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CONFIDENTIAL

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For: Ron Klain
From: Sidney Blumenthal
Re: Final debate

1. Romney will inevitably falsify, distort and mangle facts on a range of subjects from Libya to the defense budget. But why is this debate different from all other debates? In the dedicated foreign policy debate, the stakes are higher—America's role in the world. That makes Romney's errors even more consequential and potentially threatening. And that must be an essential predicate of Obama's point when he exposes Romney's falsehoods. When Romney lies on domestic policy it's shameful, but when he lies on foreign policy it's dangerous.
2. When Romney lies or distorts, he should be revealed as more than misleading. In the foreign policy debate, when Romney lies he shows that he's *unprepared*. That word—"unprepared"—is potentially lethal to him. It should be linked logically to his falsehoods, which become the proof. When you're untrue, you're unprepared, and when you're unprepared you can't be strong.
3. Romney's attack line on Libya is not only false, as exposed in the last debate. (Obama here can joke that Romney apparently wants to rerun the last debate but this time without Candy Crowley present to call him out. Romney will become angry and nonplussed.) His attack line is a reheated leftover of the Bush era attacks on Democrats designed by Karl Rove as weak on terrorism, which were themselves repackaged old Republican attacks from the Cold War. It's all nostalgia. And it's not about policy—it's only about politics and intended to obscure the realities on the ground and the truth about the matter.
4. The issue of the legacy of George W. Bush is complex. Romney has angered Republicans with his attack on George W. Bush and refusal to defend him in the last debate. (See Susan Eisenhower on her blog: <http://susaneisenhower.com/2012/10/18/what-drives-mitt-romney/#more-830> "Romney's debate answers were undoubtedly aimed at undecided voters, but many members of the Republican Party I've spoken to in the last two days are incensed by Romney's handling of the Bush question. This debate is unlikely to change the contours of the campaign, but it has offered one more glimpse at what drives the man who wants desperately to move into the White House.") Obama can make the following points: a. Of

course: He has inherited two wars, one of which he has ended and another that he is ending, characterizing how he has defended US interests in each case; b. After the elimination of Bin Laden, AQ is shattered, splintered and diffuse, still in spots a menace but as a central organization smashed, requiring smart, flexible and nuanced approaches to a variety of situations, not ham-handed, dogmatic and rhetorical responses like Romney proposes that can only have negative unintended consequences; c. Romney's old ideas are outdated, whose source is his advisers, who were Bush's propagandists, not really even his first-rank advisers, but his cheerleaders—not the neoconservative A-Team, but the B-Team; d. Then, really stick in the shiv by having Obama say that he was somewhat surprised that Romney in the last debate did not give President George W. Bush credit where credit is due—for example, breaking with the neoconservatives around Vice President Cheney by adopting the surge in Iraq led by current CIA director David Petraeus that prepared the groundwork for Obama's own policy in Iraq. And now we can understand, in that light, why Romney failed to acknowledge President Bush in any positive way—he's to his far right and the captive of the discredited advisers and policies that none other than Bush himself finally broke with.

5. Don't neglect to interject the economic factor as the foundation of US strength in the world. The Financial Times/Brookings Global Index reports that it is Obama's policies that are working--"the brightest spot in the world economy"—and that the ones that are not working are precisely the sort of austerity policies imposed in Europe—in fact like those advocated by Romney! Romney is the one pushing the bad austerity medicine from Europe that would ruin the recovery. Romney's policies are a European poison pill for the American recovery.