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Face the Nation Transcripts November 9, 2014: Obama, Bush



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(CBS NEWS) -- Below is a transcript from the November 9th edition of Face the Nation. Guests included President Barack Obama, former President George W. Bush, Peggy Noonan, David Gergen, Bob Woodward and Michele Norris.

BOB SCHIEFFER: I am Bob Schieffer. And on this sixtieth anniversary of FACE THE NATION from the Oval Office in Washington and the Bush Library in Dallas, two Presidents in one hour. President Obama reveals the next step in the war on ISIS.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: We're now in a position to start going on some offense.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And former President Bush talks about the book he's written about his dad. And whether his brother Jeb will be the next Bush to seek the White House.

PRESIDENT George W. BUSH: I think it's fifty-fifty.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Plus, an all-star panel of analysts. Sixty years of news, politics, presidents, foreign policy, analysis, and culture because this is FACE THE NATION.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Mister President, thank you so much for joining us on the sixtieth anniversary of FACE THE NATION.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Congratulations.

BOB SCHIEFFER: It's a pleasure to have you.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Wonderful to have you here.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Thank you. I want to start with your decision to basically double the size of the American force in Iraq and bring it up to about three thousand. When you ordered the airstrikes three months ago you didn't seem to think that was going to be necessary. What is-- what is this signal that what we've done so far hasn't worked?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: No. Actually, what it signals is a new face. First of all, let's be clear. ISIL is a threat not only to Iraq but also the region and, ultimately, over the long term could be a threat to the United States. This is an extreme group of the sort we haven't seen before, but it also combines terrorist tactics with on-the-ground capabilities, in part, because they incorporated a lot of Saddam Hussein's old military commanders. And, you know, this is a threat that we are committed not only to degrade but, ultimately, destroy. It's going to take some time. What we knew was that phase one was getting an Iraqi government. That was inclusive and credible. And we now have done that. And so now what we've done is rather than just try to halt ISIL's momentum. We're now in a position to start going on some offense. The airstrikes have been very effective in degrading ISIL's capabilities and slowing the advance that they were making. Now what we need is ground troops, Iraqi ground troops that can start pushing them back.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Will these Americans be going into battle with them?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: No. So what hasn't changed is our troops are not engaged in combat. Essentially, what we're doing is we're taking four training centers with coalition members that allow us to bring in Iraqi recruits, some of the Sunni tribes that are still resisting ISIL, giving them proper training, proper equipment, helping them with strategy, helping them with logistics. We will provide them close air support once they are prepared to start going on the offense against ISIL, but what we will not be doing is having our troops do the fighting. What we learned from the previous engagement in Iraq is that our military is always the best. We can always knock out, knock back any threat. But then when we leave, that threat comes back.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Should we expect that more troops may be needed before this is over?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: You know, as commander-in-chief, I'm never going to say never. But what, you know, the commanders who presented the plan to me say is that we may actually see fewer troops over time because now we're seeing coalition members starting to partner with us on the training and assist effort.

BOB SCHIEFFER: I want to get back to foreign policy but I also want to ask you about what happened on Tuesday.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: We got beaten.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Yeah. Harry Truman once famously said if you want a friend in Washington, get a dog. And I thought of that when I heard the chief of staff of the Democratic leader of the Senate, Harry Reid say and this is his quote, "The President's approval rating is basically forty percent. What else more is there to say?" He's basically saying it was your fault. Do you feel it was your fault?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Well, look, another saying of Harry Truman's was, the buck stops with me. With me, the buck stops right here at my desk. And so whenever, as the head of the party, it doesn't do well, I've got to take responsibility for it. The message that I took from this election and we've seen this in a number of elections, successive elections, is people want to see this city work. And they feel as if it's not working. The economy has improved significantly. There's no doubt about it. We had a jobs report for October that showed that once

again over two hundred thousand jobs created. We've now created more than ten million. The unemployment rate has come down faster than we could have anticipated. Just to give you some perspective, Bob, we've created more jobs in the United States than every other advanced economy combined since I came into office. And so we're making progress but people still feel like their wages haven't gone up, their incomes haven't gone up, still hard to save for retirement, still hard to send a kid to college. And then they see Washington gridlocked and they're frustrated. And, you know, they know one person in Washington and that's the President of the United States. So I've got to make this city work better for them.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All the Presidents in-- in modern history who have been successful, I mean, in various ways, LBJ, FDR, Ronald Reagan, Teddy Roosevelt, Bill Clinton, they all seem to have a zest for politics. They-- they like the give and take. They like the twisting of arms. They like the cajoling. They liked all the things that Presidents do. But I don't sense that you have the same feeling that they did. It makes me wonder-- do you like politicians, do you like politics?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: You know--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Do you like this job?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Let me tell you, Bob, I love this job. And here is I think a fair statement. If your name is Barack Hussein Obama, you-- you had to have liked politics in order to get into this office. And I-- I wasn't born into politics and wasn't encouraged to go into politics. I got into politics because I believed I could make a difference and I would not have been successful and would not be sitting at this desk every day if I didn't love politics. You know the-- the-- the fact is that we wouldn't have gotten health care passed if there wasn't a whole bunch of arm-twisting. We would not have been able to make progress on the deficit if I hadn't been willing to cut some deals with Republicans. I think every President that you've mentioned would also say that while they were in office, people weren't always as complimentary of them as--

BOB SCHIEFFER: But is it what you thought it would be?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: You know, here-- here is one thing that I will say that campaigning and governance are two different things. I've ran two successful campaigns. And anybody who has seen me on the campaign trail can tell how much I love just being with the American people. And hearing what they care about and what-- you know how passionate I am about trying to help them. When you start governing, there is a tendency sometimes for me to start thinking. As long as I get the policy right then that's what should matter. And, you know, people have asked, you know, what you need to do differently going forward and I think you do that, you got to check after every election.

BOB SCHIEFFER: What do you need to do differently?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: And I think that one thing that I do need to constantly remind myself and my team are is it's not enough just to build the better mousetrap. People don't automatically come beating to your door. We've got to sell it, we've got to reach out to the other side and where possible persuade. And I think there are times, there's no doubt about it where, you know, I think we have not been successful in going out there and letting people know what it is that we are trying to do and why this is the right direction. So there-- there is a failure of politics there that we have got-- we got to improve on.

BOB SCHIEFFER: What criticisms of your administration do you think are valid?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Well, I just mentioned one. I think that what is also true is that, you know, no matter how frustrating it can sometimes be for any President to deal with an opposition that has, yeah, pretty stubborn, and where there are really strong differences, you just got to keep on trying.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Let's talk about immigration. You have said you are going to change immigration policy with an executive order by the end of the year,

Republicans said don't do it. Mitch McConnell it's like waving a red flag in front of a bull. John Boehner, when you play with matches you take the risk of burning yourself. Why not give them a chance to see what they can do on that and then take the executive order?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Number one, everybody agrees the immigration system is broken. And we've been talking about it for years now in terms of fixing it. We need to be able to secure our border. We need to make legal immigration system that is more efficient. And we need to make sure that the millions of people, who are here, many have been here for a decade or more, and have American kids, and for all practical purposes are part of our community, that they pay a fine, they pay any penalties, they learn English, they get to the back of the line but they have a capacity to legalize themselves here because we're not-- we don't have the capacity to deport eleven million people. Everybody agrees on that. I presided over a process in which the Senate produced a bipartisan bill. I then said to John Boehner, John, let's get this passed through the House. For a year I stood back and let him work on this. He decided not to call the Senate bill and he couldn't produce his own bill. And I told him at the time, John, if you don't do it, I've got legal authority to make improvements on the system. I prefer and still prefer to see it done through Congress, but every day that I wait we're misallocating resources. We're deporting people that shouldn't be deported. We're not deporting folks that are dangerous and need to be deported. So, John, I'm going to give you some time, but if you can't get it done before the end of the year, I'm going to have to take the steps that I can to improve the system.

BOB SCHIEFFER: So are you saying here today, their time has run out?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: What I am saying to them actually their time hasn't run out. I am going to do what I can do through executive action. It's not going to be everything that needs to get done. And it will take time to put that in place. And in the interim, the minute they pass a bill that addresses the problems with immigration reform, I will sign it and it supersedes whatever actions I take. And I'm encouraging them to do so. On parallel track, we're going to be implementing an executive action. But if, in fact, a bill gets passed, nobody is going to be happier than me to sign it because that means it will be permanent rather than temporary. So they have the ability, the authority, the control to supersede anything I do through my executive authority by simply carrying out their functions over there. And if, in fact, it's true that they want to pass a bill, they've got good ideas, nobody is stopping them. And the minute they do it and the minute I sign that bill, then what I've done goes away.

BOB SCHIEFFER: We're going to have to take a break here. We'll be back in one minute.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: You sent a secret letter to Iran's supreme commander or a supreme leader last month about our two countries' shared interest in fighting ISIS. I guess I'd ask you the first question, has he answered?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: I tend not to comment on any communications that I have with various leaders. I'm-- I've got a whole bunch of channels where we're communicating to various leaders around the world. Let me speak more broadly about the policies vis-à-vis Iran. We have two big interests in Iran that are short term and then we got a long-term interest. Our number one priority with respect to Iran is making sure they don't get nuclear weapon. And because of the unprecedented sanctions that this administration put forward and mobilized the world to abide by, they got squeezed, their economy tanked, and they came to the table in a serious way for the first time in a very, very long time. We've now had significant negotiations. They have abided by freezing their program and, in fact, reducing their stockpile of nuclear-grade material or-- or weapons-grade nuclear material. And the question now is are we going to be able to close this final gap so that they can reenter the international community, sanctions can be slowly

reduced, and we have verifiable, lock-tight assurances that they can't develop a nuclear weapon. There's still a big gap. We may-- may not be able to get there. The second thing that we have an interest in is that Iran has influence over Shia, both in Syria and in Iraq, and we do have a shared enemy in ISIL. But I've been very clear publicly and privately we are not connecting in any way the nuclear negotiations from the issue of ISIL. We're not coordinating with Iran on ISIL. There's some de-conflicting in the sense that since they have some troops or militias they control in and around Baghdad, we let them know, don't mess with us, we're not here to mess with you, we're focused on common our enemy but there's no coordination or common battle plan and there will not be because, and this brings me to the third issue, we still have big differences with Iran's behavior vis-à-vis our allies. Then, you know, poking and prodding at-- and-- and creating unrest and sponsoring terrorism in the region, around the world, their anti-Israeli rhetoric and behavior so that's a whole another set of issues which prevents us from ever being true allies but--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Is it still our policy that we want President Assad of Syria to go?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: It is still our policy and it's an almost absolute certainty that he has lost legitimacy with such a large portion of the country by dropping barrel bombs and killing children and destroying villages that were defenseless that he can't regain the kind of legitimacy that would stitch that country back together again. Now, obviously, our priority is to go after ISIL and so what we have said is that we are not engaging in a military action against the Syrian regime, we are going after ISIL facilities and personnel who are using Syria as a safe haven in service of our strategy in Iraq. We do want to see a political settlement inside of Syria. That's a long-term proposition. We can't solve that militarily nor are we trying to.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you this, you had a tough summer. We saw the rise of ISIS, the outbreak of Ebola, trouble in the Ukraine, illegal immigrants coming across the border. Did you ever go back to the residence at night and say, are we ever going to get a break here?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: We have had a busy six years. This summer it seemed to compress even more. But, yeah, think about when I came into office. It was worse. Because the economy not just here in the United States but globally was in a free fall. I have great confidence in the American people and I have great confidence in this administration being able to work through and, eventually, solve problems. Sometimes we don't do it at the speed that keeps up with, you know, the-- the press cycle. So we've handled Ebola well. But, you know-- and then folks aren't talking about it as much now but there was a period of time where people are anxious. You'll recall just a year in office when there was a big hole in the middle of the Gulf spewing out oil. And we went through a month that was real tough. Nobody talks about it now because we actually had a really effective response against the worst environmental disaster in American history. But when you solve the problem sometimes the cameras have gone away. When the problem comes up it's tough. But-- but I tell you what keeps me going every day is to see how resilient the American people are. How hard they work. That-- nothing I go through compares to a guy who's lost his job or lost his home or lost his retirement savings or is trying to figure out how to send his kid to college. What I keep on telling my team here is, don't worry about the fact that we're overworked or we're, you know, getting picked on, yeah, that's all irrelevant. What is relevant is we have the chance to help that person every single day, and we do. And sometimes you're going to get fanfare for it and sometimes you're not. But I still consider this the best job on earth and I'm going to try to squeeze every last ounce of-- of possibility and-- and the ability to do good out of this job in these next two years.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Six years into an administration is the time that Presidents seem to make changes, some of them trying to really shake things up, they bring in new people, they launch new programs. Do I get the sense that you're not planning something like that?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Well, I think there are always going to be changes. I mean if you look at after each election--

BOB SCHIEFFER: That I don't see that you-- from what I've heard from you so far, you don't plan to do much different than what-- what you've done so far.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: You know, Bob, I think that what you'll see is a constant effort to improve the way we deliver service to customers, experimenting with ways that I can reach out to Republicans more effectively, making sure that we're reaching out and using the private sector more effectively. One of the things we're learning is that there's a real power to being able to convene here in the White House, not every problem has to be solved just through a bill, just through legislation. We will be bringing in new folks here because people get tired. You know, it's a-- it's a hard job. And what I've told everybody is, you know, I want you to have as much enthusiasm and energy on the last day of this administration as you do right now or as you did when you first started, otherwise you shouldn't be here.

BOB SCHIEFFER: You came here talking about hope and change, do you still hope, is change, was it harder than you thought it would be?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Well, you know, I-- I always thought change was going to be hard. But I will tell you, Bob, when I look back over the last six years I am really proud of the fact that people have jobs who didn't have them before. People have health insurance who didn't have before. Young people are going to college who couldn't afford it before. So we've made big changes, but what makes me hopeful is the American people. And change is inevitable because we got the best cards, we got the best workers. We got the-- we got the-- this incredible system that attracts talent from around the world. We continue to be a beacon for freedom and-- and democracy. We've got an extraordinary military. We've got an economy that is growing faster than anybody else's. We've got these incredible natural resources and we are the most innovative than anybody on Earth. So there's no reason for us not to succeed. And change will happen. But America is always at the forefront of change. That's-- that's our trademark. Even after, over two hundred years we're still a young country and-- and we don't fear the future, we grab it.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Thank you, Mister President.

(End VT)

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Thank you so much, Bob. I enjoyed it.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: If you haven't figured it out by now the truth is I love moderating FACE THE NATION. I was going to tell you why, but then I thought, why not just show you.

(Begin VT)

TED KOOP: FACE THE NATION. How do you do? Welcome to FACE THE NATION.

SENATOR JOSEPH MCCARTHY (1954): I think a Lynching B is a good name for it.

NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV (1957): I can prophesize that your grandchildren in America will live under socialism.

FIDEL CASTRO (1959): We are not communist at all but I will never be against any right.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (1964): We find now that the forces of darkness are much more active, zealous and conscientious, and determined, than the forces of light.

BILL STOUT (CBS News): Did you really call a fellow member of the board, a lying son of a bitch?

GOVERNOR RONALD REAGAN (1970): Very quietly I expressed a long-held opinion quite forcefully to the individual.

HENRY KISSINGER (1985): With all due respect, the congressman carries, he's a congressman and he's not secretary of state.

BOB SCHIEFFER (1997): If, as you say, there is nothing there, Mister President. How can so many reputable, respected professionals keep pressing along with this?

PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON (1997): Well, that's your characterization, not mine.

BRITISH PM MARGARET THATCHER (1987): You may go on asking the same question in a hundred different ways, and you will still get the same answer.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN LEWIS (2013): Doctor King would say my dream is in the process of becoming real.

MAYA ANGELOU (2013): Listen to me, I'm here talking to Bob Schieffer. I'm doing anything.

BOB SCHIEFFER (2013): Well, may I just say that I think I've fallen in love with you and that hasn't happened to me on this broadcast very often.

(End VT)

BOB SCHIEFFER: It doesn't get much better than that. We'll be right back.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: Welcome back to FACE THE NATION. Former President George W. Bush has written a book about his dad, 41. And we went to his library in Dallas to talk with him about it. Many of you saw part one of that story on SUNDAY MORNING. In part two, the former President talked a little politics, including the possibility that his brother, Jeb, may run for President in 2016.

(Begin VT)

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: You know there's a lot of speculation about him. I occasionally feel the speculation by saying that I hope he runs. I think he'd be a very good President. I understand the decision-making process pretty well and I'm-- you know I know that he's wrestling with the decision.

BOB SCHIEFFER: If you had to make an estimate right now, what-- what-- what do you think is going to happen? You think he's going to go with--

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: I think it's fifty-fifty. He-- he and I are very close. On the other hand, he's not here knocking on my door, you know, agonizing about the decision. He-- he knows exactly, you know, the ramifications on family, for example. He's seen his dad and his brother go through the presidency. I-- I would give it-- I would give it a tossup. I-- I know this about Jeb. He's not afraid to succeed. In other words, I think he knows he could do the job and nor is he afraid to fail.

BOB SCHIEFFER: For your brother, is it worth putting a family through?

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: Yeah, it is. I think it is. Yeah. I mean I'd put our family through it. And one of the lessons you learned from George H. W. Bush is that you can go into politics and still be a good father. In other words, the priorities of your life don't have to be compromised. I know Jeb's priority is his family, a priority his family, also know it's his country and his deep faith. And he has seen that you don't have to sell those out in order to be a politician.

BOB SCHIEFFER: But it was family that almost kept 41 from running again. In 1991 George Bush told his son he was seriously considering not running again because of his son Neil's legal troubles with a failed savings and loan. George W. Bush's response, "You still got work to do and the country needs you." For Bush, the hardest part of being a President's son was seeing his father lose.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: The '92 defeat was really hard and it-- it ironically enough it did make it easier for me because when people criticized my dad, somebody who I admire greatly, I-- I didn't react well at times. And it really, really affected me. When they criticize me, the sting wasn't nearly as-- as-- as difficult actually--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Mm-Hm.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: --being his son during his presidency created kind of a layer of asbestos. The only thing I was concerned about was that how would my girls react when they were put in the same position I had been in.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Would his father had won reelection if Texas billionaire Ross Perot had not entered the race unexpectedly and made it a three-way contest with Bill Clinton?

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: I think he would have one.

BOB SCHIEFFER: You do think so?

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: I do, yeah. Absolutely. I think he would have won and I just can't prove it. I-- let me just odd conjecture of course, but I think he would have won because I think ultimately there would have been a, you know, a clear choice between, you know, a guy who had had a very good first term and a untested governor.

BOB SCHIEFFER: After the Gulf War when your father drove Saddam Hussein back into Iraq, his favorable rating went to eighty-nine percent but then he was defeated in the--

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: Yeah.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --in the-- in the elections.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: (INDISTINCT) points from eighty-nine to thirty-nine on the poll that really mattered.

BOB SCHIEFFER: How did that affect you?

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: It's an interesting lesson of-- of how to spend political capital. In the book I, you know, was somewhat dismayed about the inability for the White House to connect, you know, the message to connect with the American people that domestic politics really mattered for George Bush as much as international politics. In other words, he had a lot of capital to spend and I didn't, in retrospect, it-- it wasn't spent wisely.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Mm-Hm. You write in the book, when you decided to send troops into Iraq it was not to finish what your dad had started.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: Yeah. There're very few defensive moments of the book and that happens to be one. I-- I guess I was just responding to kind of the gossip that tends to work around the political circles that clearly he had only one thing in mind and that was to finish the job his father did because my dad decided not to go into Baghdad after routing Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. And the reason why is that was in the mission he stated and so I went in there as a result of a very changed environment because of September eleventh. And the danger we were concerned about was that the weapons would be put into the hands of terrorist groups that would come and make attacks of 9/11 pale in comparison. And since this is a book about my dad I thought it was necessary to kind of set the record straight.

BOB SCHIEFFER: But you said in the book he was right and I was right, too, in 2003?

PRESIDENT GEORGE W BUSH: Right. I agree. I'm glad you read that part of it.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Were you surprised when you gave the ultimatum to Saddam that he didn't leave? Did you think there was a chance he might leave?

PRESIDENT GEORGE W BUSH: I really did. Yeah.

BOB SCHIEFFER: You really did?

PRESIDENT GEORGE W BUSH: I did. Yeah. You know when he was captured, I was told that the FBI agent that talked to him, he said, "I just didn't believe Bush. And it's hard for me to believe he didn't believe me."

BOB SCHIEFFER: Mm-Hm.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W BUSH: We'd given an ultimatum to the Taliban and deliver him-- I make the point in the book, of course, that-- and dad understood this better than anybody, that when you say something as President you better mean it. Words mean something.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Mm-Hm.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: And he was very clear at times during his presidency, and meant it. I thought I was pretty clear at times during my presidency and meant it. Saddam Hussein didn't believe us, so I was surprised.

BOB SCHIEFFER: But you thought that he would believe you and that he-- he would leave?

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: I thought that there was a chance. Yeah, I certainly hope so, but he didn't. And so that's why I put in the book he chose war. Twice he did, he choose war during 41 and 43.

BOB SCHIEFFER: When former first lady Laura Bush joined us we turned back to the possibility of a Bush 45. So let's talk about the Bush dynasty here. Your mom says there have been enough Bushes running for President. What do you-- what do you two think about that?

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: Sometimes her prognostications haven't been very accurate. And no, no, I think you have to earn your way into politics. I don't think anything is ever given to you.

BOB SCHIEFFER: I think the question that every candidate faces and you have a unique perspective on this is it worth putting the family through it?

LAURA BUSH: Well that's, you know, that's what every candidate has to think about because it is-- even since George and I lived at the White House, the social media has increased so much, and lots of mean and terrible things on the internet about every family member--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Mm-Hm.

LAURA BUSH: --which -- even we didn't have. But I think that, you know, that everyone has to weigh that.

BOB SCHIEFFER: From your perspective, has politics-- my sense it's just gotten a lot meaner.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: In the older days I hated to be one of these guys who talked about the old days. You are able to do that yourself, by the way.

BOB SCHIEFFER: A lot.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: People were held to account for what they said. In other words, there was a pushback. Now there's just so much stuff out there--

flotsam out there that people say what they feel like saying without any consequences.

BOB SCHIEFFER: If Jeb Bush does run will you be campaigning for him? That might be a different situation?

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: It would be totally different. I'll do whatever he wants. I will be one of his strongest backers if he wants me out there publicly, I'll be out there publicly. If he wants me behind the scenes, I'll be behind the scenes. You know I'm all in for him. He'd be a great President. And country could use a optimistic view like his.

BOB SCHIEFFER: What about you?

LAURA BUSH: I agree, absolutely.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Would you campaign, too?

LAURA BUSH: Sure, if he wanted me to I'd be happy to campaign for him.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, I want to wish you both the best.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W BUSH: Thank you, Bob.

LAURA BUSH: Thank you so much, Bob.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W BUSH: Really glad to have you have back in the Promised Land.

BOB SCHIEFFER: It's great to be here, Sir. Thank you very much.

(End VT)

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: And we're back now with our panel to talk about all of this and the election on Tuesday. Peggy Noonan, a contributor to CBS News now and Wall Street Journal columnist, of course; the legendary Bob Woodward of the Washington Post; Michele Norris from National Public Radio. Michele, you're not old enough to be a legend yet.

MICHELE NORRIS (NPR): Oh, okay. There's still time.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And David Gergen of Harvard who's been in both Republican and Democratic administrations. It's really a contrast, isn't it, to see a President and a former President on the same broadcast. I think it's a lot easier for former Presidents to speak on television than Presidents. Michele.

MICHELE NORRIS: Obviously, obviously. I mean, the-- just the body language, the comfort. President Bush talks about a layer of asbestos, a phrase that we probably would not hear roll off his tongue when he was in sort of the constrained and very scripted environment of the presidency. But it's also interesting that there was a through line for some of the things that they were saying when they were talking about the reasons for going to war, when they were talking about-- when President Bush was talking about messaging, it sort of echoed some of the challenges that President Obama faces today. But, boy, what a contrast to see the two of them.

PEGGY NOONAN (Wall Street Journal/CBS News Contributor): In part, it was-- what we saw here was a portrait of two presidents. One is a happy man having lived through history and being satisfied with the role he played. The other is a sitting President who just took it straight on the jaw in an election who's feeling stressed, who made a point of saying he loves his office but it made you sit back and think, yeah, are you sure you do. It-- it was the difference between being in the thick of it and having the tranquility of reflection and retirement.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Bob, what's your takeaway?

BOB WOODWARD (Washington Post): Well, one similarity is they're both selling something. George W. Bush is selling a book and Obama is selling what happened in the midterm election and trying to put the-- the best spin on it. I-- I-- I found the interview with Obama very revealing because he said he's going to reach out to the other side to persuade and sell. Now if you're going to reach out to the other side on something, one of the things you want to do is listen but we didn't hear that. And what we heard is the continuous Obama line, "I'm heading in the right direction." This is right. And, you know, no one knows better than Obama that all these powers are shared with Congress. And a "Go it alone" approach just is not going to work.

BOB SCHIEFFER: David?

DAVID GERGEN (Harvard University): I think we got a good, revealing example today of why ex-Presidents tend to go up in our popularity. Once they leave office, they can be more candid. They can be a little funnier and they can talk about-- they can show personality and they're not pulled into the politics of Washington and-- and-- and, you know, what seems to diminish everybody who comes here. Once you're out of that, you know it's just more refreshing, it's more interesting. And I thought President Obama has the capacity. He wrote-- the first book he wrote was one of the best books ever written by politician, this is memoirs. I think he has a capacity to write the best memoir since Ulysses S. Grant, which was more about the war. But the way he now talks is-- everything is deflected, everything is-- you don't really get an understanding of who he is and what he's really thinking. You got a sense of what the line is.

PEGGY NOONAN: Yeah, yeah. He also I think the President has taken to putting a lot of padding in his sentences.

BOB WOODWARD: Right.

PEGGY NOONAN: You can say the words "I like you" or you can give a fourteen-word sentence that has (INDISTINCT) and parentheses and stuff, do you know what I mean. That's what you do when you're running out the clock and there's a certain running out going on. But I think one of the really big stories that we saw in your interview, but also in the past few days with the President is that a very significant, historic election occurred, everybody looked at the President like, what does this change for you, and he has made it clear, one way and another. And in this interview, I think that this will not change his method of operation a bit which means he's not going to change his relationship with the Congress which means more of the past six years.

MICHELE NORRIS: We don't know that.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Do you agree with that?

MICHELE NORRIS: We don't know that.

PEGGY NOONAN: Well, tell me.

MICHELE NORRIS: We don't-- we don't know that, though, because-- I mean part of presidential strategy, part of political strategy is not necessarily revealing your hand. And you-- you noted that the President may be running down the clock, and if you actually talk to people in the White House, there's an indication that that's not the case. In fact, Denis McDonough has been reminding people on staff of something that the President has said repeatedly that important things can and do happen in the fourth quarter. He is a very competitive guy.

DAVID GERGEN: Yeah.

MICHELE NORRIS: Anyone who knows him well knows just how competitive he is. So the idea of sitting back and running out the clock and doing the same thing that has led you to a point of defeat, just doesn't seem like that would be the playbook going forward.

DAVID GERGEN: I think that's fundamentally right about the fourth quarter. I think they do-- they do see it as a fourth quarter. He's got to pick up his game. He's got to-- he is twenty points back and he's acting like he's ahead and he has to communicate better. And one of the things we saw today was, which I thought was very, very clear, yet, once again he says, look, I want to change, I want to reach out to the Republicans, I want to change the whole thing, but by the way I'm going to sign this executive order, period, end of sentence. And I think most people in Washington think that's going to throw a hand grenade into the middle of these conversations with--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, you know, the Washington Post said as much and they've not always been--

DAVID GERGEN: Right.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --that--

DAVID GERGEN: He-- he could--

BOB SCHIEFFER: --anxious to criticize the President.

BOB WOODWARD: But it's a disengaged style that in terms of Congress that just is not working. And he looks isolated. Now, if you--

MICHELE NORRIS: It's kind of goes both ways though. That does go both ways.

BOB WOODWARD: As you suggest, you talk to people in the White House and try to enter in and understand the mind of President Obama. He looks at the critics and he says, now, wait a minute, they are saying things like on your editorial page saying that it's been six years of economic catastrophe. And he says, now, wait a minute, look at all of the things we did and he's really got a point. And so you get-- you get this kind of wall that he builds up but so does the opposition.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, that's what I--

BOB WOODWARD: And somebody's got to tear that wall down.

BOB SCHIEFFER: But--

MICHELE NORRIS: You know-- you know what's--

BOB SCHIEFFER: I'm just going to say this. Sources have told me that the President met with the congressional leaders on Friday for lunch. The President of the United States announced he-- to them and he held this announcement until he could brief these congressional leaders about it. He's sending more Americans into harm's way in a very dangerous place. He's doubling the size of the U.S. military commitment there. Yet, I am told ninety percent of this meeting was an argument between the Republicans who were there and the President over whether he was going to issue this executive order on immigration. I think President has done a lot of things wrong in-- in how he deals with Washington but it seems to me, and I think you're right, the other side has got to-- kind of figure out a way to change the way they do business, too, if anything is going to happen.

MICHELE NORRIS: There may be some indication, though, that the newly elected members that are heading to Washington get that message. I mean Cory Gardner just said that-- that Washington has to lead with competence and maturity. They're-- you know, sending a message that they want to, perhaps, distance themselves from a do-nothing label that, perhaps, it is time the voters have spoken to get something done.

BOB WOODWARD: But he's the CEO. He's the boss. And he's the one who has got to set the tone. And you have to-- and if you chart the time he spends in these meetings, in these discussions, it's not enough to really get to know somebody. I mean he said to you, he kept saying, well, I'm going to sell and persuade. Two words we didn't hear. Listen and compromise. And that's what you have to do even when you're the boss.

DAVID GERGEN: Yeah, and, Bob, can I take--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Peggy.

PEGGY NOONAN: Yeah, could I also note that there were-- I think not enough of the big meeting on Friday between the congressional leaders and the President was devoted to the new decision on Iraq, I get that. But that decision came two days after the election which immediately makes people think, hey, what the heck. Did this-- did the timing of this decision and announcement have any connection with the fact that America was voting all day Tuesday and this will be a very controversial decision. But I will say second, Bob's right. A President sets the tone, when the President of the United States on Wednesday afternoon listens to the soon-to-be-Republican Majority Leader Mitch McConnell say, I got to be frank, if the President does an exec-- big executive order on immigration and amnesty that that will, quote, poison the well with Congress. And the President an hour or two later came on and said, by the way, I am going to do this. I just-- I put my head in my hands I thought. Oh, no.

DAVID GERGEN: Bob, I think you're absolutely right at a fundamental level that Republicans have to learn how to compromise as well. They have to meet him half way. And I don't think we know yet whether John Boehner can still deliver the House. You know, I don't know-- I don't know whether he has the votes to-- to go to a compromise say on immigration, he couldn't get there last time. You know, can he get there now. I don't think we know. There the Tea Party, as we know, is stirring they're not happy with the direction the leadership is taking. We'll have to see how it all works out. Having said that the President is the one who lost the elections. So the graceful thing and is the person who loses, the party that wins doesn't say, okay, we--we want to compromise. The loser has to say I'm going to believe-- to change course as Bob said. And then the Republicans have to respond. And if the President, the first time, first moment out of the box says, by the way, I really want to work with you, first I'm going to spit on your face over immigration and let's sit down and compromise.

PEGGY NOONAN: Yeah.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Would-- would the President and the Democrats be better off if the Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid resigned as party leaders often do when their party loses the majority? I hear some people say, yes. And because what I'm wondering about after the talk-- after this election, I think the President's relations with the Democrats in the Senate may be as bad as his relations with the Republicans.

BOB WOODWARD: That's absolutely true. And you get the Democrats in-- in-- in private and they are on fire, just because he won't spend the time because he won't listen. I mean Peggy said yesterday in her column, and I think there is a real truth here. Humility is power. And after you lose, you have to come out and kind of face up to that and there is a whole undercurrent in the President's approach that, well, you know, it was bad but, you know, that-- that was worse than bad. And I think, optimistically, I think he's capable and, as you're suggesting, he's capable of changing and engaging in that outreach and he just needs to do and kind of get out of this bubble of that-- that he seems to be living.

MICHELE NORRIS: Can I just point--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Yes.

MICHELE NORRIS: --something out though at this very table expressions of humility have been interpreted as weakness. And-- and-- and often when he takes that posture, when people were saying he should have been more contrite, you can almost hear the reaction to that, if that had happened and so there-- there is another way of looking at that.

PEGGY NOONAN: Do you mean that happened before, that he was humble and-- and he was criticized for humility?

MICHELE NORRIS: Yes, I do. I think we have all seen that.

BOB SCHIEFFER: You know what I would say in the age of the internet and the web, the web has no sense of humor--

PEGGY NOONAN: Yes.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --the web has no sense of irony. You cannot be self-deprecating, because people say Bob Schieffer finally admitted--

PEGGY NOONAN: That's right-- that's right.

MICHELE NORRIS: There's no nuance.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --they don't know it's a joke. There may be something to what Michele says here. I want to thank all of you for joining with us today and being with us. We will be right back. Thank you all.

DAVID GERGEN: Thank you.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

(Begin VT)

TED KOOP (1954-55): Now that the situation is well in hand, gentleman our time is up.

STUART NOVINS (1955-60): Thank you very much, indeed, for coming here to FACE THE NATION.

PAUL NIVEN (1963-65): Gentlemen, I'm sorry, but our time is up. Thank you, Doctor King, for being our guest today on FACE THE NATION.

MARTIN AGRONSKY (1965-68): Mister Carmichael, I sincerely regret, but our time is up. Thank you for being here to FACE THE NATION.

GEORGE HERMAN (1969-83): I'm sorry, Governor. We're just about off the clock at this point. Thank you very much for being with us here to FACE THE NATION.

LESLEY STAHL (1983-91): I'm Lesley Stahl. Have a good week.

(End VT)

BOB SCHIEFFER: And that's it for us today. We'll see you next week right here on FACE THE NATION.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

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