stiration, such as Lindsey Graham, of South Carolina, who was a House impeachment manager in 1998, and Trent Lott, of Mississippi, who in 2000 expressed a hope that lighting might strike Clinton before her first day in the Senate. She has surprised the military by becoming an expert on defense policy, as New York's first member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

A member of Clinton's campaign told me that Obama has not held a single hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's subcommittee on European Affairs, which he chairs, implying that he is a less serious senator than she is. In fact, according to the Boston Globe, Obama has presided over appointment hearings, but nothing more substantive: he took over the subcommittee just as the Presidential campaign began, and all the candidates have been AWOL since then. As for the challenge to Obama's seriousness, the Senate staff member disputed it, describing him as a deeply thoughtful, well-prepared member of the committee who asks good questions and never tries to score cheap points. In the staff member's words, Obama can see all sides of an issue where the Clinton would be formidable across the negotiating table from, say, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

In the Senate, Clinton has gone a long way toward neutralizing skeptics and winning over by working hard, defer-
ing to seniority, and deploying her underappreciated personal charm. At the same time, she became a Democratic leader in the Senate in part because she understood the powers of the Presidency and the need for an overarching strategy in any major conflict with the executive branch—for example, Neera Tanden said, during the fight to prevent Social Security from being privatized. Presumably, she would turn her knowledge of Congress to her advantage should she return to the White House.

"Her Senate years are when she learned," Holbrook said. "How could she conceivably have been such a successful, bipartisan, reach-out senator, collaborating even with impeachment managers, if she hadn't learned something?" In Holbrook's chronicle, her Senate career has instructed her in congressional power and filled the last conceivable holes in her resume, leaving her perfectly poised for the Presidency.

"Here's my view of the arc of her story," he said. "The so-called 'soft issues,' the so-called 'women's issues,' the military, the energy, the health, the foreign assistance—are things she mastered as First Lady. Her national-security qualifications are based on her five years as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee."

There is another view of her years in the Senate, one suggested by a few associates who have grown wary of Clinton's political tactics: that she's learned the lessons of the nineties all too well and is now concentrating on the executive branch. For example, Neera Tanden said, during the fight to prevent Social Security from being privatized. Presumably, she would turn her knowledge of Congress to her advantage should she return to the White House.

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