The Theodore H. White Lecture

with

William Kristol

Joan Shorenstein Center
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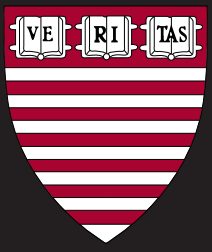

• PUBLIC POLICY •

Harvard University
John F. Kennedy School of Government

2004

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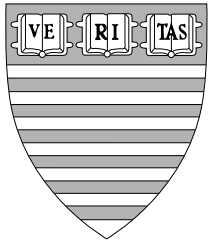

▪ PUBLIC POLICY ▪

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The Theodore H. White Lecture on Press and Politics commemorates the life of the late reporter and historian who created the style and set the standard for contemporary political journalism and campaign coverage.

White, who began his journalism career delivering the *Boston Post,* entered Harvard College in 1932 on a newsboy's scholarship. He studied Chinese history and Oriental languages. In 1939, he witnessed the bombing of Chungking while freelance reporting on a Sheldon Fellowship, and later explained, "Three thousand human beings died; once I'd seen that I knew I wasn't going home to be a professor."

During the war, White covered East Asia for *Time* and returned to write *Thunder Out of China,* a controversial critique of the American-supported Nationalist Chinese government. For the next two decades, he contributed to numerous periodicals and magazines, published two books on the Second World War and even wrote fiction.

A lifelong student of American political leadership, White in 1959 sought support for a 20-year research project, a retrospective of presidential campaigns. After being advised to drop such an academic exercise by fellow reporters, he took to the campaign trail and, relegated to the "zoo plane," changed the course of American political journalism with *The Making of the President 1960.*

White's *Making of the President* editions for 1964, 1968, and 1972 and *America in Search of Itself* remain vital historical documents on campaigns and the press.

Before his death in 1986, Theodore White also served on the Kennedy School's Visiting Committee, where he was one of the early architects of what has become the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. The late Blair Clark, former senior vice president of CBS who chaired the committee to establish this lectureship, asked, "Did Teddy White ever find the history he spent his life searching for? Well, of course not, he would have laughed at such pretension. But he came close, very close, didn't he? And he never quit the strenuous search for the elusive reality, and for its meaning in our lives."

WILLIAM KRISTOL, a scholar turned media figure, was once described by The Washington Post reporter, Howard Kurtz, as "part of Washington's circulatory system . . . [a] half-pol, half-pundit, full-throated advocate with a nice-guy image." Born in 1953 to Irving Kristol and Gertrude Himmelfarb, Kristol was raised in Manhattan. After volunteering for Hubert Humphrey in 1968, he went on to help lead the Harvard-Radcliffe Students for Scoop Jackson while studying at Harvard College. However, by 1976 he had left the Democratic Party for the right, eventually managing the failed campaign of Republican Alan Keyes—his former Harvard roommate—for the Maryland State Senate.

After receiving his A.B. in government (1973) and Ph.D. (1979) from Harvard, Kristol began teaching at the University of Pennsylvania and, from 1983 to 1985, at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He left Harvard in 1985 when he was hired to work in the Department of Education, quickly becoming the chief of staff for U.S. Secretary of Education, William Bennett, during the Reagan administration. A few years later, with the election of President George H.W. Bush, Kristol was selected as Vice President Dan Quayle's chief of staff—a position for which The New Republic named him "Dan Quayle's Brain." After appearing on "Crossfire" during the 1992 presidential election campaign, he began appearing frequently on ABC's "This Week" and "Good Morning America." Currently, Kristol serves as a regular commentator on Fox News Sunday and on the Fox News Channel.

Kristol led the Project for the Republican Future and helped shape the strategy that produced the 1994 Republican Congressional victory. In 1995 he launched *The Weekly Standard,* a Washington-based political magazine, for which he serves as editor. He is also chairman and co-founder of the Project for the New American Century.

Beyond his work at *The Weekly Standard,* Kristol has published several articles and essays on such topics as constitutional law, public policy, and political philosophy. He has been the co-editor of numerous books, including: *The Neoconservative Imagination* (with Christopher DeMuth, 1995), *Educating the Prince: Essays in Honor of Harvey Mansfield* (with Mark Blitz, 1995), *Present Dangers* (with Robert Kagan, 2000), *Bush v. Gore: The Court Cases and the Commentary* (with E.J. Dionne, Jr. 2001), and *The Future Is Now: America Confronts the New Genetics* (with Eric Cohen, 2002). In addition, his recent book, *The War Over Iraq: America's Mission and Saddam's Tyranny*, written with Lawrence Kaplan, was a New York Times bestseller.

Kristol serves on the board of directors for Sanford C. Bernstein Co., the John M. Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs, the Manhattan Institute, and the Shalem Foundation. From 1996 until 2001, he served on the Visiting Committee of the John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Kristol resides in McLean, Virginia, with his wife, Susan, and their three children.

THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE
DECEMBER 1, 2004

Dean Ellwood: I want to welcome everyone here to the Kennedy School. We're very happy to have Bill Kristol here. Obviously, his greatest claim to fame is that he's a former Kennedy School faculty member but he's done other important things along the way.

I'm also very pleased to see Walter Shorenstein here for this great event at the Shorenstein Center. Walter has been instrumental in creating the Shorenstein Center and its remarkable achievements of all kinds, along with Marvin Kalb who is also sitting up here.

This is the fifteenth Theodore H. White Lecture on Press and Politics. Mr. White, who is considered a legendary figure in journalism, had rather a humble introduction to the field. He started by delivering *The Boston Post*. He attended Harvard College on a paperboy's scholarship. I don't think there are any more paperboy scholarships, but he studied Chinese history and Oriental languages. Though he was interested in pursuing a career as a professor, and by the way, a very noble profession, he realized that journalism was his professional calling. While he was doing free lance journalism in China, he covered East Asia for *Time* magazine during World War II, and he contributed to numerous periodicals during the last two decades.

He also wrote books including *Thunder Out of China*, which was a controversial critique of the American supported Nationalist Chinese government, and *The Mountain Road,* a fictional work about World War II. He's obviously best known, I suspect, for his book *The Making of the President 1960,* which won a Pulitzer Prize, and quite honestly reinvented American political journalism. These books are now viewed as important historical accounts of presidential campaigns, and treat politicians as personalities not just symbols. Before his death in 1986, Theodore White served on the Kennedy School's Visiting Committee, and helped lay the foundation for the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy.

Mr. White once said: "I'm happy to think that American politics is one of the noblest arts of mankind, and I can't do anything else but write about it. At it's best I think there's no better calling."

We're glad he did what he did, and at this time I'm going to introduce Alex Jones. He's the Laurence Lombard Lecturer in Press and Public Policy, and the Director of the Joan Shorenstein Center. And like Theodore White, Alex Jones is the recipient of a Pulitzer Prize and has contributed to notable publications such as *The New York Times*. He's also been a Nieman Fellow here at Harvard, and hosted National Public Radio's "On the media."

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Alex Jones.

(Applause)

Mr. Jones: Thank you, David, thank you very much.

I'm always very happy to be here on this occasion. This is a very big night always for the Shorenstein Center, and I am very, very pleased that you all are here.

Walter, especially good to see you, always.

Walter Shorenstein travels from San Francisco to these things and I can tell you that he is going to be having his 90th birthday early next year, and we should all be 90 like Walter Shorenstein is 90.

(Applause)

Mr. Jones: When I invited William Kristol to deliver the 2004 Theodore White Lecture I did so because I knew he would be ideal for addressing either of two scenarios. Scenario number one: Mr. Kristol, a majority of the American voting public decided to remove President George W. Bush from office and return a democratic majority to the Senate. In light of this repudiation of President Bush and his agenda by the American people, how do you think conservatives and neo-conservatives should regroup and recast their message in a democratic administration so as to win back the support of the American people?

The good news is that Bill Kristol is equally first rate at addressing scenario number two. The voters have not only chosen to reelect George W. Bush, but to return him to office with strengthened majorities in Congress. It was believed by those on both sides that this election was of enormous importance because we face, as a nation, daunting challenges both on the foreign and domestic fronts.

The reason that Bill Kristol is such an excellent choice to talk about the impact of the election, and the next four years, is both because of what he is and because of what he is not.

He's a graduate of Harvard College and indeed, has a Ph.D in Government from Harvard. What you may not know is that as a Harvard undergraduate he volunteered to work in Hubert Humphrey's 1968 campaign, and later helped lead the Harvard-Radcliffe Students for Scoop Jackson. That impulse to be a Democrat had passed by the mid-1970s and he was clearly headed for a life that would involve politics. He is, after all, the son of Irving Kristol and Gertrude Himmelfarb; and his father, a Trotskyite turned neo-conservative, was one of the original young men who gathered in an alcove at City College in New York to figure out how to change the world.

Bill Kristol has made his own stab at trying to change the world. He managed and failed to win the campaign of Republican Alan Keyes, his former Harvard roommate for the Maryland State Senate. That sent him to the University of Pennsylvania to teach and then to the Kennedy School in the mid-1980s. In 1985 he took a job with the Department of Education and the Reagan Administration, and quickly became chief of staff to William Bennett, the Secretary of Education.

A few years later he shocked a lot of people by deciding to accept the invitation to be Vice President Dan Quayle's Chief of Staff; *The New Republic* referred to him as Dan Quayle's brain. He began appearing on "Crossfire" and other news oriented programs, to argue the case for Bush/Quayle, and honed his technique for intellectual thrust and parrying, of which, without question, he is a master.

When the Republican Party actually did fail to get a Bush reelected in 1992, he appointed himself head of something called The Project for the Republican Future, a bit of dazzling self-promotion that worked brilliantly. He helped shape the strategy that led to the sweeping Republican Congressional victory in 1994, the so-called Gingrich Revolution, though he pretty quickly concluded that Newt Gingrich didn't really want his advice.

In 1996 as the election season began to heat up he saw the opportunity to start a smart, savvy, plugged in, influential publication to speak for what was taking shape as the neoconservative tide that would grow ever more influential than our national politics. His creation was *The Weekly Standard*, of which he is both editor and publisher, jobs he has managed to hold down while also being a regular commentator on Fox News and co-writing numerous books and essays.

The Weekly Standard is widely regarded, is rivaled only by the editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal* in its power to shape conservative thinking in this country. Many Americans don't realize that for a decade there has been a conversation going on, an argument actually, among conservatives on all kinds of issues. It has been taking place in *The Weekly Standard*, on the op-ed pages of *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*, and other powerhouse newspapers and in other similar venues.

It was in this arena that there was a discussion about the wisdom of invading Iraq, and it took place long before most of the media even knew it was happening, or took it seriously, but it was serious. Bill Kristol has been in the middle of that conversation and he remains there as the issue has become what do we do now.

Which brings me to the other aspect of why Bill Kristol is the right man to be helping us understand where we are and where we're going. He has long demonstrated an independent streak that is very irritating to other conservatives, who he feels he has the absolute right to attack and disagree with as he sees fit, though always urbanely and with a smile.

For instance, Newt Gingrich went on the Rush Limbaugh Show to denounce Bill Kristol's "passion for destroying Republicans." "I've concluded," Gingrich said, "that he thinks he has to make news by pandering to the liberals every week and has become sort of the most destructive element on the right."

Bill Kristol has been an ardent supporter of George W. Bush, and the war in Iraq, but he has his own take on things which often is not an echo of the Administration. For instance, *The Weekly Standard* began thumping the

tub to put Saddam Hussein on the bullseye almost immediately after 9/11, literally. And he's complained in the last year that those critical of the invasion of Iraq should give it a chance to work. But he has also been critical of how the war is being conducted. Mainly he has been an articulate, witty, passionate and constant voice pushing for using American power to change the world. When it comes to having visions for changing the world he is his father's son.

Tonight he is going to discuss the Meaning of the 2004 Election to all of us, Republicans and Democrats, reds and blues, Americans and non-Americans. It is in that bipartisan, indeed, international spirit, that I welcome William Kristol to the Kennedy School of Government to deliver the Theodore H. White Lecture.

Bill.

(Applause)

Mr. Kristol: Thank you, Alex and thank you, David. It's great to be back at the Kennedy School.

I hadn't thought of Harvard-Radcliffe Students for Scoop Jackson in quite a while. There were 10 of us, literally. The president, I should add, of Harvard-Radcliffe Students for Scoop Jackson was none other than Alan Keyes. God knows what Scoop Jackson would think of that. It was the beginning of my very successful career at electoral politics. Scoop, at the time, this was 1972, the Massachusetts primary followed, I think, right after New Hampshire, and McGovern, of course, had upset Muskie in New Hampshire, and it seemed like a wide open race. We thought Scoop really had a chance representing the kind of old, cold war liberal faction of the Democratic Party. And I worked very hard for Scoop, cutting classes, leafletting, and licking envelopes, and all that. Scoop ran seventh in the Massachusetts primary, he ran behind Wilbur Mills. This was good practice for the Bush/Quayle campaign of 1992 and other successful electoral endeavors.

It's a great honor to give the Theodore White Lecture. I knew Teddy White a little bit, he was a friend of my parents, and I saw him occasionally over the years in the '70s and early '80s. I might have gotten interested in politics anyway, I suppose, given that I grew up in the '60s, and given where I grew up as a conservative or at least a moderately conservative Democrat on the West side of New York, and given my family and all that. But actually the one book that got me most interested in American politics was Teddy White's *The Making of the President 1960*, and I'm sure I'm not alone in this, for people my age.

I remember reading it and I guess it would have been about '63 or so. It's funny because Teddy White, later on, was thought of as a great champion of John Kennedy, and was close, I think, to the Kennedy family. But for me, and I remember this to this day, the most moving part of the book is his extremely poignant, really, recounting of the Stevenson ballot at the '60 convention which fell short, and especially of Gene McCarthy's nominating

speech for Adlai Stevenson in 1960, where Gene McCarthy called on the Democrats not to let Stevenson be a prophet without honor in his own party. That's what I remember, I remember being moved by that. It didn't make me a McCarthy supporter in 1968, and the Democrats were probably wise to nominate John Kennedy rather than Adlai Stevenson for a third time. But I guess it shows that what's most poignant and moving isn't always what's politically advantageous, something that's an insight that I had as a young man that's been confirmed, I would say, over the years.

. . . what's most poignant and moving isn't always what's politically advantageous . . .

So, it's good to be back at the Kennedy School, where I taught for a couple of years and had an excellent time. I like to joke to conservative audiences that I was the token conservative on the Kennedy School faculty, which really isn't fair because the Kennedy School is a tolerant and pluralistic place, there are at least two or three of them.

(Laughter)

Mr. Kristol: I was the token conservative. They like to have one on the faculty at all times. It's useful for the students to know what one looks like. It's particularly useful when they have to go out for interviews.

(Laughter)

Mr. Kristol: There's the token Republican today.

(Laughter)

Mr. Kristol: I liked and respected, and like and respect the Kennedy School which I will say, of all the academic environments, it honestly was the most tolerant and genuinely diverse, intellectually diverse, they didn't just make a pretense of it.

Cambridge, as a whole, on the other hand, is a different story. I saw this year the vote here was something like, was it 84–16, is that right? Cambridge went for Kerry over Bush which is a great improvement since my day. The one time I voted up here as a faculty member was in '84. We lived in Belmont, Massachusetts, Eighth Congressional District. Tip O'Neill was our Congressman, totally Democratic congressional district. Obviously, Tip was Speaker of the House and a revered figure up here.

I remember going to vote in November '84, and I voted for Reagan for re-election to the Presidency. I voted for the Republican Senate candidate, Ray Shamie, against John Kerry actually, Kerry was running in his first Senate race. And as a loyal Reaganite, by this time a loyal Republican, I voted for the opponent to Tip O'Neill even though I knew it was, of course, a hopeless race. I remember the next morning my wife had *The Boston Globe* open to the election returns. I knew, of course, Reagan had won, and I knew Kerry had won, and I was just curious how many votes the Republican running against Tip O'Neill had gotten. And I remember

asking Susan, you know, just out of curiosity, how many votes did the Republican running against Tip get? And Susan looked at *The Globe*, and kind of looked again, and said, I hate to tell you this, but there was no Republican running against Tip O'Neill.

(Laughter)

Mr. Kristol: And I said, you know, I know I voted for someone against Tip. It turned out I had voted for the Communist.

(Laughter)

Mr. Kristol: So I regard 16 percent for President Bush as an excellent showing in Cambridge and a hundred years from now Republicans will have a majority here.

. . . I regard 16 percent for President Bush as an excellent showing in Cambridge and a hundred years from now Republicans will have a majority here.

Let me talk about the 2004 election. The fact that in this election the gender gap decreased, and the marriage gap, or the family gap—that is the gap between married and unmarried voters—increased, and was larger than the gender gap; the movement of Hispanic voters; the whole question of values voters as they're called; the fact that education seems to be becoming more of a predictor of vote than income in some ways, especially postgraduate education which, for some reason, makes one more likely to vote for Kerry, more likely to be Democratic.

But I will leave all that aside and simply say this: We were told over and over again during the election by Bush and Kerry, and many, many spokesmen of them, that this was the most consequential presidential election in a generation, or in our lifetime, or in the century, or whatever. Presidential candidates usually believe the presidential election they're involved in is the most consequential one for a long time. But in this case I think it's true, certainly the most consequential election in a generation.

Now ultimately we don't know, because the reason an election is consequential is what follows from it, and what follows from it will depend on Bush's successes or failures in governing, and obviously that's the huge question of the next four years. But even just as an electoral matter the fact that Bush won a clear, though close victory, won an absolute majority of the vote, the first time since 1988, and reelected a Republican Congress with increased majorities, just by itself I think that makes it a rare election. We haven't had an election like this since 1964, just in the technical sense. We haven't had an incumbent run for reelection, hold it with control of a House of Congress, winning that election and increasing the numbers in Congress of his party. So, it's literally true that for most of our adult lifetimes we have not seen a president in the situation Bush is in now.

The election of 2000 was an even election. Bush ended up winning the electoral vote, losing the popular vote, Republicans lost seats in the Senate—it was very mixed. In '96, Clinton wins reelection but Republicans

hold the Congress, kind of a standoff between Gingrich and Clinton. In '92, Bush loses, Clinton wins with 43 percent of the vote, minority president, and Democrats lose house seats that year. In '88, Vice President Bush wins but Republicans don't gain seats in either house. Even in '84, Reagan's huge reelection victory, Republicans lose seats in the House, I believe, gain a couple in the House and I think lose one in the Senate but no coattails.

So, at least since 1980 we haven't seen a president win decisively, or at least clearly, and bring in members of his own party. And in 1980, obviously, Reagan won, Republicans picked up seats across the board, took control of the Senate. So it's at least, I think, likely to be the most consequential election since 1980, and already is in a sense the biggest victory by a party since 1980. I think that's pretty clear.

Indeed, another reason it could well be consequential is that it's the culmination of a trend which is a trend of Republicans increasing their vote and moving towards majority party status. The trend began in 1968, obviously, with the collapse of the Democratic presidential majority which it held, very reliably, from 1932 all the way through 1964, with the exception of Eisenhower's two victories which were personal victories not Republican victories or ideological victories.

Obviously, Vietnam, the riots, the whole 1960s caused, you know, Johnson 61 percent, in 1964 it went to Humphrey's 43 percent. Only once since 1968 has a Democratic presidential candidate received a majority of the popular vote and that was Carter in 1976, and that was a very, very narrow majority despite all the help that Watergate gave him.

So the Democratic presidential majority started to collapse in 1968. In 1980, Reagan beats Carter, Republicans win the Senate for the first time in a generation. In 1994, Republicans obviously win both Houses of Congress for the first time in 40 years and two generations, they've held that since. And now we have a Republican President and a Republican Congress, both reelected for the first time since 1924. So, this election is the culmination of a 36-year, rolling, Republican realignment during which time they've come to at least pare it to slight majority status.

In the exit polls, I think Republicans and Democrats were even at 37 percent each in self-identification. That's the best Republicans have done in modern times since the Democrats became the majority party. Republicans don't have a solid majority. Obviously, 51–48 is not a landslide, but having held Congress now for five straight elections, having won an absolute majority of the presidential vote, and again, having a president reelected with a Republican Congress, with a Congress of his own party, does seem that this is the end of a 36-year process.

The question is: is it the end in the sense that now it all falls apart? or is it the end in the sense that finally they're a majority party and now they can really govern and change American politics and American policies? Either of those is possible. That's why so much depends on what Bush actually does over the next four years as opposed to what happened on November 2nd.

One more point about those previous elections. In 1968, 1980 and 1994, those were all good years for the Republicans. They were all really negative verdicts, I think it's fair to say, though, on the Democrats. The election of 1968 was obviously a verdict on Johnson and Vietnam above all. 1980, a verdict on the Carter Administration. 1994, a verdict on Clinton and a Democratic Congress, the health care plan, various other mistakes Clinton made in his first two years, plus a Democratic Congress that had stayed too long and had various vulnerabilities that were exploited by Newt Gingrich and the Republicans. None of those were really a positive verdict for Republicans.

This was a victory for Bush more than a defeat for Kerry.

I don't think one can really say that about 2004. This was a victory for Bush more than a defeat for Kerry. Bush had no Democratic Congress to run against. It wasn't like Clinton in '96 who could run against Gingrich and who did so very effectively, I'll save you from the Republican Congress and from Gingrich. Not like Reagan in '84, who ran against Tip O'Neill, to some degree. Not like Nixon in '72 who also sort of ran against the Democratic Congress. He had a Republican Congress that was one party control of both major institutions of government, very narrow control in the Senate, but still.

Bush was the first president since Carter to be in the position of going to the electorate with his party controlling Congress. Carter paid a huge price for that, the voters decided to blame Carter and the Democratic Congress. Bush was able to get himself reelected and increase his margins in Congress.

Kerry, I think, was a perfectly good candidate. I don't really buy the blame Kerry for the defeat argument, though I'll let the Democrats have that fight as they will undoubtedly do. He won two of the three debates, I think it's safe to say, some people think he won the third, I don't. But he won the key first debate and put himself back in the race, which was the single most important thing he could have done for his own campaign. So I don't think it really was a defeat for John Kerry. He got more votes, obviously, as a Democratic Presidential candidate than anyone else, any other Democrat who's ever run for the presidency.

Some people say, well, Bush was lucky, the Massachusetts Supreme Court decided to interpret the Massachusetts Constitution to require same-sex marriage in 2003 and that triggered referenda around the country in 11 states which turned out higher than usual evangelical or conservative voters which put Bush over. I do know plenty of Republicans who wrote nice thank you notes to the Massachusetts Supreme Court.

But the truth is there's not much evidence it made that much difference. There's no evidence the Bush vote was higher in the states that had the referenda than the states that didn't. Maybe the issue in some general sense

helped Republicans a bit but it would be hard to prove that. It certainly wasn't at the center of most of the debates in the campaign.

So Bush got himself reelected despite a rocky economic record, despite, as Democrats said over and over, the fact that he was likely to end up as the first president since Hoover with net job loss, despite, obviously, the difficulties in Iraq and going to the electorate with 150,000 troops in Iraq taking casualties with no easy promise that we're going to get them out soon or we have a magic formula, but just the statement that we're going to stay the course and take the pain that we've got to take, and make it work. Despite all of that, Bush was able to go to the electorate with a 50 percent job approval rating by election day, and get 51 percent of the vote, win by about 3.5 percent, improve his vote over 2000 by 3.5 percent, win by three percent, get about 10 million more voters voting for him than he did in 2000.

You could say, well, all that's artificially influenced by 9/11. Bush wouldn't have won, perhaps, without 9/11, but 9/11 is a fact and the next election also is going to be influenced, I would say, by the aftereffects of 9/11. We're in a new era partly defined by 9/11. So I don't think that either takes away from the sort of importance of his victory.

But the most important thing is, I think, Congress. And again, I come back to the fact, to repeat it just one more time, the first president since 1964 to be reelected, first incumbent to be elected and to increase his seats in Congress. This doesn't happen very often and therefore, that itself is notable. Technically, of course, in 1964 Johnson wasn't reelected, he was the incumbent but he had succeeded Kennedy. So, if you want to be technical he's the first incumbent since FDR in 1936 to be reelected and to increase his seats in Congress. The first Republican incumbent since 1924 to be elected and increase his congressional seats. So, an impressive performance in certain ways for Bush.

. . . he's the first incumbent since FDR in 1936 to be reelected and to increase his seats in Congress. The first Republican incumbent since 1924 to be elected and increase his congressional seats. So, an impressive performance in certain ways for Bush.

One last point on the polling data. What makes it for me even more impressive is that Bush won despite the difficulties in Iraq, and despite the fact that a majority of Americans thought things were not going well in Iraq. When asked if things were going well, I think the polling question was it's pretty well, or pretty badly, very badly, very well. But if you accumulate the pretty wells, and very wells, and pretty badlys, and very badlys, I think it's about 52–44 badly in Iraq. So some key middle group of voters approved of the decision

to go to war in Iraq. That view retained majority support on election day, narrowly, but it retained it.

We're willing to say if it hasn't gone very well we could probably blame Bush for this in certain respects, and nonetheless have more confidence in his ability to pull it through to the end, or in his ability to do some other things, and we're willing to vote for him.

. . . much as I'm happy to take credit for all the bamboozling that Fox News does, to say nothing of *The Weekly Standard* and other organs of the dread right-wing media. I don't think they had that much influence either, to tell the truth.

So I don't think one can even say that, you know, the wool was pulled over American's eyes, or they didn't know what was going on over there, or they were, you know, bamboozled by Fox News, much as I'm happy to take credit for all the bamboozling that Fox News does, to say nothing of *The Weekly Standard* and other organs of the dread right-wing media. I don't think they had that much influence either, to tell the truth.

Bush went to the country with a pretty clear agenda, and a pretty clear record. Kerry went to the country with a pretty clear critique, I would say, of that agenda, and a pretty clear alternate set of policies, obviously on Iraq. It was complicated but I think that would have been the case with any Democrat in truth, and Bush won a narrow but clear victory.

What of the future? Let me just take one more moment on the electoral side and then get to governing which I do think, in a way, is more important. Strictly as an electoral matter, there's no reason that the momentum shouldn't continue to move, mildly I would say, in a Republican direction. The country went from 50–50 in 2000 to 51–48, 52–48 in 2004. And if you look at some of the underlying trends it's a little hard to see why Republicans shouldn't expect, everything else being equal, which I'm sure it won't be, that trend to continue or at least to stabilize at a slight Republican edge.

The most important, I think, underlying number in this is that on election day, a plurality of Americans, when asked are you conservative, moderate or liberal, a plurality of Americans say moderate. That's always been the case, but 33 percent say conservative and 21 percent say liberal. That's the great—when you really step back and say, what happened over these 40 years between Johnson's huge victory in 1964 and Bush's narrow victory in 2004, it's that in 1964 considerably more Americans thought they were liberal, or identified themselves as liberal than as conservative.

And guess what? The liberal party was the majority party, and the liberal candidate usually won except when there was an Eisenhower to dwarf the

ideological appeal with a personal appeal. And now, since the late 1970s more Americans have self-identified as conservative than as liberal. Those lines crossed, I think, around 1976–77. And guess what? Reagan won in 1980 as an explicit conservative candidate once those lines had crossed, and they've stabilized. And that's good news for Republicans, they needn't have done that, they could have gone back.

People hoped in the Clinton Administration that liberalism, or progressivism, or moderate progressivism, or something would come back. And I do think it's fair to say that whatever the merits and demerits of the Clinton presidency, he didn't change the underlying dynamic at all. It was an interruption, sort of like Eisenhower, but basically the conservative/liberal numbers are where, more or less, where they've been since the early-mid '80s. And that's good for Republicans. It means if they split the moderates they win and that's why the Republicans are now narrowly a majority party.

. . . whatever the merits and demerits of the Clinton presidency, he didn't change the underlying dynamic at all. It was an interruption . . .

In addition, Bush won middle-class voters, families with incomes of $50,000 to $75,000 which is the single largest chunk of the electorate, and is the middle of the electorate, middle to slight upper middle of the electorate, 56–43 which is a pretty comfortable victory for a Republican among the core of the middle class. Bush won married voters 57–42, Bush won married women by 11 points which is a big breakthrough for him.

So the Republicans are in pretty good shape. That doesn't mean they're going to win every election. It doesn't mean the whole thing won't fall apart. I'll come back to that in a minute and try to cheer up some people here and explain how that could happen. But I think basically if you have one party whose electoral base is, as the Democrats is, young voters, poorer voters, very well educated, wealthy voters, but that's only part of the wealthy, unmarried voters, especially unmarried women, and unchurched voters, secular voters. And those are sort of the core, and some minorities and minority voters, especially African-Americans, obviously.

And then the other party's base is married men and women, and middle and upper middle-class families. All things being equal the second party is going to win more often than not, it's just a bigger part of America. It may not always be, but if you gave a political strategist those two coalitions and said, on the whole, in most elections which one would you want to have going in, more people, I think, would take the Republican coalition today.

No one knows what's going to happen in 2008 and obviously the Democrats could easily win. But in the short term, in 2006, and this is

important for Bush's chances of governing successfully, there's very little chance the Democrats will take back Congress. Again, anything could happen. We could have a landslide like '94, a tidal wave and Republicans could get blown out in both the Senate, and even in the House.

But if you look at the House, given the gerry-mandering that's gone on in the number of safe seats, it's pretty hard to see Republicans losing the House. In the Senate, there are more Democrats up in 2006 than Republicans, 18 Democrats, 15 Republicans. More of those Democrats are in states Bush carried than the Republicans are in states that Kerry carried. I think there are five Senate Democrats in Bush states, three Senate Republicans in Kerry states. It's very hard to see Democrats picking up five Senate seats in 2006.

Bush has not two years, as Reagan did, . . . but probably four years with the majority of his party to govern which, again, is something we haven't seen since Carter, and that didn't go too well. Again, I cheer you up with that thought.

What that means is that Bush has not two years, as Reagan did, for example, in 1985-86 before Republicans lost the Senate, but probably four years with the majority of his party to govern which, again, is something we haven't seen since Carter, and that didn't go too well. Again, I cheer you up with that thought. But Bush is in pretty strong shape for a president who has been reelected, unprecedentedly strong shape in our adult lifetimes.

So, what does all this mean in terms of the meaning of the 2004 election? It means Bush has a chance to govern in a way that most presidents don't. I think really no president since Reagan in 1980, who came in with such a big victory and had a de facto majority because of the conservative, southern Democrats in the House for about two years. But Bush has the best chance to govern since Reagan in 1980, maybe since even Johnson in 1964, though he had much larger majorities.

. . . Bush has a chance to govern in a way that most presidents don't.

And this is the moment of truth for the Republican Party, and in some ways for American conservatism. You could argue that 1964 to 1968 was the moment of truth for American liberalism where on the one hand it accomplished very important and major things, most obviously the Civil Rights Acts, but also Medicare and the Great Society programs, many of which remain with us today in very important ways, but then it all fell apart for various reasons. Some of them beyond the control of anyone, I'm sure.

But that was sort of the moment of truth for American liberalism. When it had a chance to govern, it did so, accomplished some things and failed in some other ways. And politically failed in the sense that it hasn't really had the opportunity to govern, I'd say, in a straightforward way since.

This is the moment of truth for American conservatives and for the Republican Party. That's a good thing if you think the conservative policies on the whole are wise policies. But it's a worrisome thing too because God knows things can go wrong.

So this is to be a very important four years. It's been a very important election, but the most important reason it's been a very important election is that it has set up a very important four years for American politics and public policy.

Bush is going to move aggressively, it looks like, with Social Security reform as the keystone presumably of his domestic policy initiatives. I'm a little more dubious that they're going to really go to big tax reform. They're much further along in thinking through Social Security reform. There are lots of good arguments for both elements of the reform they're going to introduce, one of which will restore solvency, basically, to the system by probably changing the indexing of benefits from wages to prices. The other which would allow for personal savings accounts. Those both might be good ideas. Whether politically they can be packaged together, whether they can find majority support in Congress, whether the Bush Administration is able to pull this off is a big, big question.

There are those who speculate that it could all blow up. There seems to have been great support for health care reform. If I'd been standing here December 1, 1992, we would have all agreed that Clinton had a real mandate to pursue health care reform, and there was great support for it. And there were very well worked out ideas, and think tanks at the Kennedy School and elsewhere, for how to do it. Parts of it probably were sensible, although I shouldn't even admit that, ruin my credibility with my conservative friends. But anyway it didn't work politically and it was part of a pretty dramatic midterm disaster in 1994. If I were a younger Democrat I would think there would be an opportunity to really try to cast Bush's Social Security reform as like Clinton's health care reform. As sort of, a think-tank-driven solution to a problem that's either not a real problem or that can be solved in much different ways from the ways Bush wants to solve it.

And certainly it's fair to say that Bush hasn't begun the process of selling his plan to either the American people, or to the Congress, and that's a big, big challenge for an administration that has been, at times, very skillful, but at times not so skillful, in dealing with Congress and in making their case to the American people. Social Security reform, I think, is a huge question mark over the next four years. If they can pull it off, it could be a very big victory in terms of policy and in terms of politics. They would have touched the third rail of American politics, the Democrat's favorite issue, and done so successfully, and I think it would be a big moment.

Supreme Court nominations. It's been ten years since we've had a Supreme Court nomination. This would have come up much more in the 2004 campaign if there hadn't been a war, and if we hadn't had 9/11. That is one of the biggest issues that was at stake in 2004. The President's certainly going to get one nomination, probably very soon, for Chief Justice. He may well get one or two more, in the next year or two. And this is to say nothing of just the normal vagaries of mortality and mortality tables. But it's inconceivable, I think, that Bush won't get at least two nominations.

We know about the history of Supreme Court fights. They can be opportunities to win big victories and to reshape the Supreme Court and to reshape politics and policy. They can be the occasions for big defeats. The defeat of Bob Bork, I think, was an important moment in the stalling of the Reagan agenda.

People talk about the cultural and social issues, the moral value issues. Those really play out over the court nominees in general and Supreme Court nominations in particular. I think that Bush will have a pretty easy time with his first nomination if he nominates someone impressive, which I think he will, to replace the Chief Justice, who presumably will be the first to step down. I think that's already a conservative vote. I think moderate Democrats in the Senate will say to the liberal interest groups: Look, you can't really fight Bush replacing Rehnquist with another conservative, especially if it's one that's well credentialed. I think that nomination could go through quite easily.

But then the second nomination, if it's a replacement of Justice Stevens or Justice O'Connor, becomes a potential blood bath—that's a little too graphic—donnybrook let's say. It could be a big moment in the Bush presidency. I don't think Reagan ever really recovered from the Bork defeat in terms of domestic momentum. And you could argue that the first Bush Administration never really recovered. I remember being in that White House, we were on defense on civil rights and quotas issues. In 1991 the President had to sign a civil rights bill, quota bill, that he had vetoed and didn't like, but we were so much on the defensive on these kinds of issues. So, the second Supreme Court nomination fight, which could be as early as this summer, could be a huge moment for the second Bush term.

And above all, there is foreign policy which is the centerpiece of the Bush Administration, as it would be for any administration, in a post 9/11 environment. The centerpiece of US foreign policy is Iraq and for the Middle East, for the world, and politically for the Bush Administration, a huge amount depends on whether we come out okay in Iraq or not. If Iraq ends up like Afghanistan—pretty successful elections, more violence than we would like but basically moving on a path towards a pretty pluralistic, pretty stable, pretty democratic regime—then Bush has huge opportunities in the Middle East. And I think it's a vindication for the President, and I think he really has a chance to be an incredibly important and successful American president. Obviously, if Iraq goes badly or, God forbid, turns

into something like Vietnam and goes really, really, badly, the consequences in the Middle East, the consequences in the world, the consequences for Bush would be very dramatic as well.

I was saying to a Republican friend of mine that this is the first election since 1964 where a president has gotten reelected, increasing his majorities in Congress. And he correctly said to me: well, maybe we should be careful about publicizing that comparison. On the one hand, Johnson had some great legislative victories, but the Democratic Party didn't do so great after 1964 and we don't want to give people the impression that that could happen, but it could happen. I don't think it will.

I think this will be the moment where Vietnam as the dominant paradigm in American foreign policy will end, if, in fact, Iraq does not turn into Vietnam. And then if Iraq succeeds, I think we're in a very different world, but that's how much is at stake, really, in Iraq. There are plenty of other challenges, North Korea, Iran, Russia, but I think they all pale before Iraq. If we don't win in Iraq, if Iraq doesn't turn out well, the chances of these others turning out well are pretty slim.

I think this will be the moment where Vietnam as the dominant paradigm in American foreign policy will end . . .

So at the end of the day, the election is interesting, and analyzing the election returns and the exit polls are interesting, but a huge amount depends on the actual success of the president in governing in general, and in particular, in governing as commander-in-chief. Politics is contingent, you know. These trends don't exist independent of particular decisions and particular events, not all of which we control in the real world. I think that's a conclusion that Teddy White would have endorsed. He spent a lot of time writing about presidential campaigns and about individual politicians and believed that they actually made a difference. We're not all just little pawns being moved around a chess board by impersonal forces of history or little corks bobbing in an ocean. And I think that's really true in the next four years.

Now one could imagine very, very different political scenarios. One could imagine looking back at the meaning of the election of 2004 and judging it to be very different depending on what happens in terms of Bush's actual success in governing in the next four years. I hope he succeeds, I think he'll succeed. I can't promise you that he will, no one knows if he will. I'll conclude by saying this about President Bush—I think Alex said that I was a supporter of his, which I am, in general and certainly of the foreign policy. The fact is, on the other hand, that I had my doubts about President Bush when he was Governor Bush, when he was a candidate. I preferred John McCain as a presidential candidate, ironically precisely

because of foreign policy. I'd gotten to know McCain when we were among the rather few Republicans who supported Clinton on Bosnia and Kosovo. McCain was for much stronger internationalist, Reaganite foreign policy. Bush was okay on those issues but he wasn't terribly outspoken.

A lot of Republicans were quasi-isolationists on those issues, so I preferred McCain through much of 1999 and early 2000. The Bush people have never quite forgotten that. They're very good at remembering who was with them at every stage, which is fine. That's probably why they're successful politically.

But I say this as someone who is not particularly close to everyone in the Bush White House and the Bush Administration, or not a long time friend or associate of the President's, certainly. But I will say this about the President: I think it was the day before election day in 2000, four years ago, when he was going around giving last minute speeches, flying from airport to airport, and he was focusing on education policy. It's hard to remember now that that was a big issue in 2000, No Child Left Behind. He was going to fix our public schools and improve "our children's education." And Bush would wind up his speech by saying that it was extremely important that every American parent, each American father and mother, ask himself or herself the following question: is our children learning?

(Laughter)

Mr. Kristol: Which is a reasonable question. I ask Susan that quite often and I think I know the answer all too often.

Anyway, everyone laughed, and Bush, who's pretty good at making fun of himself, said oh, well, my English may not be perfect but people usually understand what I mean, and Laura will correct me when I make these mistakes in the future, and then he went on with the speech. And then Bush repeated this at each stop that day, and got a big laugh, and did his self-deprecating little statement afterwards, "is our children learning?" Late in the day Bush said it one more time, is our children learning, everyone laughed. Then Governor Bush paused for a minute and sort of reflected, and said, you know, I found it's been a great advantage of mine in my brief political career that my opponents have often misunderestimated me.

. . . the most likely outcome would be that four years from now the President's opponents, both at home and abroad, will end up being judged by historians to have misunderestimated him.

(Laughter)

Mr. Kristol: And I guess, if you ask me to bet, I would say that the most likely outcome would be that four years from now the President's opponents, both at home and abroad, will end up being judged by historians to have misunderestimated him.

Thank you.

(Applause)

Mr. Jones: As is the Kennedy School tradition, Bill Kristol will take questions.

Ms. Hargreaves: I'm Rebecca Hargreaves. I'm an MPP1 student at the Kennedy School.

In your book, *The War Over Iraq: Saddam's Tyranny, America's Mission,* you wrote that it has become a matter of national well-being, even survival, to promote democracy in the Middle East. In what ways do you think the U.S. should actually promote democracy and do you advocate imposing democracies on other Arab states?

Mr. Kristol: Well, I advocate promoting democracy, a liberal democracy, much more than we did over the preceding two or three decades when we, as a bipartisan matter, decided that basically dictators that we could work with were fine and we could live with the consequences of propping up those dictators. Among the consequences was dissatisfaction at home and the ability of people like Osama bin Laden to recruit dissatisfied people at home, and I do think 9/11 put an end to that. I think there's a bipartisan sense of that. And I think, honestly, if John Kerry had won he would not have gone back to a pre-9/11 American policy vis-à-vis the Middle East.

. . . we're probably too timid, not too ambitious, in our democracy promotion in the Middle East and elsewhere.

We can't live in the 21st century given the damage that can be done by terrorism, given the availability of weapons of mass destruction with a whole region of the world as a kind of cauldron of extremism, anti-Americanism, terrorism, dictators, many of them with terrorist ties, many of them developing weapons of mass destruction. It's just too dangerous.

How to do it, what mixture of persuasion and incentives and force occasionally, how aggressive to be in working with democrats in those countries; those are all serious questions and the Bush Administration's been grappling with them and in some cases, has been probably a little ham-handed and aggressive and in other cases has been a little too timid I would say. I still say on the whole, actually, we're probably too timid, not too ambitious, in our democracy promotion in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Not to say that democracy automatically solves all problems either, but I just don't see the alternative really. I don't see that we can go back to the pre-9/11 situation. I think we're kidding ourselves if we think that we can pick out enlightened dictators and prop them up for 10 or 20 years and work with them. That's just not going to work in the 21st century.

Ms. Sirquin: Kwenir Sirquin, I'm a first year student here at the Kennedy School.

Prior to the election several African-American conservative leaders sort of made a call to African-Americans asking them to vote for President Bush because of his policies supporting historically black colleges, education and the appointments of Rice and Powell.

My question to you is do you believe that the Republican Party can truly be welcoming and inclusive of African-Americans?

Mr. Kristol: Well, I think it can be and I think it is in many ways convincing African-Americans to abandon their traditional party allegiance. I say this as a Jewish American who made similar appeals to my fellow Jews and had the great success of increasing the Jewish vote for Bush from 19 percent to about 25 percent which is kind of pathetic, frankly. With African-Americans, I think it requires a little more of a leap to make the case for why they should have been for Bush. With Jewish Americans, those at least who care about Israel, I would have thought it would have been an extremely easy case to make, and there was some increase but a disappointingly low one to me.

These ethnic, religious, racial party ties are much stickier and harder to change than people think. And it's sort of unpredictable when and if they finally break. Bush went up from 9 percent to 11 percent among African-Americans. It seems we've done a little better in Ohio for some reason, 50–60 percent of African-Americans who helped him in that key state. But I don't know.

There's a deep, historical allegiance there which is hard to overcome with the kind of marginal things one can say. I mean I can make an honest case that I think Bush's educational policy is better for poor Americans, for inner-city residents, than a more status quo type of attitude towards the public school system. But that's a lot more indirect than being the party of the president who championed the civil rights legislation in the mid-1960s.

Ms. Spencer: I'm Sarah Spencer. I'm a first year student of the Kennedy School.

Given your role in shaping the Republican Congressional victory in 1994, what would be your advice to Democrats as they strategize to retake control over the Congress?

Mr. Kristol: I usually give such good advice to Democrats, almost as good as the advice I give to Republicans. Well, I was thinking about this the other day. I read these pieces of Democrats being demoralized, we're never going to win again, and all the trends are going against us. It's, of course, ridiculous. Compared to December 1, 1992 when, as a Republican, you inherited this fantastic, two big Reagan victories, one big, first President Bush victory, you felt vindicated. After all, Reagan's policies did succeed in bringing down the Soviet Union.

I think it's fair to say the economic policies did succeed in producing a considerable amount of prosperity, and some deficit, but still a pretty impressive performance in the '80s. And here we were having lost the presidency, made small gains in the House, no gains in the Senate,

Republicans had, what, 43, I think, Senate seats, not 45 after 1992, and had 166 House members, not 200 as the Democrats now have. And we were totally despondent.

I wasn't, personally. I thought, well, this is an opportunity. But many Republicans were very despondent, understandably, especially those of us who were losing jobs in the next seven or eight weeks. There wasn't a huge market for Republicans in Washington since the Democrats controlled both the presidency and the Congress. So we were worse off than the Democrats are now.

. . . the good news for Bush is that the Republicans control Congress, the bad news for Bush is that the Republicans control Congress.

My main advice would be, history moves in very funny ways and don't buy these arguments that you're fated to be in a minority, and look for vulnerabilities. I do think that the good news for Bush is that the Republicans control Congress, the bad news for Bush is that the Republicans control Congress. And the last time the president controlled Congress was '93–'94. We know what happened after that. And the time before that was '77 to '80 with Carter, and we know what happened then.

So it is tough when you're in charge of the government. Things can go wrong even if you make right decisions, let alone if you make big miscalculations. And I think Social Security would be worth looking at if I were a Democrat. Karl Rove is a smart guy and he was aware of all the obvious problems in pushing the Bush proposal, but it does seem to me that that would be something to focus on if I were a Democrat.

. . . whether one was a regular church-goer or not, became a better predictor of your vote than whether you were wealthy or not.

From the floor: Hello, and thank you for coming. My name is Joanne. I'm a first year student.

There's been a lot of discussion about the link between conservatism and religion. What implications do you think that has for the Republican Party?

Mr. Kristol: Well, that's a big question. Obviously one of the biggest things that's happened in the last 40 years is in 1994 where the lines crossed. I believe it's true that in November 1994, for the first time, whether one was a regular church-goer or not became a better predictor of your vote than whether you were wealthy or not.

Now it's still the case that wealthier voters vote more Republican than poor voters. Though as I said earlier the big story there is the ability of Bush to get down to the middle middle-class and carry that as well, since obviously you can't win elections with just the upper class or with the

upper-middle class. But Bush's ability to get down to the middle class, and even the working class, presumably by appealing to them on cultural and social issues, has been a big story of this election but it's really a trend that's been going on a long time. Gradually the Republicans have become more the party of church-going Americans and Democrats more the party of secular Americans.

Now one shouldn't overstate this. I think Kerry carried secular Americans by something, what, 62–38, something in that ballpark, but an awful lot of secular Americans still voted for Bush, and an awful lot of church going Americans still voted for Kerry. Sometimes the red, blue America, treating them as if they're wildly opposite or different doesn't make sense. "Everyone who goes to church votes for Bush," and "everyone who's secular votes for Kerry." It's just not the case.

. . . observant Jews now vote more like church going Protestants or Catholics than they do like secular Jews.

Having said that, it's an interesting story. I think historians and political scientists will be writing about it for a long time. It's also the case that, for example, observant Jews now vote more like church going Protestants or Catholics than they do like secular Jews. So that whether you are generally religious seems to be a better predictor of your vote, and may be a better predictor of your general social and cultural attitudes than which religion you're a part of, which is very new.

Most American political history could be written in terms of different religious groups. Catholics go this way, Protestants go that way. The whole late 19th century in the midwest is basically Catholics go to one party, Protestants are one party, Catholics go to the other party and they fight over control, or some fights among different kinds of Protestants. That's where we've changed a lot in the last 30 to 40 years. So it's a very big development.

Politically whom does it help? I don't know. The numbers are about even, it turns out. Do you want to be the religious party or the secular party? Is it good for the country to have a sort of religious party and a sort of secular party? One's general instinct would be to say no. It just seems sort of unhealthy and risky. A lot of bad history in other nations where all the religious are on one side, and all the secular, or people with a different religious faith, and on and on. On the other hand, we're not anywhere near that state. And in any case, people are choosing to vote the way they're choosing to vote so none of us can do much about it at this point.

But I think, you know, it's risky for the Democrats to look too secular, and it's risky for the Republicans to look like simply a religious party. And then the question is, who can frame the cultural and social and moral

agenda. And who can frame other issues? Incidentally, it's not like people who are religious or secular don't care about war or don't care about economics, it's who can frame those in convincing ways.

Ms. Ward: My name is Kelly Ward. I'm a first year student here at the Kennedy School also.

I was wondering if you could speak a little bit about Fox News. There seems to be a conversation among those in the media about whether or not the media should follow that trend toward a more biased coverage or should maintain its role as an unbiased source of news.

Mr. Kristol: I'm sure you meant to say more fair and balanced.

(Laughter)

Mr. Kristol: Well, there are a lot of interesting things to be said about media and politics. Look, I think the bigger trend is not Fox News. I like it very much, we get two, three, four million viewers. We got eight, nine million viewers, households, during the Republican Convention and on election night which was very gratifying. But the bigger trend, obviously, is the collapse of the dominance of the network news, and the rise of cable news, the rise of 24-hour news, the rise of talk radio which happened before the rise of cable news, and the rise of the internet which is now happening. And I do think those together are a very big change. I generally think it's a good change. I do think it's a democratizing change, a decentralizing change really.

It's sort of amazing to think back only 25 years ago and realize the degree to which there were two or three newspapers that mattered in terms of national news, three networks. That's it. No CNN. No Fox. No MSNBC. No national talk radio at all, and of course no Internet. And I think on the whole it's healthier in a democracy to have the diversity of voices and I think that's what's happened over the last generation.

Now it has it's own complications and problems. Charles Krauthammer, my friend and fellow Fox News occasional analyst, had this wonderful formulation about Fox News. He said Rupert Murdoch saw a niche market, the niche market was half of the American people who thought that the mainstream media was liberal. And the mainstream media is liberal. It doesn't mean that they're personally biased. They're not horrible people, not every single story is, you know, liberal propaganda, but it is just a fact. It is just a fact that virtually every senior executive at the three networks, and virtually every senior executive at *The New York Times—The Washington Post* is a little more complicated—and virtually every senior executive on the news side, I would say, of *The Wall Street Journal* is liberal. They're moderate liberals, some of them are moderates if you want, but none of them is really conservative, and almost none of them are pro-life, and almost none of them is an Evangelical Protestant, and they're out of touch with a lot of America. And Fox News saw an opportunity for fair and balanced coverage, and there it is.

Ms. Adams: My name is Jama Adams. I'm a student here at the Kennedy School.

And I completely agree that this is the moment of truth, as you put it, for the conservative movement. What advice do you give? How do you perceive your role as an opinion leader within the movement as it relates to the larger movement?

Mr. Kristol: My role is to give advice to the Bush Administration that they'll ignore, and sometimes it will coincide with what they were going to do anyway, and that's good, and other times not, and maybe they'll be right some of those times. No, I mean I think it is important for journals of opinion to be honest, and to call it as they see it. I don't think there's much use for cheerleading. Maybe it's useful for two months before an election when you're in a true electoral fight, but it's not much use, I would say, when you're actually governing and when you're 23 months away from a congressional election, and four years away from a presidential election.

So I think constructive criticism, whether it's on foreign policy—do we have enough troops in Iraq? do we have a large enough Army?—raising questions about the Social Security strategy, suggesting judicial nominees (this is all public, this isn't private advice), helping them think through the right way to frame the Supreme Court fights. These are all interesting intellectual and political questions, so I think our role is simply to write about them.

. . . Bush Administration . . . modus operandi is never to admit that they're wrong about anything, but actually quietly and silently to change policy in some cases

Ms. Adams: How is this going to play out, and what would your advice be in order to avoid intraparty squabbles?

Mr. Kristol: My advice—which, they will, believe me, not take—and no administration will, is they're much too worried about intraparty squabbles and much too little worried about making a collective intraparty mistake. And if a squabble saves them from an error that's a good thing. And the truth is Franklin Roosevelt's Majority Coalition, the Democratic Party under FDR all the way up until LBJ, was full of squabbles. Squabbles doesn't even begin to describe it, you know. This is a party that split three ways in 1948. I mean Wallace and Thurmond ran for president for God's sake against Truman.

A lot of these fights strengthened the party. If they're intellectual arguments I think they're important. And I think it's a big mistake for administrations to suppress dissent internally or react to criticism externally as if this is just hostility; that people don't understand.

And the Bush Administration is mixed on that. Most administrations don't like criticism, and they don't like it any better than others. Their

modus operandi is never to admit that they're wrong about anything, but actually quietly and silently to change policy in some cases. And they do read and listen to the criticism. So that's fine if they take the advice without ever acknowledging they're taking the advice. That's just a natural, human tendency, I suppose, and they're entitled to do that.

But I think people worry much to much generally about intraparty squabbles. Obviously, if you're running for reelection and there's a question if you have a primary opponent or not, it's a good idea to try to avoid having a primary challenge, though even that is overrated.

I remember so vividly in 1998, a California Republican telling me, I guess a month of two before the California primaries, we're in great shape. We've all united behind Dan Lundgren, our gubernatorial candidate. The Democrats were ripping each other up, it was Gray Davis, and John Garamendi, and Kathleen Brown. Huge media buys, bitter, negative campaigns, and the Republicans were rubbing their hands together. I then went to New York. Al D'Amato, unopposed for reelection, Chuck Schumer—I can't remember who was running, was it Gerry Ferraro and Chuck Schumer—and there was a third Democrat running in New York. You had a bitter, campaign, late primary, a Labor Day primary, and Republicans, we're united, we're in great shape, we're saving our money, these Democrats are slaughtering each other. And in both states, obviously, the Democrats won easy victories. And I've seen that an awful lot, at least at the state level in politics, and I think in general that is true. Healthy debate doesn't hurt and false unity doesn't help.

Ms. Raimer: Hi, I'm Alison Raimer and I'm a freshman at Wellesley College.

Given President Bush's history with Europe, how do you see the strength and growth of the EU affecting the United States? And what role do you think the United Nations plays now that President Bush has been reelected?

Healthy debate doesn't hurt and false unity doesn't help.

Mr. Kristol: Well, certainly the main reason for me hoping that the president would be reelected was to be able to read the European press for the next few days which has truly been enjoyable, I would like to say, as a red-blooded American. They still haven't recovered.

The truth is the Bush Administration could do a better job of public diplomacy in Europe. They are more pro-American, more in favor of the principles that Bush is articulating than one would think. This is just a failure, I think, of public diplomacy and private diplomacy as well in certain ways.

On the other hand, there are real differences between the U.S. and Europe that aren't going away, and that my colleague, Bob Kagan, has written about. There's now a huge industry of people writing about these differences and they're real. If Tocqueville came down from Mars, or wherever

he is, and if the great sociologists didn't know anything about the U.S. and Europe, and just looked at the U.S. and Europe, and said well, here's one country, the U.S., forces stationed all over the world, spends about five percent of its GDP on the military, about a third of the people are pretty seriously religious, very proud of being a strong nation, kind of an exceptional nation almost, sitting on a hill, very proud of its own history.

Then there's Europe in which the nation state is something that they want to get beyond. The military force is something they want to get beyond, and most nations spend less than two percent of their GDP on it, and they have no forces stationed anywhere basically, a few scattered ones, and no ability to deploy force, post-religious, basically, certainly post-Christian in most of the countries, church attendance below 10 percent on an average weekend. Just as a sort of sociological and cultural matter you'd say gee, these two entities are going to have somewhat different views of the world. It would be unlikely that we would be in sync on everything, and sure enough, we're not.

I still think Europe is important. European nations are important allies and we have to think through when and where we can work with them, and when and where we can't. I think the question of EU integration is an open question. I would have said five years ago I don't much like EU integration but it's going to happen. I no longer am convinced about that. Five to ten years from now, it's utterly unpredictable, I think, what the future of Europe is. They have huge obstacles now to European integration, constitutional ones, demographic ones, the whole question of Turkey and their big problems.

Having said all this, you know, the problems in some ways are overstated. We're working very well with a lot of European nations. On Ukraine, for example, which is a practical issue on Europe's doorstep, the Americans are in there, the polls have been very good, the British have been very good and we're, I think, going to help. We'll see. We may pull off the successful support for the democratic forces in the Ukraine which would be very, very important. It's not as dire a situation as some people think and not as dire a situation even as the European media think, though it's still enjoyable to see how much they absolutely dislike the notion that Americans could possibly have reelected George W. Bush. It's been somewhat amusing for the last three weeks I would say.

Ms. Gettinger: I'm Sunny Gettinger. I'm a first year student at the Kennedy School.

Given how much the administration needed to scale back operations in Afghanistan in order to be able go into Iraq, and how the media kind of left with them and now Afghanistan doesn't figure very prominently into the big network reports anyway, you rarely see a story on Afghanistan and what the situation is there except for the recent elections. Do you think that there's any possibility something like that could happen in Iraq as

well? Can we leave and leave it the way that it is to go on to Iran or North Korea or Russia, as you mentioned earlier?

Mr. Kristol: No, I don't actually agree with the premise on Afghanistan. I think certain assets were pulled out of Afghanistan, some of them we had finished using and others maybe could have been useful. We have more troops in Afghanistan now than the day we began planning to go into Iraq. We've been very aggressive actually in the Afghan countryside and we did pull off elections, after all, in October that were not a trivial matter, with an awful lot of people voting.

They've made some mistakes in Afghanistan and I, myself, might have gone in with even more troops to begin with. And if we had a bigger military in general, and if we performed our intelligence apparatus earlier we probably could have done both things a little more efficiently or effectively.

Afghanistan . . . is a pretty good success story.

But I don't think we've pulled out of Afghanistan. I agree the media sort of turned its attention away, but Afghanistan, after a lot of stumbles, and some mistakes, I think is a pretty good success story. And I think for those who sort of say, with great confidence, well, America could never pull off this kind of thing, we're very bad at being any kind of interventionist power, or quasi-imperial power, if you want to use that term, as Niall Ferguson does, it's not so clear to me that that's true. We've been pretty deft, actually, in Afghanistan. In some ways Afghanistan is more difficult than Iraq to steer towards something resembling a civil, liberal, pluralistic state.

No, I don't think the President went through all this to then find an exit strategy from Iraq.

Since this is near the end, I can close with a little big of a plug for the President since I've been so moderate in my politics here so far. The most impressive thing about the last year and a half for me is the following: Almost exactly a year ago I was in Europe, it was in November, defending the Bush doctrine and American foreign policy in Paris and Berlin, really a wonderful thing to do, I highly recommend it to any of you if you want to suffer a little bit.

(Laughter)

Mr. Kristol: And I was over there when Bush announced the moving up of the turnover of power in Iraq. It had been originally planned for 2005 sometime and we were moving it up to June 30, 2004. Every European I talked to, and this was echoed back here a lot, of course, too, thought this was an exit strategy, they're getting out. Karl Rove, if I heard this once I heard this 50 times, Karl Rove would not let George W. Bush go to the electorate with 150,000 troops, it was then about 125,000 troops, in Iraq,

taking casualties. They'll either go into a cocoon, in barracks, and let the country gradually fall apart. Or they'll just get out. They'll declare some phony transfer of power. We'll withdraw down to 50,000 troops and they'll hope it doesn't look too bad before November 2. It was an absolute consensus. And even I was a little worried. I didn't really think they were doing that, but I was a little worried about it.

I remember talking to Condi Rice about it. She made a very shrewd statement, that no, no, no, we want the transfer of power precisely so we don't have to exit Iraq, so there's a legitimate Iraqi government who we can then help to defeat the insurgency. And she turned out to be telling the truth, and she was right, I think. It was the right thing to do to move up the transfer. But Bush could have done an exit strategy. Believe me, Republicans, *The Weekly Standard* would have complained. No one else would have complained. No Republican political operative, no Republican House member or Senator would have complained if Bush had found a way to lower our profile, lower our casualties, sort of say we were getting out of Iraq. No one would have complained if Bush had gone to the electorate in November and said I've got a plan to get us out in six months. Don't worry, Clinton when he went to Bosnia in December of '95 said, you know, we'll be out in a year.

It's really to Bush's credit that he was willing to go to the American people with 150,000 troops fighting a very nasty insurgency, taking casualties, with no phony promises that we'd be out soon.

It's really to Bush's credit that he was willing to go to the American people with 150,000 troops fighting a very nasty insurgency, taking casualties, with no phony promises that we'd be out soon. Indeed, we had an offensive teed up against Fallujah for the weekend after the election. I think that's to Bush's credit, as a matter of actually caring about what happened there and being willing to take considerable political risks for it. What it tells me is that there's no way, having been reelected, he's going to be looking for some easy exit from Iraq.

Now, look, everyone hopes that we get through the elections in January, things get better, we have another set of elections at the end of the year, and American troops can gradually be drawn down. That's obviously the goal and it's going to happen at some point. But I don't think Bush is inclined at all to look for a withdrawal strategy. I think he wants a victory strategy. As part of that victory, obviously, we'll have a gradual, at least partial withdrawal of American troops.

Mr. Jones: Final question.

Mr. Liebert: My name is Dan Liebert and my background is in public health. I think it's interesting that George Bush won all the states of the old

Confederacy. Now, if you look at the red and blue maps, there were some areas in the south that were blue. You alluded to an assumption that Harvard faculty and students voted probably 85 percent for Kerry. Is that a reasonable guess?

Mr. Kristol: Yes.

Mr. Liebert: And Bob Jones University students probably voted 85 percent or 90 percent for George Bush. What does that mean to you, as far as Harvard, where they try to get people to think about a lot of books and ideas, and Bob Jones where it's pretty much one book.

Mr. Kristol: Well, look, what does it mean to you that there's no more diversity at Harvard than at Bob Jones. I mean, to be honest, it's embarrassing.

(Applause)

Mr. Kristol: I say this as a Harvard graduate. Secondly, you know, the truth is, who knows?

Here's how I'll put it. I was at the University of Iowa two weeks ago, in Iowa City which is Johnson County, Iowa, which, as is the case with most big university towns, is one of the most Democratic counties in Iowa, and went for Kerry about 60–40. The students probably went about that, 60–40, 65–35 for Kerry. So, that's fine, students are a little more liberal and Democratic than the country as a whole. Faculty are considerably more Democratic. Probably the workers at universities, and the people who choose to live in university towns are probably more liberal. That's fine. It's a free country. It doesn't mean they're any better or any worse than the people who choose to live in the exurbs of Tulsa or in Phoenix, Arizona.

What struck me was the young lady who drove me around, picked me up at the airport and drove me to the campus, was the head of the college Democrats, and she was actually very active in the Democratic Party in Iowa. She had done a huge amount of work for Kerry, was very politically sophisticated, and very unhappy. This was a week after election day. She was unhappy that Kerry had lost, unhappy that Kerry had lost Iowa in particular which is one of the three states that

. . . if the Democratic Party becomes the party that says that people in Cambridge are morally superior or politically more far-seeing than people in Biloxi, Mississippi, or Phoenix, Arizona, or other parts of Massachusetts that were much less predominantly for Kerry . . . that would be an utter disaster for the Democratic Party. It really would be unhealthy for the country. But it is the surest way to make the Republicans a majority party.

changed obviously between 2000 and 2004, unhappy that she hadn't hit her target. I think it was a 20,000 vote majority in Johnson County and they had gotten eight and 19,000 or something. Very sophisticated, impressive young lady, very liberal, political activist.

She was furious. And I don't think she was just saying this because she was talking to me. Furious about what? Furious about the New York, Boston, if I dare say, and Hollywood disdain for middle America that had been manifested in the week since the election. And she is a liberal from Iowa, a state that Kerry almost won. And I would say, honestly, that the single best hope the Republicans have, apart from anything they can do in terms of their own positive efforts, is if to the degree the Democratic Party becomes the party that says that people in Cambridge are morally superior or politically more far-seeing than people in Biloxi, Mississippi, or Phoenix, Arizona, or other parts of Massachusetts that were much less predominantly for Kerry—I guess Bush actually increased his vote, if I'm not mistaken, in Massachusetts compared to four years ago—that would be an utter disaster for the Democratic Party. It really would be unhealthy for the country. But it is the surest way to make the Republicans a majority party.

. . . moral judgment, but even political judgment, doesn't correlate very highly with levels of education or even what particular books one has read, and certainly not with where one lives.

So, I don't think one should assume that attending better institutions of higher learning does not make one a better person, or make one a better judge of policies.

Susan Sontag said in the early/mid-'80s, maybe it was late '80s, as the Soviet Union was collapsing—Susan Sontag, one of the most literate and sophisticated cultural critics of our time—said that on the core issue of her adult lifetime, which was communism and the Soviet Union, Phyllis Schlafly was more right than she was. And it is to her credit that she said it, and it's something that people on both sides, since there were plenty of conservative elites too, should remember that moral judgment, but even political judgment, doesn't correlate very highly with levels of education or even what particular books one has read, and certainly not with where one lives.

Thank you.

Mr. Jones: I want to thank you, Bill Kristol. That was a fascinating presentation.

THEODORE H. WHITE SEMINAR
DECEMBER 2, 2004

Mr. Jones: The second part of the Theodore White Lecture event is always interesting because it gives not only the distinguished panel that we've assembled, but all of you in attendance, the opportunity to both respond to and challenge, if you wish, the comments that were made the night before.

We begin with Andy Kohut. I'm a journalist, essentially, and Andy Kohut has been, virtually throughout my journalistic career, one of the really indispensable figures in American journalism because he has been the person responsible for telling us what we think about ourselves and what the world thinks about us. His specialty has been doing polling that is focused on the media. He is President of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, and has been doing similar things under different titles for years before.

He was the President of the Gallup Organization during the 1980s. In 1989, he created the Princeton Survey Research Associates, which was focused on media, politics and public policy. He is also, as I'm sure you know, a commentator frequently seen on television, heard on radio, quoted in newspapers, really doing an analysis of the meaning and interpretation of opinion poll results, these questions that we and other pollsters ask, trying to get at who and what we are.

Andy, the floor is yours.

Mr. Kohut: Thank you, thank you very much.

My general comment on Bill's talk last night is that, as is often the case, I agree with most of what he says when he characterizes public opinion, and voting behavior and political forces, and specifically, I agree with what he said about the forces and factors that drove the election.

A couple of points that I would make, however, are really more a difference in emphasis from what Bill said. I think, looking forward, that there is a real risk to Republican success, predicated upon Republican hubris. They control Washington to a greater degree than ever before. But I think it would be very easy for them to lose sight of the fact of two points that Bill made, and that is the country continues to be divided one-third Republican, one-third Democrat and one-third independent, and the one-third independent is awfully important. But also a plurality of the electorate describes themselves as moderates and if this administration governs from the right or governs from conviction, I think there is a real risk that the people in the middle will be, could be alienated and that's a potential problem for the Republican Party. The strategy of Karl Rove has been to look to his base first and looking to his base in the second term I think would be quite different, the consequences might be quite different.

The other point that I would make is one that Bill didn't mention and that is the role of terrorism in the next four years. There are two possibilities: one, we don't have another attack. If we don't have another attack by the next election, it will have been seven years without a repeat of the September 11th attacks. To my mind, that takes terrorism off of the table and reduces the Republican advantage because it's principally the Republican Party and George Bush's principle advantage in this election.

If we don't have another attack by the next election, . . . to my mind, that takes terrorism off of the table and reduces the Republican advantage

And then secondly, if we do have an attack, what will this do to the Bush advantage and the Republican image going forward into 2008? It will be an attack, the second attack on Bush's watch.

So I think that, yes, the domestic issues are very important, in the way Social Security is played and the Supreme Court nominations, especially with respect to this issue of the moderates and the independents, they are all key. But I think the question of another attack is a big one and one that has to be considered as we think about the next four years and the political future of the Republican and Democratic Parties.

Mr. Jones: Bill, do you want to respond to that?

Mr. Kristol: Very briefly. On the second one, I would just broaden Andy's point, in a way I think he might agree with, which is I think it's less the particulars necessarily of whether there is a second attack or not, and more broadly, is Bush's general foreign policy vindicated? Has the War on Terror made us safer? Is the Middle East better off as a result? In Afghanistan and Iraq, do we have democratic elections and some sense of progress there, or have the warnings of those who thought this was a big mistake and a distraction been vindicated? In that respect, if things get worse in the Middle East and there is a terrorist attack here, obviously that's very bad.

But I very much agree that that would be a core judgment of the Bush Presidency in 2008, and therefore, a key question for any prospect of further Republican gains or, for that matter, the whole thing falling apart.

On the first issue, well, I totally agree that there is always a risk of hubris and the Bush Administration is not exempt, and may be even a little bit susceptible to it, I think it's fair to say. But I think it is a little simple. I think Karl Rove's strategy has been overly characterized as appealing to the base; I really don't think that's quite right.

He is pretty smart about this. I think he understands that the way you gain a majority in American politics, the way you gain a realignment in American politics, is a combination of old initiatives, which you believe in

probably, but which your base also likes, defining issues that separate you from the other party in a way that's advantageous to you, and the reaching out of leadership elements of the party and constituencies of the other party.

Great models in American politics in the 20th Century I think were Roosevelt and Reagan. Both were extremely bold presidents, both were very partisan, and both had no problem with demonizing the other party. People complain about Bush's rhetoric in 2004. Read Roosevelt's speeches from 1936 or even 1940 against Wendell Willkie, the moderate Republican cast by FDR as leader of a party of economic royalists. Way beyond that are the Truman speeches of 1948.

Successful presidents, like Roosevelt and Reagan, both are willing to draw sharp lines, be pretty fiercely partisan, but also have sophisticated ideas about how to go about other constituencies from the other party and build a genuine majority. And I think Rove and Bush are pretty interested in that, and I would say that the vote of the Hispanics in the last election suggests that they are pretty attentive to the notion of figuring out how to expand the majority at the same time that they define the majority in a way that's disadvantageous to the other party.

Whether they can do it, god only knows, but the sort of Roosevelt-Reagan model of a successful presidency that is at once pretty tough and kind of fierce in its partisanship and its polemic abilities, but also able to reach out to constituencies from the other party, is the model they have in mind. Whether they can do that is a good question.

Mr. Jones: Theda Skocpol is the Victor S. Thomas Professor of Government and Sociology, Director of the Center for American Political Studies here at Harvard and a very distinguished member of the Harvard faculty. She got her Ph.D here at Harvard. She has great scholarly accomplishments, President of both the Social Science History Association and the American Political Science Association.

She was a counselor to Bill Clinton on policy and her major area of research is civic engagement in American democracy, the rise and development of voluntary associations throughout the history of the United States.

Ms. Skocpol: Thank you.

Well I'm very grateful to William Kristol for what I thought was a very stimulating lecture last night. And as is often the case, and I agree with Andy Kohut on this, I agree with a lot of what he offered as an analysis of the election and the possible significance of this election in American political history. I have one reservation I want to share about the election itself and what the

It's not such a big accomplishment, for a sitting president who chooses to run for reelection, being reelected in a time when the country is actually at war.

accomplishment was there, and a little bit more to say about the challenges of governing, which speaks to Bill's thesis. What this election ends up meaning depends very much on what comes after it, not just what happened during it.

Bill's thrust, I think, accurately, is that much of the significance of this electoral victory for the Republicans was not just George W. Bush's solid but narrow reelection victory, but the fact that he brought increased majorities in the Congress with him, therefore, opening up the possibility for concerted governing initiatives over the coming period.

In his bolder flights of fancy, Kristol seems to be suggesting that this is the realigning election that political analysts have been pining for now for decades. That may turn out to be the case, but I do think we should keep one thing in mind about this election: It's not such a big accomplishment, for a sitting president who chooses to run for reelection, being reelected in a time when the country is actually at war.

There have been those, like LBJ, who stepped down, but those who have actually chosen to run for reelection when there are troops in the field, get reelected and usually by much bigger margins than this. Like many of us, right after the election, I thought the evidence was suggesting a very important role for social conservatives. I still think the social conservative mobilization was important across the board and that it allowed them to keep their share of the electorate, in an electorate which remarkably expanded quite a bit during this struggle. And so social conservatives would be claiming a right to help set the agenda in a bolder way than ever before.

But I think Bush basically got reelected because of his stance, almost his stylistic stance, on the war on terror in the post 9/11 situation. And ironically, I've come to think that the mess in Iraq has actually benefitted him because it's a lot to ask voters to turn out when they know people who are dying in the field in an actual struggle that's ongoing. Some voters may have accepted Bush's claim that things were going well and that he would bring it to its successful conclusion in Iraq. Others may have simply thought he is the guy to be responsible for seeing this through and it doesn't make sense to change horses in midstream.

When you invade a country, what comes next depends very much on the kind of society and regime that was there before.

Now that underlines the importance, I think, of the governing challenge in Iraq. And here, I think I don't disagree with Bill Kristol about that, I think W. Bush's presidency and much of the fortunes of the Republican Party depend on success in Iraq, and I think that that can be a perceived success, it has to be some perception of stability and democracy, but it also has to be a situation in which American troops can be drawn down in the

near future. Kristol seems sanguine about that and suggests that it won't turn out either way, it won't turn out like Vietnam, or like Afghanistan.

I think that is a very poor analogy, and going back to the early work I did on revolutions, here is how I would put it. When you invade a country, what comes next depends very much on the kind of society and regime that was there before, the same as is true when a country undergoes a revolution. And Iraq had a very different kind of regime than Afghanistan and society than Afghanistan or Vietnam.

To put it briefly, in the Iraq situation, if you are going to invade a country that's a centralized dictatorship holding together a tense melange of ethnic groups, you need to put in overwhelming force at the beginning to establish order and then remake that regime in a more democratic and ethnically merging direction, gradually. The Bush Administration did not do that. I believe that mistake is irretrievable. I think the best hope for Iraq is going to be a very uneasy establishment of a Shia authoritarian democracy, that may or may not be willing to fight for itself against a continuing seeming insurgency.

And it's going to be very difficult for the Bush Administration to declare victory and draw down American troops, and I predict that, by 2006, the Republicans, with the Democrats doing very little, Republicans will be very restive about the continuing and mounting human and fiscal costs of this conflict and it will be a source of trouble for the nation as a whole, as it already is. I think that is a real threat to the perception of success of this new Republican regime.

Very quickly, Kristol never mentioned the giant fiscal mess that the Bush Presidency has gotten us into, a mess that is only going to get worse with additional tax cuts, more borrowing to "reform Social Security" and the continuing high costs of the War of in Iraq, and that doesn't even factor in the possibility of additional terrorist attacks on American soil or to American interests abroad.

I just want to underline that the Social Security battle is an example of hubris and overreach of the most amazing proportions.

He does not mention, indeed, assiduously avoids I think, discussing the tensions for Republicans that will be created by the fact that social issues are great for Republicans to run on, as long as they can use them to mobilize the far right, the Christian right, but when they are actually expected to deliver on things, like anti-abortion judges, that can create tensions in their own coalition going forward, because that's not necessarily the majority position of many Americans.

And finally, I just want to underline that the Social Security battle is an example of hubris and overreach of the most amazing proportions. Two

days after an election, in which he was reelected because of his firmness in the War on Terror and because of the expectations of many Americans that he could carry through the Iraq gambit, President Bush declared that he had the political capital to restructure the single most successful and popular social program in American history and to redo the tax code. Ha!

(Laughter)

Ms. Skocpol: I am almost tempted to start preparing now to write a sequel to my book, *Boomerang*, about the hubris of the Clinton Administration, and try to remake one-seventh of the American economy with expert plans that the public didn't understand and that as it came to understood liked less and less, I'm almost getting ready to write, *Backfire*—

(Laughter)

Ms. Skocpol: —which is what will happen when the public in America begins to find out what these think tank generated plans for Social Security restructuring mean for benefits, for the country's fiscal health, for our sense of social well being, security and opportunity, just wait. I hope the Democratic Party, of which you all guessed I am a member—

(Laughter)

Ms. Skocpol: —has the wisdom to take up this battle full throttle because it's a perfect opportunity to reach back toward the middle and to build for the future for Democrats.

Mr. Jones: Thank you.

Bill?

(Laughter)

Mr. Kristol: I don't agree much with Theda, actually, and of the three points that she said Iraq is central. We can have all the fancy arguments we want, and they are interesting, about the underlying social and intellectual dynamics and possibility of a realignment, but if Iraq falls apart and discredits the foreign policy, we are in a whole new world. And as I said before, the 1964 analogy, that's the last time a president was reelected controlling both houses of Congress and had increased numbers in both houses of Congress, and that all turned to ashes because of Vietnam, basically. And obviously, if Iraq turns into Vietnam or anything like Vietnam, I think the same will happen. I don't think that won't happen, I hope it doesn't happen, but it's absolutely fair to focus on it.

I don't know that they thought through adequately the legislative strategy that can get them from here to there on Social Security.

I think Social Security is a huge challenge to the administration. I don't know how much they thought through the politics of it. I very much agree that it could be Hillary-care, I mean, it has that potential. If I were a Democrat, I would be looking really hard at their plan and

the politics of it, and I don't know that they thought through adequately the legislative strategy that can get them from here to there on Social Security, really.

I won't take the time now, but if people are interested, we should have a discussion because I think there is a particular issue with Social Security which is—it's trying to do two things at once. They are trying to save the solvency of the system, which is totally doable and it should be partly done on a bipartisan basis. And they are trying to reform the system or change the system, to allow for some carve out for personal accounts, which is a much more ideological agenda—it's one I'm personally sympathetic to.

Doing both of them at once is going to be very difficult and I think that the legislative strategy for each of those is actually, it seems to me to be very different, and I don't quite know how they think they can actually get this thing through in a sitting Congress.

. . . it wasn't the Republican Party that did in Lyndon Johnson, it was the Democratic Party

And if they don't, and if you made this your lead domestic initiative, you have some problems coming up, somewhat analagous to Clinton in '93–'94. The last point, if you think about Clinton in '93–'94 or Carter in 1997 to 1980, the last time the president's party controlled Congress, what did them in? Well, lot's of things, a little hubris, their own mistakes, but also their own party did them in or divisions within their own party did them in. And of course, to take the 1964 analogy, which it's in my interest to keep going back to, but it's an interesting one, it wasn't the Republican Party that did in Lyndon Johnson, it was the Democratic Party and the total collapse or loss of support for the war on the left. His primary challenge was from McCarthy and Kennedy.

. . . the Bush White House has not been particularly good . . . at congressional relations

If you look at the history of American politics, managing a majority coalition is more difficult than dealing with a minority party. And as Bush has learned from the Intelligence Bill, Republicans in the House or the Senate don't think they were sent there to rubberstamp what the White House wants. They are elected by the people. The committee chairmen know a lot about these issues and they have their own views. And I think the Bush White House has not been particularly good, I would say, at congressional relations, including Republicans, for its first four years in office.

The degree of resentment among House Republicans, in particular, expressed privately in green rooms, off camera, for having to carry huge

amounts of water for the Bush Administration, twisting arms to put through legislation they don't like, and then no kind of gratitude, no sort of consideration for their needs and what they want. Now that shouldn't be underestimated. And of course , they like Bush, and of course they want the Republicans to succeed and the Bush Administration to succeed. But I would look closely at the tensions between the administration and the Republicans in both the House and the Senate, and not just moderates.

The more common narrative is that moderate Republicans in the Senate don't like the conservatives in the Bush Administration. But they can have as many problems, in certain ways, with conservative Republicans in the Senate, and particularly the House, as with moderate Republicans. Managing that coalition and keeping it together is really a difficult task, and I think Social Security will be one of the main issues where they will face this challenge early on.

Mr. Jones: Bill, could you also respond to Theda's comment about the deficit? Is this a fault line within the Republican party that looks serious or is it not?

Mr. Kristol: No, it's not, and I dutifully think that continuing to avoid that topic, as Theda said—

(Laughter)

Mr. Kristol: The deficit is declining. It's now below three percent of the GDP. It's been lower this year than it was last, despite the cost of Iraq. If economic growth continues, it's not a big problem, 2.8 percent of the GDP as a deficit is totally doable, it's half of what it was in the late '80s.

As we see from the latest appropriations bill, Bush has tried to enforce a little more discipline in domestic discretionary spending. The underlying truth is that it's not a very high percentage of the deficit, we will have increased defense spending. We probably are looking at a deficit in the range of two to three percent of the GDP in the rest of the Bush Administration and that's, I think, tolerable.

Social conservatives did not display a disproportionately important role in the Republican turnout win.

I'll leave it to the economists here at the Kennedy School and Harvard about whether the drop in the value of the dollar is going to precipitate some kind of crisis or not, and how related that is to the deficit is another interesting question. I think the trade deficit is probably more of an actual economic problem than the budget deficit, that they are related in certain ways. Economic growth matters, the deficit matters much less, I would say.

Mr. Kohut: I just wanted to add one thing to what Theda said. I've been banging my head against the wall on this issue since hours after the election. Social conservatives did not display a disproportionately important role in the

Republican turnout win. That is an assumption that is just not true and ironically and oddly enough, it's something that Democrats love to believe. We can talk about it, I don't want to take any more time.

Mr. Kristol: Well they love to believe it because it then makes them think that they are going to make huge demands on Bush which he is going to have trouble satisfying while keeping moderate Republicans happy. I think it is easier than Theda thinks to keep that part. I don't think that's going to be what the Republican coalition falls apart about. If President Bush nominates Mike McConnell, and Larry Thompson, and Alberto Gonzales for the three Supreme Court Justice appointments, and nominates the same people he has been nominating for federal courts, and supports the ban on partial birth abortion and supports, without putting a huge emphasis on it, a constitutional amendment to ban same sex marriage, social conservatives will be happy and moderate Republicans are not going to complain.

But I think it's a more manageable coalition, in that respect, perhaps a little bit. I think it's a little bit more rational than Theda thinks.

Mr. Jones: Theda, did you want to comment further?

Ms. Skocpol: Well I hope Andy didn't misunderstand me to be endorsing the idea that numerically, conservatives were disproportionate. I think their achievement in this election was to increase their mobilization to allow their proportion to remain the same.

Mr. Kohut: Across the board, ideologically, not just Christian conservatives, other kinds of conservatives, other kinds of Republicans and independents lead the Republicans with the notion that there was this tidal wave of Christian conservatives and other social conservatives who accounted for the GOP turnout advantage is just bunk.

Ms. Skocpol: Well I didn't say that.

Mr. Kohut: All right.

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: You didn't say bunk.

(Laughter)

Ms. Skocpol: On the other hand I mean, going forward, you know, I understand why Bill wants to believe that the mobilized minority, that evangelical conservatives representing the Republican coalition, are "manageable" and I would like to point to that language. I think that they are going to be less manageable, partly because they've got more leverage in the Congress now than they did before. Some of the people who were elected in the Senate and the House are much more extreme on some of these social issues and it also matters when

Democrats would be well advised in my view, not to get into a series of battles over speculation about what potential Supreme Court Justices might do about abortion. I think that's a trap . . .

groups have organizations behind them that they can just continue to monitor and continue to push in policy ballots.

On the other hand, Democrats would be well advised in my view, not to get into a series of battles over speculation about what potential Supreme Court Justices might do about abortion. I think that's a trap for Democrats, I fully expect that they may wander into that trap but I hope they don't because I think that's a loser. I think that it will be possible to nominate Supreme Court Justices who are sufficiently ambiguous that it won't be known until down the line what they are actually going to do about questions like abortion.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Theda.

Carlos Watson is a political analyst for CNN and he has been in that position since 2003. He also has a blog, I think it's fair to call it a blog. In any event, he has a column on the web called "Inside Edge with Carlos Watson**."** He came from CNBC where he had a similar kind of column called "The Edge with Carlos Watson**."** He is an honor's graduate of Harvard College, also Stanford University Law School, and his interests are much broader. He is particularly interested in politics and journalism. When he was an undergraduate at Harvard, he worked for the *Miami Herald* and other newspapers and in some cases, had front page stories. That's not an easy thing to do as an undergraduate at Harvard, I can assure you.

His political jobs have included working for Senator Bob Graham and the Democratic National Committee Chairman Ron Brown. He worked for McKinsey and Company, left McKinsey, founded his own consulting business, sold it and became a commentator.

Carlos, the floor is yours.

Mr. Watson: I'm going to ask for permission in advance to be a skunk at the party.

(Laughter)

Mr. Watson: I think Bill Kristol was too nice to this audience yesterday and today. I think Democrats' problems are much worse than he suggested and I think that people here would do well to be leery of his kindness while he is in Cambridge.

Democrats have chosen candidates who at best are average campaigners.

(Laughter)

Mr. Watson: I'll break that down into two pieces, both looking back at the campaign and thinking ahead about the president's opportunity to govern. When you think back about the campaign, I think Democrats had problems along three different *axes* that we should worry about: When you think about the messenger, when you think about the message and when you think about the actual campaign itself. When you think about the messenger, Democrats now, twice in a row, and

arguably three of the last four opportunities to choose an individual, have chosen candidates who at best are average campaigners.

Whether that comes in terms of speaking, whether that comes in terms of putting together a solid team and a solid strategy, whether that comes in terms of their ability to respond, a la the swift boat attacks, or Michael Dukakis' Willie Horton issues in 1988. I don't think it's a denigration of John Kerry and his years of public service to say that, when all is said and done, he probably managed to be just an average candidate. And I think there is a fundamental issue that we can talk about to a greater degree, the fact that the Democrats continually choose these relatively average candidates and average campaigners, in a presidential sense.

. . . it was very hard, to find anyone who was inspired or excited about an issue on the Democratic side, other than George W. Bush.

In terms of message, I think that Ralph Nader is right. Democrats, in contrast to Republicans, seem to have an incredibly difficult time finding messages that inspire, that excite. I think I probably visited every one of the so-called battleground states this past year, with the exception of New Mexico, and it was very hard, even late in the campaign, to find anyone who was inspired or excited about an issue on the Democratic side, other than George W. Bush.

I think that's a problem, when you've got a number of very smart people running, running for a couple years at a minimum, who can't find an issue and a formulation of that issue that is not only going to enrage but actually inspire their side. I think it's worth some thought, as Democrats go forward, and some creative thought, frankly. I think it takes a certain kind of candidate who, by the way, is not just comfortable going to church and is not just comfortable raising money, but who fundamentally loves policy, who thinks a lot about policy, thinks about it a lot ahead of a campaign and ultimately is able to come up with some creative messages that really do reach out to people and inspire.

The last issue where I think there is a weighty consideration for Democrats as they go forward is on the running of the campaign. And I'll put it this simply: When all is said and done, does anyone know how much money it's believed that John Kerry's campaign had left over? How can you have $15 million left over when you know, four years ago, you had a campaign and it was decided by less than one percent?

Now I will grant you it's very easy to Monday morning quarterback. I will grant you that it is much easier to sit along this row than it is to try and figure out how to win Ohio, Florida and New Mexico, Iowa and at the last minute, Hawaii and other places. But I think that that was just one of

several instances, in terms of running a campaign, maybe a more important issue being the turnout operation that the Republicans put together, that I think should worry Democrats.

Some fundamental issues, in terms of managing the campaign, have come up now, not just once but multiple times, that I think Democrats should be concerned. They should be particularly concerned about the continuing evolution of the quality of Republican campaigns. It's not something that's stopping. If you take a look at their 2000 "Get out the Vote" operation where, in most of these swing states, they had pretty good counting meters, if you look at what they piloted in the 2002 Senate elections in places like Minnesota and Georgia. And you look now at 2004, and I spent a lot of time on the ground in Ohio, up until the very last day, spending time with both "Get out the Vote" operations, I think Democrats should have real concerns.

Republicans have gotten very good at this, at having chairmen all the way down to the precinct level in all the different swing states, people who have quotas of calls they need to make, e-mails that need to go out, people who may have to go after not just "undecided" voters and so-called lapsed voters (people who may have voted only one or two of the last three or four elections), and a lot of this is stored. Although Democrats thought they were credited with making good use of the Internet in campaigns, particularly in light of Howard Dean, the Republican operation has done a significantly better job. I think those are the kinds of resources and assets that aren't going to go away, they are only going to get better, and better and better.

So I think Bill Kristol was being too nice, by half, to the Democrats and I think there are real worries. Now, having said all that, we clearly would be having a different conversation, and I would, in a very articulate fashion, be offering a whole different perspective if 75,000 or 80,000 votes had switched in Ohio. And we would all be explaining to him, about the first senator elected President in 44 years, the first Catholic, and a Massachusetts liberal. About the defeat of a war time president, and so I acknowledge that thin lines could change the larger narrative.

I think Bill Kristol was being too nice, by half, to the Democrats . . .

I thought that Bill made a very interesting point as he spoke about the possibility for this to be a very significant administration in terms of policy. Again, I thought he was being too nice to this audience. I think the chances that this is the most consequential, impactful presidency since LBJ is beyond likely. I think that certainly other things, from terrorism and unexpected events, did interrupt that. But the reality is that this is a president who came into office in 2000 with less than a majority of the vote, less of a popular vote than his opponent and still was an incredibly successful legislative president.

If you step back, if you forget your partisan leanings one way or another, when you think about Medicare, when you think about the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, when you think about four tax cuts, when you think about the changes in education—this is a guy who got a lot done and he got a lot done with less strength in the House, with less strength in the Senate, without having won a second term and without six of the seven new Republican senators being conservatives, at a minimum, and people like Tom Coburn of Oklahoma, and Dave Vitter of Louisiana and others being, some would say even more aggressive conservatives, conservatives in the mold of the old house Republicans, old Gingrich House Republicans.

. . . Democrats have a legitimate reason to be worried about the policy implications of a second Bush term.

So I think the likelihood that the president makes some of the most significant departures in policy on the environment, on energy policy, on tax cuts, on Social Security, absent some significant, unexpected event, all of us hope that this won't happen, in terms of a major terrorist event, I think are significant. And so while I too enjoyed Bill's talk yesterday, I walked away saying that perhaps he had been a little bit too nice to the Cambridge audience.

I say that as a graduate of the school and someone who loved my four years here, went to school here with my best friends since elementary school, so I don't say that in any negative way, but I say that trying to sit back and be thoughtful about it. I think there are real concerns for Democrats when you think back about the campaign, and I think that Democrats have a legitimate reason to be worried about the policy implications of a second Bush term.

Bush won by three and a half million votes, nationally, and the Democrats targeted so well that they were able to bring it down to one state that they lost by 75,000 votes.

Mr. Jones: So, Bill, you can stop lulling us now and tell us what you really think?

(Laughter)

Mr. Kristol: I'm not often accused of being too nice.

But the only point I would say in defense of John Kerry is he did the one thing he really had to do, which is he won the first debate. He dominated it and Bush did very badly, so it was partly Bush's fault and partly Kerry's. But Kerry did genuinely well, I think, in the first debate against an incumbent president at war time, on foreign policy. And this probably takes Kerry from the five point loss to the three point loss. He was down five or six going into the debate and I'm not so sure he doesn't lose by

five, if he doesn't win the first debate, win the second debate, actually, and I think maybe lose the third debate. The data showed that people thought he easily held his own or won that one.

So, in a way, you could say that Republicans are stronger than the numbers suggest because, after all, Bush won by three points while doing badly in the debates. In some ways, the margin was closer than he needed it to have been.

I don't agree about the parties, and this is a complicated, technical discussion. I think the Democrats did an awfully good job of turnout. They ran I would say, if anything, a more adeptly targeted campaign than the Republicans. Think of it this way, Bush won by three and a half million votes, nationally, and the Democrats targeted so well that they were able to bring it down to one state that they lost by 75,000 votes.

So, unlike four years ago, it was the Republicans who wasted, if you will, a lot of votes on all this and the Democrats didn't. And all the talk about how Wisconsin and Minnesota were going to go for Bush and they had this brilliant operation there, they lost Wisconsin and Minnesota by more than they lost it by four years ago. The Democrats have a pretty impressive ground game, and they do it differently from the Republicans, with the 527s and it's less coordinated, but they turned out their voters.

And Theda is right. It's not so easy running against a war time president and even though Iraq was a mess, people are inclined not to change horses in mid stream and that, plus 9/11, pulled Bush through.

Kerry had a tough time because Howard Dean had set the parameters of the Democratic race in '03. Dean induced Kerry, I believe, to vote against the $87 billion, which was a very smart political vote for Kerry in October of '03 because it signalled enough Dean supporters that Kerry was now willing to be sort of an anti-war candidate and was not going to be one of these Washington Democrats who just rolled over for Bush, that he was able to take the steam out of the Dean juggernaut.

Dean then made various mistakes, and Kerry got nominated. It's no accident that Kerry and Edwards became the two finalists of the Democratic race, who both had voted against the $87 billion, were responsible, and seemed more electable than Dean. Lieberman and Gephardt, the two guys that voted for the $87 billion, consistent with their vote for the war, went down in Iowa and New Hampshire. What was the single most effective Republican line on the campaign? He voted for the war and against the $87 billion, and then of course Kerry helped Bush out by explaining that he had voted for the $87 billion, against the $87 billion, but why did that whole dynamic come into play? Because of Dean.

So given that Kerry had to handle that sort of background to his own race, while Bush had an uncontested nomination, and given everything else about running against a war time president, I think Kerry ran a pretty good campaign and I think the Democratic Party ran a pretty good campaign.

At the congressional level, they lost a bunch of seats that were held by Democrats who had been elected in a different era and had been reelected with the incumbancy. And so for every Republican genius, picking up seats in South Carolina, North Carolina, Louisiana, Georgia, and then winning by one point in Florida is not so obviously difficult.

And the truth is they lost Colorado and Illinois, one state at least of those two, they could have won. They barely held on in Kentucky, and held on in Alaska, and that was pretty much the Senate situation. They picked up four house seats because of Tom DeLay's redistricting and taxes. So for all the talk about what a machine it is, and how brilliant they are and how Democrats got the votes, it was an even election at the presidential level, except Bush went up plus three compared to 2000, primarily because of the war, and both sides' turnout went up, and an even election at the congressional level actually, and the House except for the redistricting.

And in the Senate, it's a big gain, mind you, four seats, I guess. But with the exception of South Dakota, and even there it's a state that Bush carries by 25 points. Republicans didn't show fantastic ingenuity, I wouldn't say, in winning senate races in Oklahoma, the Carolinas, Louisiana, Georgia and South Dakota.

Mr. Kohut: How could Kerry have best spent that 15 million dollars?

Mr. Kristol: Well, it's a little bit unfair because that's primary money, he could have given it to the DNC. He wanted to keep it for certain other reasons that had to do with his political future, but he couldn't have spent it directly on the general election on his own advertising, and whether the DNC or the 527s were underfunded for the last month, I'm a little doubtful of that point, that the marginal return on any money spent would have been anything. No one was short of money in the battleground states. I think it's a little bit of bum rap, maybe, that this money would have made a difference.

Mr. Jones: Carlos?

Mr. Watson: I will say on the $15 million, having spoken with more than a few Democratic operatives, I think they had a couple of different ways they would have spent that money in battleground states, if they had access to it. Certainly radio in Cleveland for example, is one that I've heard more than a few times, despite some decent turnout numbers in Cuyahoga County.

I think the possibility that the president could enjoy the final two years of his term with closer to 60 votes in the Senate is a real possibility.

Again, I'll end by saying that I think Bill Kristol is extraordinarily kind to undercut these enormous victories. For Democrats not to appreciate that would be a mistake and be a mistake heading into 2006 when states win in a number of places.

As you pointed out yesterday, I think in five different states, five different red states, Democrats are up for reelection in the Senate and I think the possibility that the president could enjoy the final two years of his term with closer to 60 votes in the Senate is a real possibility. Democrats are better to be sober about that and to not discount what, in my mind, are enormous and not necessarily victories that have to happen.

I think about Harry Truman not running in '52 and I think about LBJ not running in '68. I didn't buy it and I certainly don't buy it, having talked to the lots of voters that the president necessarily has a war time advantage.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Carlos.

Dotty Lynch is the senior political editor of CBS News**,** she has been the political editor of CBS News for nearly two decades, the senior editor since 1997. She is based in Washington and she provides political analysis and is the "go to" person for CBS News in Washington. She is also the author of a column which she has been writing since 2001 for cbsnews.com. Her unit, in 2002, inaugurated another web innovation, a daily digest of political news. The 2004 election was her tenth presidential campaign, tenth, my goodness.

Dotty?

Ms. Lynch: Thank you very much. I try to tell people the tenth presidential campaign is only 36 years and not 40 years because the difference—

(Laughter)

Ms. Lynch: —is small but it's important for some of us at a certain age. It's actually my 11th because, in 1960, I was a Kennedy girl and activist, as a journalist.

Bill's remarks last night were a great example of the shift for us to mandate interpretation at this election. As we are now in December, a month after the election, I, for one, have not come out with a conclusion of why this election happened the way it did. I was trying to think of another year where a month afterwards we didn't all have some consensus on what happened and why. Of course, four years ago, we were still counting votes at this particular point, we weren't analyzing it, we were still counting.

. . . a campaign that was so micro-targeted toward swing voters and the battleground that it lacked big messages and appeal to big groups in non battleground states . . .

But the shift, plus mandate analysis, is one that Republicans are very much interested in proposing. The other is the tilt, plus no mandate, a small victory by Bush, increased margins of base at least in Florida and Ohio, giving enough for an electoral victory, no mandate on domestic issues. In fact, polling since the election, as well as before, shows majorities of the electorate agree with the Democratic proposals on Social Security, taxes and health care in

particular. And I think that the jury is still out on which analysis will prevail and in my mind, I'm not totally convinced Bush is right.

The other way of looking at it is as I think Bill did last night: The Bush won thesis because of all those reasons, a good campaign, a president in wartime being able to control the agenda and/or the Kerry-lost side, a weak candidate. Interestingly, there has been less criticism of Kerry as candidate than you might expect for the disappointment in Democratic ranks losing this election and the lack of real affection for Kerry inside the Democratic ranks. The unifier among Democrats was George Bush, not John Kerry. But the criticism of Kerry himself, as a candidate, I think has been surprisingly muted.

Kerry, in my mind, is a patrician who was not able to do the Roosevelt-Kennedy thing of connecting with all voters, not just on values issues but on economics. He was a candidate and a campaign that was so micro-targeted toward swing voters and the battleground that it lacked big messages and appeal to big groups in non battleground states, and a campaign whose communication strategy was confused and was never able to get control of the agenda.

So I think there is a point to be made that not only did Bush and his campaign control the agenda but they were up against a candidate and a campaign that were not up to the task.

Iraq, to me, is central. Kerry's defensiveness on the issue, on a war that was unpopular, Bush being able to put Kerry on the defensive on Iraq, and Kerry's inability to rise above that, and put Bush on the defensive on a key issue like that I think is crucial. The inability to move the agenda onto issues which every Democratic strategist that you talked to said were the winning issues for the Democrat, which were the economic issues, I think is something that is important to analysis of the election and to what it means in terms of governance and Democratic opposition this time.

If they believe that Bush won because of these issues, because of the conservative shift in the country, they will only enhance the mandate that he has.

Right now, my own sense is that there is a huge leadership vacuum inside the Democratic party, not only in a personnel sense but in an issue agenda sense and an interpretation of what lessons should be learned from the last election. It's very clear that if they accept the Kristol analysis, I think it will make it real. If they believe that Bush won because of these issues, because of the conservative shift in the country, they will only enhance the mandate that he has. But right now I think there is a big discussion going on about what accounted for the Bush win and a tendency to believe that the conservative issues that Bush ran on and got that 51 percent to agree with on are the dominant issues in the campaign.

I have two questions for Bill. How concerned were the people who were very much interested in the continuation of the strategy in Iraq that Bush would actually change course because of the election?

My second question is, if you accept the fact, Bill, that liberals control the dominant media in the country, why was Kerry unable to shift the conversation to domestic issues and onto issues that were more friendly to a Democratic campaign?

Mr. Kristol: I wasn't that concerned that Bush was going to go to an exit strategy in Iraq because he believed in this and he knew that it wouldn't work. Frankly, to pretend, to minimize the importance of Iraq and pretend we're just getting out, without satisfactorily resolving the situation. So I think he kind of believes in it and I also think it was actually the right thing to do, to have the nerve to go to the country and just say, look, we are in a tough war there and we're fighting it out and we are not getting out. So I wasn't that concerned.

There was such an immense amount of media talk about exit strategy that you had to be a little worried and there are certainly those within the administration, and certainly those in the Republican Party who had less strong constitutions than Bush and were looking for exit strategies. In their eyes, it could happen again in 2006, if things don't get better.

On the media, it's a very complicated issue, Alex, so I won't talk about it too much, you all think about this a lot. On the one hand there is a liberal mainstream media. On the other hand, it's much less powerful than a lot of conservatives think, as is, incidentally, the conservative opposition media, if that's what you want to call it. And my data for this is perfectly simple. In the 1980s, there was very little cable news, and the only cable news station was CNN and it wasn't nearly as big as it became after the first Gulf War. There was no talk radio to speak of, there was no *Weekly Standard,* there was no internet. There was the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, basically, the only mass conservative media.

. . . if this media are so powerful, how come they don't seem to actually be able to drive election results at all?

In the 1980s, Reagan won by nine points, 21 points and Bush won by eight points. In the 1990s, we had Rush Limbaugh, we had conservative talk radio, we had Fox News by the last half of the '90s. Then we got the internet. In the 1990s, Republicans lose presidential elections by, what, seven, eight, and half a percentage point of the popular vote in 2000. So if this media are so powerful, how come they don't seem to actually be able to drive election results at all?

And it has very complicated implications. Obviously, the way the media frame issues and all that, but I think any direct correlation between political results and media dominance one way or the other is doubtful.

I still think the campaign was mostly a referendum on Bush, and Bush took his job approval, which had sunk to about 44 or 45, I believe, after Abu Ghraib and after the pull back from Falluja in April, and when things really seemed bad in Iraq, and he took it back up to 50, which is pretty impressive. Remember, you've got hundreds and millions of dollars in negative advertising against you, and you need a very partisan environment to get your job approval up during election campaigns. I don't think that's that usual.

And he got it up to 50%. All the data suggests, I think, that if you go to the electorate with a job approval rating of 50%, you are going to get 50 or 51 percent of the vote, and Bush did. In that respect, I do think it's fair to say that it was a referendum on Bush.

If you think that's important, I suppose the moment the Democrats had their biggest chance to knock his job approval back down was the Democratic Convention. They did have a lot of people watching network television for those three nights and a chance to make the case against the Bush record, and they failed to do it and that was a conscious strategy. At the time, I can't say that I thought it was necessarily a mistaken strategy, that they never mentioned Bush, it was an incredibly positive convention, they got spooked out of the idea of being negative.

They were so convinced, I mean we all talked to the same people during that week, I'm sure, they were utterly convinced that the American people basically wanted to remove Bush. People thought the country was going in the wrong direction, Bush's job approval was only 45 percent, all that the Democrats had to do was be a respectable, responsible alternative and to prove that they were tough on national security. Kerry served in Vietnam, and people learned that as a result of a Democratic convention and they had to be upbeat and moderate, and that was all they had to do.

Kerry had a smooth convention, there were no problems or disasters, but they had left the field clear for Bush to make his own positive case to the American people.

If the American people wanted to remove Bush, all they had to be persuaded was that Kerry was an acceptable replacement. Democrats made a fundamental, strategic miscalculation. They all believed that Bush had to be removed and everyone they talked to believed that Bush had to go, but there were some number of swing voters who weren't so convinced that Bush had to be removed. They didn't make the case to them at all during that week. They left it clear, and I remember saying this is the one thing I did think at the time, I remember I wrote an editorial the next week saying Kerry had a smooth convention, there were no problems or disasters, but they had left the field clear for Bush to make his own positive case to the American people.

And they did a pretty decent job, the Republicans, at their own convention, and subsequently, in making their own case, both on foreign policy and to some degree even on domestic policy. And in that respect, I suppose one could really criticize the Kerry campaign for failing to put a stake through Bush when they had a chance to do so. I'm not sure, maybe it wouldn't have made any difference, maybe partisans were still watching the speeches and maybe it wouldn't have made much difference if Kerry or whoever had said different things in their speeches. But it was a bit of a giving him a pass. The opposition party convention not to lay out the fundamental case against the incumbent president is a little unusual and I think they ended up paying a pretty big price for the failure to do that.

So that's the one thing, I guess, that strikes me as maybe a very true criticism. The Democratic campaign just assumed people wanted to vote Bush out and people were much more ambivalent, it turned out, about that, and they let Bush come back and make his case, and he did a pretty good job, and he ended up being up five or six percent and then in the first debate, finally, Kerry made a case and knocked it down, but not quite enough.

On changing the debate to domestic policy, I just think if you have 140,000 troops fighting somewhere, when you've been attacked three years before, when the world is in turmoil and chaos and everyone has the sense, correctly, I think, that we are now shaping the future of the 21st Century and it's either going to be safer and better or incredibly more dangerous and difficult. I just think you can't change the debate, especially when it's not like you're in a huge recession. The economy is growing at four percent, it's not great but it's not terrible. Kerry had no radically different economic proposals, what was he going to do to increase economic growth?

So I just think that was always a myth, that they could really end up running a domestic policy campaign in the context of the real world that we were living in.

Mr. Jones: Thank you.

Evan Thomas is the Edward R. Murrow Visiting Professor of the Practice of Press and Public Policy at the Kennedy School, and my colleague at the Shorenstein Center this semester, I'm glad to say. He has been a top editor at *Newsweek* magazine since 1991, with *Time* magazine before then, and he has written over 100 cover stories on war, politics, celebrity profiles, you name it. He has won the National Magazine Award, among many others, for coverage of the Monica Lewinsky scandal. He is the author of five books, including a biography of Robert Kennedy, and he is a graduate of Harvard and the University of Virginia Law School.

Evan writes the post-election piece for *Newsweek*.

Mr. Jones: Since 1984, *Newsweek* has had an arrangement with both campaigns to cover them in a very intimate way but do not report until after the election. They do essentially an exegesis of what happened, of what went right and what went wrong and so forth. Evan is the long standing author of that said exegeses.

Mr. Thomas: Thanks, Alex.

I'm the writer on it, there is a team that's in the field that does the real work and I do the splicing-it-together part. This project was fairly critical of the Kerry campaign and it made it seem that, as we believe, that the Bush campaign was much more nimble and that the Kerry campaign was sort of flat-footed, and that was probably Kerry's fault, who dithered and had a need to revisit every decision. One little detail we reported was that the campaign had to take away Kerry's cell phone twice, just to get him off it, because he had a way of just calling his 100 closest friends every time they made a decision, to revisit the decision.

Well after this piece came out, I got a call from Kerry and it wasn't to tell me what a great job I had done. He summoned me over to his house there on Louisburg Square and I spent an interesting couple of hours talking to him. We went back and forth on whether he had or had not run a good campaign, but the one thing that he seemed to stop and think about, and worry about and stew about was this question of rhetoric, and by rhetoric, I mean words that are going to reach voters, inspire voters. Carlos mentioned it. Voters just weren't inspired. They might vote against Bush and for Kerry but they just weren't inspired.

. . . he was not well served by Bob Shrum.

And this gnawed at Kerry. Why hadn't he found a way of speaking to the American public that really resonated and captured them and lifted them up? And I don't know the answer to this question, and he sure doesn't, but one thing that I do think, and I said to him and I think he agreed with, although he had to be careful here, is that he was not well served by Bob Shrum. Bob Shrum's rhetoric is dated, it is old, political rhetoric.

It sounded good in 1961 when Ted Sorensen was writing it and it was coming out of the mouth of John F. Kennedy but it doesn't sound so good 35 years later when it's kind of being retreaded by Bob Shrum coming out of the mouth of John Kerry. It sounds kind of old and like an echo of something, a kind of a dated echo of something that doesn't feel fresh, that kind of a high, seeking to be uplifting rhetoric, the sentences reverse themselves. I mean Kerry famously said, who amongst us does not love NASCAR?

(Laughter)

Mr. Thomas: Well here's the problem, Kerry talks that way anyway, and Shrum just made it worse.

(Laughter)

Mr. Thomas: I mean that instinct needed to be discouraged in Kerry, not encouraged, and Kerry knows it and Kerry said I told Bob we need to be more conversational here. Well that's true and modern voters want to hear a different rhetoric, they don't want to hear that old fashioned Ted Sorensen stuff. I mean maybe if there was a JFK to say it, they would like

it, but they want a more conversational, more low key, cooler, touch. Actually John McCain was good at this. John McCain, when he is talking, sounds like John McCain when he is speaking. It's all the same guy, it's consistent and it reaches people in a way that I don't think Kerry can.

Kerry never overcame this image of a liberal, elitist Massachusetts politician. He just never was able to break out of that in a real way. I thought his convention speech was pretty good and pretty considerate. I thought he did well at the first debate but he never really found a way to speak to people in a way that resonated. And I think the next successful Democrat is going to have to find a way of speaking to people, not just in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but in other states that resonates.

Kerry never overcame this image of a liberal, elitist Massachusetts politician.

And I'll just end on this note: Some people reported back to me from the Brookings Institution, it had a dinner and Hillary Clinton was there, and she was not sounding like the Yale Law School educated activist that she had become, she was sounding like the midwestern Methodist that she had grown up as. She is searching for a new way of speaking, and I don't know if she can pull it off, but you could feel her at this dinner looking for that way of talking to the red states, not just the red states but to the average voter, that inspired and resonated and came across, and the Democrats have just got to find it.

Mr. Jones: Where would you handicap Hillary Clinton's prospects as the presidential nominee in 2008?

Mr. Kristol: The account of the campaign that Evan put together really was terrific this year and very interesting. It was tough on Kerry and since it's the account of the campaign, of course it emphasizes the importance of particular campaign decisions, and rhetoric and strategy, and it's always hard to know how to balance it. We can keep going back and forth on this and I'll end up like others too about how important particular tactical decisions are versus underlying structural trends.

It's ridiculous for me to be defending Kerry here but I will do it just in this one instance. I mean let's just pose the field, would Dean have been a better candidate against Bush than Kerry? No. Would Edwards? I don't believe so. I think actually Edwards was not an electable candidate. Would Lieberman, as the more centrist? I think what Nader did was about five percent of the vote and those are Democrats. Maybe Dick Gephardt would have been a better nominee than Kerry. Any Republican I know thinks Dick Gephardt would be the toughest nominee and every Republican I know likes Dick Gephardt the best of the Democrats.

I don't trust Republicans to pick the best Democratic nominee, there is always a weird dynamic when the other party is sort of trying to judge

who will be best. But I think Dick Gephardt would have been very competitive, and carries Iowa, and just goes and fights in Ohio.

Mr. Thomas: He was the one that Rove feared.

Mr. Kristol: I think he gets every vote they get anyway. Having said that, I still think Kerry ran a reasonably competent campaign. One Democrat, since Kennedy, has had rhetorical gifts, who ran for president, and that's Clinton, if you think about it, and only one Republican, which is Reagan. We get the canditates we get and most American senators and governors are bright people or competent people but they are not terribly, they are not super gifted.

So I'm a slight defender of Kerry. I don't know how much he hurt himself but if I was for Kerry, I'll leave that for others to decide.

Mr. Jones: Hillary?

Mr. Kristol: Hillary, I don't know, I can argue this one either way. I mean, from a conventional analysis, the Democrats would be better off nominating a governor rather than a senator to attempt to win the presidency. The Democrats have a lot of governors who have experience winning in competitive states or in fact in red states, Warner in Virginia, Vilsack in Iowa, Richardson in New Mexico, Bredesen in Tennessee, the North Carolina governor, whose name escapes me as we sit here. I mean the Democrats actually have a pretty good stable of governors, Illinois, which is a competitive state. Granholm in Michigan, if they change the constitution, to allow people who aren't born in the US to run.

So I think, conventionally, one would say those people are stronger candidates than Senator Clinton. On the other hand, if she runs for the nomination, she probably gets it and I think she is often underrated, and I'm not sure she wouldn't be strong. Would she actually lose any votes that Kerry got this time? If it's Clinton-Warner or Clinton-Vilsack or something like that, do they actually lose any votes that Kerry won? And if they don't, is she not a pretty attractive candidate in Ohio? If she has Vilsack or someone like that on the ticket that has to pick up Iowa?

It's a competitive race, I think. So I am less down on Hillary than a lot of my Democratic friends who think she is a disaster, a New York liberal who brings all this baggage, but what do I know? And I'm not so sure she is going to run. She likes being a senator, she knows how brutal the presidential campaign is. I don't want to psychoanalyze her, but I'm not so convinced that she is convinced this is something she wants to do or has to do. And I wouldn't be that surprised if, after 2006, she just said, look, I chose not to run this time, but that doesn't rule out something in the future.

So I'm not so convinced she runs and that she is the inevitable candidate. If I were a Democrat, maybe this is the way they can get a better candidate than Kerry. At the end of the day, how many Republican states do the Democrats have a real shot at picking up? How many states did Bush carry that are likely to be in play in 2008? I'm saying if you're a Republican

you are looking at, fine, you might lose either Iowa or New Mexico but you are looking at Pennsylvania, minus two, Michigan, minus three, Wisconsin, minus two, Minnesota, minus two, all pretty big states, a lot of electoral votes there. If you're a Democrat, you're looking at Ohio and maybe Florida. I think the Republicans have a slight advantage. They have a bigger field to play on, and of the course if the constitution gets changed, then California comes into play, even if it doesn't get changed.

I see no reason to hold to the old presumption that the in party loses seats in the off year.

Let's remember this, Bush did poorly among the Hispanics in California, considerably more poorly, I believe, than he did among Hispanics nationally. Isn't that right? I think the exit poll in California was like 33 percent Hispanic for Bush because they spent no money in California, they did no targeting of Hispanics in California. If I were to really think hard about putting California in play in 2008, leave aside Schwarzenegger for a minute, if you think you could replicate the Hispanic number from the nation to California, you have a shot at putting that in play and that's bad for the Democrats.

So I think the truth of Carlos' point is twofold, that Republicans do have more states to put into play than the Democrats probably do. It's just hard to believe they can win any southern states, and that's a big part of the country to just start by giving up. And secondly, the old rules are gone in terms of off year elections. Clinton's party picked up seats in '98, Bush's party picked up seats in 2002. I see no reason to hold to the old presumption that the in party loses seats in the off year.

And if you remove that presumption, it is true that there are probably more Democratic senators at risk or more Democratic senators who won close races in 2004 than there are Republican senators in 2004. It was a great year for the Democrats but, as a result of it being a great year, they had people who won with 50–54 percent of the vote in Minnesota and Washington. They have a couple of Democrats in Bush states who, if they step down, those states would be competitive.

. . . a significant number of the people who cast ballots for Bush were ambivalent about him.

So you could see, I agree with Carlos on this, there is as good a chance of Republicans picking up seats in 2006 as the Democrats. So, in those two respects, the electoral college map, at the presidential level, and what's at stake and what's up in 2006, at the senatorial level, you could make a case for continued Republican gains, if they govern successfully.

Mr. Jones: Andy, you have a comment?

Mr. Kohut: I wanted to try to answer the question that Dotty raised about why the Democrats didn't change the conversation to the economy. And there is a simple fact that we have to take into account, and I think it says something also about the meaning of the election, going forward, and that is Bush won a very large share of the ambivalent votes and a significant number of the people who cast ballots for Bush were ambivalent about him. Back in the summer, there was this form of conventional wisdom that said there was a very small undecided and it was overwhelmingly going to go to Bush.

I think Charlie Cook said it was just six percent and these people were all very unhappy with the country. It was all going to go to Kerry, that's right, and that notion held forth for a good deal of time. In point of fact, it was more than six percent, it was probably closer to 20 percent, and they kept cycling that back and forth between the candidates during the general election campaign. And then they finally decided, they continued to be discontented with the economy, they continued to have reservations about the way Bush ran the country. But in the end, for them this was an election about the September 11th attacks and the War on Terrorism.

And the Democrats were always pushing a rock up a hill in trying to get these people focused on this discontent that they had because they could not get comfortable with the alternative to Bush, given the concerns about terrorism. This phenomenon was especially the case among women. We saw the impact of the slaughter of those children in Russia in the first week of September having a very significant impact on the views of female voters. It was one of the principle reasons why the gender gap was asymmetrical. Bush made great gains, a lot of very significant gains among women.

And I think it is going to take a lot for these ambivalent voters to act upon their criticisms of President Bush, given the historical context of this election. And I think that says a lot, going forward, with how these voters will look at the second term.

Mr. Jones: Carlos?

Mr. Watson: I was going to make one other point about the electoral map and Democrats' struggle. Another graduate of this institution, I think 100 years ago, W.E.B. DuBois, talked about the issue of race, an issue that would bedevil the 20th Century. As we go into the 21st Century, 136 electoral votes come from the former states of the Confederacy? The fact that Democrats are not competing or, at least this time, they didn't compete for any of them, even in states like Louisiana, I guess with the exception of Florida, states like Louisiana, states like North Carolina, where Clinton came within one percent for '92—granted that Ross Perot played a disproportionate factor.

I think that's a major issue. The next successful Democratic candidate will be someone who has created policy. It will be someone who, in terms of their ability to communicate in places like Ohio, can do that well. But I think it's someone who, on a very personal level, as well as on

a broader political level, has thought about the issue of race, has dealt with the issue of race and can speak to white voters, can speak to African-American voters, can speak to Latino voters. And I don't mean that in a PC way, I mean that in a very fundamental, practical, if you want to win Louisiana, frustrated and you want to try and figure out how you can win Georgia, you can't believe that it got away from you now and it seems it's going to be gone forever. I think that's a big, serious issue for Democrats.

Democrats have to worry about African-Americans, now Hispanics . . .

Another issue that Democrats have to worry about is African-Americans, now Hispanics, voted 44 percent for the president. What happens after Alberto Gonzales gets elevated to the Supreme Court, and other policy changes are made, and Goudiares and other people join the administration and they look up and say, wow, 44 percent is not enough, maybe 52, maybe 53?

If I were to think about the top two or three things that Democrats worry about as they reconstruct the record over the next two to three years, I'd probably put race in the top three.

Mr. Jones: Theda?

Ms. Skocpol: Just a couple of things, quickly. I agree with Carlos that things are much more worrisome for the Democrats, both in terms of the electoral process in 2006 and 2008 and the probability that there are going to be fundamental policy departures. I didn't want to dwell on that today because I actually am not convinced that Democrats are well advised to be focusing on how to run in 2006 and 2008. Democrats are an opposition party right now and they need to establish a communications center and pick issues to dramatize differences around.

For the time being, it's too soon to tell where masses of voters are going to move and I think Andy is right that many remain ambivalent, so this is not a locked-in situation.

And it's much too soon to be speculating about whether Hillary will be nominated in 2008. I'm coming around to the thesis that Kristol is trying to lull Democrats into something when he suggests—

(Laughter)

Ms. Skocpol: —that she wouldn't be such a bad candidate for the Democratic—

(Laughter)

Ms. Skocpol: My suspicion grew by the day, when I hear that, and so —.

Let me just say one final thing about Social Security. I think, with women voters, Social Security is a very important issue for changing the conversation back, not simply because it's a policy that helps the elderly

but because it helps families, and women are very sensitive to what happens to parents and grandparents. So I think there is room there for movement back, on the Democratic side, with women voters who did move in this election. I thought it was a very interesting point that the school slaughter in Russia was visible in the movement of opinion.

We don't know what's going to happen with those kinds of issues but Democrats have some real opportunities to heighten the concerns that many voters who voted for Bush and the Republicans, still have about where they are going to go with this election victory, and I think we should concentrate on doing that over the next two years and picking our issues very carefully, if I can speak as a Democrat and not just as an analyst.

Mr. Kristol: If I could just add one word on Social Security. We had a piece on Social Security in the magazine a week or two ago criticizing the Bush plan and making the case for a different kind of Social Security reform. One of the hidden secrets of Social Security, which Theda knows very well, is that it is pro-family. It is also pro-women, who did not spend most of their adult lives working outside the home. It is not a pure libertarian program, you don't just get in what you contributed personally, the surviving spouse or the family gets a pretty good return on Social Security.

There is a kind of conservative, pro-family rhetoric that could be used to defend Social Security against some kinds of Republican, privatizing efforts—well, either way. Social Security is the Democrats' best issue and they need to make the argument not simply in a sort of reactionary way but in a more—

Ms. Skocpol: More a policy wonk way, which is a big risk.

Mr. Jones: Before we open it up, I want to have a very intense, five minute, complicated conversation with Bill about the media because I think that actually simply citing those statistics about the presidential elections isn't so much the point. It is clear of course that the media do have a role, a very important role, but that role is evolving, and the media are changing, and the style of news is changing, and the perception of truth seems to be polarizing and the country seems to be polarizing, and certainly it seems to me that the media has a significant role in all of those things.

I wanted to know, Bill, as you look at the role of the media in, not just the political process but in the national character, in the national sense of itself, what do you see? And what do you see for better and for worse?

Mr. Kristol: I don't know, I mean clearly it's a moment of big change. One reason it's an important election, incidentally, is that, as is the case in previous realigning or quasi-realigning actions, often they go hand in hand not just with the changes in the relationship with the parties, the changes in media, the changes in other institutions. Kennedy's rise coincided with TV and all that changed American politics in many, many ways. You could argue that the combination of talk radio, cable news,

Fox News in particular, and then especially the internet and the blogs really is changing the American character of the media in this country and I think its political implications are extremely hard to predict.

. . . no one ever correctly predicts the implications and the effect of the technological changes

One thing we know is that no one ever correctly predicts the implications and the effect of the technological changes, and usually the conventional wisdom is exactly wrong. If the conventional wisdom is that it will centralize, it decentralizes. If the conventional wisdom is, and it has been for some 30 or 40 years, I think of all the discussion today and last night, red America, blue America, we are all really into this distinction. But what has been the absolute conventional wisdom about America in every university and in every think tank in the last 50 years? We are getting smaller, we are one country, and so on.

I mean, in the old days, of course, people in Iowa had no idea the way people in New England lived and people in the south were so different from people in the north, and then now we are all becoming one country, and everyone moves around all the time, people come from the west to go to college here, et cetera, et cetera. And all those old regional divisions, that's old, that's ancient history and now we are moving into the global village in the late 20th and early 21st Century. Then we look up and we have a political system which, guess what? It's dividing regionally and geographically, cultural and social divisions are bigger than they were 20 or 30 years ago, or certainly have more electoral impact, it seems, than they did 20 or 30 years ago. No one predicted that, not a single person would have predicted that 40 years ago, maybe one or two people, but really I only say this to say that it's conventional, and of course just look at the last three or four years. Who predicted the Dean phenomenon and the Internet? Who predicted that, first the blogosphere was conservative, then it was liberal, then it became conservative again in 2004 when it debunked Bush's National Guard documents that Dan Rather reported on? I don't know what political effect it has, I don't even know what broader social impact it has.

I don't think the mainstream media will ever have the credibility or the power they had 25 years ago, that's very clear. The skepticism is healthy on the whole, a healthy skepticism people have today about what they see on TV, what they read in newspapers that they did not have in our parent's generation.

Mr. Jones: But is that the conventional wisdom we should assume is wrong?

(Laughter)

Mr. Kristol: It could be. I think the skepticism is deep. I just see this in my kids, the Jon Stewart stuff. I just think people know enough stories have been debunked, both on the right and left. There is Vietnam for all I know and the left-wing project, as it were, debunking the mainstream media and its compliance with government, and you still hear that a lot on the left, but it's also now a conservative project in many ways. I think it's probably been pretty successful. I just don't believe that anyone will have the status that Edward R. Murrow or Walter Cronkite had on TV, and in terms of the newspapers, I think it's pretty clear that there is not going to be anyone with the power and status that the *Times* had 30 years ago.

Mr. Jones: But does that make us more mature or does it make us more childish?

Mr. Kristol: Well, it's a little of both probably. Generally I think it's healthy but it would depend a lot on one's judgment of how media organizations did 30 or 40 years ago. And I think, in retrospect, if we went back and looked at what the American people were told and what they were not told about policy issues, about wars, about what was going on in the US Government, about what candidates were really doing and what the real agendas were, if we went back and looked at the coverage of 50, 40, 30 years ago, we would be appalled.

I think we have a better informed electorate and so I'm mostly a defender of the changes in the media.

There is so much nostalgia for the good old days but go back and look at those campaigns and look at how dishonest, really dishonest they were. Let's look at 1960, a campaign everyone loves, John Kennedy, great guy, a serious guy, a ridiculous campaign, missile gap. You really couldn't get away with the stuff people did back then today. I would say this about this campaign, that this was a very substantive campaign and I think actually the American people were exposed to the basic arguments on both sides.

If one looked at the debates this year compared to the debates 40 years ago from the media coverage and compared it to 40 years ago, I think it's, on the whole, healthier. I think we have a better informed electorate and so I'm mostly a defender of the changes in the media.

Mr. Lewin: Yes, my name is Adam Lewin, I'm a student at Emerson College, across the river.

Given, I guess, the now infamous episode of "Crossfire" with Jon Stewart, has there ever been any reflection at the networks on the way and the role that political pundits play in the coverage of presidential campaigns? And if there has been any reflection, has there been any change that's been made?

Mr. Jones: Dotty?

Ms. Lynch: Well, as far as punditry is concerned, broadcast networks probably depend on pundits a little less than cables do. I think that using pundits inside a piece to make a point that a reporter doesn't want to make himself or herself is a device that's sort of waning right now. When I first came to CBS in the '80s, we used a lot of political analysts inside pieces because reporters were shy about making some of those points themselves. The standard question you would always get is: I need somebody to say this and I said, well, if you want to say this, why don't you say it yourself?

Other than the sort of Jon Stewart moment on "Crossfire," from what I've watched anyway, there would seem a lessening of that tendency.

Mr. Watson: Maybe I'll ask you for a little more clarification of the question you were asking and the point you were making.

Mr. Jones: Let me if I may?

Some of you may not be aware of what we are talking about. Jon Stewart, when he was a guest on "Crossfire," "Crossfire" is CNN's sort of signature, political, yelling back and forth show. You've got the left, you've got the right, in discussions, at a high volume. And Jon Stewart, who has a great comedy show on public affairs, very popular, especially with young people, went on "Crossfire." He was being questioned by the host, Tucker Carlson, who was your colleague, Bill, and Stewart was not funny. In fact he was very, very serious, really critical of what goes on not just on "Crossfire" but the whole idea of these sort of moralized shows that frame everything as X or Y, black and white, and really don't seek any real answers, but just seek to apparently create a lot of heat, rather than light.

My sense is, you were asking what happened after that?

Mr. Lewin: Has there been any reflection as to whether these types of shows really contribute any substance to healthy political debates on issues in this country?

Mr. Watson: I think that, to the extent that the Bill O'Reilly show and more recently, "Hannity and Colmes" and others attract not just the million viewers that they attract each night, the two million, three million people. I think that there are lots of people on cable news who are trying to find that gladiator match, if you will, and that will almost will break through and attract people.

So my sense is that it's not going away. Marvin Kalb and I talked about this at dinner last night in a different frame, people think about it now partly as entertainment. And so we probably reject Jon Stewart's requirement that they only be public affairs shows but say that part of it is to just entertain people.

The blogs are driving some of those substantive political discussions these days. And for those who don't tune into the blogs, I think they do it in a couple of interesting ways, one is by sometimes taking an issue and keeping it in front of reporters, that otherwise may not be covered.

Two, I think they can often introduce new issues.

And then three, I think is the different analytical spin that they may offer.

So, no, I don't think that, at least on the network I worked at, that there would be any lessening of the gladiator matches and I think that, in some ways, I wouldn't be surprised if we have a little bit more, it may be a different sort at Fox. But I think the blogs will be an interesting opportunity to have more investigative pieces, more substantive pieces, sometimes good and sometimes, frankly, not that good.

Mr. Kristol: I like Jon Stewart and I've been on his show, but I think that's just ludicrous, what he's saying, and it's just kind of pompous, self-important, bullshit. I mean how many hours does CNN devote to "Crossfire" every day? A half an hour. Ooh, the country is going to be ruined because for half an hour Tucker Carlson and James Carville yell at each other, it's corrupting our otherwise elevated political discourse. It's total nonsense, it's total nonsense. I would prefer to have those two than to have what we had 30 years ago.

Let's talk about really what we had in the great old days, right? No cable news. How did people get news? Half an hour of people telling you what to think. I introduced pieces on network news in which people couldn't assert their own point of view, if they wanted, unchallengeable, no blogs, no cable news, no talk radio, no op-ed pages, incidentally. Think about that, the op-ed page is a recent thing.

The idea that "Crossfire" and "Hannity and Colmes" are ruining the country and it's terrible, is nonsense.

Now you can go too far the other way. Do I personally watch "Crossfire"? No. Do I prefer "Fox News Sunday"? Yes, and "Meet the Press" type discussions, "Washington Week in Review" to "Crossfire" and "Hannity and Colmes"? Yes.

The idea that "Crossfire" and "Hannity and Colmes" are ruining the country and it's terrible, is nonsense. And in fact it's healthy, to some degree, because often you do need partisan points of view and you need ideological points of view to bring things into discourse that wouldn't otherwise be in the kind of very wishy washy, moderate middle discourse.

And for Jon especially to get all huffy, I mean after what he does on his show, it's silly frankly.

Look, you can learn a lot watching "Crossfire," or watching O'Reilly or watching "Hannity and Colmes" about a lot of issues actually. It's not my personal style, but I talk to a lot of other people that don't have a chance to read, they work very hard, and it's a choice between that and what? And being lectured to, being given sort of, getting nothing, or being told stuff

from down high or being lectured to by think tank types. I think I'm for the controversy.

Mr. Jones: You think those are the only choices?

Mr. Kristol: I think that we should have a wide range of choices, but there is no shortage. They can watch the "News Hour" if they want. The "News Hour's" ratings haven't gone down. No one is taking the "News Hour" off TV. The "News Hour" is publicly subsidized, which is more than CNN or Fox News are. And incidentally, the whole rap on CNN and Fox, that this is what they are mostly about, is just empirically not true. Watch Fox News some night, I mean they have "Hannity and Colmes," which is a certain amount of yelling and screaming, though a certain number of interesting interviews incidentally, and news-making interviews, I would say, on it.

They also have O'Reilly, who is not my personal cup of tea, but he is very unpredictable in some ways politically, and he also can sometimes generate news and as Carlos said, keep issues alive that some others aren't that interested in, some of them which are not good issues for conservatives. Then if you look at the other shows, they have some normal shows, I would say, whether it's Wolf Blitzer, or Brit Hume, or Greta VanSusteren, again, here their interests aren't exactly my interests, in terms of the legal stuff. But I just think it's not a problem, it is not a problem.

It's a bizarre view of the American people to think, they flip on "Crossfire" because they want to see a sort of amusing, and kind of over-the-top debate for half an hour, that this is corrupting our political discourse. I don't buy it for a minute.

Mr. Kristol: Walter, you have a comment?

Mr. Shorenstein: With all the experts here, I really hesitate, but since I'm paying for the microphone. . . .

(Laughter)

Mr. Shorenstein: One thing I think Democrats are lacking significantly is the so-called wisemen in Washington that was built around having Averill Harriman and Bob Strauss and Clark Clifford and the Tip O'Neills and people like that that created a cohesiveness around the Democratic Party where major issues were discussed.

And the campaign would have been organized, with these wisemen, and they call in various people throughout the country. Somehow there was a form of cohesiveness and Ron Brown was created and so forth, and this is sadly lacking. There is just no one of any of that kind of significance around that could bring the party together and to have the astuteness that existed with Bob Strauss and all the others. So this is a very sadly lacking thing and until something like that is created, I don't know how they are going to be able to put all the diverse pieces together that exist.

Secondly, I'm bothered about the definition of the word conservative and I'm trying to determine what do they mean by conservative? Since I'm a person that's handled as much money as probably anybody, so conservative is prudent, fiscally responsible, they don't spend money that they don't have. So how can people call themselves conservatives when they are so reckless and imprudent in the way they are handling money? So that's my comment.

So how can people call themselves conservatives when they are so reckless and imprudent in the way they are handling money?

Mr. Jones: Bill, you want to respond?

Mr. Kristol: I don't care if people call me conservative or not. We can debate the virtue of the tax cuts. We have faster economic growth than European countries that chose not to cut taxes going into the recession. I think, on that, we will end up better off economically.

I agree we can't run a deficit forever. The question is whether as a matter of political, of economic prudence, it was wise to have a stimulative fiscal policy for the last three years. And then we can argue about the distributional effects of the tax cut but that's a separate issue. But I take your point, I do think the Republican Party is less conservative in the older sense of conservative than it was 30 or 40 years ago. Liberals liked that Republican party because it was a conservative party and a losing party.

Mr. Shorenstein: But are we marginalizing the word conservative?

Mr. Kristol: I don't think we are really marginalizing it, since a third of the country thinks they are conservative and since Bush won. I mean I consent to that but, I don't quarrel with it. If the Democrats want to say that they are the more fiscally prudent party, they can make that case.

I do think the Republican Party is less conservative in the older sense of conservative than it was 30 or 40 years ago. Liberals liked that Republican party because it was a conservative party and a losing party.

Mr. Jones: Theda?

Ms. Skocpol: I think the word conservative as used in opinion polls probably doesn't mean the same thing to many of the citizens who invoke it as it does as a description of what's happening in the Republican Party. I don't think we should kid ourselves, the Republican Party has moved in a remarkably radical, even reckless direction and it has coincided with the rise of great socioeconomic inequalities in

this country, which are being terribly exacerbated by the tax and social policies that are being undertaken and that are likely to be undertaken through more intense ways.

And it interacts within the media environment in ways that good research suggests that media environment, which emphasizes choice and all of the good things, all of the flexibility, the democratic critique, the liveliness that goes with choice has also aided and abetted ideological polarization, which played out at the elite level and is a polarization that goes much more toward the right than it does toward the left. I'm not surprised that today's radical conservatives or what I would call radical revisionists in many ways, are happy with the new media environment.

But it has contributed to a fractionization, ideological polarization, greater difficulty in arriving at policy solutions that I think appeal to the moderate conservative, moderate liberal and moderate middle society in a number of policy realms. I don't know what that has to do with this election, so I didn't bring that in, but these are secular penalties that are playing out in ways that should worry us about where this country is headed.

Mr. Jones: Bill, do you want to respond to that?

Mr. Kristol: Well that's a very big, point. No, I'm not convinced that we're more ideologically polarized than we were in '64 or '72 or '80. You could say, three obvious moments in time before the new media, before the new dominance of the new radical conservatives and—

Ms. Skocpol: We've got a lot of people's research to read, which I think is—

Mr. Kristol: Well I agree with that. What, that the elites are or that the public is?

Ms. Skocpol: All the research on congressional voting patterns shows a clear polarization.

Mr. Kristol: Well the parties are much more ideological than they used to be.

Ms. Skocpol: —comes galloping to the right.

Mr. Kristol: Sure, the parties are more ideological than they used to be. It's not that the country is, there is a lot of social science research by Alan Wolfe and all that suggests that the divisions are overstated. And I don't know, you tell me that there is a greater division between the south, when segregation existed in the south, and the north in the 1950s, that the country is not, in that respect, is more polarized in its social attitudes, and its attitudes on race and its attitudes on issues of tolerance, for that matter? On gay rights, is it less or more polarized than it was 30 or 40 years ago?

I think, in certain ways, that's very complicated. The parties are more ideological, that is unquestionably true. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. The American Political Science Association put out a famous a report in 1951 complaining, and this was a total staple of political science scholarship when we were all in college. It's terrible,

people deserve a clear choice. You've got these totally muddled parties and Kennedy can't govern. Burns was very upset about this because these conservative southern Democrats are citing these initiatives in Congress. And then the conservative Republicans are very upset that the liberal Republicans are stopping the conservatives from governing.

Look, I, myself, would prefer a slightly less polarized party system but no one invented this, this is the result of huge forces, and it has certain good consequences and certain bad consequences. But certainly it is true, there is a lot of empirical research that the parties are more distinct in their electoral bases and they are certainly more unified and more distinct in Congress. The parties are more united in Congress, there is more party voting in Congress.

Again, something that no one predicted 30 or 40 years ago. The conventional view was you have the moderate America, independence, you have a better educated electorate, everyone can make up his own mind, we're moving to a new media. Incidentally, in the '60s, the view was the new media was moving us to a personality based politics, away from ideologically based politics. And of course, as is always the case, everything turned out sort of the opposite, so now we do have more ideological political parties. I honestly don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing.

Mr. Mulkern: My name is George Mulkern, I live in Central Square.

There is an exit poll that I've read about, the people who voted for Bush, according to this exit poll, 84 percent believe that we favored labor and environmental standards than trade agreements; 75 percent believe Iraq worked closely with al Qaeda and was directly involved in 9/11; 69 percent believe Bush is in favor of a nuclear test ban; 66 percent that he is in favor of an international criminal court; and 51 percent believe that Bush favors the Kyoto agreement.

Is this accurate? And what does that mean in terms of the meaning of the election?

Mr. Jones: Let me ask you, Andy, to address that first.

Mr. Kohut: I don't know where you got those results, I've never seen them. I want to come back to something someone said about this. I think the American public had a pretty good choice to make, in terms of issues, and when we did our weekend-after-the-election poll this year, as we've done in every presidential election since 1988, the voters expressed more contentment with the process, and a larger percentage of them than in previous elections said that they made an informed choice.

Were some voters confused about what the candidates stood for? Sure. Were the levels of confusion anything like what you just described? No.

Maybe Dotty has some insights that I don't have, but that's the way I see it.

Ms. Lynch: I think that clearly Bush voters and Kerry voters thought different things about their candidates, I don't know of those results, it may have been a post election poll and not an exit poll.

Mr. Jones: Actually, I think I know what you are talking about, it was a poll that was done by an organization at the University of Maryland about two weeks before the election. And the Kerry voters, according to this, had a better idea in the large sense of what Kerry stood for. Some people who said they were going to vote for Bush were correct about Bush's attitudes about the things they cared about. They tended to project upon George Bush their own feelings for how they felt, and simply didn't know, but that was not why they were voting for him or not. At least that's my impression.

Bill?

Mr. Kristol: And of course they have no feelings about the international criminal court or the Kyoto Treaty. Most Americans don't know what they are in any detail, and so it would all depend on how the question was asked. I'm sure, if there was a question asked, well, gee, do you think there should be a criminal court to try horrible war criminals, people said yes, and then a lot of them were Bush voters and then everyone goes ooh, ooh, look at these Bush voters that don't know that Bush is against the ICC.

Most Americans have no opinion, believe me, on the International Criminal Court.

Most Americans have no opinion, believe me, on the International Criminal Court.

Mr. Kohut: That's exactly right.

Mr. Kristol: So it's a farcical poll question and it would then depend on how you explain what the ICC does and that's a rather complicated issue.

Mr. Jones: Well then it also may be the question of the idea of being wrong about something, like the role of Saddam Hussein in 9/11, things like that that were important, theoretically anyway, in how you made your choices. Why, in the face of evidence, has so much of the misinformation about 9/11, for instance, and what was said about Saddam Hussein, persisted?

Mr. Kristol: I just totally disagree, I think there were ties between Saddam and al Qaeda. If you are going to tell me that that proves that the Bush voters are ignorant, I'm going to say that *The Standard* published ten articles based on undisputed evidence of ties between Saddam and terrorist groups, including al Qaeda, not direct involvement with 9/11, and if people say that, they're wrong.

. . . I don't buy any of this notion that Bush voters are more ignorant than Kerry voters

But I'll also tell you this, we've been sitting here for an hour and a half and ooh, the economy, it's amazing people voted for Bush, look at how bad the economy is. Really, is the economy that bad? What's the year to year growth over the last two years?

I think, if you polled Kerry voters, they'll say, gee, the economy is in terrible shape, and I'll say, oh, those ignorant Kerry voters, don't they know that we've had two of the strongest years of growth in the last 20 years? Don't they know that in fact, incidentally, this is a funny thing everyone keeps asuming Bush won despite the economy, the actual economists who have these models of how a president will do when he is reelected, depending on economic data, had Bush winning easily.

The truth is, if you gave a political scientist and an economist the data, which was a first year recession, and then a comeback and two straight years of four percent growth, and unemployment going down, Bush should win. So I don't buy any of this notion that Bush voters are more ignorant than Kerry voters, everyone has a slightly different take on things based partly on what they want to think, and welcome to the world.

But I will say this, that the people made a decision, as Andy suggested, I think, based on a pretty serious consideration of which way they wanted the country to go on foreign policy and on domestic policy, and I don't think there was a huge amount of delusion on either side.

From the floor: I'm from the Harvard Institute for Retirement.

My question is based on the recent writings by Evan Thomas. I have learned that Kerry offered John McCain both the vice presidency and the secretary of defense. Naturally, I wonder if a prominent McCain supporter four years ago, like Bill Kristol, if there was anything that Kerry could have done to bring Kristol and McCain both to his support? And Mr. Jones was talking the term meta narrative. I would be very grateful if any member of the panel can tell me if this campaign we've just been suffered through had a meta narrative, and if it did, what on earth was it?

Mr. Jones: Well what could Kerry have done to get you on his campaign?

Mr. Kristol: I was an even tougher sell than McCain. I can't speak for McCain, I think McCain didn't agree with Kerry on fundamental foreign policy questions, and wasn't going to be his vice presidential nominee and said no. I think if he had gotten McCain, he would have won the election. It was not foolish for Kerry to try but I don't think it was going to happen.

Mr. Jones: Was there a meta narrative? I don't think that there was a clear one mostly because I think John Kerry could be faulted here for not having one. In a way, this is something that the media reflects, rather than creates, it buys it from the campaigns. And I think that the John Kerry campaign never got a message that had that kind of sweeping sense of what it was about, except for being not for Bush.

Mr. Kristol: I think they each had a pretty good, pretty compelling or pretty coherent meta narrative. And then of course 9/11 required us to have this much more aggressive foreign policy, which involved dealing with Iraq, as well as al Qaeda, and blah, blah, blah. You don't fight the War on Terror broadly, that's the foreign policy meta narrative. The Kerry meta narrative was Iraq was a diversion from the War on Terror for

Afghanistan. He said that many times, and it's not a foolish argument and he made it, I think, reasonably competently.

That core foreign policy question, is it Bush's view that the War on Iraq has to be thought of as part of the broader War on Terror in the Middle East or was it a diversion and a catastrophic mistake? That question was posed pretty clearly to the voters and those two narratives collided.

And on domestic policy, I think, it was a pretty conventional Republican/Democratic tax cuts for the rich type argument, which I think was adequately argued by either side.

So, again, let's just be comparative again here. Obviously everyone has his own dream campaign where there is a wonderfully clear and brilliantly expressed and charismatically well argued meta narrative, but was the argument clearer in 2000? Yes. Clearer in '96? Maybe, I would say, which was kind of just Clinton, I'm going to save you from Gingrich and Republicans who can't have Clinton. Clearer in '92 with Perot and all that kind of insanity? I don't know, I think it was a pretty clear, clearer campaign than most. I'm struck by Andy's comment that voters were happier after this campaign.

Mr. Kohut: A higher percentage said they made an informed choice this time than in any of the presidential elections, since 1988.

Ms. Skocpol: I just read Rudy Texeira's "Public Opinion Watch" and he said that since the election, the portion of voters who say Iraq is not integral to the War on Terror has gone up 9 percent.

A higher percentage said they made an informed choice this time than in any of the presidential elections, since 1988.

I guess the larger point I want to raise here is are we a little too hung up on these precise poll findings and how they unfold moment by moment? And can we really read in the meaning of an election into the kind of divided positions that voters take on multiple issues where they can't vote on all of them at once?

Mr. Kohut: Excuse me. I'm just struck by what Mickey Carroll said about Rudy Texeira the day after the election, and he suggested that Texeira should be calling for a party affiliation weighting of the presidential election.

Mr. Jones: But, Bill, one of the things that I expect would be a meta narrative from the Democratic perspective on this because of the War on Terror, because of the issue of Iraq, was that we had been misled into going to war. But when John Kerry said that even if he had known, he would have voted for it, it seemed to basically make it impossible for him to make that argument. Did that make a difference, in your opinion?

Mr. Kristol: I don't know. I've always been more sympathetic to Kerry than a lot of my Democratic friends. He was in a very tough position in Iraq,

given the votes he actually had cast. Maybe he should have said in August, well, given what I now know, I would have, it would not have stopped the War on Iraq. It does allow Bush to say that, with total honesty and clarity that what John Kerry is now saying is that he would have left Saddam in power. Therefore, what he is saying is we decide the fact that he is an horrible dictator and all that, what he is now saying is that we can be confident, whatever the level of contacts with terrorist groups, that he wouldn't, of course the inspectors would have come out, so you couldn't have put 2,000 troops in the region.

. . . would we be better off with Saddam still in power, with all the downsides that implies, as opposed to the downsides we are now facing? John Kerry decided he didn't want to have that debate.

So he would been confident that he wouldn't have reconstituted the program, we could live comfortably with the Middle East where he is in power. Now I'm saying that maybe John Kerry should have been willing to have that debate. I think it would have been an intellectually honest debate. It is a fair argument, would we be better off with Saddam still in power, with all the downsides that implies, as opposed to the downsides we are now facing? John Kerry decided he didn't want to have that debate. I don't know, would that have been a politically winning debate for him? I'm just not sure.

Mr. Jones: Carlos?

Mr. Watson: I'm going to take a quick stab at a meta narrative, understanding that any good meta narrative probably takes 50 years of reflection to put together. But if I had to guess today, I suspect that we'll say that George W. Bush, a guy who didn't have a ton of success in his first 40 years of life, ultimately emerged in the 2004 election as one of the three or four most politically talented people to come along in a half century, and that Democrats misunderestimated him, as he said so well—

(Laughter)

Mr. Watson: —as Bill said so well. And that, consequently, we may look back and see that the Democrats lost their last best chance to stop, a Republican tidal wave is too strong a phrase, but as you heard me suggest before, I think it will be very interesting to watch what happens over the next several elections. I think there is a chance that scholars and others will look back at the meta narrative

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theme here that an incredibly talented and misunderestimated candidate and campaign won an election that he easily could have lost, and that winning that election ushered in a prolonged period of Republican political success.

Mr. Jones: Bill, I'm going to give you the last word.

Okay, that would be the last word then.

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: We are out of time. Thank you very much, Evan Thomas, Dotty Lynch, Theda Skocpol, Andy Kohut, Carlos Watson.

(Applause)

Mr. Jones: And thank you Bill Kristol, thank you for being with us.