Brookings scholars--and outside experts--independent observers, critics, and supporters will

make a first assessment of the imprint on history left by the first president from the Baby Boom generation.

Transcript

MR. ARMACOST: Good morning everybody. I'm Mike Armacost.

It's my pleasure on behalf of the Brookings Institution to welcome you this morning to a national issues forum on the Clinton legacy. Some may regard it as a bit premature to make such an assessment, the president still has 10 days left in office. And I think as Ari Fleischer was saying the other day, he's been a busy beaver issuing new regulations while still in hot pursuit of a peace deal in the Middle East. But it is clear that time is running out on the Clinton presidency. A lot of news organizations and others have been very active in expatiating on his legacy. And while interest in the subject is high, it seems an appropriate moment to make the first pass at assessing the achievements and the shortcomings of the first baby-boomer president.

It's clear that the president's supporters and his detractors are hard at work seeking to shape the way historians will remember him, as is the president himself. In some ways, one of the defining characteristics of Mr. Clinton's legacy may be the self-consciousness of its pursuit. Historians and scholars with the benefit of time and a measure of detachment will provide the authoritative judgments concerning what Mr. Clinton has accomplished, what was left undone. Our efforts this morning fall more into the category of trying to make an outline or, thus, a first draft of history for others to fill in or to round out.

I expect the draft will be neither black nor white, and it's clear that during President Clinton's watch, the economy has flourished as almost never before. It's true also that not least because of this prosperity, we've seen rather dramatic progress on a number of social indices, and I expect there historians will mainly argue over how to divvy up credit for these very benign and welcome developments. In the field of foreign policy, too, there have been undoubted accomplishments, most notably in the field of trade with the ratification of NAFTA and GATT, and in the field of peacemaking and peacekeeping. And yet, even in an area like the Middle East, where the president has undoubtedly made extraordinary personal efforts, there is more turmoil perhaps now than there was in January of 1993 when he assumed office.

And finally in the areas of major reform, it's currently welcome that an issue like Social Security Reform is no longer taboo, it's out on the table, politicians actively debate it. And yet the opportunities for reform, heretofore at least, have seemingly slipped through the cracks, and perhaps the personal scandals in the White House did something to affect the practical possibilities for reform as they impinged on the national political climate.

So, I expect the balance sheet will be a mixed bag now and perhaps later. But to help us formulate this first cut at a balance of the Clinton legacy, we've organized two panels this morning. The first features Brookings scholars, Richard Haass, Belle Sawhill, Bob Litan and Tom Mann, and it will be moderated by someone you all know and we're proud to have as a journalist in residence at Brookings, Jon Rauch. This panel will assess the Clinton presidency in specific areas of foreign policy, social policy, economic policy, and politics and governance.

The second panel, moderated by Steve Hess, will feature Clinton biographer and Washington Post writer David Maraniss, ABC TV correspondent Ann Compton, Newsweek journalist Michael Isikoff, and White

House Special Counsel Lanny Davis. They'll take a look at the Clinton years through a somewhat wider lens, reflecting on changes he brought to the tone and the process of American government, the meaning and lasting impact of the Lewinsky scandal, and Mr. Clinton's place in the history of the American presidency.

You can get a full transcript of this event, as well as full audio and video recording, as well as additional background materials on our website, www.brookings.edu, and during the course of the program, we'll be taking some questions that come through the Internet.

There was one other note that I was supposed to mention, that is, if you're watching this and have work to do on the computer, you can watch and listen to this event on your computer via live streaming video and audio. You'll have to ask someone else how you do that, but I know it's technically possible.

And with that, let me turn the program over to Jon Rauch.

MR. RAUCH: Hi. Thank you, Mike.

My name is Jonathan Rauch, and I'm a writer here in residence here at Brookings. I write a column for National Journal Magazine, and write articles for many others, including, for example, the Atlantic Monthly. One of the great joys of being here at Brookings is the extraordinary depth of knowledge of this place, administrations going back, I think, to Kennedy. And a remarkable amount of policy experience, a good deal of which is sitting to my right. Welcome to you all. Welcome also to C-SPAN viewers who are with us today.

We're going to spend about the next hour, perhaps an hour and 15 minutes, talking about policy during the Clinton years. We'll have brief statements by each of the panelists to sort of create a context for their overall view, then a discussion amongst ourselves, and hopefully involving you. We hope to keep it informal and lively and interactive, as they say.

Many of you will already know all the folks up here. To my immediate right, Bob Litan, vice president, director of the Economics Studies Program here at Brookings, the author, or co-author, or editor of more than 20 books, and more than 125 articles also extremely relevant today, a former Clinton administration official, served in the Office of Management and budget in 1995 and '96, where he oversaw six cabinet agencies. And before that, in 1993 to '95, deputy assistant attorney general who was in charge of civil antitrust litigation and regulatory issues, which put him in the middle of some of the key fights that have gone on since then, including the Microsoft dispute. And then, in the '70s, he also worked on President Carter's Council of Economic Advisors. Thank you for coming, Bob. That's an extraordinary depth of experience.

To Bob's right, Richard Haass, vice president, director of Foreign Policy Studies here at Brookings. Richard worked, as many of you know, in the Bush administration for four years, where he was special assistant to President Bush, and senior director for Near East and South Asian Affairs on the National Security Council. He has also worked in various roles for the Departments of State, Departments of Defense, he's the author or editor of nine books on American foreign policy, and something I didn't know until just a few days ago, also the author of a book on management called The Bureaucratic Entrepreneur. He is also, by the way, the formulator in the most concise terms I've ever heard of the Clinton Doctrine, which is perhaps something he'll share with us when he talks to us later on.

To Richard's right, Belle Sawhill, Isabel V, officially, senior fellow in Economic Studies at the Brookings

Institution, also a former Clinton administration Office of Management and Budget official where she dealt with the human resource programs for the federal government, which, of course, account for something like a third of the government's budget. I know of no one who knows more about welfare and thinks harder about the issues of human capital in American society for more years than Isabel Sawhill, who also has long and deep experience at the Urban Institute, and has written any number of books including on welfare reform, on social mobility in America, on the social contract, and also at the moment is doing something I think is exceptionally important, which is she's president and one of the founders of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, an extremely important endeavor, I think.

Finally, at the far end is Tom Mann, who is senior fellow in American Government for many years here, from 1987 to 1999, director of Governmental Studies. A truly distinguished political scientist, a former executive director of the American Political Science Association. He's written or edited at least 10 books, I sort of lost count after ten on everything from the media and polls, campaign finance reform, an area Tom has been active, both as scholar and as a doer, congressional elections, you name it, Tom has been involved in it in the political arena.

By my very rough count, we have on this panel at least 20 years in government under at least three administrations, and we have 30 or more books, and I don't know how many articles. With that, let me start with, I suppose, foreign policy is a good place to begin, let's start with Richard Haass.

MR. HAASS: It's so rare that foreign policy gets to begin anything that I'm reassured already.

We were asked to discuss Bill Clinton's legacy, so let me talk about Bill Clinton's legacy in the realm of foreign policy. Well, first off, what does it take to have a legacy? And I would say it takes one of two things, either one has to bring about great accomplishments on the ground or, secondly, one has to change the way the people in the country, in this case the United States, think about foreign policy. And by either of those measures, either great accomplishments or fundamentally altering the way Americans think about foreign policy, I would argue that Bill Clinton lacks any foreign policy legacy. He has none.

Why is this the case? I would cite three reasons that Mr. Clinton essentially does not possess a foreign policy legacy after eight years. First, there was no foreign policy framework. Instead, policies were essentially ad hoc, they were not consistent, they were not additive. The few attempts at articulating frameworks, for example, the idea that we would be believers in assertive multilateralism, well, that lasted a few weeks until Somalia. Or democratic enlargement, well, that couldn't be the direction for foreign policy because in too many situations democracy could not be given a central place. Or Jon has already referred to the Clinton Doctrine, well, that basically talks about intervening except where the costs get too high. So, for all these reasons, there was no attempt to articulate or, more important, to stick with any framework. So that's the first reason there was no legacy.

Secondly, the Clinton administration was addicted to politics. It's not the first administration, it won't be the last to obviously have politics influence policy, but did bring this to a new height or, if you'd prefer, to a new depth. And more often than not, foreign policy was seen through the prism of domestic policy, and that, again, made it all too vulnerable to change to avoiding doing what was difficult or right simply because it was not politically popular as the polls of the day showed.

And, thirdly, the reason that there's no foreign policy legacy is, at least until the end of Mr. Clinton's tenure, foreign policy received an awfully low priority. In the first term, it was essentially missing. One of the things I did in writing about it was just add up, for example, all of his Saturday radio talks, and it turns out that only about 10 percent, 30, roughly, out of 300 were devoted to the world. And a similar

percentage of his States of the Union. And that simply tells you something, it's very hard to build a foreign policy legacy if you're only going to devote approximately 10 or 12 percent of your calories to that task. So it ought not to surprise us that there's not much to show for eight years.

What you end up with instead is a report card, or a checklist. And what one has on that checklist are a number of accomplishments, and there I'd add such things as the NAFTA agreement, the trade agreement with the United States, Canada and Mexico, the World Trade Organization, the rescue of the Mexican economy, the denuclearization of several of the foreign Soviet Republics, including the Ukraine, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the agreed framework with North Korea, and the humanitarian interventions in the Balkans. And I would say all of those, and arguably some other foreign policies, would clearly go, for the most part, on the positive side of Mr. Clinton's ledger. Unfortunately, there are also some things to put on the negative side of the ledger, and there, again, an incomplete list would be on the trade front the lost of fast track negotiating authority and ultimately the debacle in Seattle, for the loss of control over trade policy, the proliferation of economic sanctions, the failure to bring about any major arms control agreement with Russia so that arsenals of the two great powers still look pretty much like they looked during the Cold War, the erosion to a significant degree of the anti-Saddam Hussein coalition, the fiasco in Somalia, the non-intervention in Rwanda, I would add the Middle East peace process to this list. The fact that the Middle East that Mr. Clinton is going to bequeath to Mr. Bush is far worse than the Middle East he inherited from Mr. Bush's father, and lastly the failure to define post-Cold War relationships with China, with Russia, with Europe, with Japan, with India, essentially not working out a new basis for American foreign policy with the other key centers of power in this world.

And this last point is illustrative, and I'll essentially end here. Bill Clinton will be seen by historians who look at his foreign policy record as a transitional president. Yes, he was the first president whose entire term occurred in the post-Cold War world. Indeed, Bill Clinton's two terms as president were essentially the same as the first decade of the post-Cold War world, but I would say he didn't really define this world in any lasting way. He didn't build any lasting institutions. And he didn't come up with an approach to the world that will last after him. He did not give the American people a handle, a philosophy, a doctrine, a policy that will essentially guide them through the second decade of the post-Cold War world. Now, could he have done so? I would say, yes, I think there were many areas to do so.

So, as a result, when foreign policy historians look at Bill Clinton, I think the verdict will be a mixed record, but ultimately a squandered opportunity to build a lasting foreign policy legacy.

MR. RAUCH: Thank you, Richard. Bob Litan, you want to talk for a little bit about the economic legacy?

MR. LITAN: Well, I think there the news is a little better than what Richard has outlined. Let's remember that Bill Clinton ran on a campaign of, it's the economy, stupid, and I would suspect that the portion of calories he spent on the economy was well over 50 percent. And I think what the big debate is going to be, and I predict that you'll see tons of Ph.D. theses that will address the following issue: How much credit will historians and economists give to Bill Clinton for the remarkable economic performance of the 1990s? Because, by all measures, it was remarkable. We had low and unexpected inflation, extraordinarily low unemployment, far below what we thought was possible at the beginning of the decade. We converted a record deficit into a record surplus in the span of eight years, something I don't think anybody here would have predicted. And you add all that up -- and Alan Blinder has been quoted in another context saying that if you had had to place a bet in 1992 on what the gross macro outlook would have looked like at the end of 2000, the outcome that we actually reached was probably a one in a million shot. I mean, that's how extraordinary the performance was in the '90s.

And one other piece of evidence just to support that, is that from 1995 to the year 2000, we had something that was totally unexpected, we had productivity growth, which is the engine for the growth of living standards essentially advancing at 3 percent a year, the fastest pace of advanced, sustained advance, basically since 1973. And one that was totally unexpected, and one that occurred toward the end or the middle of the end of an expansion, something that no one would have predicted in advance.

So now the question is, how much does Bill Clinton get credit for this? I'm going to give you my first draft, it is totally non-scientific, purely judgmental and anecdotal, but I would assign Bill Clinton approximately a third of the credit for this, with the other two-thirds being split between Alan Greenspan and the enormous energy and vitality of the private sector. I mean, people will quibble, some people will say the third to Clinton is too high, some will say it's too low. But let me give you six policies which make up that one-third, or at least support the view that Clinton had something to do with this.

Number one, overall budget policy. We had two deficit reduction packages, one in '93, which was the biggest, and then another one that was smaller in '97. The '93 one, by the way, was not as big as the Bush deal in 1990, something that people forget. And so I think any fair historical reading of the decade would have to give, I think, substantial credit to President Bush, father, as well as Bill Clinton for turning us toward a deficit reduction path. And we all know that that fateful decision by President Bush to embrace the tax increase probably cost him the election.

But in any event, budget policy was critical. The '93 budget package was passed by one vote. Now, it's true the '97 package probably would have never happened had it not been for the '94 elections, where the Republicans came in and swept Congress and forced Clinton from a budget, which was basically $200 billion in deficit as far as the eye can see, to a much more aggressive deficit reduction package. But taken as a whole, that deficit reduction package lowered interest rates, and helped sustain the recovery.

Second, early support of free trade, both NAFTA and the WTO. I underscore the word "early," because I agree with Richard. Toward the end of the term, Clinton, I think, lost a lot of enthusiasm for free trade, helped contribute to the debacle in Seattle. But that early support of NAFTA and the World Trade Organization helped encourage global forces to contain inflation, and spurred economic growth around the world.

Third, I would say the strong dollar policy, give big credit to Bob Rubin, here, who ran against the conventional wisdom of a lot of economists who would have said in the face of a very large trade deficit that what you ought to do is talk down the dollar so that American goods will get cheaper and, thereby, you can close the deficit. Rubin had exactly the opposite view. He said always talk up the dollar. And Larry Summers continued afterwards. And I think it is now conventional wisdom, something I think will be embraced by the new Bush administration, don't talk down the dollar, because a strong dollar basically allows you to run a low inflation economy, you don't import inflation from the rest of the world, and helped Alan Greenspan keep the economy going because he didn't have to worry about inflation as much as he would have otherwise.

Fourth policy were the various financial rescues, Mexico and the IMF rescues in Asia, under heavy criticism from conservative wing of the Republican Party, and also from the left. The administration, nonetheless, supported these rescues, and I would argue that in retrospect they helped keep the expansion going, not only here, but contained the damage in Asia. There will be debates about this I think for years to come. We may get a change in policy towards the IMF in the Bush administration, but certainly in the 1990s, these rescues kept things going.

Fourth, welfare reform, Belle is going to talk about this. But welfare reform unexpectedly brought a lot of people into the labor force, we know at the low educational level, but essentially this helped contain inflation because we didn't run out of workers. And so that was an important contribution. People will say, well, look Bill Clinton caved in to the Republicans and eventually embraced something that was advocated by Republicans, but give Bill Clinton credit for having the guts to sign welfare reform, and realized the results, the rather unexpected and remarkable results that have followed so far.

And, finally, this is an area of personal interest, that I think the shift in policy towards antitrust enforcement at the margin also was an anti-inflation force, with very aggressive antitrust enforcement. American firms knew they are not around to fix prices; people knew there was a cop on the beat; and, other things being equal, it had the effect of putting a lid on inflationary pressures. I wouldn't rank it among the other top initiatives, but it certainly was an important element in the Clinton program.

So add all that up, and I think you can make a respectable case that Clinton deserves a third of the credit for what happened.

MR. RAUCH: Thank you, Bob. Belle Sawhill, a few words about the administration's record on domestic policy and social reform?

MS. SAWHILL: Yes. First, two adds before I begin, one is that there is a book that I co-authored that came out this summer, which is out on the table there called Updating the Social Contract, and which has a chapter in it which covers this whole question of Clinton's handling of the economy and of domestic policy more generally.

Second, in your packets that you got when you came in, there is a table that I prepared with the help of my wonderful research assistant comparing various statistical indicators of where we've been over the 1990s and compared it to the 1980s, basically compares the Clinton years to the Reagan years. And I think some of the data there are really quite interesting. Just as a teaser, let me mention one, recall that Clinton is a New Democrat, that he has said the era of big government is over, and notice what the data show, which is that as a proportion of GDP federal outlays are almost 3 percentage points lower now than they were when he took office, compare that to the supposedly conservative Reagan years, and you can see that the federal government has shrunk far more during the Clinton years than it did during the Reagan years. So that's just one teaser.

Now, I want to make sort of three points about domestic social policy. I think the first is that Clinton's biggest legacy, and Bob has already mentioned this, is that he transformed a social policy based on welfare to one based on work. The most obvious thing he did there was to sign the Welfare Reform Bill in 1996. Less obviously, but very important, was a major expansion of something called the Earned Income Tax Credit, which is now by far our largest antipoverty program, and which is distinguished

These two initiatives along with the strong economy have led to a sharp drop in welfare caseloads, over 50 percent since 1994, and also, interestingly enough, a sharp drop in the poverty rate, despite the fact that when this law was signed into law most of its critics were predicting that the poverty rate, particularly the poverty rate amongst children would increase substantially.

Second point, when Clinton came into office, he really wanted to increase investment, both private investment by reducing the deficit, getting interest rates down, but also public investment in research, in education and training, and in infrastructure, highways and the like. He believed that we needed a mixed strategy here, that public and private investment were complementary. His efforts where were stymied, I

think, by two things, first of all, simply a lack of money, the fact that if you're trying to reduce the deficit you don't have much money for anything else. And, secondly, the difficulty of reordering budgetary priorities in the face of interest group pressures to maintain existing programs and, of course, after 1994, a Republican Congress.

The result is that this strategy was somewhat stymied. These public investments are now a lower share of the budget than when he took office. However, I think that bigger picture masks somewhat some success, some smaller successes on a number of fronts. I would mention as examples here increasing enrollment in Headstart, improvements in child nutrition, more spending on education in the context of much greater emphasis on educational standards, and a number of other smaller initiatives.

Also, I would maintain, although others might disagree, that he earned his reputation for being a true policy wonk by doing a pretty good job of sorting the effective from the less effective programs within the domestic social area, increasing the ones that had the best performance records.

Third point, two areas where I would have to give him much lower marks. First of all, and most obviously, the failure of healthcare reform in 1993. He should have done welfare reform before healthcare reform, something that he now concedes in recent interviews. As a consolation prize, he got a $24 billion program in 1997 that helps states pay for healthcare for poor children. But, there hasn't been a huge amount of progress here. The number of uninsured is higher now by four million than it was when he took office.

Second area where I would have to give him lower marks is more incentive omission than commission, and that is the failure to do much to start the process of restructuring Social Security and Medicare to deal with the impending baby-boom retirement. He could have done this with the political capital that he had during his second term, blame it on Monica Lewinsky if you want to, but it didn't happen.

On a more positive note, in the minds of many, he erected a brilliant defense of his hard won earlier victories on the budget battlefield, by arguing that we shouldn't have a tax cut as the Republicans were arguing, because we needed to "save Social Security first". But, keeping those surpluses intact for progressive purposes really required putting Al Gore or some other Democrat in the White House and hopefully changing the composition of the Congress, as well. That obviously hasn't happened, so this may be a case of winning the battle and losing the larger war.

I'll leave it there for now.

MR. RAUCH: Thank you, Belle. Tom Mann, what's Clinton's legacy in politics in America.

MR. MANN: Well, on the one hand and on the other, triumph and defeat, success and failure. It's become a cliche, but, alas, sometimes cliches are true. And the overriding question really is will scandal and impeachment trump the positive elements of the Clinton years.

I think from a longer historical perspective that will depend, in part, on how the Democratic Party fares in the 2002 and 2004 elections. Is the George W. Bush presidency a brief interlude in a period of Democratic strength, or, in fact, does this become a reversal politically.

Secondly, how durable will the productivity gains of the '90s turn out to be, and how much will we look back on this extraordinary economic performance as setting the stage for a long period of prosperity or rather a temporary boom or bubble.

And finally, what will the former President Clinton do with the rest of his life, and how will that in turn shape the way we view his political legacy. And in the same with what will Senator Clinton make of her life politically, and how will that have a bearing.

I really think the way to think about the political legacy of Bill Clinton is to view it from the lenses of on the one hand and on the other. And let me give you a series of such tensions. I would submit, Bill Clinton is the most gifted American politician since FDR, in every respect, intelligence, policy, knowledge, political skill, capacity to relate to the American people. Yet, he was also the one who was impeached and almost driven from office. As Bob said, Bill Clinton presided over and contributed to a period of extraordinary prosperity, yet leaves office with a widespread sense of squandered opportunities, Belle identified two, the area of health reform, and social insurance reform. On the latter one might argue that the success of fiscal policy has indirectly improved the health of our social insurance system, yet alas he certainly intended to do more and would have, had other matters not overwhelmed him.

He rebuilt a national Democratic Party to be competitive in presidential elections, destroyed the wedge issues that had made Democrats perennial losers in presidential politics, and yet he also saw Democratic fortunes decline at every other level of political office. He provided the conditions for the likely victory of his Vice President Al Gore, both the extraordinary prosperity, the repositioning of the Democratic Party to the center, the enunciation of an issue agenda that clearly resonated with the American people, I would submit much more so than that put forward by the Republican Party. Yet he also planted the seeds of Al Gore's defeat, through his own personal misbehavior. Just run through the game, the intellectual game, if Monica Lewinsky had never entered -- if the words Monica Lewinsky never entered the political lexicon how different do you think the Democratic campaign would have been, and how different would the outcome of that election have been.

Bill Clinton moved the Democratic Party to the center on crime, on welfare, on fiscal responsibility. Alas, he made paying down the debt an instrument of progressive policy. Yet, he enjoyed his strongest support among the party's core constituencies. Bill Clinton declared in that famous state of the union speech, the era of big government is over. Yet, he created the political basis for activist government, though on a more fiscally disciplined set of terms.

Bill Clinton suffered a chaotic transition, and disorganized early presidency, yet he adapted brilliantly to the election of a Republican Congress in 1994, and to the demands of governing in the age of a permanent campaign. Alas, I suspect that future presidents will find themselves taking notes from Bill Clinton, rather than reversing his means of elections. Our politics have been transformed in the idea that you can roll back to a period in which the permanent campaign did not exist strikes me as fanciful, and I think historians may well look back on his adaptations as setting the stage for governance in the future, for better or for worse.

Bill Clinton saw many of his close aides crushed by misfortune or turn on him after leaving the White House, yet had a Cabinet in many respects characterized by stability, loyalty and competence. It really is striking to realize that at HHS, at Education, at Interior, at EPA, for the most part at Justice, you had the longest tenure of any Cabinet members. In many respects I think we saw genuine sort of competence and the best of public management, in spite of the criticism that's been leveled at some of those Cabinet members.

Bill Clinton was reviled and pursued by conservative activists, and not a few establishment journalists. Yet, his adversaries were often more diminished than he. I'd give as my favorite nominees in that score the editors of The Wall Street Journal editorial page, who seemed consumed with assembling their own

investigative staff to challenge perhaps the best reporting staff in the country on the news pages of The Wall Street Journal. I'd name Kenneth Starr, Dan Burton and Michael Kelly, a superb journalist who Clinton drove crazy. And we've had to suffer once a week as a consequence.

Clinton had a consuming interest in polls. This man could never get enough reports about polling, yet probably had more substantive policy knowledge and interest than any other contemporary American president. Go figure. He was widely viewed as unprincipled, and protean in his political views. Yet, his presidency was remarkably faithful to the values and goals he set out in his 1992 campaign, I recommend for your reading pleasure the 1992 Democratic platform, and the little paperback book he released in the campaign. You go back and reread that and look to see what he tried to do, and did do, during these eight years, and you will see more stability than change.

Finally, in a personal sense, Bill Clinton was compassionate, empathetic, optimistic, energetic, and remarkably hearty. To be willing to get up and continue with the job when most of us would have abandoned it long before, yet also proved thin skinned, undisciplined and self destructive. Remarkably complicated political legacy. I suspect historical assessments of his presidency will undergo many revisions over the next decades, but I also believe the first two-term Democratic president since FDR will not be easily dismissed

MR. RAUCH: Thank you, Tom. As a journalist it seems to me it's appropriate for me to ask a first question that's simplistic and reductive. So let me ask each of the four of you briefly as a way to sum up, in the pantheon of, say, post-war presidents where do you put Clinton?

Why don't we start with Tom and work our way back.

MS. SAWHILL: Post which war?

MR. RAUCH: You pick the war

MS. SAWHILL: The Civil War?

MR. MANN: Or the War of 1812?

Probably somewhere in the middle. But, alas, it's deceptive for the very reasons I suggested. It's there because of an averaging of the sort of the highs and the lows, which inevitably sort of moves him into the middle rank. Let me leave it there, and then respond where my colleagues put him.

MR. RAUCH: Does anyone else want to try and slot him in? Richard?

MR. HAASS: I'd say on a foreign policy ranking he's somewhere towards the lower end of the scale, when you think of the foreign policy records of Truman, the other president who ran into massive political problems Nixon, again, though gets very high marks I would argue for he most part on foreign policy, Reagan, Bush. I would essentially put Clinton in the lower half on a foreign policy ranking

MR. RAUCH: Down there with Carter, maybe Johnson?

MR. HAASS: Vietnam obviously becomes the overwhelming thread that undid several presidents. But yes, essentially and clearly Johnson it was the weakest part of his, and Carter was a fairly unsuccessful president, as well.

MS. SAWHILL: I think we have to give this a little more time, and let history make that verdict, as Mike said earlier. So I would duck that question. I would use it as an excuse to point out that one area that none of us has talked about up here, because none of us knows a lot about it, is what happened in the area of the environment and natural resources, and I'm told that Clinton was concerned about his reputation here, particularly recently. And that Bruce Babbitt understood that if he could get the president to understand that he could actually outdo Teddy Roosevelt in his commitment to saving public lands, that that would be a nice legacy. And recently, as we've seen, he's done quite a bit on that front.

MR. RAUCH: Bob, do you want to take a crack at my simplistic, reductive question? Be irresponsible.

MR. LITAN: Yes, the way I would be irresponsible is to go on a one to ten ranking. I'll take a weighted average of his domestic and his foreign policy initiatives, and I'll give him two rankings. One with and without Lewinsky. If there had been no Monica Lewinsky I think historians would rank him an eight, and with Lewinsky a six.

MR. RAUCH: That's a good way to think about it. I took the liberty while you were all speaking of assigning a numerical score to what I interpreted to be your points of view. And I won't insult you all by telling you how I interpreted your long and thoughtful, nuanced discussions as a single number. But, I will tell you that when I averaged the four of you the number I came out with was 5.5, on a scale of one to ten, where one is Andrew Johnson and ten is Abraham Lincoln.

The one common thread, it seems to me, of what you all said is that this is a man who possibly had the potential to be a paradigm shifting president, a major figure, who wound up being an incrementalist, a hedger, a guy with a lot of pluses and a lot of minuses, but no consistent legacy.

A question for anyone who wants to take it, who served in this or the previous administration, in the real world of Washington today is it realistic to expect a president to be an overarching figure who does great things, or is in fact Bill Clinton doing about as much as a president can do these days?

MS. SAWHILL: I would say that -- Richard made the distinction right off the bat between getting people to think differently about issues, versus actual accomplishments. And the accomplishments can be somewhat incremental, whereas the use of the bully pulpit to be a paradigm shifter, and to get people to think about the issues differently is another role for a president. I think Clinton did that extremely well. I would give him very high marks there. I think he was much more than just a tactician. I think he really did change the debate, update the Democratic Party, as Tom argued, modernized the welfare state, brought it into the 21st Century.

His new Democratic ideas, which I could go through a list of what they were, but they became a model for Europe, as well as for the United States. And they set the stage for progressive government to move forward again, politics permitting, now politics don't look as if they're permitting right now. But, I do think he was a paradigm shifter.

MR. HAASS: I would split it off and say, in foreign policy it would have been difficult to make Americans think different about foreign policy, because with the end of the Cold War foreign policy has lost some of its salience or traction, and Americans are essentially indifferent to foreign policy. So I think that would have been possible, but extremely difficult. And it would have meant using a lot of his discretionary time at the bully pulpit to essentially educate Americans on foreign policy, and clearly that wasn't his priority when he came to town. His motto was, it's the economy stupid, not it's the world stupid. I understand that.

Where I think that he fell short was in his ability to really change things. Bill Clinton came to office at a time of unprecedented American primacy. If there ever was a moment that the United States had the potential to build institutions, and essentially build a new order, this was the moment, with the end of the Cold War. And just think of what he could have done if, for example, he hadn't abandoned trade. If Bill Clinton had built on his NAFTA and WTO accomplishments, which were bipartisan, and essentially said over the next then six years that I have, after those first two years, I was going to make the institutionalization of open trade the priority for my foreign policy, he would not have allowed sanctions to proliferate, he would have had all sorts of fleshing out of the WTO, he would have used that bully pulpit argument and so forth. He didn't do that.

Imagine if it had been nuclear weapons, if he had said I am going to bring about massive cuts in nuclear weapons so the arsenals are fundamentally different, one-fifth what they were during the Cold War, and allow a certain amount of defense to enter the strategic balance, that could have been a paradigm shift, or on humanitarian intervention. If he had articulated a serious doctrine and followed it through consistently, and hadn't done things like taking ground forces off the table in Kosovo, or hadn't run out of Somalia, or hadn't stayed out of Rwanda, but basically had the courage of his own convictions and said, this is going to be the hallmark foreign policy contribution I'm going to make. I am going to try to develop new thinking about sovereignty, create a new norm that governments are not free to massacre their own people, or see them massacre, and I am going to try to transform our armed forces to do more and so forth.

So he had major opportunities, given American advantages in strength to do these things, and he simply chose not to.

MR. RAUCH: Tom?

MR. MANN: Yes, I tend to be more on the upbeat positive side of this. Think for a moment what the sentiments toward government were in the late 1970s, the proposition 13, the tax rebellion, Ronald Reagan's first election, first inaugural, government is not the solution, government is the problem. Now, fast forward to the late 1990s, the view of government is really quite different. Sure, if you pose would you rather have a smaller government and fewer services, a larger government, people ideologically will opt for smaller government. But, the reality is everyone across the political spectrum now accepts a vibrant role for the government. Even the Supreme Court when it comes to the matter of administering elections. So I think there's really been a sea change in the view of the role of government. Now, Clinton might have done more on this score, and certainly it's an exaggeration to say he saved "a place for government", as FDR saved sort of capitalism back in '32. But, it's sort of the same general idea.

Secondly, I think he actually demonstrated how it's possible to govern during a period of divided government, when you face a polarized Congress controlled by the other party. He adapted a style of governance that was tactical, that was defensive, that made heavy use of executive orders, that involved a good deal of sort of campaigning, that actually allowed him and his party to pursue a number of objectives, many in the environmental area, that Belle had mentioned. And I suspect in terms of institutional innovations, and given the changing nature of the world, that we're not going to have the great transforming presidencies until we have a great crisis facing the country. And that Clinton's adaptations will prove to be quite innovative and lasting in their impact.

Just finally a little word on trade. I think the story is more complicated. I think, first of all, there was PNTR late in the game, and secondly I think there also were a host of other trade agreements, with Africa, and

Latin America, and a whole host of others that were negotiated during this time. I think the whole domestic politics of globalization has come to the fore not just in this country, but all around the world and the idea that somehow we're going to return to an era of "principled free trade" I think is unrealistic. And Clinton didn't solve this problem, but he helped people understand that it is with us, and we will be dealing with environmental and labor issues in future trade agreements, whether we like it or not.

MR. RAUCH: For anybody who doesn't know, PNTR is permanent normal trade relations with China, which Clinton managed to push through.

Let's go to the audience. We also have for C-SPAN viewers, and people who are people who are watching live on the Brookings web site, you can submit questions for the panelists by sending an email to communications@brookings.edu, note that's dot edu and not dot com. Members of the audience themselves, please wait for a microphone to come around so that TV viewers can hear you, and then please identify yourself. And please also keep your questions short.

Young man in the front row here, there's a microphone on the way.

Q: George Condon, with Copley News Service. Some people judge presidential legacies in terms of great things that transformed the country, whether it's Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase or Teddy Roosevelt's park system, or the interstate highway system with Eisenhower. Was there anything that President Clinton left behind that in any way is big, or changed the country. And in a sort of related question, none of you had mentioned, does he leave the presidency itself, the office of the presidency, weakened because the rulings that were made?

MS. SAWHILL: I would say the big accomplishment was the one that Bob Litan talked about, the surpluses that we now have compared to the deficits he inherited. That's a huge change, and changes the whole fiscal landscape, both in terms of money, and in terms of the Democrats now being viewed much more as the party of fiscal responsibility. And the second half of your question. I'll turn it to Tom or someone.

MR. MANN: Let me just take up on that. By the way, I think Richard's litany of squandered opportunities in foreign policy are striking. And I'm not going to dispute those. But, in the realm of economics, and again this gets into a dispute about how much we give Clinton credit for, but historians will look back on the 1990s as a decade and compare it to the 1980s. And for just all of us in the audience, just think about the 1980s mind set that we had. We all thought that we were going to be creamed by Japan, right. We thought that we were a losing power. Toward the end of the Bush administration there was worry, even though we were in the stages of economic recovery, Clinton clearly won because the recovery still hadn't manifested itself, and there was a lack of confidence. Most of us never thought we could surmount this deficit problem. A footnote, by the way, is Ross Perot's one contribution to American politics is that he did put the deficit issue on the agenda, and he ought to be getting some credit for that.

But, just think about now in the year 2000, just the sea change in psychology that's happened in the economy. Except for the recent down turn and the slow down in economic growth, Americans in the 1990s have been ebullient. We're the envy of the world. People come from all over the world to see Silicon Valley, to see how venture capital, and see how high tech is transforming the world. I mean, this is an enormous, you want to talk about paradigm shift, this is huge. It's one of the biggest turnarounds between decades that I can think of in my lifetime. So in that sense it will be transformative.

On the issue of the legal rulings that you were talking about, I'm not sure exactly which ones you meant.

Forcing testimony by Secret Service agents, and the whole question of executive privilege. I mean, what I'd say on that is that Clinton further fueled the criminalization of politics. A sort of politics by other means that began well before Bill Clinton came to office, but the very sort of nature of the man and the situations he found himself in, with Whitewater and various other investigations, and then really culminating in that extraordinary Supreme Court decision of Clinton v. Jones, which sort of opened up a civil proceeding against him, which is what caught him in the Monica Lewinsky matter. I think all of this has done damage not just to the presidency, but to the sort of texture and nature of American politics.

Fortunately, we did allow the independent counsel law to expire, although we haven't been able to bring to an end a number of independent counsel investigations that continue on, and may continue on indefinitely. There's no way of bringing them to a close. But, also during this period we saw really the use of civil litigation and discovery motions as political weapons. I'll tell you, if the political left follows the model of Larry Klayman's Judicial Watch on the political right, during the Bush presidency, this will be one of the most horrible legacies of the Clinton years. If this legal battle, which is really a cover for a political struggle, continues in this fashion, it will be quite constructive.

It wasn't Clinton alone, it was Clinton and his adversaries. But, it's also permeated the press, because now the rewards go so much toward looking for scandal, imputing nefarious motives, I'd like to say Bill Safire has had sort of a tremendous career in uncovering 19 of the last 5 scandals in American politics. And that's pretty much the way in which our politics operates now, and that has all been fueled by the Clinton presidency.

MR. LITAN: Can I say one thing? I think there's also a point that has nothing to do with Bill Clinton, which is the change in the context for presidents of the future. With the end of the Cold War, clearly the commander in chief role is less central than it was. With some of the powerful forces of globalization, it's a threat to governance, and to nation states. Again, it has an impact on the presidency. Several decades of federalism, of revenue sharing, of clearly pushing power back to the states, the power of the economy is clearly to some extent reduced the role of the federal government.

So for reasons that had nothing to do with Bill Clinton, for better and for worse, I think just for where we are in history you could argue that the presidency, all things being equal, is a somewhat less central institution than it was.

MR. RAUCH: Good point. Let's go, gentleman in the back.

Q: Thank you. My name is Popov. I am from the Embassy of Bulgaria. My question is for Mr. Haass. When he listed the accomplishments and shortcomings of Mr. Clinton's legacy, he did not mention, I believe, the expansion of NATO, and I would like to ask him to comment on it, in light of aspirations of other countries, my country included, to join NATO.

MR. HAASS: I didn't list NATO enlargement, simply because of its controversy, and there's a debate over whether it ought to be put on the positive or negative side of the column, depending on your political views. I myself would put it more on the positive side of the column, but others would feel differently. So it was clearly something that happened, but again the sign you would put on it is something that clearly is quite subjective, depending upon your foreign policy perspective.

MR. RAUCH: On this side.

Q: For a kind of field manual --

MR. RAUCH: Identify yourself, please.

Q: Yes, Marvin Leibsdown, Global Security Journal. For a kind of field manual on how to be a successful American president, I wonder if each of you would translate your assessments of Mr. Clinton into a couple of dos and don'ts for future American presidents to follow.

MR. RAUCH: I'll modify that question by suggesting that two of us do that, since four of us would take rather a long time. Does anyone want to take a crack at that?

MS. SAWHILL: Well, there's one very obvious one --

MR. RAUCH: Skipping that one.

MS. SAWHILL: No, it wasn't going to be the one you thought it was. After don't order pizza in, and particularly relevant for Bush, and we hope that one isn't relevant for Bush, is don't overreach in your first couple of years, because it will come back and bite you in the midterm elections.

MR. RAUCH: Anyone else have any quick lessons for George Bush coming off of Bill Clinton.

MR. MANN: I think the real question is sort of context. Presidents are elected in certain times, under certain conditions of their election, with a certain array of preferences in the public, and in the congress, with an inherited agenda and set of problems. And the question is how do they sort of relate to and try to make a difference, given those particular circumstances. I think we'd probably say, as Belle suggested, Clinton didn't pay enough attention to the constraints implicit in his ascension to the White House initially. And now there is a very lively debate going on as to whether or not President Elect Bush is paying the right amount of deference to the circumstances of his ascension to the White House.

One strategy says, you stick to your guns, this is the nature of the campaign, you hold on to your base, and then you begin dealing toward the center. Another is, in doing so you set up very high expectations of what you're going to achieve, and you're almost certainly going to fail in doing so, so better early on to send a very different kind of signal. It will be interesting to see whether the lessons drawn by this new administration prove to be the correct ones.

MR. LITAN: I would say one do, and it's something that Clinton eventually learned from Ronald Reagan, is keep the message simple. Now, he eventually got to this, but it took him a while. But, when we were in the government we called it M2E2, all right, it was Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment. He eventually got to that in the mid-1990s, but then they did it again, and again, and again, and again, and it worked. It worked for Reagan, because you knew anti-communism and no taxes. People could summarize what they thought about the man by just a couple of things. So I think presidents are well advised to try to boil their message down to something really simple.

MR. RAUCH: A reminder, we're taking questions by email. Send your email to communications@brookings.edu. Who else would -- gentleman in the far corner there, if we can get a microphone to you.

Q: I'm Stanley Newman, recently retired from the federal government.

Dr. Haass, in your assessment of foreign policy you didn't give any credit to the president for the peace in

Ireland. In terms of Kosovo and Bosnia, at a point where Europeans and the rest of the world didn't seem to care, Clinton stopped the killing. You criticized him for not sending ground troops, I would say that if he tried to do that, he would probably have been impeached. There was no political support for that. On Israel, I thought you were very unfair on Israel. I don't think any president has tried harder to get peace. Had he had a leader of the Palestinians that didn't live up to the adage that the Palestinians always lose an opportunity to lose an opportunity, we might have peace in the Middle East. Would you care to comment?

MR. HAASS: I should have mentioned Ireland on the positive side, although it's final resolution is still somewhat in doubt, shall we say, so whether he actually for all of his efforts will have an enduring monument to them is up for grabs. I did mention the Balkans as a list of accomplishments, both Bosnia and Kosovo, although I think he was late to intervene with both. And I do think that extraordinary suffering took place in Kosovo because of our refusal to put ground troops on the table. You say he would have met political resistance, I agree. Last I checked, though, that's what presidents get paid for, it is to overcome political resistance. That's a perfect example of not being poll-led, but instead going out and selling the policy you believe is right.

On the Middle East, we just disagree. You don't give presidents high marks for efforts. You give presidents high remarks for results, and you give presidents high marks for doing the right thing. I simply think it was a flawed act of diplomacy to have convened Camp David when it was done, and to have sought a final status agreement without having shaped in any way political perceptions or the context that would have increased the chances of success.

Indeed, the speech the president gave a few nights ago, I think it was Sunday night in New York to the Israel Policy Forum, that's the sort of speech he should have been giving for the last few years. You create a context, and then you negotiate within it. But to try to launch a negotiation of unprecedented ambition without having first tried to make the situation ripe or conducive for it seems to me an extremely dangerous way to go. And the fact that it failed is not cost-free. The violence we are now seeing, the sense of despair, the sense of frustration are all in part linked to the fact that what we've now done is exposed the myth that there really was something at the end of the road called peace. And I think that was not inevitable. If it was done differently, it's possible things would have worked differently. So, yes, I am quite critical of Mr. Clinton and the fact that he's tried awfully hard and dedicated himself I think is laudable, it's worthy, but it's not enough.

MR. RAUCH: Gentleman on the left side with the beard.

Q: Ken Fireman from Newsday.

Halfway through his second term, the president tried to elevate his political approach into something of an international movement called the Third Way with the help of some like-minded partners in Europe. I'm wondering what your view would be whether any of that will survive him, or whether that whole notion of the Third Way will simply disappear along with Bill Clinton on January 20th?

MR. MANN: Thank you. I think sort of intellectual purists find the offering of the Third Way a little threadbare at times, and yet as a set of sort of political values, guidelines, aspirations, it's provided a basis for the election of center-left governments around the world, certainly in Europe. So, I actually think there's something to it, not so much in its detail or nuance, but in a general sort of sensible approach that if government is to play an important, active role and it needs to, then it has to be disciplined in important respects, that markets are crucial, but markets operate best in a legal environment set by important

government policy. So, I actually think that beneath the jargon and the pretentiousness of much of the writing and discussion of a Third Way is an approach to governance that is more likely to survive and be a basis for center-left governments doing rather well for decades to come.

MR. RAUCH: We could argue that at least he's shown, at a minimum, and it's important, you an be pro-government and pro-market at the same time.

MS. SAWHILL: As I said earlier, I think this is a very important change that's occurred. I would not say it was just a temporary thing at all. I think what we have now is a model of smaller, but smarter government. And a different way of doing things. Let me just tick off a few examples. The Clinton administration, instead of emphasizing as previous Democratic administrations had, unemployment insurance and adjustment assistance for unemployed workers, emphasized instead job placement and retraining, and a strong macroeconomy

Instead of fighting the whole idea of partnerships with the states, and block granting various programs, the Clinton administration embraced the idea of block grants, but with some standards and accountability, what were often called performance partnerships. We saw that in welfare, we saw that in the education and training area, particularly workforce training. Tom mentioned that liberalism had earlier gotten a bad name on issues like crime, welfare, drugs, so forth. The president, I think, made a number of efforts in those areas and talked about those issues in a very different way. In the Education Department we had a shift from an emphasis on a lot of small categorical programs that were intended to serve various disadvantaged groups, the handicapped, bilingual education, so forth, and so on, to much more of an emphasis on standards and excellence. So, it was a shift from an equity theme to an excellence theme.

In the healthcare area, the emphasis was not just on expanding healthcare, but also on finding ways to constrain healthcare costs. So I would just cite those as some specific examples of this shift that I think may be here to stay.

Q: And you'd say all of this goes beyond just splitting the difference between left and right?

MS. SAWHILL: Yes, because I think that Clinton articulated what's often called a new form of the social contract, or a new social covenant, in which he said government has certain responsibilities, but that has to be combined or balanced with the responsibilities that we ask of individuals, and this balancing of personal responsibility on the one hand with government responsibilities to help those who exercise personal responsibility is, I think, a theme that has caught on and resonated with the public.

MR. RAUCH: Had to happen, Dan Schorr.

Q: Dan Schorr of National Public Radio.

I admire the sense of ambiguity and nuance which Tom, Belle and Bob discussed the domestic record of President Clinton. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same about Richard Haass' presentation of the scoreboard on the foreign side. If you take a look at eight years of a president and say, has he left this world safer or less safe than he found it, and you look at the easing of our problem with North Korea, that Taiwan and Mainland China have started now trading with each other, that Kosovo and Bosnia, which were threats at one point, now have eased as threats, add Northern Ireland, and you say he may get some credit for things that were going to happen anyway, but he will get blamed for things which were going to happen anyway. I find that the low score given to President Clinton on the foreign affairs side I think misses a lot.

MR. HAASS: Well, that's why this is subjective, and that's why you have horseraces, Dan. We just disagree. I did give him credit for many things in the trade area, in the Balkans, the denuclearization of Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan, the Mexico rescue which, again, is important also because it was one of the few times in the foreign policy realm he went against the polls to do something that was good and right. North Korea I mentioned is an important accomplishment.

But I think there are certain areas where the world is a more dangerous place, the Persian Gulf is one. I think the treatment of Saddam Hussein was not good. I think the coalition has eroded. I think the use of military force against Saddam Hussein as recently as two years ago was essentially feckless, so I think we have paid a price there. We've already discussed the Middle East. But I think, to put it bluntly, if the Middle East were a share of stock, it's value now would be below what Mr. Clinton inherited eight years ago.

On Taiwan, I'm not as sanguine as you are. I hope you're right. The situation in Colombia is clearly demonstrably worse. The situation in Africa in many cases is demonstrably worse. There are situations that are better. But I think at best it is a clearly mixed record. And, more important, I think it could have been better. I think it was well within Mr. Clinton's capacity to have done better than he did on foreign policy, and that is essentially what I am criticizing.

MR. RAUCH: We have a couple of email questions. One of them, I think is a natural for Bob Litan, if you don't mind considering it. The questioner says: One of the most significant developments during the Clinton years was the growth and impact of the Internet. Two questions. One, do any of your panel believe that actions or policies of the Clinton administration helped or hindered Internet development or changed its course. And, second, did the Internet have an impact on the Clinton administration's policy in Washington and politics itself?

MR. LITAN: Okay. On the first question, did Clinton contribute to the growth of the Internet, the most important thing that Clinton did in the area of the Internet was say, hands off. He put, of all people, in charge Ira Magaziner in charge of the Internet, and to everyone's consternation after the health care plan, Ira comes out with a free market approach to the Internet which is being modified now because now we see that there is going to be the need for some kind of government regulation of parts of the Internet. But generally speaking, if you ask most high-tech and Silicon Valley types, they'll say that Clinton had it right, keep your hands off.

Now the second part of the question was, has the Internet changed politics in Washington. That's better for Tom, but my first instinct is, it's beginning to, but not as much as the cyber enthusiasts predicted. I mean, we had people telling us three or four years ago that the net was going to change politics forever, Congressmen were going to be dealing with constituents via email all the time, that you were going to raise money predominantly on the Internet, and so forth. And at the end of the day, what we saw is, we got some dollars, McCain and Bradley raised money on the Internet. But if you look at the government as a whole, our government actually is less webified, if you will, than other governments around the world. So that, for example, in Singapore, or Estonia, this is a little known fact, these are two countries now where citizens now regularly interact with their government over the Internet. They get all kinds of things from the Internet, and we in the United States actually are way behind.

MR. RAUCH: Tom, do you want to say anything else about that?

MR. MANN: Well, I'd just say, e-government is proceeding more rapidly than e-democracy. That is to say,

you're beginning, although mainly at local levels, and you see it in some cities and some states, the real embrace of the Internet for the delivery of government service, and that's beginning to penetrate the federal government as well. But, on the e-democracy front, for the most part, the Internet has reinforced existing patterns of information seeking and political participation rather than complemented or supplanted them.

I think the biggest impact is among those of us in this room, that is, people who make politics and government a livelihood. We depend upon the Internet to get information and to disseminate our work. It eases our task, but hasn't changed the basic character of democracy.

MS. SAWHILL: What about e-campaigning and the McCain phenomenon?

MR. MANN: Very little. I mean, more hype, as Bob said, than real results. John McCain raised some millions of dollars quickly on the Internet, but much more money was raised by McCain in conventional ways. We still haven't had the blossoming of new political communities. For the most part, the well-visited web sites are the newspaper and television network sites. Many of the so-called "grassroots citizens organization" sites are collapsing, they haven't proved commercial viable thus far. So it's mainly a way for us to get quicker information from Washington Post and ABC reporters, and not wait for the next evening's news or morning's newspaper.

MR. HAASS: Just two quick footnotes on the Internet, there are two areas where it has had a significant impact, the international campaign against land mines was organized by the Internet, and secondly the Seattle protest would not have happened without the Internet.

MS. SAWHILL: And one more footnote, you may now more about this than I do, Bob, but there was an attempt to address the digital divide by making sure that rates for schools were kept low so that everybody could have access.

MR. LITAN: That's true.

MR. RAUCH: Let's go back to the audience for another question. There's a gentleman way in the back there.

Q: Michael Davidson.

Some thoughts of the panel about these years and how we relate to each other as a people of race, ethnicity, how we debate issues that divide us on moral views, such as abortion, have these years helped? How do we look forward 50 years when people don't quite remember the conflict in Northern Ireland, or particulars about the economy, but we are still a people who have to deal with each other?

MR. RAUCH: An interesting question. A lot of commentators are saying we're closer than before on policy, but further on culture.

MS. SAWHILL: That's such a tough question that I hesitate to try to answer it. But I think this president obviously was, as Tom's earlier remarks suggested, both good and bad in this area. Obviously in terms of his own personal behavior, he set us back. And yet, at the same time, he was out talking about these issues in a way that previous presidents hadn't. And on race, he did have a race initiative, as you know. He recognized that there needed to be some amendment of affirmative action, and he tried to spark a better conversation about race in America. I'm not sure how much was accomplished there. The

conventional wisdom seems to be, not much, they didn't produce much, but if all of this is about our talking more, then he certainly tried to catalyze that. He certainly was the country's best moderator of a national conversation that you could have. So, I don't know what else to say about this. The cultural divide, I think, is very much with us. I'm not sure it's shrunk at all.

MR. MANN: George Bush campaigned for the presidency in part speaking in very soothing and reassuring racial terms. We did not see the racial polarization that occurred, say, in the 1988 election when his father first ran for the president. He did that not with the expectation of garnering a substantial share of the African American vote, but in part because he felt that would play well with white suburbanites. That it's no longer acceptable in this country to engage in sort of race baiting electoral politics. And that's the good sign, Michael.

There's a sense at which the whole sort of tenor and character of race and ethnicity has improved in America, and yet at the same time in the aftermath of the Florida count, seldom have I seen such anger and distress among civil rights activists as I've seen now. Intensity, passion, a sense of having had their votes devalued in the system, and that's going to play out in a very important way. And the way in which the new Bush administration handles this is going to, in turn, set the tone for these matters in the future.

So it's good news/bad news. Some say three steps forward and one step back.

MS. SAWHILL: It might be worth just noting also that in terms of immigration, the '96 welfare bill, as you may recall, denied benefits to most legal immigrants for most purposes. The president fought hard in 1997 to amend that so that many of those benefits, although not all of them, were restored. And so, I think we have a very deeply divided country in terms of what our stance should be towards those who are not citizens, and I think that particular battle was a good manifestation of that.

MR. RAUCH: It is time for our next panel. I hope some of you will get a chance to raise some of the questions that remain in the next session.

Many thanks to our four scholars, and to all of you for some marvelous questions.

PANEL II

MR. NESSEN: [Ladies and Gentlemen], Stephen Hess, presidential historian, expert on presidents and transitions, and assessments of presidents, he's seen presidents from both sides, and he will moderate the second panel, and introduce this panel to you.

MR. HESS: The first panel were the experts on economics, foreign policy, social welfare and so forth. Our panelists are the experts on William Jefferson Clinton, and there are four.

David Maraniss is an associate editor of the Washington Post. He is the author of a splendid biography of Bill Clinton called First In His Class.

To his right, to your left, is Ann Compton, who is a White House correspondent for ABC News, and Bill Clinton, I believe, is the fifth president that she has covered in her distinguished career.

Next to her we have Michael Isikoff, who is one of our premier investigative reporters in the United States from Newsweek, whose work won many awards in the recent unpleasantness starting with Monica Lewinsky, and his book on that was called Uncovering Clinton.

And next to him, I don't know if there's any significance in putting the two of them together, they are great buddies I'm sure, is Lanny Davis, whose experience with Bill Clinton goes back the longest, to Yale Law School. He's a partner in Patton Boggs, who left his pleasant perch for several years to be a special counsel and chief explainer and defender in 1996 to '98 at the White House.

Now, what I'm going to ask of my friends here is that they imagine that we are now in the year 2018. It's the 25th Anniversary of the first inauguration of Bill Clinton, and they will, at that time, because of their experience, have been given special assignments.

For David, the Encyclopedia Britannica, we'll, of course, ask him to do the entry on Bill Clinton, 42nd President of the United States. It's going to be a 3,000-word entry, but all we are going to ask him to do this morning is to tell us what his lead paragraph is going to be, and to outline several of the points that he's going to make.

For Ann Compton, the publishers are going to come to her, she will now be covering her tenth president, and write a book entitled, Presidents Who Have Known Me, out of modesty she will have declined that title, but they'll be particularly interested in her assessments of two Clinton presidents and the three Bush presidents, and we'll ask her to outline briefly the points, there will be ten chapters, of course, in the book to reflect the ten president, to outline the points that she's going to offer when she writes that book on the chapter on Bill Clinton.

Mike Isikoff will have the pleasure of writing the next book, this one, of course, you'll recall was called Uncovering Clinton, this one will be called Recovering Clinton, and we'll ask him to reflect 25 years later on what he found and what will still be the significance of it.

And then, finally, Lanny Davis, whose book was called, after his service in the White House was called, Telling The Truth -- remind me, it was called Truth To Tell. He is going to write his next book called More Truth To Tell: The Final Spin, and he'll have a chance to bring it back altogether as it should be after he's heard all three.

I should say that David also wrote a book on the life of Vince Lombardi, and though we will -- many will remember his book on Bill Clinton, in the year 2018, probably most people will be talking about his life of Daniel Snyder, which will recount how five years in a row the Redskins won the Super Bowl.

Anyway, start with David.

MR. MARANISS: You have to understand, I'm not a Redskins fan.

MR. HESS: Oh, my God.

MR. MARANISS: I'm a Packers fan.

Actually, I already wrote that, not for the Encyclopedia Britannica, but for Henry Graff's book on the presidency, and different presidents, and my opening paragraph had nothing to do with Monica Lewinsky, but with a fraud. And it was the day before Bill Clinton was about to move to Washington to begin his

presidency, and he went out for a job in Little Rock, his last jog through town, and he left the governor's mansion carrying a box under his arm, ran all the way through the streets of downtown, and down an embankment to the Arkansas River, and opened up the shoe box and let out a little frog. And it was Chelsea's frog from a school project, but he said he was leaving it in Arkansas so that something in the Clinton family could lead a normal life. And really, in essence, that was the beginning of eight incredible years in which no one in Washington lived a normal life, I would say.

And I've come to think of the Clinton presidency not as two four-year terms, but as four two-year terms, and I think that's the way I would write about it 25 years from now. The first two years to me were the most eerie because I was writing about his first term as Governor of Arkansas in 1993 and 1994 when Bill Clinton was playing out the first two years of his presidency, and I saw history repeating itself in terms of Clinton's agenda for those two years being perhaps overreaching and idealistic. Enormous chaos in his staffing, not having clear lines of authority in the presidency, everything sort of going on the run. Mark Gearen, one of his first communications aides' famous phrase, we're like a bunch of little kids playing soccer, everybody chasing the ball. Those were the first two years.

And they played out in Washington in the same way that they did in Arkansas, which is to say that after those first two years, Clinton was soundly defeated in Arkansas by a former savings and loan executive, and in Washington by Newt Gingrich and the Republicans. I think that defeat of Congress in '94 was as profound in Clinton's life as his defeat in 1980 as the youngest ex-governor in American history.

The way he recovered from that defeat in Washington was remarkably similar to what he did in Arkansas in terms of learning how to co-opt the Republicans on their issues of crime and punishment, and welfare, and using the stronger Democratic issues of education and the environment to build himself using, in fact, the same strategist to some degree in Dick Morris, who came down to Arkansas, helped him resurrect his career, came into the White House in late 1994 and did the same thing.

Clinton was probably at his best as the jujitsu expert, learning how to deal against his enemies. That's another theme of his life and career. Allowing them to overplay their hands, and learning how to slowly incrementally get something back by playing off his enemies rather than taking the lead himself. And that's how he played out his presidency.

The most obviously discouraging aspect of his presidency for him and for his family and for the world, and in a personal way for me was, the Lewinsky scandal. When I was writing the book, I was dealing with some of those same issues on a different level, struggling deeply with the question of whether this is a good man or a bad man, eventually came to the conclusion that he was both, and that those forces within him explain the best of Clinton and the worst of Clinton, and then we saw it played out again in his presidency.

But the other central theme of his presidency and of his life is his extraordinary ability to survive, and to find his way back, and I think that right now Bill Clinton knows how to be president. I think that the saddest part of it is that he's probably a better president today than he was at any point in his presidency, and he's got two weeks left.

MR. HESS: You can see that 25 years, in the 2018, our panel have not lost any of their mental agility, physical strength, and so forth.

Ann, the outline of your chapter

MS. COMPTON: Well, my chapters which I, in the year 2018, will actually have ghost written by my colleague Helen Thomas, who will be on her I forget how many presidents. But I think we will look back on the first Clinton presidency, the one before Hillary's, but we probably won't remember in detail the successes on welfare reform, or the economic changes other than the fact that it was a very good time. Unlike the Depression in the 1900s, the good economic times, good for business and for political fundraising.

I don't know that the media has done a good enough job in this current administration of covering the real -- making it understandable to the American people the budget surplus, and the importance of that in the overall. But I know what we have covered well, and that is Bill Clinton, the man, the good and bad, as David says, the character of the man. Nobody can walk through American life these days with cameras trained on him every minute for eight solid years and not have the American people get a pretty good feel of who that man is and what makes him tick.

And in an era in which culturally our country has devoted, and our media has devoted such incredible attention to stories such as OJ Simpson, and to Monica Lewinsky, in the year 2018 by far the most compelling story will be of the man who was torn between his charms and his appetites, the president who tried to do so much on a grand scale, and then took, I thought it was Dick Morris' advice, to go down to the little micro-issues, and perhaps putting it all in the reflective light of some of the principles of the time. Lanny Davis going on to be head of his own big white collar criminal firm here in Washington, and Monica Lewinsky living out on Long Island married to a Republican, the little stories that will go on into the future. We will look back at this Bill Clinton, and remember him for character more than the policies that he brought, and the first Democratic president to win a second term since Franklin Roosevelt's day.

MR. HESS: Okay. Mike, I suspect that you'll look upon 1998 much as we all look upon our first love after you've done your fifth investigation, and our third impeachment of various presidents. However, what will you remember back then?

MR. ISIKOFF: Well, we're making a lot of assumptions here. You know, look, the Clinton presidency has clearly been a complicated one, just as Clinton the man is a complicated one. And, you know, it tends now, probably the most frustrating thing, when I read all the stories summing up the Clinton legacy after eight years in office, is the sort of dichotomy. There are all these substantive achievements, many of which are undeniable, and for which he clearly deserves a great deal of credit, and then there's the personal mistake of Lewinsky, as though that quite sums it up.

I think it was -- the Lewinsky matter, in many ways, was a metaphor for a lot of personal character flaws, but also sort of instincts about politics and government that are not being truly appreciated, I think, at this point. And clearly these are sort of negatives. As a reporter for 20 years, I was, for lack of a better term, an ethics cop, that's what we do, that's what people, investigative reporters of my ilk did for a generation. And Bill Clinton has sort of destroyed the profession in a lot of ways, because all the rules and assumptions by which we did reporting for many years, through many different administrations have sort of collapsed, assumptions about things that the public would get concerned about, that the political process would extract a cost for. Clinton sort of has defied all those to the point where everybody got exhausted covering Clinton on many of these issues. But also, I think, and we saw it in the last campaign, got exhausted even holding other candidates to the kinds of rigorous standards that we used to hold people to. And so that areas of investigative inquiry that would have been done in the past, and not that there weren't excesses, but there were also illuminations that flowed from, wasn't being done, and may not be done for some time because Clinton broke all the rules.

And I could just -- there are a couple of examples that I think may have some sort of historical repercussions. I mean, one that just happened a few weeks ago and was sort of stunning in its cynicism, the very first act of the Clinton presidency, the first hour-and-a-half in office, was signing the executive order that was designed to get at the revolving door, banning people going from government and government agencies to representing private interests before those agencies that they used to cover. This was considered a big deal at the time in 1992, you can go back and read the newspapers about the conflicts of interest that were rife through the Bush administration, and political advisors to the president who were simultaneously representing foreign interests, and special interests that had business before the government. And, indeed, if you go back and look at the Clinton rhetoric of '92, and putting people first, there's a whole chapter on the money culture of Washington.

Anyway, when Clinton is remembered for, I'm going to bring you the most ethical administration in history, it's flowed, the very first act in which he tried to embody that was that executive order on revolving door. And what did Clinton do over the Christmas holidays, just as it was going to take effect, not just for him, but for all the loyalists who had stuck with him for eight years, and it was finally going to apply to them, he rescinded it. He just said, well, it no longer applies, and maybe it wasn't such a good idea anyway, we don't really need this now. And, what was the political price paid for that, how much coverage did that get? Nothing, I mean barely a mention of it.

And I think that's sort of a metaphor in a lot of ways for the way in which we've all become exhausted covering Bill Clinton and trying to hold certain standards up that we wouldn't apply to others, and I could go on and I'm sure we'll have an opportunity to go on, but I think that that sort of cynicism about government is a part of the Clinton legacy every much as his achievements in the economic sphere, and some of his other substantive policy achievements.

MR. HESS: Lanny, about your friend Bill Clinton.

MR. DAVIS: I didn't discuss with Michael what I was going to say, but it couldn't have been a better softball over the plate to hand me. If we have put the ethics cops out of business, notably the investigative journalists, and those that judge politics by appearances rather than substance, that would be in 2018 my most longed for goal.

Did the scandal machine reach its heights or its depths in the Clinton White House to the point where we rake the momentum of what has become a personally and politically destructive force in American life, I think in 2018 my greatest wish is that at least for the negative direction things got so bad in the '90s with the forces that imploded, that I call the scandal machine, that we broke its back, and we put people out of business who judge politics with a cynicism of their own, thinking that they can set ethical standards from their subjective viewpoint as to what is an appearance of impropriety rather than looking at the law and objective standards and due process, and evidence and fact instead of innuendo and smear.

We Democrats began the scandal machine, and proudly so, in the Nixon Watergate episode. Journalists since Watergate have been vastly affected both professionally, as good investigative reporters looking for wrongdoing, and also personally to gain financially and career wise by aiming their energies at bringing politicians down who "are acting unethically or wrongly". And that first post-Watergate impulse by journalism to investigate politicians and look for wrong doing began the process, Burt Lance comes to mind as one example. Pay back time for the Democrats went through the '80s, where we invented an independent counsel, investigated somebody by the name of Raymond Donovan three times, he was finally acquitted. On the courthouse steps someone congratulated him and you all know the famous line, now where do I go to get my reputation back?

So that's what we Democrats did with the second element that has occurred in this pinnacle or death of the scandal machine which is the Independent Counsel Act, as Tom Mann said, where we take criminal procedures, we put them into politics, and we have the two of them merge very dangerously for our process.

A third thing that happened that didn't begin in the '90s, it certainly began with the post-Watergate Democratic investigations, is traceable perhaps back to the House Un-American Affairs Committee in the late '40s, and the McCarthy era in the '50s, where congressional investigations become a political instrument, and they too implode with the criminal justice process, and with investigative journalists, leaks get printed, innuendo becomes news, accusation becomes a surrogate of fact, congressional hearings feed off the journalists, the independent counsel gets appointed because of all the publicity, and everything implodes with the final fuel on the fire of that machine, 24-hour cable stations, Internet instantaneous news that goes around the world, so that an accusation that plots were sold in Arlington Cemetery by the Clinton White House to the large political donors circulates the globe in minutes. I get 125 phones calls within three hours of a story that ultimately turned out to be totally 100 percent bogus without the slightest factual foundation. And it circled the globe in minutes.

So if you take those four forces, post-Watergate investigative journalists, great ones, including Michael Isikoff, congressional investigations, both Democratic and Republican, that become political instruments to bring down a president, the Independent Counsel Act which criminalized, as we have seen, the political process, and then finally the political process, and then finally the Internet and 24-hour cable, I hope that we have such a saturation of the destructive power of that machine by the year 2000 that we've ended it, and that we Democrats start by not doing to George Bush and his Cabinet nominees what we have done to each other through the '70s and the '80s.

MR. MARANISS: I think that's a very compelling argument and also rife with demagoguery. Even as you can take each element that you're talking about and find great flaws in the way it's carried out, but to put it all together into what you call a scandal machine sort of is a false argument. And tends to try to diminish legitimate reporting on serious questions of ethics, which will persist, and should persist, and I don't think will ever go away as long as there's a free press.

MR. DAVIS: Let me just defend myself on the word demagoguery. My opinion, which is a nonpartisan, and bipartisan perception, since I spread the blame equally among Democrats and Republicans, is not putting the blame on journalists who are investigating wrongdoing. I was certainly in favor of that in Watergate, I was certainly in favor of that in Iran-Contra. And I certainly think there was a lot of fodder for excellent reporting in the campaign finance issues that I had to deal with at the White House. And all those things do some good. What I am concerned about is the merger of all those four elements, David, that lead to the blurring of fact and evidence with accusation and innuendo. And I don't say any one of those elements are necessarily to blame, and each of them play a role. But I think in the late '90s what began in Watergate ended up in an excess of focus on accusation, and scandal that became very politically destructive.

MR. HESS: It was inevitable, given the nature of this very high powered panel that we would get down to the question of how the press covered Bill Clinton, but I want to get back a little more to Bill Clinton than to the press, and give you the flight plan for the rest of our time together.

We had in the first panel some discussion of Bill Clinton's ultimate place in history. This is a game that historians particularly love to play, in 1948 the senior Arthur Schlesinger did a famous survey of American

historians which was published in Life Magazine. Then in 1963 his son, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., did a comparable one that was for The New York Times Magazine, and did it again in 1996, and that one -- I was one of the panelists, and later had to publicly apologize in the memory of Rutherford B. Hayes, as I remember. But, undoubted in the year 2018 the next generation of Schlesinger, Robert, will do the same thing, and we're going to help him eventually. The last opportunity I want to give our panel as we close this, will be their grade and their assessment. And I hope that you as the audience, and the audience includes all of those watching on C-SPAN or on Brookings live webcast, will contribute to this.

You can do that if you're out there by calling communications@brookings.edu. I'd ask you to give your brief questions for this panel, or comments on what they should be thinking about when they do their final placement of Bill Clinton 25 years from now, understanding full well that there's a movement up or down over time. We don't know if they'll hit it exactly right for 25 years. In the case of the Schlesinger polls, for example, John Kennedy has moved down slightly, Dwight Eisenhower has moved up slightly. But, here we're taking our time.

I'm going to ask them one round of questions, in a sense, while you are preparing to help them in their final evaluation of Bill Clinton's rating in history. And that is to return to the question of presidential skills, not press skills, but presidential skills, which are generally thought of by people like Fred Greenstein at Princeton as communication skills, organizational skills, political skills, vision, vision of the future, cognitive abilities, and ultimately their emotional skills, when you open them up psychologically what's inside, and how does that help them?

How, given that array of skills, would Bill Clinton rate? What have been his strong points as he has this unique opportunity of being President of the United States. Annie, you've been watching him for eight years, of these communications skills, how do you rate him?

MS. COMPTON: Can I start, though, with one of the weaknesses?

MR. HESS: Absolutely.

MS. COMPTON: When President Clinton came into office the skills of not only survival, but success in the 1992 campaign were obvious. And when I watched him I was actually on the White House lawn watching new gold draperies being brought into the Oval Office while he was up at the Capitol being sworn in. And when he came back to the White House he brought with him a young staff, many of them household names, some of them working for ABC now, and what surprised me wasn't the youth of the staff, because I'd seen that with Jimmy Carter, what surprised me was the lack of any real sense they had of the institution of the presidency.

And I was stunned with this week, during the series that Nightline is running all this week, Nightline and Frontline together, doing interviews of about 20 insiders on how the presidency progressed, a stunning admission from George Stephanopoulos who -- he was talking about a time in which he and others basically dispatched the White House Travel Office staff members in May of -- I think it was in May of '93. He says now that they really had no true respect for or appreciation for the office of presidency.

And it was so blindingly clear at that time, I don't know whether Bill Clinton came in as President and thought that his friends, people like Mickey Cantor, or outside the administration Vernon Jordan, would help him embrace the more institutional importance of the presidency, or whether he really thought that being a guy of the '90s that it was time to throw out the old allegiances and the manners with which things were done, and try it whole new ball game.

Have a war room to run your healthcare policy. Close that door that led from the press office up to the press secretary's office, so literally we could not go up and ask the press secretary a question. I was stunned by the tone deaf quality of certainly the first 100 days of the Clinton administration, until that door opened and they decided that instead of treating us as a nuisance down in the basement, that the press was a vehicle through which he could get some of those bigger ideas, and then smaller ideas out.

MR. HESS: Does fit in with your idea of this set of two-year presidencies? That this was a tremendous on the job learning for Bill Clinton, who after all had been the governor of a very small state, 2 million-plus people, where he could be every place, do everything, know everything, and succeed?

MR. MARANISS: I think that's very true. I think he did. He transplanted a lot to Washington, or tried to, and none of it took root. Another aspect was in Arkansas he had an implicit faith that whatever his wife did would turn out right. She was the one who led the education task force in Arkansas, which helped make Bill Clinton's national reputation. And so it was just instinctive, intuitive of him to turn to Hillary Clinton who was a very talented individual, but had no more knowledge of how Washington worked than he did, to run the healthcare plan, and that proved to be problematic. Not to blame the whole healthcare fiasco on her by any means. There were a lot of other problems with it, and a lot of money out to get it. But, nonetheless, that was also reflective of trying to do things in Washington the way they did in Arkansas, and not really understanding Washington.

I was surprised, frankly, by how poorly he interacted with Congress in the first two or three years, because in my biography I came to -- his start was in Congress. I mean, he worked for Fulbright in a very low level job, but in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he spent his whole years at Georgetown, when he was plotting his political future, trying to understand how Congress worked. He came back to Congress a lot during his governorship, particularly to work on welfare. And yet when he came in as president it was like he never had any clue how to deal with congressional committee leaders.

In organization, clearly he had very difficult problems with organization in those first two years, which I think over time he overcame. His cognitive skills are extraordinary, as other people have said, and his ability to analyze. He's not a creative thinker, but he's terrific at synthesizing information, and helping to move it in another direction. And his emotional skills are probably the quintessential Clinton, which is the best of him and the worst of him.

MR. HESS: I come back to that question that was raised for the first time, and that is the involvement of his wife, which is relatively unique. From a public administration standpoint, one would say that there's nothing as bad as giving a job that's very important to you to someone you can't fire. And he found himself locked into that. But, you, because you go back with both the Clintons might want to answer that.

MR. DAVIS: The relationship with Hillary going way, way back was always a partnership in the true sense of intellectual mutual respect. I think David has it right that Bill Clinton was very much dependent on Hillary, and still is, intellectually, emotionally, personally. And the two of them really did form a partnership for good and for bad back in Arkansas. Hillary kept her name as Rodham, and that was a critical issue, David, as you wrote about, in the first term. But, she also was a leader in that education reform effort that really put Bill Clinton on the national map. And on a personal level, after he lost in 1980, I remember he actually considered running for the Democratic National Chair, and that's when I first reconnected with him after law school days, because I had just gotten elected to the DNC. And I was absolutely amazed that he would want to give up his base in Arkansas and come to Washington to be DNC Chair with Ronald Reagan in the White House. It just didn't seem like the right decision. And I remember hearing

very much that Hillary wanted to stay in Arkansas, continue to fight back politically. And I think it was a factor in his decision to stay on and hang in there

So the health care issue, Steven, always perplexes me, because Hillary seemed to have all the opposite instincts of what knew her for. She was always an inclusive person, always politically sensitive, and maybe even at times more so than her husband about what would work and not work. And yet somehow the shut down of the process behind closed doors was I think the central fallacy of what she was part of in the healthcare situation. And they both learned from that episode almost more than any other mistake in those early years.

MR. HESS: My concern was, of these six skills that I mentioned, certainly, in pursuing the story that you became a national figure because of, it seems to me that both his political skills, and the whole question of the emotional intelligence would have played an important part. But, speak to any --

MR. ISIKOFF: Well, Ann mentioned bringing the war room from the campaign to the White House. And I think that's actually a much bigger part of the story than people instantly recognize. Clinton's survival skills are beyond dispute. And if he'll be remembered for anything above all he may be remembered as the ultimate survivor, a guy who survived more. But, part of that was the ethos of the war room, which is the campaign mentality, rapid response, winning the news cycle, trashing your enemies, demonizing your enemies, politicizing everything, and bringing that from the campaign right into the White House. And it became an essential part of the White House ethos for much of his presidency.

Now, Lanny will say, that's because we were always under attack by scurrilous enemies, but there is a sort of both sides fed off each other here. And the excesses of one led to greater excesses on the other side, which only escalated the political warfare between the president and his foes. I mean, Clinton was always blessed with his enemies, and the essential problem his enemies had was they were always so frustrated that he never paid the political price they thought he should be paying for the transgression they thought they had caught him at that only led them to greater excesses and to wilder charges. That only played into Clinton's hands.

But, you can't -- I don't think you can write about, or talk about the Clinton presidency without examining the war room figures. And I was struck just by watching the Nightline special last night about how many of them were the key talking heads, I mean, Stephanopoulos, Carville, Dee Dee Myers, Paul Begala, I mean, these were the people who invented it. And then they passed the baton to Lanny and others. Well, they didn't invent it, but they certainly refined it to a greater art form than I think it had ever been practiced before.

MR. HESS: Can I just put in a commercial from what Mike says, and that is that Brookings in association and collaboration with the American Enterprise Institution has just put out a book, edited by Norm Ornstein, of AEI, and Tom Mann of Brookings on the permanent campaign and its future, exactly this question that he refers to, and Tom Mann did earlier on the previous panel, bringing the techniques of campaigning into governance, a very interesting point.

MR. ISIKOFF: Can I just add one more point? One more part of that, and again it's a double edged sword, there's no question that there were excesses by the independent counsels, the various independent counsels that were investigating Clinton. But, the Clinton White House response of demonizing the independent counsels, and essentially trashing newly authorized, court appointed prosecutors was something that really did trouble a lot of people beyond in the battle over the Clinton presidency.

And I remember at the time one of the consequences is talking to people at the Justice Department who were very concerned about just the normal prosecutions that they were bringing and how it would play with juries at a time that the Clintons did so well, and the Clinton White House did so well as seizing on sort of standard prosecutorial tactics, and portraying them as tyrannical, persecutive acts. It became -- and, in fact, there were a number of prosecutions that were lost in the District of Columbia in which the prosecutors thought the halo or the spill over of the Clinton attacks on Ken Starr and some of the other special prosecutors were part of the reason. So that's just, again, I mean, it's part of the story.

MR. HESS: Annie, go on.

MS. COMPTON: Can we talk on one thing, you talked about the personal, the emotional side of leadership, and we haven't touched as much on that. And I think while we may be caught up in the phenomenon of how he governed, and the president, it's the emotional side of Bill Clinton that the American people saw and absorbed more than anything else. And any president is subject to what goes on in the world. And when the Oklahoma City Federal Building blew up at a time when he felt very much under siege, growing siege, and the kind of outpouring -- I remember we went to Oklahoma City that Sunday for a big memorial service, and the kind of emotional presidential leadership that he could touch at times like that I think is exactly why at the end of his presidency, thanks in part to the economy, but in spite of what he's been through, the sense that the people's -- that the polls show still a 60 percent approval rating of his role as president is guided as much by the emotional reaction to his leadership skills as it is to many of the process questions we've addressed.

MR. HESS: That's an interesting point, and actually an important one, because actually I use the word emotional as analogous with psychological, I didn't mean it in the same way. And I think there the question was, just as when we opened up Richard Nixon, who had high cognitive skills, and so forth, and so on, we found the wires were crossed, and it brought down his presidency, I think in some of the same ways the dark side of Bill Clinton played that. But, what you relate to, or refer to, I think is the communication skills. And I was interested, because we hadn't touched on them before. And I've always found them very strange with Bill Clinton, and somewhat almost like the little girl with the curl, when she was good she was very, very good, when she was bad she was horrid. Because, this tremendous skill that this person clearly has, which shows for instance when he went to the church and gave the talk on Martin Luther King and so forth, and he could be so brilliant. And yet, he leaves office without any great line, does he?

MR. ISIKOFF: No, he doesn't and the only lines that are memorable are sort of --

MR. HESS: "I did not have sex with that woman."

MR. DAVIS: Right. And "the era of big government is over," neither of which really do much. But, he's a great ad-libber and extemporaneous speaker. And you could take any of his written speeches and say there's not much there, but it's because of what Ann said, he's a great emotive speaker. He knows how to connect with people, and he has done that throughout his presidency. I'd rank him in terms of the actual formal speeches as below average, but in terms of at the right moment talking to a specific audience extraordinary. And that's what saved his campaign in New Hampshire in 1992, when he said he'd be there until the last dog died, and he was right. He has been there, and the dog hasn't died yet. And people have connected with that, as well. That's another emotional component, which is that they know that no matter what goes at Bill Clinton he will somehow not only survive it, but actually keep going and want to be president through anything.

MR. HESS: It's interesting that two hours into our discussion on the legacy of Bill Clinton is the first mention of what the American people think of him. And I would like to think about the comment made earlier about whether any president in today's Washington is going to escape, whether it's George W. or anybody else, the forces that are so negative when you are trying to be president in this day and age, and how he's managed to keep a 60 percent approval rating, as Ann points out, despite everything. A large chunk of it, let there be no mistake about my bias, and my loyalty to Bill Clinton, but my criticism of how he lost a year and did so much harm to himself and his family has never been in doubt, at least in terms of anything I've ever said.

Yet, despite everything the American people were able to separate his job performance, his ability to communicate and connect, with the underside that we all regret so much about him. And in any judgement in history, Steve, it seems to me a two term president who ends up with a legacy of good for the economy, and no credit for Bosnia and Serbia, and Northern Ireland. And I would even venture to say to Dr. Haass that the whole debate in the Middle East has shifted, never have the Israelis and the Palestinians talked about sovereignty issues in Jerusalem, to have an Israeli Prime Minister actually put on the table the possible compromise on that. It seems to me that Bill Clinton has done something in the long-run of history that the American people are quite wise in rating him as highly as they do.

Shall we move on and get some reaction from our audience as well? You know, it is very interesting in response to what you just said, Lanny, because so much of this will be in the eye of the beholder, and will look almost like the last election map of where was the red and where was the blue.

And Phoenix, Arizona [via e-mail], comes in here and says: I rate him 2 on a scale of 1 to 10. I mean, this is the first president in American history to ever be impeached. How can anyone rank him any higher based on that?

So, those who put that set of what we political scientists call emotional intelligence first are going to bring him down in scale. But the other, if you look at these six points of leadership, it strikes me that the one that would be the most prominent among them would be vision. A president has a small amount of time given to make the country greater and so forth. Speak each to the question, before we open it to the audience, of what you see as Bill Clinton's vision, after all he was also the one who broke his State of the Union messages, and so forth, into tiny little bits, and was the vision something like putting people or kids in classroom uniforms, or giving them computers, or what? What do you end up thinking of Bill Clinton in terms of his vision for America? Mike?

MR. ISIKOFF: As a political visionary, I think he has to rank at the highest of American presidents. You know, among his achievements that are going to be remembered historically was redefining the Democratic Party, and turning it from what had been seen as a party that can't win national elections, to a coalition that is at a minimum politically competitive. And I think that's the one thing you could take from Clinton, the pre-President Clinton and see that sort of all through his presidency.

And another thing I was struck in watching the thing last night is you know, in points when they got hit by scandal, Hillary and then Governor Clinton would talk about, you know, there were higher purposes here that were more important, and weren't going to be deflected. But if you tried to define what they were in 1992 and compared it to how he governed, I think you'd see a real disconnect. But the one thread that runs through was the redefining of the Democratic Party and shedding those aspects of progressive liberalism that were politically unsalable, and emphasizing those that were.

So I think you have to give him a great deal of credit as a visionary for that. It's not so much substantive policy-wise, but it is politically.

MS. COMPTON: Can I jump in then?

MR. HESS: Surely.

MS. COMPTON: I guess covering the White House I often felt like I couldn't see the forest, I couldn't see the trees, all I could see was the bark. We saw the little minutia day after day. We started with the big things in the first two-year term, and maybe that's because of all those years of governor, he had two-year terms up until the end. The first two years with the grand, the stimulus package, and the healthcare plan. And then when we got closer into the elections in '96 with, it was school uniforms, and uniform car seat standards, and cops on the beat, and wiring every classroom, and I was struck in the Nightline series where Dick Morris comes in and he shows him a poll saying, nobody gives you credit for creating three million jobs, and Clinton says, no, no, it's 3-1/2 million. Well, you're not getting credit for that. You're not getting credit for the economy. But what they do give you credit for is, boy, you helped smooth out my Social Security checks, you helped change some welfare, their food standards, the little things hit people where they live. I have trouble at this stage, Steve, standing back and looking at the broader vision, because I think Bill Clinton gave us the smaller personal one on one vision just as he, as a communicator, could talk to a whole room of people, and every person in that room felt he was talking just to him.

MR. HESS: David?

MR. MARANISS: Well, I think that that's true, but on a larger level. He came in saying, it's the economy, stupid, and he did have that focus sometimes to the detriment of foreign policy, but nonetheless it was there for all eight years. And he followed through on that vision. And I think that no matter how much other people deserve or get credit for the economy, Clinton focused on it from the beginning. He had a vision on what he wanted to do, and he did it.

MR. HESS: What was the vision from the '92 campaign that carried through?

MR. DAVIS: Can I try to answer that, because Michael your definition of his legacy is, to me, the most important one, how he made the Democratic Party competitive. But to be a little bit contrarian, again, on the conventional wisdom that he was poll driven, take a look at what he had to do in the Democratic Party to do what you said correctly he accomplished. I am still a somewhat bleeding heart liberal going back to the days of my childhood with my dad and Franklin Roosevelt. And he had to challenge people like me on the three issues that in the '60s, in the '70s, when I thought of myself as a liberal I thought were a matter of fate.

One was, going back to Keynes, that you spend money to stimulate the economy and deficits are good. That was liberal theology, at least as far as I could remember. It was the Republicans who talked about balanced budgets, and hard money and strong dollars. And he challenged us in '93, when there was a split in the White House between stimulus spending and deficit reduction and balanced budgets, and he went against his base.

Secondly, he went against his base on welfare reform. I was against the welfare bill. Peter Edelman resigned. He was under intense pressure from liberals in his party to veto that bill, including George Stephanopoulos in the White House. He went against his base.

And, thirdly, labor. I'm a labor Democrat. I was raised in a household where protection helped preserve jobs, and there's a good chunk of American history where protectionism seemed to be the right way to protect American workers. When Bill Clinton stood up to the Democratic Party base and the labor movement on NAFTA, that was an act of political courage. Now, you can say he was president and he could afford to stand up to organized labor, well, very few Democratic presidents have been willing to do that.

So on those three issues, he took on the base of his party, and by doing so I think established a much broader theme for our future, which is a whole new Democratic Party where the debate is no longer whether we should be for free trade, welfare reform or balanced budgets and surpluses, he's shifted the entire debate into a whole new -- I hate to use the word "paradigm," but that's about the best word as to where we are as Democrats, and I think much more competitive as a result.

MR. HESS: All right. Now, we're ready for some questions. And let me see, a microphone, and I have a hand up over here that I see first. Please tell us your name, and then speak up.

Q: My name is Jesse White. And it seems to me that one of the legacies of this administration of which at full disclosure I'll admit I'm a part that has not been commented on is it seemed to me to have been an extraordinarily competent administration with highly competent people throughout the federal government. And what I would argue to the ethics watchdogs that has really mattered is no significant ethical standard by senior officials in the administration. And I think just in terms of the sheer role of the president as chief executive of a competent administration that Clinton should get pretty high marks.

MR. HESS: Certainly FEMA stands out as one of those things that he understood the importance of that sort of outreach and did it very well indeed.

There's a question over here on the aisle first, there.

Q: My name is Andrew Phillips. I'm with Maclean's Magazine of Canada.

I guess everybody is trying to conciliate these two halves, if you like, of President Clinton, the dark side and the light side.

MR. HESS: Can you speak a little louder, I'm sorry.

Q: I beg your pardon. Everyone is trying to conciliate these different aspects of President Clinton, the negative, the positive, and in some of the coverage, I was struck by the New York Times in one of their retrospective pieces quoted George Stephanopoulos in his memoir in which he said, "I came to see how Clinton's shamelessness is a key to his political success, how his capacity for denial is tied to the optimism that is his greatest political strength." And I wonder if anyone on the panel has anything to reflect on that, or whether they agree or think that there's another way in which one can connect these disparate aspects of Clinton's personality?

MR. MARANISS: Well, I certainly agree with that, and I've come to think of them as inseparable, and not necessarily even in conflict, although they take him in different directions, but that is just Bill Clinton. And certainly you could call it shamelessness, or you could call it incredible sheer will, and it's probably both that got him through. I mean, I think one of the moments that I will never forget in the Clinton presidency was right after the Lewinsky scandal broke when he gave that State of the Union Address, and I think everybody in the House chamber that night who was elected was thinking, I couldn't do this, but Clinton

could. And whether that was shameless or sheer will and perseverance, it's both. But that is Bill Clinton.

MR. HESS: You know, I remember once it was to be President Day and the radio station was doing, who is your favorite president, and they called me up, and I said, William Howard Taft. And they were shocked because of course they expected me to say Franklin Roosevelt or Lincoln or Washington. The thing said favorite, and William Howard Taft was such a nice man, he was nice to his children, he was nice to his wife. His brother and siblings loved him, and so forth. And so it goes. It strikes me that very often the ones who would make awfully good next door neighbors are the ones who got there by accident, who didn't have to run, Jerry Ford is an awfully nice man. And some of what you're describing about Bill Clinton is, if you want to be president of the United States you're different than the rest of us, and you've got to be pretty ruthless at times, and then you see the ABC thing, and you see the old friends who have drifted away or are in opposition, and there's a little of that involved as well.

Next question down here, or comment, I should say.

Q: Al Millikan, Washington Independent Writers. I don't know if anyone saw Dick Morris on Bill O'Reilly's show last night, but there were a couple of things that he mentioned that seemed to be very revealing about Bill Clinton and perhaps his legacy. He talked about the Republican he feared more than any other in the '96 campaign was Bill Bennett, and it was because of the values issue, which it seemed like, yes, perhaps he had the edge with soccer moms, working people, more than his opponent. And it seems like when he lost -- when his own failings came out, it seemed like it had such an effect on -- well, with everyone as far as how they reacted, I mean, in various ways, hurt, angry, disappointed, and in fact it seems like the most common reaction was just trying to ignore or avoid dealing with the reality of it.

But it seems that what came out in that was that to me he talked about the Bennetts, and obviously it was quite surprising to me how close they remained. And I'm wondering from a political and a legal point of view and a professional point of view, if their remaining as close as they were was a wise thing on either one of their viewpoints. But in the same way that, you know, he continually lied and deceived. He also mentioned Henry Cisneros and his consultation with him about how to deal with the situation when it came out that he had been paying money to a mistress. And Bill Clinton was not surprised by the fact that this money was being paid, but he was surprised that he was so open about it as he was.

MR. HESS: I'm sorry, you've lost me way back. I'm not really sure what the question was, but maybe one of the people on the panel will respond.

Q: Well, the line of deception was --

MR. HESS: Let me have a response from our panel

Q: -- part of the family, cabinet and American public.

MR. HESS: Okay, thank you.

MR. ISIKOFF: I just wanted to say a word about Morris, Dick Morris, because he's sort of thought of as the pollster, and the political guru during the run up to the '96 campaign, but he actually participated in one of the acts of the Clinton presidency that I think really did have quite long-standing repercussions, and not for the better. And that was when Clinton and Dick Morris started writing the soft money paid for Democratic National Committee issue ads that were, in essence, candidate ads, that were designed to boost Clinton's poll ratings on the eve of the '96 elections. The essentially, that one single act, actually it

was a series of acts in which they connived together, and wrote the ads, and poll tested the ads, and Clinton reviewed the scripts, and approved the media buys, did more than any one single thing to smash the campaign finance laws in this country that went back to the Watergate era.

And once those distinctions between issue ads and candidate ads were broken, then soft money became the coin of the realm for both parties, and we saw the consequences in this election where essentially unlimited corporate and individual contributions become the biggest part of financing and paying for presidential elections, and congressional elections, we saw it taken to a new level in the Senate campaigns this year, where even Senate candidates, led by Hillary Clinton, set up their own soft money committees.

And to the extent that, again, this was something that people once cared about, including the people who helped elect Bill Clinton in 1992, Clinton campaigned on a platform that called for abolishing soft money, and he did more than any single American politician to make it the coin of the realm, and I think that becomes part of his legacy, too. And I think that was the real contribution, the real long-lasting contribution of Dick Morris.

MR. MARANISS: It was a Faustian bargain to survive. But it was also another extension of the permanent campaign, which Morris and Clinton had developed in Arkansas, and he did the same thing there. They ran issues ads in Arkansas to help Clinton survive, except no one was paying attention then, and it didn't have the same ramifications.

MS. COMPTON: No president ever spent as much time traveling the country raising money in his off hours and his evenings than any other president in history. He brought it to a real art form. It was part of the institutional process of how the presidency works.

MR. ISIKOFF: Just one more quick symbolic note, where I think that part of the contribution of Clinton to the Democratic Party was captured just a few weeks ago when who is the new head of the Democratic Party, Terry McAuliffe, the ultimate political fundraiser, Washington fixer, a guy who basically has no -- very nice guy, but he has no other profession other than Washington deal making and raising money. And he is now the new embodiment of the Democratic Party.

MR. DAVIS: For those of you who are not partisan Democrats the way I am, I have to interject that with all that Michael has suggested about soft money, and it didn't begin with Bill Clinton and it wasn't led by Hillary in the last election, I don't think Michael literally meant that. The Republicans, even if you believe that the Clinton White House was sold like Motel 6 as many people suggested in the campaign fundraising in '96, the Republicans out-raised the Democrats in '96 by $120 million, and in 2000 with all the fundraising and of Bill Clinton, the greatest fundraiser in our party's history, by almost $200 million the Republicans out-raised the Clinton Democratic Party in the last couple of years.

So if anyone here thinks there's a level playing field on the soft money business and, of course, we Democrats want to abolish it and pass McCain-Feingold, and of course the Republicans don't for their own self-interest, understandably so.

MS. COMPTON: Don't you think in a way he gets credit for that Republican money? I meant that was anti-Clinton money, he raised that too.

MR. HESS: Last question over here, and then we're going to go and put Mr. Clinton somewhere in the arc of the American past presidents.

Q: Andy Newman, recently retired from the federal government.

Nobody has mentioned Clinton and race relations, there has probably never been a president that had more support, empathy and concern over minorities, particularly the black community, than President Clinton. And I would ask how would you evaluate that, and is it lasting, is there a legacy there, which I think there is, but I would like to hear somebody comment on Clinton and race relations?

MS. COMPTON: Two things jump out in my mind when you talk about President Clinton and minorities. At one point, I believe he claimed that he was part black, that if there was ever going to be a white president that he felt it so in his bones and his blood and his heritage, that he identified so closely with those who came up as the way he did. He also tried hard in the second term for the only really big issue that he had in the second term was this commission on tolerance, or racial tolerance, and it never got -- never took traction, and the commission never actually produced anything. And while he tried, he's still toying around doing a book about it. But I think that's one of the great unwritten, unfinished jobs of his, that while in his physical makeup and his bones he may feel a great kinship to it, I don't think he has that trophy that he wanted at the end of some kind of commission, or some kind of report, or some symbol to say that this country has come a long way from the days of his youth.

MR. MARANISS: There's a long history of Clinton not following through on commissions, and having trouble with those. But a better legacy are people that were inspired by Clinton that will be in government for a long time, from Rodney Slater, who is the Transportation Secretary, and will probably be the Governor of Arkansas someday soon, and move from there to all number of blacks and Hispanics who were brought into the government and into the judiciary in unprecedented numbers. And that's been true of Clinton from the time he was governor of Arkansas, when he brought more blacks in than all the previous governors combined.

MR. HESS: All right. Now, panel, listen very carefully, take notes if you need to, I'm going to tell you how in 1996 American historians rated presidents, and ask you to put Mr. Clinton in this ranking. That is, between President X and President Y.

Okay, our great presidents were Lincoln, Washington and Franklin Roosevelt. Our near greats were Jefferson, Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson, Truman, and Polk. High average, Eisenhower, John Adams, Kennedy, Cleveland, Lyndon Johnson, Monroe and McKinley. Average, Madison, John Quincy Adams, Harrison, Van Buren, Taft, Hayes, Bush, Reagan, Arthur, Carter, Ford. Below average, Taylor, Coolidge, Fillmore, Tyler. Failures, Pierce, Grant, Hoover, Nixon, Andrew Johnson, Buchanan and Harding.

We'll go start with, David, between whom and whom did you see him as you listened to that, or shall I repeat anything more, or you can pass and come back.

MR. MARANISS: I don't think I have anything interesting to say about it. I think it's probably in that average group, but in the higher end of the average group in everything except for honesty and integrity, and that merits down in the bottom.

MR. HESS: So you've got him somewhere around Benjamin Harrison and John Quincy Adams.

MR. MARANISS: Well, I think he's a more effective president than them.

MR. HESS: Okay, you've got him about with McKinley?

MR. MARANISS: Yeah.

MR. HESS: Okay, you've got him there.

MS. COMPTON: I'm going to cop out, because he's still president, I still carry White House Press Pass which is due for renewal next week. He's still president, I need a new pass to cover the new administration, and I find it very hard to sit this close in history to the accomplishments of the incompleted job of a president and rate him with that historical perspective. If forced, I would have to say, so many of the presidents I have covered are clustered there together, I think I'd put President Clinton on a little side bar right along near the other current presidents.

MR. HESS: Okay, so you've got him around Reagan, Bush, Carter and Ford, who range from low to middle average.

MS. COMPTON: And I've covered all of them, and I have to see them all as a group.

MR. HESS: Okay. So do historians apparently. Michael?

MR. ISIKOFF: Well, I'm not a big fan of these rating systems, but I like the idea of putting Clinton just above William McKinley because it will drive Karl Rove crazy. William McKinley -- and Mark Hannah -- Rove's own hero is Mark Hannah, and he wants to make George W. Bush into William McKinley, so if we can put Clinton above him.

MR. HESS: Okay. We'll give you the last rating point here.

MR. DAVIS: I think if you ask people who are black and poor what kind of president historically Bill Clinton was, they would think of one other president, maybe two, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt. If you ask wealthy people, they would probably put him below Warren Harding. I think you have to judge presidents by which way you're looking, and looking up from the ground up, Bill Clinton was a great president for people who are less well off in this country, and depending on where your politics are and where your priorities are for me, the fact that he can relate to poor people and to black people, and to people who are left out of this prosperous economy is his greatest legacy, because they're the folks that we still have to concentrate on. So, in that respect, I would rank him as a very good president.

MR. HESS: A good place to stop, a nice gentle way to leave our morning. We thank you all for coming. We thank our panel. Brookings is very appreciative of them giving their time.

[END OF PANEL.]