

RELEASE IN FULL

TO: Hillary

FROM: Neera

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RE: Media Attention

Thinking about the media attention you've received, I realized you are in a different position than you've been in the eleven years since I've known you. You are the object of continuing media interest – not just by reporters who have an expertise in foreign affairs, but also general political reporters who, unfortunately, have very little understanding of international relations and foreign policy. At the same time, it strikes me that foreign policy is a particularly difficult area to generate substantive news. So much of foreign policy comes across as positioning rather than concrete proposals. By that I mean, so much of the discourse of the day is how our country relates to other countries or our attitude towards particular developments, rather than clear proposals to solve problems. While foreign policy reporters may understand the nuances of positioning (e.g. our position on talks with Iran, our position on six-party talks, etc), such nuances are probably lost on most political reporters who are not paying close, daily attention to these matters. In addition, such nuance at their highest level may often emanate from the White House. (I have no sense of how State works with the White House, but on health care, everything is controlled by them.) In short, because of your stature you are covered by political reporters, unlike other cabinet secretaries who remain much more anonymous; at the same time political reporters probably have the least grounding and understanding of foreign policy and its nuances than any area. So political reporters are not able to sufficiently grasp what you are doing because in short, it's not easy for them to understand it.

Another problem is that while foreign policy reporters may grasp the true meaning of thematic speeches, political reporters may often miss their import and meaning. Nevertheless, these speeches are important. From the health care system's collapse (NYT Magazine circa 2004), to the myriad problems of the Chinese holding our debt (getting tough with your banker), you have a history of seeing problems before they become crises. That is a great brand for you. So I don't take away from the thematic approaches; I just suggest that to address the needs of other reporters, it may be helpful to buttress these kinds of speeches with another approach.

On top of all of this, because of your intense privacy, the media has always been fixated on character, rumor, personal dynamics and essentially, what you think, in relation to others. Indeed, while stifling, this is not a new phenomena, and has been around for seemingly decades. I believe it is a result of a combination of sexism and laziness. The sexism is obvious; and the laziness occurs because it is much easier for anyone to decipher the meaning of a photo or a hug than it is to decipher what we should be doing about North Korea.

Obviously, much of your coverage is positive and the public thinks you are doing a fantastic job. So I'm not writing to try to fix some terrible problem. And you may think that it's silly to mess with something that is not broken.

But while you have always had an uphill climb with the press, throughout your history there has been one way you have been able to counter and puncture the media's fixation on the mundane. And it has been by forcing them to cover your new, substantive, concrete proposals – real solutions. Solutions communicated in a way so that all reporters, even the laziest, would understand them. And even when the media didn't cover them, the fact that you were doing specific policies all the time permeated the media culture and branded you as an ideas leader.

Therefore, in order to reach those political reporters and others, an approach to this problem could be to overwhelm people with solutions: 5 point plans; 10 point plans (You came up with "point plan" approach on our campaign, and I didn't at first understand its merit, but soon saw it – it shorthanded the solutions so that even when reporters couldn't go through all the details, they would at least write that you had a 5 point plan to solve the problem.)

Nevertheless, I appreciate that foreign policy is not an area easily amenable to concrete solutions. We are unlikely to have a five point plan on North Korea. And really this may not work at all for bilateral relationships. But there are international problems that you could work to address, perhaps in a series of speeches in the coming months. The following are just some ideas of areas in which there could be domestic interest in your ideas:

- 5 point plan to combat international pandemics
- 5 point plan to combat sex trafficking
- 5 point plan to stop the spread of terrorism to newer locations like Africa and Asia through the work of smart power (this may be repackaging a series of ideas you have already discussed)
- 5 point plan to improve girls' education as a way to defeat terrorism
- 5 point plan to strengthen non-governmental efforts to combat global warming (there was a great story on NPR about human-powered batteries to run cell phones and lights in the developing world)

Obviously it would take a fair amount of policy work to develop these ideas and many may not work at all. But a series of speeches on topics like this, especially if timed well, may well give even political reporters a sense that you are doing what you have been doing as long as I have known you – solving people's problems.