

**Tough Talk: The Construction of the Iranian Myth by the Obama Administration**

**(2008 – 2016)**

An Honors Thesis for the Department of Middle Eastern Studies

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## Abstract

This study explores the impact of Obama’s speeches as they shaped and were shaped by American foreign policy and ideology towards Iran during the time period 2008 – 2016, with a particular focus on the speeches that discuss the nuclear agreement between Iran and the United States. Its research outlines the language patterns within these speeches and how they interact to construct an Iranian myth in the eyes of not only the American people, but also the rest of the world.

Although the bulk of the thesis will concentrate on the present state of relations between the United States and Iran, my analysis of the current construction of Iran’s global image by the United States also draws on a reserve of older stereotypes and negative associations, as suggested by William Beeman and his examination of the perception of Iran being governed by “mad mullahs.”<sup>1</sup>

My research ultimately reflects on the development of Obama’s rhetoric towards Iran and evaluates it in contrast with the openness and optimism initially expressed by his government in its first term, and the changes, concessions, and perhaps sacrifices Obama had to make in order to successfully negotiate and implement the nuclear agreement with Iran. Thus, my thesis may prove useful in aiding the public to understand that politics is an image game, not only for Obama to achieve his foreign policy aims, but to preserve his own standing and legacy as a politician.

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<sup>1</sup> William O. Beeman, *The “Great Satan” vs the “Mad Mullahs”*, (CT: Praeger, 2005).

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## Introduction

On June 4, 2009, in the Major Reception Hall at Cairo University, President Barack Obama delivered a speech that spoke to his aspirations for a newfound mutual cooperation and respect between the United States and the Muslim world. Fittingly, it was christened “A New Beginning.”

In a manner unprecedented for an American president, Obama used the traditional Muslim greeting of “assalaamu alaykum,” which was met with thunderous applause, and outlined the Muslim world’s rich and storied past.<sup>2</sup> Most astonishingly, he acknowledged the United States’ own role in creating the mayhem that was the Middle East: Namely, how American self-interest had led to Cold War proxy games played at the expense of Muslim-majority countries.<sup>3</sup>

He even admitted that “in the middle of the Cold War, the United States played a role in the overthrow of a democratically-elected Iranian government.”<sup>4</sup> This admission was considered a “dramatic shift in tone from that of the Bush administration” towards Iran, which was grouped with North Korea and Iraq in President George W. Bush’s infamous 2002 State of the Union speech, perhaps better known as the “Axis of Evil” speech.<sup>5</sup> According to President Bush’s remarks, these states and their pursuit of weapons

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<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Freedland, “Barack Obama in Cairo: the speech no other president could make,” *The Guardian*, accessed March 21, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jun/04/barack-obama-speech-islam-west>.

<sup>3</sup> “Text: Obama’s Speech in Cairo,” *New York Times*, accessed April 16, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> “Obama offers Iran ‘the promise of a new beginning’,” *CNN*, accessed March 13, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/03/20/obama.iran.video>.

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of mass destruction, in tandem with their support of “terrorist allies,” threatened the “peace of the world”.<sup>6</sup> The speech is commonly regarded as one of the most important and memorable State of the Union speeches in history, simply for that powerful three-word phrase, the “Axis of Evil.”<sup>7</sup>

Reminiscent of both President Ronald Reagan’s renowned June 8, 1983 “Evil Empire” speech which condemned the Soviet Union as well as the fight against the Axis powers in the Second World War (former White House speechwriter David Frum, who coined the preceding term “axis of hatred,” confirmed that the reference to the Axis powers was indeed deliberate<sup>8</sup>),<sup>9</sup> the 2002 State of the Union address was the “definitive statement... of the President’s intention to make the war on terror a worldwide crusade for democracy, however different regimes like Iran, Iraq and North Korea might otherwise be.”<sup>10</sup>

The speech thus established the direction of American foreign policy during the Bush era, especially towards the Middle East, and Iran in particular, and was a marker for the start of the War on Terror.<sup>11</sup> It seemed to represent a “take no prisoners,” almost Wild-West approach, or as Kenneth Pollack, a noted expert on Middle Eastern affairs and

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<sup>6</sup> “President Delivers State of the Union Address,” The White House: President George W. Bush, accessed April 16, 2017, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>.

<sup>7</sup> “The 4th best State of the Union address: ‘Axis of evil’,” *Washington Post*, accessed January 22, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/01/25/the-4th-best-state-of-the-union-address-axis-of-evil/?utm\\_term=.2092e7c5beb9](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/01/25/the-4th-best-state-of-the-union-address-axis-of-evil/?utm_term=.2092e7c5beb9).

<sup>8</sup> David Frum, *The Right Man: An Inside Account Of The Bush White House*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 234.

<sup>9</sup> “How Much of an Axis, and How Evil?” Washington Institute, accessed April 9, 2017, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/how-much-of-an-axis-and-how-evil>.

<sup>10</sup> “The 4th best State of the Union address: ‘Axis of evil’,” *Washington Post*, accessed January 22, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/01/25/the-4th-best-state-of-the-union-address-axis-of-evil/?utm\\_term=.2092e7c5beb9](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/01/25/the-4th-best-state-of-the-union-address-axis-of-evil/?utm_term=.2092e7c5beb9).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

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former CIA analyst, said, “reinforced the sentiment that these [the individuals that constituted the Bush administration] are a bunch of cowboys who don't pay a whole lot of attention to nuances.”<sup>12</sup>

President Obama’s overtures for a softer kind of diplomacy in the Cairo address, especially towards Iran, were therefore a complete departure from what the world had come to know of American foreign policy towards the Middle East for the past decade. The name “A New Beginning” said it all: Hopeful, optimistic, and encouraging are words that could characterize this speech.

On the subject of Iran, “rather than remain trapped in the past, [President Obama] made it clear to Iran's leaders and people that [his] country [was] prepared to move forward.”<sup>13</sup> A particularly notable line from the speech is that “there will be many issues to discuss between our two countries, and we are willing to move forward without preconditions on the basis of mutual respect.”<sup>14</sup> By saying that moving forward would involve no “preconditions,” it seemed as though President Obama was hinting at a completely blank slate for Iran, with the promise of lifted sanctions.

However, President Obama did also recognize that “change cannot happen overnight”; that “no single speech can eradicate years of mistrust.”<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, in hindsight, that has certainly been the case. The Middle East is arguably worse off than it

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<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Bumiller, “White House Letter; Axis of Evil: First Birthday for a Famous Phrase,” *New York Times*, accessed April 9, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/20/us/white-house-letter-axis-of-evil-first-birthday-for-a-famous-phrase.html>.

<sup>13</sup> *New York Times*. “Text: Obama’s Speech in Cairo.” Accessed April 16, 2017. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

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was before, with Syria and Iraq in tatters thanks to ISIS, which many attribute to President Obama's mishandling of the region.

Relations between the United States and Iran, on the other hand, have ostensibly improved. On July 14, 2015, the P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), the European Union (EU), and Iran reached a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) "to ensure that Iran's nuclear program will be exclusively peaceful," while October 18, 2015 was the official Adoption Day of the JCPOA; lastly, January 16, 2016, marked Implementation Day of the JCPOA.<sup>16</sup>

Yet in spite of such tangible progress, the current dynamic between the two countries remains unfriendly at best, and volatile at worst. I argue that this dynamic, while also the direct result of actions by the Iranian government, is in no small part due to the ongoing efforts of the Obama administration to construct a mythological image of Iran in order to serve further the administration's own domestic and foreign policy agendas.

Consequently, I will investigate how President Obama's rhetoric creates this Iranian myth, by tracing the development of and analyze President Obama's rhetoric (in the form of official speeches) towards Iran in the context of the JCPOA, including both the language of the speeches themselves and their performative dimensions. To do so, I will employ literary and rhetorical tools such as symbols, metaphors, syntax, and diction, as well as offer interpretations of his delivery i.e. in terms of vocal tone and gesture.

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<sup>16</sup> "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," US Department of State, accessed April 24, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/iran/jcpoa>.

### **Locating My Research**

Much of the research I have come across is divided into two camps. The first camp argues that the poor state of relations between Iran and the United States is entirely the fault of Iran's hostile government; the second set of texts recognizes the complex dynamic between the two, which has arisen from complicated foreign policy interests and a tangled history. I place my own research squarely in the second camp, which relies more on facts rather than media spin. As such, I evaluate President Obama's speeches with an eye to particular political motivations and consequently, his desired messaging. Thus far, many have written about President Obama's powerful rhetorical style, but no one has engaged in a consistent, detailed analysis of his speeches surrounding the nuclear deal. This analysis is hence the primary contribution of my thesis to the field.

### **Structure**

This thesis first presents background information to contextualize the longstanding tension between Iran and the United States, marked most obviously and infamously by the 1979 Iran Hostage Crisis, but with roots in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. I then provide a literature review of key sources, including relevant books and a list of the speeches by President Obama that I have referred to extensively, and proceed to situate my thesis in light of the existing research. Following the literature review section, I begin my analysis of the language patterns present in the rhetoric surrounding the nuclear agreement: Firstly, I discuss President Obama's manipulation of historical allusions, secondly, his performance of masculinity, and thirdly, his moral characterizations of Iran



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in opposition to the United States. The thesis then culminates in a reflection on whether true progress has been made in terms of what President Obama hoped for in his Cairo speech, as well speculate on the future of Iranian-American relations in the wake of Trump's election to the presidency.

## **Chapter 1: Background Information**

### **1.1 The Climate of US-Iran Relations**

Despite the implementation of the historic JCPOA in January 2016, the relationship between the United States and Iran remain frosty. Diplomatic relations have not been re-established since the aftermath of the 1979 Hostage Crisis; currently, Switzerland serves as the protecting power for U.S. interests in Iran.<sup>17</sup> As Sina Azodi writes in *The Diplomat*, “while the post-JCPOA era has created a positive atmosphere about the future of the two former friends, the hopes of the two nations enjoying better relations have so far proved elusive. In fact, no substantial change has occurred in the diplomatic climate.”<sup>18</sup>

This lack of change is, of course, due not to one single party, but both the Iranian and American governments. On the one hand, President Hassan Rouhani is a stark contrast to his predecessor, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whom critics have labeled as a conservative representing the hard right.<sup>19</sup> Instead, President Rouhani continues in the pragmatic vein of Presidents Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami, both of whom backed his campaign.<sup>20</sup> Like Ahmadinejad, his aim is to maximize Tehran’s influence in the region, but on the other hand, sees the economy as the key to

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<sup>17</sup> “A Guide to the United States’ History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Iran,” Office of the Historian, accessed April 2, 2017, <https://history.state.gov/countries/iran>.

<sup>18</sup> Sina Azodi, “3 Possible Paths for Iran-US Relations,” *The Diplomat*, accessed April 2, 2017, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/08/3-possible-paths-for-iran-us-relations>.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Mason, *Foreign Policy in Iran and Saudi Arabia: Economics and Diplomacy In The Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 23.

<sup>20</sup> Kevjn Lim, “Iran: The Ayatollah Succession Question,” *The Diplomat*, October 11, 2014.

achieving this goal.<sup>21</sup> His rhetoric has displayed a much greater willingness than President Ahmadinejad to engage with the West, and his actions have concretized in the JCPOA.<sup>22</sup> Over the years, there has been an evolution of political attitudes in Iran over time towards negotiations because of the declining economy, brought about in large part by sanctions.

Both Iran and the United States, however, find each other's actions in the Middle East threatening to their own interests. Iran considers the U.S. presence in the Persian Gulf "a major security threat," while the United States views Iran's ballistic missile program and its actions in Iraq, Syria and Yemen as dangerous. Circumstances in the region like the US withdrawal from Iraq, instability in Yemen, and the rise of ISIS have combined to create a power vacuum, and allowed Iran to pursue its goal as the other major power centre in the Middle East aside from Saudi Arabia.

The United States thus continues to be wary of Iran and its growing regional clout, especially taking into account Iran's tumultuous history with Israel, the chief American ally in the region. As previously discussed, President Obama's approach to diplomacy with Iran has been markedly different from President Bush's – softer, with a comparatively stronger desire for engagement; yet to a large extent, his rhetoric too works within an American foreign policy framework that has been cultivated over generations of American presidents.

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<sup>21</sup> Roger Shanahan, "Iranian Foreign Policy Under Rouhani," *Lowy Institute*, February 2015, 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Idem.*, 5.

## 1.2 US Foreign Policy Interests in Iran

The United States government has long had foreign policy interests in Iran, in terms of resources as well as hoping to use it as a base to spread American influence. These interests have often been at odds with the aspirations of the Iranian people themselves leading to friction in relations, as well as influencing many of Iran's major political milestones.

Prior to the Iranian Revolution, Iran and the West had close relations. Western governments and corporations had and still have economic and political interests in Iran thanks to its plentiful oil and strategic position in the Gulf. Iran borders several countries including Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey, as well as key water bodies the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, the Caspian Sea, and the Straits of Hormuz. The oil issue in particular has been a source of contention, prompting the 1953 coup against the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammed Mussadiq, who strove to nationalize Iran's oil.

Mainly "motivated by economic interest", the US was "concerned about the possible contagion of the nationalization in Iran", as other oil-producing countries might do the same to American companies and harm the ability of the US to profit from them.<sup>23</sup> As a result, the US and Britain sought to establish a government "more amenable to compromise and negotiation."<sup>24</sup> In addition, the US, frightened by the possibility of Musaddiq being a Communist leader, saw "the challenge of Communism" to be a legitimate justification to assist in the Musaddiq coup.

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<sup>23</sup> James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*, (USA: Yale University Press, 1988), 273.

<sup>24</sup> *Idem.*, 274

There existed a brief period after the Iranian Revolution where US-Iran relations appeared to be improving, only to sour again once the Iranians thought the US was being disingenuous. In 1979, the US had made overtures to Khomeini's government saying that the Shah was "finished," and that the two countries were natural allies in light of their common enmity towards the Soviet Union. The US even offered to supply fresh arms to Iran. The Shah's subsequent entry into the US for medical treatment cast the US as partial to the Shah, and disingenuous towards the Iranians.<sup>25</sup> Iranians viewed this as another violation of their trust intended to serve US self-interest.

The Hostage Crisis grew out of the resulting anti-American sentiment. It saw the release of papers documenting US-British plots in Iran – reinforcing the perception of the West as greedy for control over the state for their own gain. Khomeini consequently declared President Carter an "enemy of humanity."<sup>26</sup> The effects of the crisis would be long-lasting on both sides. The Hostage Crisis is to Americans what the 1953 coup is to Iranians –a formative point of reference for further engagement. Trade halted; US and British warships began joint naval exercises near the Straits of Hormuz; Iran closed its territorial waters and airspace to US ships and aircraft.<sup>27</sup> Soon after, the US would back Saddam's regime in the Iran-Iraq War (1980 – 1988), and use its clout in the international arena to isolate Iran. In Iran's national narrative, these gestures showed how the US wanted to suppress Iran's ascension.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Dilip Hiro, *Iran Under The Ayatollahs*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 137.

<sup>26</sup> *Idem.*, 138.

<sup>27</sup> *Idem.*, 138-139.

<sup>28</sup> Williamson Murray and Kevin M. Woods, *The Iran-Iraq War: A Military and Strategic Perspective*, (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 89.

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Since then, tensions were arguably at their highest during the Ahmadinejad presidency, due to American suspicions that the Iranian government was pursuing nuclear weapons despite repeated denials. After a period of sanctions, the United States under the Obama administration and Iran under the Rouhani administration finally managed to negotiate the infamous nuclear deal, which has been a source of controversy ever since.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review of Key Sources**

### **2.1 Books**

This thesis is indebted to a number of critical sources regarding the topics of Obama's rhetoric, the history of the relationship between Iran and the United States ranging from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the contemporary nuclear deal, the image cross-construction that occurs thanks to both countries, and of course, the intersection between all of these issues. They provide not just key perspectives but also theoretical grounding for my own research.

Firstly, I looked to the following books to provide crucial historical research: Becoming Enemies: U.S.-Iran Relations and the Iran-Iraq War, 1979 – 1988 by James G. Blight, Janet M. Lang, Hussein Banai, Malcolm Byrne, and John Tirman, Navigating Iran: From Carter to Obama by Ofira Seliktar, US Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran: From the War on Terror to the Obama Administration by Kumuda Simpson, and Iran's Nuclear Program and International Law: From Confrontation to Accord by Daniel H. Joyner.

Becoming Enemies: U.S.-Iran Relations and the Iran-Iraq War, 1979 – 1988 gives crucial context as to the roots of the poor state of American-Iranian relations today. It makes use of a unique critical oral history approach to show the real, behind-the-scenes perspectives of policy-makers. Advocates of particular points of view “present evidence for their interpretations from documents and experience and then cross-examine each

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other, with reference to whatever evidence they believe bears on the issues under investigation<sup>29</sup>.”

Ofira’s text details the development of Obama’s attitude and approach towards interacting with Iran, from the early days before his presidency to the wake of the Arab Spring in 2011. The book does, however, assume a highly negative impression of Iran as a rogue state and military dictatorship under President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

US Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran: From the War on Terror to the Obama Administration is an examination of the trajectory of American nuclear policy towards Iran, and the consequences on the two countries’ relations. It serves also as a critique of the demonization of Iran and the negative effects of that monolithic portrayal in educating the American public about Iranian nuclear policy, as well as the formation of competing national identities and narratives. By tracing the development of the American government’s attitude towards the Iranian nuclear program, it concludes by looking at the shift in the Obama administration’s foreign policy towards Iran and consequently the nuclear program.

Joyner’s Iran's Nuclear Program and International Law: From Confrontation to Accord serves as a comprehensive overview of the nuclear dispute and the actions of the parties involved from 2002 – 2015. It looks closely at whether Iran violated the NPT, and whether Iran was in violation of its safeguard obligations, which form the basis of American accusations of Iran’s quest to build a nuclear weapon. It also

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<sup>29</sup> James G. Blight, Janet M. Lang, Hussein Banai, Malcolm Byrne, and John Tirman, *Becoming Enemies: U.S.-Iran Relations and the Iran-Iraq War, 1979 – 1988*. (UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 7.



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assesses the standards of the IAEA and the actions of the Security Council and their implications. Lastly, it discusses the JCPOA and recent developments.

Aside from historical context, it was necessary for me to investigate rhetoric, particularly President Obama's rhetoric, from a theoretical point of view, so as to inform my own analysis of his speeches. To do so, I referenced William O. Beeman's The "Great Satan" vs the "Mad Mullahs", Jason Jones' The American Rhetorical Construction of the Iranian Nuclear Threat, Justin S. Vaughn's and Jennifer R. Merciacca, The Rhetoric of Heroic Expectations: Establishing the Obama Presidency, and Ira Allen and Elizabeth A. Flynn's symposium collection, "Barack Obama's Significance for Rhetoric and Composition" for the journal College Composition and Communication, Vol. 67, No. 3, February 2016.

Beeman undertakes a analysis of the postmodern culture conflict between Iran and the US, which focuses "not on substantive differences or real conflict, but rather on symbolic discourse: both nations construct the "other" to fit an idealised picture of an enemy."<sup>30</sup> The analysis looks at the history of discourse in both nations, eg. how the US is primed in foreign policy to speak using a set of tools inherited from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and how this leads to the construction of "master myths" in both states that impede understanding.<sup>31</sup>

Jason Jones' book is an in-depth illustration of how the American media has constructed the Iranian nuclear threat in a way that discourages the asking of questions or debate. It shifts the focus from Iran's sensationalist media to America's own, and

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<sup>30</sup> William O. Beeman, *The "Great Satan" vs the "Mad Mullahs"*, (CT: Praeger, 2005), 4.

<sup>31</sup> *Idem.*, 7

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investigates what happens when portrayals are not accepted wholesale. It engages in close readings of media coverage regarding the Iranian nuclear program, namely through newspaper reports as well as cable television reports and interviews. Thereafter, it examines the relationship between American executive power and the press, and how this relationship works towards constructing that perception of Iran as a nuclear threat. However, it was published in 2011, and thus is not immediately up to date on the most crucial period of the US-Iran relationship regarding the nuclear deal.

The Rhetoric of Heroic Expectations: Establishing the Obama Presidency meanwhile, delineates the context behind the public's expectations of presidential rhetoric, namely in how the president is supposed to embody the ideal hero. It analyses the background of public perception at the beginning of the Obama presidency and the rhetorical burdens he had to overcome, as well as specific aspects of his rhetorical style in both the domestic and foreign policy settings.

Lastly, the symposium collection on "Barack Obama's Significance for Rhetoric and Composition" was of great assistance to Chapter 4 of this thesis, which deals with the gendered aspects of Obama's speech.

## **2.2 Obama's Presidential Speeches**

Obama, in his speeches regarding Iran, has demonstrated a number of recurring language patterns such as masculine diction, historical allusions, and characterizations of the US and Iran as moral and ethically questionable respectively. This thesis will highlight and analyze these groups of rhetorical devices, and their intended effects on

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persuading the public to support the nuclear deal, as well as craft a particular image of Iran on the global stage. The speeches listed below are those that I refer to most frequently in this thesis, and are introduced in chronological order. Elsewhere in the text, I occasionally hyperlink parts of President Obama's speeches to their audio-visual counterparts on Youtube, so that the reader may benefit from the full experience of hearing and seeing Obama's rhetorical style and content. The complete text of the speeches can also be found in the appendix.

1) "Text: Obama's Speech in Cairo." *New York Times*. June 4, 2009.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html> (Accessed April 16, 2017).

2) "9 June, 2010: Address on UN Security Council Sanctions Against Iran."

*American Rhetoric*.

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamairansanctions.htm>

(Accessed April 16, 2017).

3) "Statement By The President On First Step Agreement On Iran's Nuclear Program." *The White House: President Barack Obama*. 23 November, 2013.

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/23/statement-president-first-step-agreement-irans-nuclear-program> (Accessed April 16, 2017).

4) "3 March, 2015: On Ash Carter Briefing, Iran, and PM Netanyahu's Address."

*American Rhetoric*.

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamairanpmnetanyahucongressspeech.htm> (Accessed April 16, 2017).

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5) “Statement by the President on the Framework to Prevent Iran from Obtaining a Nuclear Weapon.” *The White House: President Barack Obama*.

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/04/02/statement-president-framework-prevent-iran-obtaining-nuclear-weapon> (Accessed April 16, 2017).

6) “Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal.”  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/08/05/remarks-president-iran-nuclear-deal> (Accessed 24 October, 2016).

## **Chapter 3: Historical Allusions**

### **3.1 Following Tradition**

Despite garnering a reputation as a changemaker, Obama's speeches tend to rely heavily on historical allusions. Looking towards the future means an acute awareness of the past; consequently, even as Obama proposes "historic" deals like the JCPOA, he couches these announcements, I contend, in a history that the American people and a majority of his voters would find familiar and to which they can relate. He sets out to strike a delicate balance – situating himself as part of a longstanding tradition, while negotiating a space for his own historical legacy.

Obama has often made explicit links between the Iran deal and older ones from bygone eras, declaring it to be "in line with a tradition of American leadership."<sup>32</sup> His historical allusions are typically drawn from either the Kennedy or the Reagan era, in relation to the Cold War, or the bipolar rivalry between the US and the USSR.

On April 2, 2015, in his "Statement on Historic Nuclear Agreement with Iran," Obama opened his speech with one such historical reference:

They [the American people] understand instinctively the words of President Kennedy, who faced down the far greater threat of communism, and said: 'Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate.' The American people remember that at the height of the Cold War, Presidents like Nixon and Reagan struck historic arms control agreements with the Soviet Union, a far more dangerous adversary – despite the fact that that adversary not only threatened to destroy our country and our way of life, but had the means to do so. Those

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<sup>32</sup> "Statement by the President on the Framework to Prevent Iran from Obtaining a Nuclear Weapon," The White House: President Barack Obama, accessed April 10, 2017, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/04/02/statement-president-framework-prevent-iran-obtaining-nuclear-weapon>.

agreements were not perfect. They did not end all threats. But they made our world safer. A good deal with Iran will do the same.

Rather than making any mention of Iran, President Obama delves directly into a historical allusion. This frontal placement of the allusion thus seems to convey President Obama's prioritization of historical referencing above all (even over mentioning Iran, the party with which he was negotiating).

### **3.2 Bypassing Partisan Politics**

Despite the eighteen-year gap between the presidencies of Kennedy and Reagan and the developments in the Cold War rivalry during that time, Obama not only draws parallels between the two presidents' actions towards the USSR, but collapses these time periods into one monolithic event – the “height of the Cold War.”<sup>33</sup> He does not mention the other presidents who served within that time period, such as Lyndon B. Johnson, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter. Nixon is mentioned only in passing. Why then, focus on Kennedy and Reagan?

I argue that in the American collective memory, Kennedy and Reagan represent the best of recent American leadership from both the Democrats (Kennedy) and the Republicans (Reagan): According to a Gallup poll from 2009, they are considered essentially on par with Abraham Lincoln.<sup>34</sup> Mentioning Kennedy and Reagan appears to

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<sup>33</sup> “Statement by the President on the Framework to Prevent Iran from Obtaining a Nuclear Weapon,” The White House: President Barack Obama, accessed April 10, 2017, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/04/02/statement-president-framework-prevent-iran-obtaining-nuclear-weapon>.

<sup>34</sup> “Best President? Lincoln on Par With Reagan, Kennedy,” Gallup, accessed January 14, 2017, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/114292/best-president-lincoln-par-reagan-kennedy.aspx>.

be Obama's attempt to appeal to both parties, and hopefully sidestep additional divisive bipartisan politics. The amount of time between the terms of the two presidents is irrelevant; instead, Obama's speeches are constructed so as to deliberately mythologize two already greatly mythologized presidents from each major political party. Doing so posits him in the middle of a desired (and desirable) political consensus.

This inference is supported by the heavy emphasis placed on unity and support regardless of political affiliation within the speech. President Obama openly acknowledges that “unfortunately, we're living through a time in American politics where every foreign policy decision is viewed through a partisan prism, evaluated by headline-grabbing sound bites. And so before the ink was even dry on this deal – before Congress even read it – a majority of Republicans declared their virulent opposition.”<sup>35</sup> Consequently, his solution is to attempt to unite the Democrats and Republicans, at least in his rhetoric.

Similarly, when referring to the Cold War, President Obama remarks that, “Under Democratic and Republican Presidents, new agreements were forged – a Non-Proliferation Treaty that prohibited nations from acquiring nuclear weapons, while allowing them to access peaceful nuclear energy; the SALT and START Treaties which bound the United States and Soviet Union to cooperation on arms control. Not every conflict was averted, but the world avoided nuclear catastrophe, and we created the time and the space to win the Cold War without firing a shot at the Soviets.”<sup>36</sup> In his delivery

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<sup>35</sup> “Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal,” The White House: Barack Obama, accessed October 24, 2016, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/08/05/remarks-president-iran-nuclear-deal>.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

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of the speech, [President Obama intentionally stresses the “and” in the phrase “Under Democratic and Republican Presidents”](#) (00:02:53) so as to highlight the like-mindedness of presidents from both parties. Of course, I would also like to note that President Obama’s point here is somewhat ironic, since President Kennedy’s policies towards Cuba in the early 1960s nearly resulted in nuclear war between the US and the USSR.<sup>37</sup> This glossing over of history therefore implies that President Obama is focused more on employing allusions for political gain rather than ensuring that they enjoy full accuracy and nuance.

To produce a similar effect as the quotation above, President Obama says later in the speech that “among U.S. policymakers, there’s never been disagreement on the danger posed by an Iranian nuclear bomb. Democrats and Republicans alike have recognized that it would spark an arms race in the world’s most unstable region, and turn every crisis into a potential nuclear showdown.” Here, he [places a vocal emphasis on the word “alike”](#) in “Democrats and Republicans alike” (00:09:27).

Yet another tonal similarity can be found in the following lines: [“The United Nations Security Council has unanimously supported it. The majority of arms control and non-proliferation experts support it. Over 100 former ambassadors – who served under Republican and Democratic Presidents – support it”](#) (00:20:12). Each time President Obama says “support it,” he uses the same tone, and emphasizes the part of the last sentence which indicates that the ambassadors served under both “Republican and

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<sup>37</sup> Carter Vaughn Findley and John Alexander Rothney, *Twentieth-Century World*, (USA: Wadsworth Cengage, 2011), 257.



Democratic Presidents.” Perhaps this speaks to the manner in which President Obama and his advisors sought to portray him – as a ”unifier” and someone “above partnership.”

### **3.3 Kennedy Reincarnated**

Paying homage to previous leaders casts Obama as a president not only sensitive to American history, but one who will continue in the hallowed tradition of the great men before him. President Obama, in his “Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal,” tells the story of Kennedy as a pillar of strength amidst a sea of naysayers: “In light of these mounting threats, a number of strategists here in the United States argued that we had to take military action against the Soviets, to hasten what they saw as inevitable confrontation. But the young President offered a different vision. Strength, in his view, included powerful armed forces and a willingness to stand up for our values around the world. But he rejected the prevailing attitude among some foreign policy circles that equated security with a perpetual war footing.”<sup>38</sup>

Phrases like “young President” deliver a subtle hint to the audience to consider one of the more obvious similarities between Obama and Kennedy. Kennedy was the youngest president ever elected to office, while Obama is the fifth youngest (other “firsts” include Kennedy being the first and only Catholic elected to the presidency and Obama the first African-American). During President Obama’s time in office, a number of his decisions have been criticized by the American public and the media, which has, in

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<sup>38</sup> “Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal,” The White House: Barack Obama, accessed October 24, 2016, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/08/05/remarks-president-iran-nuclear-deal>.

large part, been attributed to his youthful lack of experience.<sup>39</sup> According to pundit Kenneth T. Walsh, the dilemma can be characterised as thus: “Youth has always been a double-edged sword for America's presidents. It tends to inject the White House with fresh ideas and energy, but it can also lead to impetuosity and a disregard for the tried and true.”

While academics and politicians universally agree that Kennedy is to blame for the botched Bay of Pigs invasion (also attributed to his youth), he is remembered nonetheless as one of America's great presidents. Obama, therefore, is hoping to draw on that association between youth and greatness, by casting himself as a modern-day Kennedy in both temperament and decision-making ability. The speech frames his efforts to engage with Iran diplomatically as prescient in the same way that Kennedy's “different vision” and “wisdom would help guide our ship of state through some of the most perilous moments in human history” to resolve the Cuban Missile Crisis peacefully.<sup>40</sup> Again, there appears to be a collapsing of time periods into one – the 1960s with the current day. The implied message is that Obama's decision, like Kennedy's, will stand the test of time; moreover, the parallels in the positive outcome in Kennedy's case and Obama's foreign policy decisions reinforces Obama's own “different vision.”

As a matter of fact, despite the presence of a “different vision,” President Obama argues that a more dovish attitude is well within the ambit of US political history: “It's a mindset out of step with the traditions of American foreign policy, where we exhaust

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<sup>39</sup> “The Young Presidents: Obama's Inexperience Could Affect Key Decisions,” US News, accessed March 17, 2017, <https://www.usnews.com/news/history/articles/2009/12/11/the-young-presidents-obamas-inexperience-could-affect-key-decisions>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

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diplomacy before war, and debate matters of war and peace in the cold light of truth.” His approach may seem radical and displeasing to many conservative politicians and policy makers, but even then, Obama has an appropriate quote from the president most revered by American conservatives: “Peace is not the absence of conflict,” President Reagan once said. It is “the ability to cope with conflict by peaceful means.”

### **3.4 Comparing Iran to Other States**

These historical references are also used to draw comparisons between the USSR and Iran as ideological enemies of the US. On August 5, 2015, “Fifty-two years ago, President Kennedy, at the height of the Cold War, addressed this same university on the subject of peace. The Berlin Wall had just been built. The Soviet Union had tested the most powerful weapons ever developed. China was on the verge of acquiring a nuclear bomb. Less than 20 years after the end of World War II, the prospect of nuclear war was all too real.”

President Obama thus positions Iran as the current major political threat faced by the US in his speech by once more invoking the language of the Cold War, and by placing the two time frames (fifty-two years prior and when the speech was given) side by side, he creates an emotional portal that allows him to tap into that anxiety within the national emotional memory. Moreover, explicitly mentioning the fact that President Kennedy had addressed the same university on that very topic adds yet another layer to that collapsing of time and space; that sense of the past happening now. As a result, the

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speech exhibits undertones of mounting danger and urgency: To prevent a repeat of the past, the problem must be dealt with immediately.

In that same breath, however, Obama makes certain to temper his language: Despite the urgency of his rhetoric, he takes care not to slide into outright jingoism. The same speech from August 5, 2015 notes that, “With all of the threats that we face today, it’s hard to appreciate how much more dangerous the world was at that time.” Referring once more to his quote about the US-USSR treaties from the early 1990s, his focus is on the solution to the rivalry more so than the rivalry itself: “SALT and START Treaties which bound the United States and Soviet Union to cooperation on arms control. Not every conflict was averted, but the world avoided nuclear catastrophe, and we created the time and the space to win the Cold War without firing a shot at the Soviets.” The emphasis here on “time and space” as well as averting crises demonstrates a desire on Obama’s part to balance his aggressive, macho language with a gentler problem-solving bent, even seeking to appropriate the level-headedness of the past (e.g. “With Kennedy at the helm, the Cuban Missile Crisis was resolved peacefully”).

Behind this measuredness is a concerted effort to appear less hawkish in comparison to those who would oppose his foreign policy vis-à-vis Iran. A more recent event in the American political memory is, of course, the 2003 Iraq War, which has been universally derided as a mistaken war. Gesturing at the damaging ad campaign waged by Republicans, Obama argues: “And if the rhetoric in these ads, and the accompanying commentary, sounds familiar, it should – for many of the same people who argued for the war in Iraq are now making the case against the Iran nuclear deal. ... More than a decade

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later, we still live with the consequences of the decision to invade Iraq. Our troops achieved every mission they were given. But thousands of lives were lost, tens of thousands wounded. That doesn't count the lives lost among Iraqis.”

Unnecessary hawkishness was the root of the problem in the first place, and President Obama, who publically voiced his opposition to the invasion of Iraq, is using the Iraq War as a cautionary tale here. He employs it so that other government players and the American public will be less likely to aim for aggressive action; instead, it lays out a convincing context for his more diplomatic approach. Invading or taking military action against Iran may be tempting, but based on what happened in Iraq, history shows that hawkishness loses out. The allusion to the Iraq War furthermore strengthens the idea of Obama as prescient and Kennedy-like – avoiding war with Iraq and Iran are effectively Obama's Kennedy-esque credentials.

### **3.5 Carving Out a Niche in the Political Canon**

While building an extensive narrative on his continuation of history, Obama's speeches on American foreign policy towards Iran simultaneously showcase his desire to make history. They seek to historicize the decision and act as a way of capturing the significance of the moment; of Obama's moment. He needs the trust and support of both Democrats and Republicans which comes from invoking tradition, but to establish his legacy as well.

As a result, Obama frequently employs the term “first step” across a number of speeches. For example, in the first formal announcement of the Iran nuclear agreement on

November 23, 2013, which itself is titled the “Statement By The President On First Step Agreement On Iran's Nuclear Program,” Obama’s second sentence is: “Today, the United States – together with our close allies and partners – took an important first step toward a comprehensive solution that addresses our concerns with the Islamic Republic of Iran’s nuclear program.”<sup>41</sup>

The term is repeated four more times, with a total of five times in the speech:

a) “While today’s announcement is just a first step, it achieves a great deal. For the first time in nearly a decade, we have halted the progress of the Iranian nuclear program.”

b) “Meanwhile, this first step will create time and space over the next six months for more negotiations to fully address our comprehensive concerns about the Iranian program.”

c) “However, now is not the time to move forward on new sanctions — because doing so would derail this promising first step, alienate us from our allies and risk unraveling the coalition that enabled our sanctions to be enforced in the first place.”

d) “The first step that we’ve taken today marks the most significant and tangible progress that we’ve made with Iran since I took office. And now we must use the months ahead to pursue a lasting and comprehensive settlement that would resolve an issue that has threatened our security – and the security of our allies – for decades. “

The importance of the phrase “first step” should not be overlooked. It is a straightforward indicator of time, and acts as a marker of a new, better beginning; history

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<sup>41</sup> “Statement By The President On First Step Agreement On Iran's Nuclear Program,” The White House: President Barack Obama, accessed April 16, 2017, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/23/statement-president-first-step-agreement-irans-nuclear-program>.

is in the process of being made. In spite of the ostensible contradiction between the two modes, Obama portrays himself not just as a follower of tradition, but a pioneer and leader.

Another term that denotes Obama's push to make history is, fittingly, the word "historic." The official Obama White House webpage for the nuclear deal is titled, "The Historic Deal that will Prevent Iran From Acquiring a Nuclear Weapon" – a reflection of the weight placed by the Obama administration on the word.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, the April 2, 2015 announcement of the deal contained several mentions of its "historic" nature:

a) "Today, the United States – together with our allies and partners -- has reached a historic understanding with Iran, which, if fully implemented, will prevent it from obtaining a nuclear weapon."

b) "I made clear that we were prepared to resolve this issue diplomatically, but only if Iran came to the table in a serious way. When that did not happen, we rallied the world to impose the toughest sanctions in history – sanctions which had a profound impact on the Iranian economy."

c) "The American people remember that at the height of the Cold War, Presidents like Nixon and Reagan struck historic arms control agreements with the Soviet Union, a far more dangerous adversary – despite the fact that that adversary not only threatened to destroy our country and our way of life, but had the means to do so. Those agreements were not perfect. They did not end all threats. But they made our world safer. A good deal with Iran will do the same." In this quote, as previously discussed, Obama draws

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<sup>42</sup> "The Historic Deal that Will Prevent Iran from Acquiring a Nuclear Weapon," The White House: President Barack Obama, accessed April 10, 2017, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/foreign-policy/iran-deal>.

explicit parallels between Cold War diplomacy and engaging in diplomatic efforts with Iran, which is underscored by the repetition of the word “historic” to refer to both instances.

d) “Their work – our work – is not yet done and success is not guaranteed. But we have an historic opportunity to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons in Iran, and to do so peacefully, with the international community firmly behind us. We should seize that chance.”

e) Occasionally, the word “history” is used to similar effect: “Iran will face strict limitations on its program, and Iran has also agreed to the most robust and intrusive inspections and transparency regime ever negotiated for any nuclear program in history.” The nuclear agreement is historic in part because of the level of transparency and stringency it exhibits.

Above all, President Obama is interested in creating an emotional connection between him and past politicians for the American public – even if his allusions are not truthful or complete – with the eventual goal of moving forward his foreign policy plans for Iran. In order to achieve that goal, he uses allusions firstly to verbally unify the two major political parties; secondly, he hopes to legitimize his actions and decisions by associating them with a romanticized American political history, and thirdly, he aims to monumentalize his own administration and concretize his foreign policy legacy by gesturing at a broader historical record to contextualize his leadership. Thus, Obama seeks to deftly manipulate both the old and the new, and strike a balance between the two



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modes so as to service his political aims, in much of the same way that he navigates his rhetorical performance of masculinity.

## Chapter 4: Masculine Speech Patterns

### 4.1 The First Female President?

President Obama has a fraught relationship with masculinity. As the first Black president, he has had to perform masculinity and contest its strictures at the same time. He has also had to be conscious of his racial identity and his relationship to White supremacy; this intersectionality has often meant that President Obama is disallowed the opportunity to perform “stereotypical masculinity.”<sup>43</sup>

Scholar Erec Smith suggests that “by being Black and male, [Obama] suffers from ‘gendered racism,’ Mutua’s term for a double oppression that involves the confluence of racial and gender stereotypes. ‘Ideal masculinity,’ when performed by Black men, threatens many White audiences.”<sup>44</sup> Instead, “Obama exudes what Mutua calls ‘progressive masculinity,’ which seeks to reorient contemporary masculinity away from ‘ideal masculinity,’ which, by definition, requires the domination of women, children, and, yes, other subordinate, or ‘weaker’ men.”

One question I had in my research was the reason for the stark juxtaposition between President Obama’s rhetoric from the “A New Beginning” speech in Cairo and his speeches relating to Iran and the nuclear deal; not only are they distinct in levels of congeniality, but also in the gendered nature of the language. The Cairo speech exhibits that “progressive masculinity,” or even “feminine rhetoric,” whereas the foreign policy

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<sup>43</sup> Ira Allen and Elizabeth A. Flynn, eds., *Barack Obama’s Significance for Rhetoric and Composition*, College Composition and Communication, Vol. 67, No. 3 (February 2016): 480.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

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speeches regarding Iran appear to be President Obama's attempt to perform "ideal masculinity."

Firstly, let me clarify what performing "feminine rhetoric" means in this context.

Erec Smith refers to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's definition:

In rhetorical terms, performing or enacting femininity has meant adopting a personal or self-disclosing tone (signifying nurturance, intimacy, and domesticity) and assuming a feminine persona, e.g., mother, or an ungendered persona, e.g., mediator or prophet, while speaking. It has meant preferring anecdotal evidence (reflecting women's experiential learning in contrast to men's expertise), developing ideas inductively (so the audience thinks that it, not this presumptuous woman, drew the conclusions) . . . and avoiding such "macho" strategies as tough language, confrontation or direct refutation, and any appearance of debating one's opponents.

The Cairo speech is a prime example of such rhetoric. It avoids "tough language, confrontation or direct refutation, and any appearance of debating one's opponents." Instead, it employs the word "respect" a total of 10 times; "cooperation" twice; it stresses commonality and mutual interest rather than conceiving of the United States and the Muslim world as being in opposition to each other, as in "I have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world; one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect; and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition."<sup>45</sup> By extension, I suggest that this definition recalls Judith Butler's theories on gender performance and performativity as well, in that gender does not exist outside of language; rather, language and discourse create gender.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *New York Times*. "Text: Obama's Speech in Cairo." Accessed April 16, 2017.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (New York: Routledge, 1990), 113.

President Obama is typically so adept at employing feminine rhetoric that Kathleen Parker of the *Washington Post* dubbed him the “first female president.”<sup>47</sup> In agreement with the description of feminine rhetoric above, Parker writes “Generally speaking, men and women communicate differently. Women tend to be coalition builders rather than mavericks (with the occasional rogue exception). While men seek ways to measure themselves against others, for reasons requiring no elaboration, women form circles and talk it out.”<sup>48</sup>

Parker uses the example of President Obama’s handling of the BP oil spill. She states that “his lack of immediate, commanding action was perceived as a lack of leadership because, well, it was. When he finally addressed the nation on day 56 (!) of the crisis, Obama's speech featured 13 percent passive-voice constructions, the highest level measured in any major presidential address this century, according to the Global Language Monitor, which tracks and analyzes language.” Her implication was that the character of President Obama’s rhetoric was hence insufficient in its forcefulness; passive rather than active, and consequently, that it would be ineffective in assuaging American national security concerns. In the “masculine-coded context of the Oval Office,” Parker contends that President Obama came up short.<sup>49</sup>

If feminine rhetoric is a predominant feature of President Obama’s public persona, then to what end does he use it? According to Smith, “Campbell further describes the role of audience in feminine rhetoric. When someone uses feminine

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<sup>47</sup> “Obama, Our First Female President,” *Washington Post*, accessed March 30, 2017, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/29/AR2010062903997.html?sid=ST2010070204475>.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

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rhetoric, ‘audience members will be addressed as peers, with recognition of authority based on experience... and efforts will be made to create identification with the experiences of the audience and those described by the speaker.’ That is, the goal is to empower one’s audience as well as enhance the proper ethos for oneself. Feminine rhetoric assumes capable, agential audiences.” I contend, however, that in the case of the Iran deal, the Obama administration did not assume a “capable, agential audience,” but an audience conditioned by years of fear-mongering under the Bush administration. Therefore, President Obama shifted from a feminine rhetoric to a masculine one regarding this issue.

A key obstacle for the Obama administration in negotiating the Iran deal was the pressure from domestic political circles. Opposition to any kind of engagement was widespread since before he took office in 2009, while his stance leaned towards engagement, it was necessary for him to balance that pursuit of diplomacy with a sense of authoritativeness and assertiveness, lest the public lose confidence in the Obama administration’s ability to control the relationship and potential consequences of engagement with Iran.

In mid-July 2015, one week after the administration announced the deal, public approval was at 33%, which then quickly fell to 21% over the following six weeks. 2% had a great deal of confidence that Iran’s leaders will abide by the agreement, while another 18% reported having a fair amount of confidence. About 70% said they were not too confident (28%) or not confident at all (42%) in Iran’s leaders. On a related note, the general public remained somewhat more confident in the ability in of the U.S. and

international agencies to monitor Iran's compliance with the agreement. In September 2015, 42% say they have a great deal (12%) or a fair amount (30%) of confidence in the U.S. and international agencies to track Iran's compliance.<sup>50</sup> As of February 2016, only 3 in 10 Americans approve of the nuclear agreement.<sup>51</sup>

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, Iran already had a poor image amongst members of the American public, thanks to the 1979 Hostage Crisis but mostly to the infamous "Axis of Evil" title and the panicky attitude of the United States towards the Middle East during the War on Terror. Domestic opinion of whether the deal would be adhered to was thus clearly low, and at best a fair amount of confidence that the US and international sphere would be capable of monitoring and enforcing that compliance. As a result, the language employed in the speeches surrounding the nuclear deal seek to combat that insecurity, specifically through the use of masculine diction.

#### **4.2 Obama's Masculine Diction**

Prior to the conception of the nuclear deal as we are familiar with it today, Obama already began to adopt the masculine language that would carry over to later speeches. On 9 June, 2010, in his "Address on UN Security Council Sanctions Against Iran," Obama declared that: "This resolution will put in place the toughest sanctions ever faced by the Iranian government, and it sends an unmistakable message about the international community's commitment to stopping the spread of nuclear weapons." The tone here is

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<sup>50</sup> "Support for Iran Nuclear Agreement Falls," Pew Research Center, accessed February 12, 2017, <http://www.people-press.org/2015/09/08/support-for-iran-nuclear-agreement-falls>.

<sup>51</sup> "After Nuclear Deal, U.S. Views of Iran Remain Dismal," Gallup, accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/189272/after-nuclear-deal-views-iran-remain-dismal.aspx>.

one of power, authority, and strength: the hyperbole of “toughest” notes that this is the most severe approach possible; the “un” prefix in “unmistakable” immediately accords the word negative force.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, Obama insists that the US “will ensure that these sanctions are vigorously enforced, just as we continue to refine and enforce our own sanctions on Iran alongside our friends and our allies,” thus painting the US and the international community as rigid, unyielding, and fully capable of cracking down on Iranian behaviour.<sup>53</sup> In particular, “vigorously enforced” suggests a sense of masculinity. Consequently, “the strong resolution that was passed today benefited from strong international support.”<sup>54</sup> Here, Obama repeats the word “strong,” whereby the repetition reinforces not only the idea of a powerful, effective resolution, but that it that can and will be enforced by the community.

Three years later, on November 23, 2013, in the first official statement announcing the nuclear accord with Iran, Obama reused a number of similar masculine buzzwords from the 2010 speech above, or at least echo the same sentiments. Once more, he assures the public that the US will continue to apply its “toughest sanctions”; secondly, despite refraining “from imposing new sanctions,” and allowing “the Iranian government access to a portion of the revenue that they have been denied through sanctions,” he insists that “the broader architecture of sanctions will remain in place and we will continue to enforce them vigorously”; thirdly, “through strong and principled

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<sup>52</sup> “9 June, 2010: Address on UN Security Council Sanctions Against Iran,” American Rhetoric, accessed April 16, 2017,

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamairansanctions.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

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diplomacy,” the United States of America will contribute to global peace and stability, and in addition, the “resolve of the US will remain firm.”<sup>55</sup>

Although there is a significant period of time between the 2010 and 2013 speeches, the diction employed is startlingly similar in constructing a particular image of the US as a powerful masculine actor in this relationship. This masculine language is consistently present throughout most of the speeches regarding Iran over the 2010 – 2016 period, especially in speeches that pertain to the Iran deal. For example, on March 3, 2015, in Obama’s “Ash Carter Briefing, Iran, and PM Netanyahu's Address,” he declares that the nuclear deal “would subject Iran to the most vigorous inspections and verifications regimes that have ever been put in place.”<sup>56</sup> “Most vigorous” and “ever been put in place” imbue the same superlative texture to the speech as “toughest sanctions” and convey a kind of masculine emphasis of impenetrability. Meanwhile, the January 17, 2016 speech “On Smart Diplomacy with Iran and Release of U.S. Detainees” repeats the earlier terms almost verbatim: Obama insists that “we will continue to enforce these sanctions, vigorously” while describing America as “strong” and “confident.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> “Statement By The President On First Step Agreement On Iran's Nuclear Program,” The White House: President Barack Obama, accessed April 16, 2017, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/23/statement-president-first-step-agreement-irans-nuclear-program>.

<sup>56</sup> “Remarks by the President Before Meeting with Secretary of Defense Carter,” The White House: President Barack Obama, accessed 10 April, 2017, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/realitycheck/the-press-office/2015/03/03/remarks-president-meeting-secretary-defense-carter>.

<sup>57</sup> “On Smart Diplomacy with Iran and Release of U.S. Detainees,” American Rhetoric, accessed April 22, 2017, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamairansanctionslifted.htm>.



### 4.3 Performing Masculinity Through Body Language

Of course, speeches are much more than their words and texts. They are an entire experience – a mix of text, voice, cadence, manner, and body language. Obama’s body language perfectly aligns with his masculine language. In the 2010 speech, when Obama states that these are the “toughest sanctions ever faced” (00:00:15) [his hand is in a closed fist](#), and he moves it on a downward decisive stress on almost every syllable for that phrase.<sup>58</sup> Downward hand gestures especially with palms facing downward are often considered demonstrations of non-verbal dominance.<sup>59</sup>

Generally, he employs a variety of closed fist movements in this speech. Furthermore, when listing, he also lists with his fingers in downward strokes, such as when he [lists the countries that support the sanctions](#) (00:04:48). When establishing a concrete policy point, he closes his fist with his thumb outward in a precise movement to emphasize each point, which adds crispness and lends an authoritative air to his words.

On the other hand, his gestures switch subtly when he talks about the possibility of future diplomacy – they become much more inviting. [His palms open](#) when he makes a hopeful statement about “the day when these sanctions are lifted, previous sanctions are lifted, and the Iranian people can finally fulfill the greatness of the Iranian nation” (00:06:00).

While a number of pundits and academics view President Obama’s general rhetorical style as feminine, John C. Landreau argues that President Obama’s national

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<sup>58</sup> “9 June, 2010: Address on UN Security Council Sanctions Against Iran,” American Rhetoric, accessed April 16, 2017,

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamairansanctions.htm>.

<sup>59</sup> “Palm-down,” Center for Nonverbal Studies, accessed April 6, 2017, <http://center-for-nonverbal-studies.org/hdocs/palmdown.htm>.

security rhetoric is informed and oriented by the “logic of American masculinity, and more specifically by the forms of presidential masculinity that are imbricated with national security thinking in our political culture.”<sup>60</sup> Landreau links President Obama’s rhetoric with narratives of violence that are present in the national mythology, which harks back to my earlier chapter on historical allusions to past presidents. President Obama’s approach to national security is hence a continuation of those masculine historical narratives of leadership built up in American culture over time.

While Landreau does not specifically address President Obama’s discourse on Iran, I suggest that since his examples such as the speeches regarding Afghanistan also deal with national security, Landreau’s theory can be applied similarly in this context. President Obama’s thus focuses on cultivating a masculine tone to his speeches on Iran in order to construct an image of his administration as forceful and powerful, which would in turn bolster domestic opinion about his capability to uphold the nuclear agreement and keep Iran in check.

If the United States is strengthened by President Obama’s masculine rhetoric, then what of Iran? Though not explicitly stated in President Obama’s speeches, I contend that in opposition to a masculine United States, Iran becomes feminized or effeminate. Such feminization hearkens back to older Orientalist rhetoric, where the “effeminate Oriental male” was “frequently deemed insufficiently manly”; “the East as a whole is ‘feminized,’ deemed passive, submissive... While the West becomes ‘masculine’ – that is, active,

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<sup>60</sup> John C. Landreau, “Obama’s My Dad: Mixed Race Suspects, Political Anxiety and the New Imperialism,” *thirdspace: a journal of feminist theory & culture*, Vol 10, No 1 (2011), <http://journals.sfu.ca/thirdspace/index.php/journal/article/viewArticle/landreau/408>.

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dominant, heroic, rational, self-controlled and ascetic.”<sup>61</sup> President Obama’s foreign policy discourse on Iran, while certainly not as harsh as his predecessor President George W. Bush’s, therefore, plays into familiar stereotypes about the Middle East. Perhaps this strategy indicates a kind of latent (or not-so-latent) racism at the heart of America, or at least President Obama’s willingness to exploit it.

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<sup>61</sup> John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, (UK: Manchester University Press, 2010), 46.

## **Chapter 5. Moral Characterizations of Iran**

### **5.1 The Inmate vs. the Warden**

Iran is not merely feminized in President Obama's rhetoric regarding the nuclear deal, but is also cast as something of a common criminal. In contrast, the United States is depicted as a global beacon of morality. The United States, therefore, is the warden to Iran's inmate. Intriguingly, the representation of Iran's misbehavior is twofold: It is portrayed both as a dangerous criminal and also as a naughty child. President Obama's talk of vigorous enforcement, on the other hand, paints a picture of the United States as a firm, masculine authority figure – a father figure, perhaps. Not only is the United States allegedly the moral centre in this equation, but is in the position of the global patriarch who will maintain the worldwide moral order.

### **5.1 America the Good**

Masculine language is not used merely to reassure the American people of the Obama administration's ability to maintain national security, but also in reference to its ability to maintain a global moral order. The image of the United States as constructed by Obama's speeches is of a moral leader, in terms of both espousing worthy principles and possessing the ability to uphold and enforce them.

President Obama's references to American principles demonstrate this twofold approach. For example, in the July 14, 2015 announcement of the deal, he mentions

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“strong, principled American diplomacy,”<sup>62</sup> as well as how “history shows that America must lead not just with our might, but with our principles”<sup>63</sup> and that “through strong and principled diplomacy, the United States of America will do our part on behalf of a world of greater peace, security, and cooperation among nations.”<sup>64</sup> In the first instance, principled American diplomacy is supported by strength; in the later two instances, principles back up American military might. The two concepts are intended to work in tandem, enhancing and underscoring each other. In essence, the Obama administration has both the will and the way to improve global peace; therefore, it is able to “lead” morally as opposed to merely follow. The United States thus assumes not just the side of “good,” but in fact drives it on the world stage.

This rhetoric is not new; like other aspects of Obama’s speeches, this image of the United States as moral leader continues a legacy carried over from previous politicians. President Woodrow Wilson, in his address to the Senate on the Versailles Peace Treaty, billed Americans as “the disinterested champions of right” in the context of the United States’ entry into World War I.<sup>65</sup> He stated, “There can be no question of our ceasing to be a world power. The only question is whether we can refuse the moral leadership that is offered us, whether we shall accept or reject the confidence of the world.”<sup>66</sup> Wilson, often

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<sup>62</sup> “Statement by the President on the Framework to Prevent Iran from Obtaining a Nuclear Weapon,” The White House: President Barack Obama, accessed April 10, 2017, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/04/02/statement-president-framework-prevent-iran-obtaining-nuclear-weapon>.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> The White House: President Barack Obama. “Statement By The President On First Step Agreement On Iran's Nuclear Program.” Accessed April 16, 2017. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/23/statement-president-first-step-agreement-irans-nuclear-program>.

<sup>65</sup> “Address to the Senate on the Versailles Peace Treaty,” The American Presidency Project, accessed April 20, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=110490>.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

regarded as the father of America's liberal internationalist bent, pioneered an American foreign policy that engaged in moral development, starting with America's involvement in the Philippines.<sup>67</sup>

Since then, American leaders have frequently used their public addresses to tap into the moral dimensions of international politics.<sup>68</sup> In President Bush's 2002 State of the Union address, which Colleen Shogan frames as a masterful redefinition of a "foreign policy problem" as a "moral struggle",<sup>69</sup> he declared, "America will lead by defending liberty and justice because they are right and true and unchanging for all people everywhere."<sup>70</sup> I suggest, that this moral rhetoricizing is done especially to highlight not just an international moral struggle, but American moral leadership in particular. The United States thus becomes the ultimate representation of "goodness" in such a context.

## 5.2 Iran Behaving Badly

On the other hand, if the US is portrayed as the good, moral hero, then he must have a foil. Prior to President Obama, the rhetoric towards Iran had already been cast as a struggle between good and evil: President George W. Bush, in his 2002 State of the Union address, labeled Iran one of the three rogue states that constituted the "Axis of

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<sup>67</sup> Wilson saw America's entry into the Philippines as America's "peculiar moral duty... to moderate the process [of opening and transforming the East] in the interests of liberty; to impart to the peoples thus driven out upon the road of change, so far as we have the opportunity or can make it, our own principles of self-help; teach them order and self-control in the midst of change, if it be possible by contact and sympathy, and example, in the drill of habit and law and obedience." Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy*, expanded ed., (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), 63.

<sup>68</sup> Colleen J. Shogan, *The Moral Rhetoric of American Presidents*, (USA: Texas A & M UP, 2006), 8.

<sup>69</sup> *Idem.*, 3

<sup>70</sup> "President Delivers State of the Union Address," The White House: President George W. Bush, accessed April 16, 2017, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>.

Evil,” which in turn echoed Reagan’s iconic 1983 speech about the “Evil Empire.” Reagan’s speech was directed towards the USSR, not Iran, but as previously outlined in the second chapter of this thesis on historical allusions, I propose that President Obama’s speeches have made an active attempt to draw parallels between the USSR and modern-day Iran, where both are positioned as ideological enemies.

William Beeman cites George Lakoff’s observation that American foreign policy uses “as a central metaphor, the idea that a nation is a person... ‘it is part of an elaborate metaphor system. It is part of an international community metaphor, in which there are friendly nations, hostile nations, rogue states, and so on’.” Beeman argues that American politicians have been skillful in using this device to portray Iran “as a rogue nation, hostile to the United States.”<sup>71</sup> By using this metaphorical shorthand, it becomes easier for the United States to vividly conceptualize of Iran as in opposition to itself, and to “construct scenarios where there are victims and heroes.”<sup>72</sup> The “nation as a person” metaphor thus assigns roles to each political actor, as though they are characters in a play with fixed attributes and personalities.

During the Obama era, the governmental portrayal of Iran was far less severe than it was in Bush’s time, but still contained hints of that moralizing legacy. On March 5, 2015, Obama spoke of how “[Netanyahu] also pointed out that Iran has been a dangerous regime and continues to engage in activities that are contrary to the interests of the United

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<sup>71</sup> William O. Beeman, *The “Great Satan” vs the “Mad Mullahs”*, (CT: Praeger, 2005), 41.

<sup>72</sup> *Idem.*, 42.

States, to Israel, and to the region. And on that, we agree.”<sup>73</sup> He also pointed out the fact that Iran has repeatedly threatened Israel and engaged in the “most venomous of anti-Semitic statements.”<sup>74</sup> Words such as “dangerous,” “threatened,” and “venomous” play into that conception of Iran as something of a criminal in the international arena. Particularly, the word “venomous” harks back to the good-evil dichotomy, as it recalls the serpent in the Garden of Eden – otherwise recognized as an emblem of the devil himself.

It would be remiss to ignore the complicated dynamic between Israel and the United States, especially considering the strong Israeli opposition to the nuclear agreement.<sup>75</sup> Israel is America’s closest ally in the Middle East; however, it is no secret that President Obama’s relationship with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has always been tense. Early in his first term, President Obama “pushed aggressively” for a peace pact between the Israelis and Palestinians much to Prime Minister Netanyahu’s displeasure; meanwhile, Netanyahu’s continued flouting of international law due to ongoing settlement construction in Palestine invited Obama’s irritation. Consequently, President Obama’s pursuit of the Iran deal is a sore point for the Israeli government.

I argue that as a result, President Obama’s presentation of Iran as “evil” has become much more subtle and complex, so as to manage the relationship with Israel while continuing to effectively forward his own foreign policy strategy. America is still

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<sup>73</sup> “Remarks by the President Before Meeting with Secretary of Defense Carter,” *The White House: President Barack Obama*, accessed April 10, 2017, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/realitycheck/the-press-office/2015/03/03/remarks-president-meeting-secretary-defense-carter>.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> “Obama's tense relationship with Netanyahu colors his legacy on Israel,” *LA Times*, accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-obama-israel-20160921-snap-story.html>.



painted as the international bastion of morality, and Iran is its opposite; however, that image of serious villainy has largely been replaced by an image of Iran as prone to adolescent misbehaviour. Obama gets to reduce the doubts the American public have over Iran's cooperation, while still placating Israel by bad-mouthing Iran to an extent.

President Obama's portrayal of Iran thus becomes closer to a stubborn, low-level criminal rather than outright evil: Iran engages in "destabilizing behaviour," "troubling actions" and remains in a state of "intransigence," and Obama often remarks on the possibility of Iran "cheating" on the deal. In fact, Iran even seems unable to help or control itself, as seen from Obama's statement, "We know that the Iranian government will not change its behavior overnight."<sup>76</sup>

At this juncture, I would like to point out the double standards present in American foreign policy thinking: According to a number of academics and foreign governments, the United States itself is something of a rogue state, thanks to its penchant for uninhibited unilateral action, particularly in the United Nations.<sup>77</sup> In actuality, President Obama's moralizing tone comes across as hypocritical, and highly expedient.

Adjusting the rhetoric surrounding Iran allows Obama to maintain his balancing act: He is able to keep a sense of legitimacy surrounding his foreign policy approach by not drastically refuting all that previous presidents have said about Iran, but simply reducing the severity of their actions to depict Iran as merely suspicious rather than a truly sinister villain.

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<sup>76</sup> "9 June, 2010: Address on UN Security Council Sanctions Against Iran," American Rhetoric, accessed April 16, 2017,

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamairansanctions.htm>.

<sup>77</sup> Robert L. MacDonald, "Rogue state? : the United States, unilateralism, and the United Nations" (2006), . (Masters diss., University of Toledo, 2006), Paper 1366, 1-2.

### 5.3 An Orientalist Legacy

Much like the representation of Iran as “effeminate,”<sup>78</sup> the representation of Iran as a misbehaved state echoes familiar Orientalist views. In President Obama’s official discourse, Iran plays the part of the primitive, childlike subject, whereas the United States is the modern patriarch.

Once more, we are reminded of that earlier American colonial effort in the Philippines. President Woodrow Wilson announced in 1898, “We must govern as those who learn, and they must obey as those who are in tutelage. They are children and we are men in these deep matters of government and justice.” He goes on to describe these children, the people of the Philippines, as “foolish, impulsive, headstrong, unreasonable.”<sup>79</sup> Wilson’s declaration is a near-exact match with Edward Said’s description of the Oriental vis-à-vis the European: “The Oriental is irrational, deprived (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’.” He is depicted as “something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts (as in a curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or a prison), something one illustrates (as in a zoological manual).”<sup>80</sup> American political history thus reveals an Orientalist bent in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Not much seems to have changed, however. The image of Iran as a liar and a cheat in discourse surrounding the nuclear agreement reflects that same Wilsonian

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<sup>78</sup> John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, (UK: Manchester University Press, 2010), 46.

<sup>79</sup> Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy*, expanded ed., (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), 63.

<sup>80</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed., (New York: Random House, 1979), 40.

mindset of American moral superiority and Eastern moral inferiority. Obama's rhetoric therefore reinforces what Said theorizes as an "essential relationship between a strong and a weak partner," where each is "conceived in opposition" to the other. The result is the containment and representation of Iran, or the Oriental, by dominating frameworks established by the stronger power. As Said writes, "knowledge of the Orient... creates the Orient, the Oriental, and his world."<sup>81</sup>

Ultimately, both Wilson's project in the Philippines and President Obama's rhetoric possess similar goals, which is the very aim of Orientalism itself – to weave a "political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')."<sup>82</sup> Thus, despite the acknowledgements and significant overtures made by Obama in the Cairo speech, his discourse regarding the Iran deal exhibits continuity with colonialism and Orientalism.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

It is hard to reconcile the optimism of President Obama's words in Cairo with the cautious suspicion of Iran in his later speeches. Gone were the overtures of mutual respect and cooperation, leaving a constructed image of Iran that was feminized, infantilized, and feminized; an image that, in substance, did not differ much from President Obama's predecessors.

Based on the foreign policy interests of the United States, President Obama deliberately strategized his rhetoric using rhetorical devices such as historical illusions, masculine language, and moral characterizations of both countries. He did so in order to deliver the nuclear agreement and procure greater national support for it, while continuing to placate those who opposed it both domestically and internationally.

Yet perhaps this thesis has been overly pessimistic towards President Obama's rhetoric. Ultimately, President Obama did succeed in bringing Iran to the negotiating table. Of course, this success was not entirely his own, but rather a confluence of events and circumstances, not least the change in the Iranian political climate with the election of President Rouhani, and the increased weariness of the Iranian people thanks to the heavy economic sanctions placed on Iran. The Obama administration did, on the other hand, commit to negotiating and implementing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to achieve its foreign policy aims rather than employing brute force, which a more hawkish administration like President George W. Bush's may have done.

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I believe that President Obama meant what he said in Cairo. However, his years in the White House forced him to realize that politics is not simply about hope, but a complex and arduous balancing act that involves give and take. After all, President Obama's personal dislike of Prime Minister Netanyahu is obvious, and Obama's proximity to the Palestinian issue has arguably been more sympathetic than previous American presidents.

In his Remarks on August 5, 2015, President Obama said, "in other words, it was diplomacy – hard, painstaking diplomacy – not saber-rattling, not tough talk that ratcheted up the pressure on Iran."<sup>83</sup> To some degree, he was right. Yet the "tough talk" rampant in his rhetoric has fed into that increasingly unshakeable image of Iran as belligerent and untrustworthy – a pariah in the international arena. No doubt this image will continue to prevail with the volatile government helmed by Donald Trump.

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<sup>83</sup> "Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal," The White House: Barack Obama, accessed October 24, 2016, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/08/05/remarks-president-iran-nuclear-deal>.

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## Appendix

### **1. Text: Obama's Speech in Cairo (a.k.a. "A New Beginning")**

June 4, 2009

The New York Times

Watch the full speech here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCJrTx29ENQ>

*The following is a text of President Obama's prepared remarks to the Muslim world, delivered on June 4, 2009, as released by the White House.*

THE PRESIDENT:

I am honored to be in the timeless city of Cairo, and to be hosted by two remarkable institutions. For over a thousand years, Al-Azhar has stood as a beacon of Islamic learning, and for over a century, Cairo University has been a source of Egypt's advancement. Together, you represent the harmony between tradition and progress. I am grateful for your hospitality, and the hospitality of the people of Egypt. I am also proud to carry with me the goodwill of the American people, and a greeting of peace from Muslim communities in my country: assalaamu alaykum.

We meet at a time of tension between the United States and Muslims around the world – tension rooted in historical forces that go beyond any current policy debate. The relationship between Islam and the West includes centuries of co-existence and cooperation, but also conflict and religious wars. More recently, tension has been fed by colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims, and a Cold War in which Muslim-majority countries were too often treated as proxies without regard to their own aspirations. Moreover, the sweeping change brought by modernity and globalization led many Muslims to view the West as hostile to the traditions of Islam.

Violent extremists have exploited these tensions in a small but potent minority of Muslims. The attacks of September 11th, 2001 and the continued efforts of these extremists to engage in violence against civilians has led some in my country to view Islam as inevitably hostile not only to America and Western countries, but also to human rights. This has bred more fear and mistrust.

So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, and who promote conflict rather than the cooperation that can help all of our people achieve justice and prosperity. This cycle of suspicion and discord must end.

I have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world; one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect; and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap, and share common principles – principles of justice and progress; tolerance and the dignity of all human beings.

I do so recognizing that change cannot happen overnight. No single speech can eradicate years of mistrust, nor can I answer in the time that I have all the complex questions that brought us to this point. But I am convinced that in order to move forward,

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we must say openly the things we hold in our hearts, and that too often are said only behind closed doors. There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other; to learn from each other; to respect one another; and to seek common ground. As the Holy Koran tells us, "Be conscious of God and speak always the truth." That is what I will try to do – to speak the truth as best I can, humbled by the task before us, and firm in my belief that the interests we share as human beings are far more powerful than the forces that drive us apart.

Part of this conviction is rooted in my own experience. I am a Christian, but my father came from a Kenyan family that includes generations of Muslims. As a boy, I spent several years in Indonesia and heard the call of the azaan at the break of dawn and the fall of dusk. As a young man, I worked in Chicago communities where many found dignity and peace in their Muslim faith.

As a student of history, I also know civilization's debt to Islam. It was Islam – at places like Al-Azhar University – that carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment. It was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra; our magnetic compass and tools of navigation; our mastery of pens and printing; our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed. Islamic culture has given us majestic arches and soaring spires; timeless poetry and cherished music; elegant calligraphy and places of peaceful contemplation. And throughout history, Islam has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality.

I know, too, that Islam has always been a part of America's story. The first nation to recognize my country was Morocco. In signing the Treaty of Tripoli in 1796, our second President John Adams wrote, "The United States has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Muslims." And since our founding, American Muslims have enriched the United States. They have fought in our wars, served in government, stood for civil rights, started businesses, taught at our Universities, excelled in our sports arenas, won Nobel Prizes, built our tallest building, and lit the Olympic Torch. And when the first Muslim-American was recently elected to Congress, he took the oath to defend our Constitution using the same Holy Koran that one of our Founding Fathers – Thomas Jefferson – kept in his personal library.

So I have known Islam on three continents before coming to the region where it was first revealed. That experience guides my conviction that partnership between America and Islam must be based on what Islam is, not what it isn't. And I consider it part of my responsibility as President of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear.

But that same principle must apply to Muslim perceptions of America. Just as Muslims do not fit a crude stereotype, America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire. The United States has been one of the greatest sources of progress that the world has ever known. We were born out of revolution against an empire. We were founded upon the ideal that all are created equal, and we have shed blood and struggled for centuries to give meaning to those words – within our borders, and around the world. We are shaped by every culture, drawn from every end of the Earth, and dedicated to a simple concept: *E pluribus unum*: "Out of many, one."

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Much has been made of the fact that an African-American with the name Barack Hussein Obama could be elected President. But my personal story is not so unique. The dream of opportunity for all people has not come true for everyone in America, but its promise exists for all who come to our shores – that includes nearly seven million American Muslims in our country today who enjoy incomes and education that are higher than average.

Moreover, freedom in America is indivisible from the freedom to practice one's religion. That is why there is a mosque in every state of our union, and over 1,200 mosques within our borders. That is why the U.S. government has gone to court to protect the right of women and girls to wear the hijab, and to punish those who would deny it.

So let there be no doubt: Islam is a part of America. And I believe that America holds within her the truth that regardless of race, religion, or station in life, all of us share common aspirations – to live in peace and security; to get an education and to work with dignity; to love our families, our communities, and our God. These things we share. This is the hope of all humanity.

Of course, recognizing our common humanity is only the beginning of our task. Words alone cannot meet the needs of our people. These needs will be met only if we act boldly in the years ahead; and if we understand that the challenges we face are shared, and our failure to meet them will hurt us all.

For we have learned from recent experience that when a financial system weakens in one country, prosperity is hurt everywhere. When a new flu infects one human being, all are at risk. When one nation pursues a nuclear weapon, the risk of nuclear attack rises for all nations. When violent extremists operate in one stretch of mountains, people are endangered across an ocean. And when innocents in Bosnia and Darfur are slaughtered, that is a stain on our collective conscience. That is what it means to share this world in the 21st century. That is the responsibility we have to one another as human beings. This is a difficult responsibility to embrace. For human history has often been a record of nations and tribes subjugating one another to serve their own interests. Yet in this new age, such attitudes are self-defeating. Given our interdependence, any world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will inevitably fail. So whatever we think of the past, we must not be prisoners of it. Our problems must be dealt with through partnership; progress must be shared.

That does not mean we should ignore sources of tension. Indeed, it suggests the opposite: we must face these tensions squarely. And so in that spirit, let me speak as clearly and plainly as I can about some specific issues that I believe we must finally confront together.

The first issue that we have to confront is violent extremism in all of its forms. In Ankara, I made clear that America is not – and never will be – at war with Islam. We will, however, relentlessly confront violent extremists who pose a grave threat to our security. Because we reject the same thing that people of all faiths reject: the killing of innocent men, women, and children. And it is my first duty as President to protect the American people.



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The situation in Afghanistan demonstrates America's goals, and our need to work together. Over seven years ago, the United States pursued al Qaeda and the Taliban with broad international support. We did not go by choice, we went because of necessity. I am aware that some question or justify the events of 9/11. But let us be clear: al Qaeda killed nearly 3,000 people on that day. The victims were innocent men, women and children from America and many other nations who had done nothing to harm anybody. And yet Al Qaeda chose to ruthlessly murder these people, claimed credit for the attack, and even now states their determination to kill on a massive scale. They have affiliates in many countries and are trying to expand their reach. These are not opinions to be debated; these are facts to be dealt with.

Make no mistake: we do not want to keep our troops in Afghanistan. We seek no military bases there. It is agonizing for America to lose our young men and women. It is costly and politically difficult to continue this conflict. We would gladly bring every single one of our troops home if we could be confident that there were not violent extremists in Afghanistan and Pakistan determined to kill as many Americans as they possibly can. But that is not yet the case.

That's why we're partnering with a coalition of forty-six countries. And despite the costs involved, America's commitment will not weaken. Indeed, none of us should tolerate these extremists. They have killed in many countries. They have killed people of different faiths – more than any other, they have killed Muslims. Their actions are irreconcilable with the rights of human beings, the progress of nations, and with Islam. The Holy Koran teaches that whoever kills an innocent, it is as if he has killed all mankind; and whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all mankind. The enduring faith of over a billion people is so much bigger than the narrow hatred of a few. Islam is not part of the problem in combating violent extremism – it is an important part of promoting peace.

We also know that military power alone is not going to solve the problems in Afghanistan and Pakistan. That is why we plan to invest \$1.5 billion each year over the next five years to partner with Pakistanis to build schools and hospitals, roads and businesses, and hundreds of millions to help those who have been displaced. And that is why we are providing more than \$2.8 billion to help Afghans develop their economy and deliver services that people depend upon.

Let me also address the issue of Iraq. Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq was a war of choice that provoked strong differences in my country and around the world. Although I believe that the Iraqi people are ultimately better off without the tyranny of Saddam Hussein, I also believe that events in Iraq have reminded America of the need to use diplomacy and build international consensus to resolve our problems whenever possible. Indeed, we can recall the words of Thomas Jefferson, who said: "I hope that our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us that the less we use our power the greater it will be."

Today, America has a dual responsibility: to help Iraq forge a better future – and to leave Iraq to Iraqis. I have made it clear to the Iraqi people that we pursue no bases, and no claim on their territory or resources. Iraq's sovereignty is its own. That is why I ordered the removal of our combat brigades by next August. That is why we will honor

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our agreement with Iraq's democratically-elected government to remove combat troops from Iraqi cities by July, and to remove all our troops from Iraq by 2012. We will help Iraq train its Security Forces and develop its economy. But we will support a secure and united Iraq as a partner, and never as a patron.

And finally, just as America can never tolerate violence by extremists, we must never alter our principles. 9/11 was an enormous trauma to our country. The fear and anger that it provoked was understandable, but in some cases, it led us to act contrary to our ideals. We are taking concrete actions to change course. I have unequivocally prohibited the use of torture by the United States, and I have ordered the prison at Guantanamo Bay closed by early next year.

So America will defend itself respectful of the sovereignty of nations and the rule of law. And we will do so in partnership with Muslim communities which are also threatened. The sooner the extremists are isolated and unwelcome in Muslim communities, the sooner we will all be safer.

The second major source of tension that we need to discuss is the situation between Israelis, Palestinians and the Arab world.

America's strong bonds with Israel are well known. This bond is unbreakable. It is based upon cultural and historical ties, and the recognition that the aspiration for a Jewish homeland is rooted in a tragic history that cannot be denied.

Around the world, the Jewish people were persecuted for centuries, and anti-Semitism in Europe culminated in an unprecedented Holocaust. Tomorrow, I will visit Buchenwald, which was part of a network of camps where Jews were enslaved, tortured, shot and gassed to death by the Third Reich. Six million Jews were killed – more than the entire Jewish population of Israel today. Denying that fact is baseless, ignorant, and hateful. Threatening Israel with destruction – or repeating vile stereotypes about Jews – is deeply wrong, and only serves to evoke in the minds of Israelis this most painful of memories while preventing the peace that the people of this region deserve.

On the other hand, it is also undeniable that the Palestinian people – Muslims and Christians – have suffered in pursuit of a homeland. For more than sixty years they have endured the pain of dislocation. Many wait in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, and neighboring lands for a life of peace and security that they have never been able to lead. They endure the daily humiliations – large and small – that come with occupation. So let there be no doubt: the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable. America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own.

For decades, there has been a stalemate: two peoples with legitimate aspirations, each with a painful history that makes compromise elusive. It is easy to point fingers – for Palestinians to point to the displacement brought by Israel's founding, and for Israelis to point to the constant hostility and attacks throughout its history from within its borders as well as beyond. But if we see this conflict only from one side or the other, then we will be blind to the truth: the only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security.

That is in Israel's interest, Palestine's interest, America's interest, and the world's interest. That is why I intend to personally pursue this outcome with all the patience that

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the task requires. The obligations that the parties have agreed to under the Road Map are clear. For peace to come, it is time for them – and all of us – to live up to our responsibilities.

Palestinians must abandon violence. Resistance through violence and killing is wrong and does not succeed. For centuries, black people in America suffered the lash of the whip as slaves and the humiliation of segregation. But it was not violence that won full and equal rights. It was a peaceful and determined insistence upon the ideals at the center of America's founding. This same story can be told by people from South Africa to South Asia; from Eastern Europe to Indonesia. It's a story with a simple truth: that violence is a dead end. It is a sign of neither courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or to blow up old women on a bus. That is not how moral authority is claimed; that is how it is surrendered.

Now is the time for Palestinians to focus on what they can build. The Palestinian Authority must develop its capacity to govern, with institutions that serve the needs of its people. Hamas does have support among some Palestinians, but they also have responsibilities. To play a role in fulfilling Palestinian aspirations, and to unify the Palestinian people, Hamas must put an end to violence, recognize past agreements, and recognize Israel's right to exist.

At the same time, Israelis must acknowledge that just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's. The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop.

Israel must also live up to its obligations to ensure that Palestinians can live, and work, and develop their society. And just as it devastates Palestinian families, the continuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza does not serve Israel's security; neither does the continuing lack of opportunity in the West Bank. Progress in the daily lives of the Palestinian people must be part of a road to peace, and Israel must take concrete steps to enable such progress.

Finally, the Arab States must recognize that the Arab Peace Initiative was an important beginning, but not the end of their responsibilities. The Arab-Israeli conflict should no longer be used to distract the people of Arab nations from other problems. Instead, it must be a cause for action to help the Palestinian people develop the institutions that will sustain their state; to recognize Israel's legitimacy; and to choose progress over a self-defeating focus on the past.

America will align our policies with those who pursue peace, and say in public what we say in private to Israelis and Palestinians and Arabs. We cannot impose peace. But privately, many Muslims recognize that Israel will not go away. Likewise, many Israelis recognize the need for a Palestinian state. It is time for us to act on what everyone knows to be true.

Too many tears have flowed. Too much blood has been shed. All of us have a responsibility to work for the day when the mothers of Israelis and Palestinians can see their children grow up without fear; when the Holy Land of three great faiths is the place of peace that God intended it to be; when Jerusalem is a secure and lasting home for Jews

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and Christians and Muslims, and a place for all of the children of Abraham to mingle peacefully together as in the story of Isra, when Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed (peace be upon them) joined in prayer.

The third source of tension is our shared interest in the rights and responsibilities of nations on nuclear weapons.

This issue has been a source of tension between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. For many years, Iran has defined itself in part by its opposition to my country, and there is indeed a tumultuous history between us. In the middle of the Cold War, the United States played a role in the overthrow of a democratically-elected Iranian government. Since the Islamic Revolution, Iran has played a role in acts of hostage-taking and violence against U.S. troops and civilians. This history is well known. Rather than remain trapped in the past, I have made it clear to Iran's leaders and people that my country is prepared to move forward. The question, now, is not what Iran is against, but rather what future it wants to build.

It will be hard to overcome decades of mistrust, but we will proceed with courage, rectitude and resolve. There will be many issues to discuss between our two countries, and we are willing to move forward without preconditions on the basis of mutual respect. But it is clear to all concerned that when it comes to nuclear weapons, we have reached a decisive point. This is not simply about America's interests. It is about preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could lead this region and the world down a hugely dangerous path.

I understand those who protest that some countries have weapons that others do not. No single nation should pick and choose which nations hold nuclear weapons. That is why I strongly reaffirmed America's commitment to seek a world in which no nations hold nuclear weapons. And any nation – including Iran – should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power if it complies with its responsibilities under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That commitment is at the core of the Treaty, and it must be kept for all who fully abide by it. And I am hopeful that all countries in the region can share in this goal.

The fourth issue that I will address is democracy.

I know there has been controversy about the promotion of democracy in recent years, and much of this controversy is connected to the war in Iraq. So let me be clear: no system of government can or should be imposed upon one nation by any other.

That does not lessen my commitment, however, to governments that reflect the will of the people. Each nation gives life to this principle in its own way, grounded in the traditions of its own people. America does not presume to know what is best for everyone, just as we would not presume to pick the outcome of a peaceful election. But I do have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose. Those are not just American ideas, they are human rights, and that is why we will support them everywhere.

There is no straight line to realize this promise. But this much is clear: governments that protect these rights are ultimately more stable, successful and secure.

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Suppressing ideas never succeeds in making them go away. America respects the right of all peaceful and law-abiding voices to be heard around the world, even if we disagree with them. And we will welcome all elected, peaceful governments – provided they govern with respect for all their people.

This last point is important because there are some who advocate for democracy only when they are out of power; once in power, they are ruthless in suppressing the rights of others. No matter where it takes hold, government of the people and by the people sets a single standard for all who hold power: you must maintain your power through consent, not coercion; you must respect the rights of minorities, and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise; you must place the interests of your people and the legitimate workings of the political process above your party. Without these ingredients, elections alone do not make true democracy.

The fifth issue that we must address together is religious freedom.

Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance. We see it in the history of Andalusia and Cordoba during the Inquisition. I saw it firsthand as a child in Indonesia, where devout Christians worshiped freely in an overwhelmingly Muslim country. That is the spirit we need today. People in every country should be free to choose and live their faith based upon the persuasion of the mind, heart, and soul. This tolerance is essential for religion to thrive, but it is being challenged in many different ways.

Among some Muslims, there is a disturbing tendency to measure one's own faith by the rejection of another's. The richness of religious diversity must be upheld – whether it is for Maronites in Lebanon or the Copts in Egypt. And fault lines must be closed among Muslims as well, as the divisions between Sunni and Shia have led to tragic violence, particularly in Iraq.

Freedom of religion is central to the ability of peoples to live together. We must always examine the ways in which we protect it. For instance, in the United States, rules on charitable giving have made it harder for Muslims to fulfill their religious obligation. That is why I am committed to working with American Muslims to ensure that they can fulfill zakat.

Likewise, it is important for Western countries to avoid impeding Muslim citizens from practicing religion as they see fit – for instance, by dictating what clothes a Muslim woman should wear. We cannot disguise hostility towards any religion behind the pretence of liberalism.

Indeed, faith should bring us together. That is why we are forging service projects in America that bring together Christians, Muslims, and Jews. That is why we welcome efforts like Saudi Arabian King Abdullah's Interfaith dialogue and Turkey's leadership in the Alliance of Civilizations. Around the world, we can turn dialogue into Interfaith service, so bridges between peoples lead to action – whether it is combating malaria in Africa, or providing relief after a natural disaster.

The sixth issue that I want to address is women's rights.

I know there is debate about this issue. I reject the view of some in the West that a woman who chooses to cover her hair is somehow less equal, but I do believe that a woman who is denied an education is denied equality. And it is no coincidence that countries where women are well-educated are far more likely to be prosperous.

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Now let me be clear: issues of women's equality are by no means simply an issue for Islam. In Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia, we have seen Muslim-majority countries elect a woman to lead. Meanwhile, the struggle for women's equality continues in many aspects of American life, and in countries around the world.

Our daughters can contribute just as much to society as our sons, and our common prosperity will be advanced by allowing all humanity – men and women – to reach their full potential. I do not believe that women must make the same choices as men in order to be equal, and I respect those women who choose to live their lives in traditional roles. But it should be their choice. That is why the United States will partner with any Muslim-majority country to support expanded literacy for girls, and to help young women pursue employment through micro-financing that helps people live their dreams.

Finally, I want to discuss economic development and opportunity. I know that for many, the face of globalization is contradictory. The Internet and television can bring knowledge and information, but also offensive sexuality and mindless violence. Trade can bring new wealth and opportunities, but also huge disruptions and changing communities. In all nations – including my own – this change can bring fear. Fear that because of modernity we will lose of control over our economic choices, our politics, and most importantly our identities – those things we most cherish about our communities, our families, our traditions, and our faith.

But I also know that human progress cannot be denied. There need not be contradiction between development and tradition. Countries like Japan and South Korea grew their economies while maintaining distinct cultures. The same is true for the astonishing progress within Muslim-majority countries from Kuala Lumpur to Dubai. In ancient times and in our times, Muslim communities have been at the forefront of innovation and education.

This is important because no development strategy can be based only upon what comes out of the ground, nor can it be sustained while young people are out of work. Many Gulf States have enjoyed great wealth as a consequence of oil, and some are beginning to focus it on broader development. But all of us must recognize that education and innovation will be the currency of the 21st century, and in too many Muslim communities there remains underinvestment in these areas. I am emphasizing such investments within my country. And while America in the past has focused on oil and gas in this part of the world, we now seek a broader engagement.

On education, we will expand exchange programs, and increase scholarships, like the one that brought my father to America, while encouraging more Americans to study in Muslim communities. And we will match promising Muslim students with internships in America; invest in on-line learning for teachers and children around the world; and create a new online network, so a teenager in Kansas can communicate instantly with a teenager in Cairo.

On economic development, we will create a new corps of business volunteers to partner with counterparts in Muslim-majority countries. And I will host a Summit on Entrepreneurship this year to identify how we can deepen ties between business leaders, foundations and social entrepreneurs in the United States and Muslim communities around the world.

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On science and technology, we will launch a new fund to support technological development in Muslim-majority countries, and to help transfer ideas to the marketplace so they can create jobs. We will open centers of scientific excellence in Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and appoint new Science Envoys to collaborate on programs that develop new sources of energy, create green jobs, digitize records, clean water, and grow new crops. And today I am announcing a new global effort with the Organization of the Islamic Conference to eradicate polio. And we will also expand partnerships with Muslim communities to promote child and maternal health.

All these things must be done in partnership. Americans are ready to join with citizens and governments; community organizations, religious leaders, and businesses in Muslim communities around the world to help our people pursue a better life.

The issues that I have described will not be easy to address. But we have a responsibility to join together on behalf of the world we seek – a world where extremists no longer threaten our people, and American troops have come home; a world where Israelis and Palestinians are each secure in a state of their own, and nuclear energy is used for peaceful purposes; a world where governments serve their citizens, and the rights of all God's children are respected. Those are mutual interests. That is the world we seek. But we can only achieve it together.

I know there are many – Muslim and non-Muslim – who question whether we can forge this new beginning. Some are eager to stoke the flames of division, and to stand in the way of progress. Some suggest that it isn't worth the effort – that we are fated to disagree, and civilizations are doomed to clash. Many more are simply skeptical that real change can occur. There is so much fear, so much mistrust. But if we choose to be bound by the past, we will never move forward. And I want to particularly say this to young people of every faith, in every country – you, more than anyone, have the ability to remake this world.

All of us share this world for but a brief moment in time. The question is whether we spend that time focused on what pushes us apart, or whether we commit ourselves to an effort – a sustained effort – to find common ground, to focus on the future we seek for our children, and to respect the dignity of all human beings.

It is easier to start wars than to end them. It is easier to blame others than to look inward; to see what is different about someone than to find the things we share. But we should choose the right path, not just the easy path. There is also one rule that lies at the heart of every religion – that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. This truth transcends nations and peoples – a belief that isn't new; that isn't black or white or brown; that isn't Christian, or Muslim or Jew. It's a belief that pulsed in the cradle of civilization, and that still beats in the heart of billions. It's a faith in other people, and it's what brought me here today.

We have the power to make the world we seek, but only if we have the courage to make a new beginning, keeping in mind what has been written.

The Holy Koran tells us, "O mankind! We have created you male and a female; and we have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another." The Talmud tells us: "The whole of the Torah is for the purpose of promoting peace."

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The Holy Bible tells us, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

The people of the world can live together in peace. We know that is God's vision. Now, that must be our work here on Earth. Thank you. And may God's peace be upon you.  
END



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## **2. Address on UN Security Council Sanctions Against Iran**

June 9, 2010  
American Rhetoric

Watch the full speech here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IY-InIqnKc>

THE PRESIDENT:

Alright. Good afternoon, everybody. Today, the United Nations Security Council voted overwhelmingly to sanction Iran for its continued failure to live up to its obligations. This resolution will put in place the toughest sanctions ever faced by the Iranian government, and it sends an unmistakable message about the international community's commitment to stopping the spread of nuclear weapons.

For years, the Iranian government has failed to live up to its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It has violated its commitments to the International Atomic Energy Agency. It has ignored U.N. Security Council resolutions. And while Iran's leaders hide behind outlandish rhetoric, their actions have been deeply troubling. Indeed, when I took office just over 16 months ago, Iranian intransigence was well-established. Iran had gone from zero centrifuges spinning to several thousand, and the international community was divided about how to move forward.

Yet this day was not inevitable. We made clear from the beginning of my administration that the United States was prepared to pursue diplomatic solutions to address the concerns over Iranian nuclear programs. I extended the offer of engagement on the basis of mutual interest and mutual respect. And together with the United Kingdom, with Russia, China, and Germany, we sat down with our Iranian counterparts. We offered the opportunity of a better relationship between Iran and the international community -- one that reduced Iran's political isolation, and increased its economic integration with the rest of the world. In short, we offered the Iranian government the prospect of a better future for its people, if -- and only if -- it lives up to its international obligations.

So there is no double standard at play here. We've made it clear, time and again, that we respect Iran's right, like all countries, to access peaceful nuclear energy. That is a right embedded in the NPT -- a treaty that has to serve as the safeguard against a world in which more nations acquire the world's most deadly weapons, and international law is treated as an empty promise. That NPT treaty was signed by all the parties involved, and it is a treaty that the United States has sought to strengthen from the day I took office, including through our own commitments to reduce America's nuclear arsenal.

So let me repeat: We recognize Iran's rights. But with those rights come responsibilities. And time and again, the Iranian government has failed to meet those responsibilities. Iran concealed a nuclear enrichment facility in Qom that raised serious questions about the nature of its program. Iran further violated its own obligations under U.N. Security Council resolutions to suspend uranium enrichment. Instead, they're enriching up to 20 percent. It has failed to comply fully with IAEA's requirements. Indeed, Iran is the only NPT signatory in the world -- the only one -- that cannot convince the IAEA that its nuclear program is intended for peaceful purposes.

That's why the international community was compelled to impose these serious consequences. These are the most comprehensive sanctions that the Iranian government has faced. They will impose restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities, its ballistic missile program, and, for the first time, its conventional military. They will put a new framework in place to stop Iranian smuggling, and crack down on Iranian banks and financial transactions. They target individuals, entities, and institutions -- including those associated with the Revolutionary Guard -- that have supported Iran's nuclear program and prospered from illicit activities at the expense of the Iranian people. And we will ensure that these sanctions are vigorously enforced, just as we continue to refine and enforce our own sanctions on Iran alongside our friends and our allies.

The strong resolution that was passed today benefited from strong international support. In voting for it, we were joined by nations from Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America -- including Russia and China. And these sanctions show the united view of the international community that a nuclear arms race in the Middle East is in nobody's interest, and that nations must be held accountable for challenging the global non-proliferation regime. The Iranian government must understand that true security will not come through the pursuit of nuclear weapons. True security will come through adherence to international law and the demonstration of its peaceful intent.

We know that the Iranian government will not change its behavior overnight, but today's vote demonstrates the growing costs that will come with Iranian intransigence. And I want to be clear: These sanctions do not close the door on diplomacy. Iran continues to have the opportunity to take a different and better path. I would like nothing more than to reach the day when the Iranian government fulfills its international obligations -- a day when these sanctions are lifted, previous sanctions are lifted, and the Iranian people can finally fulfill the greatness of the Iranian nation.

Indeed, these sanctions are not directed at the Iranian people. As I said in Cairo, for decades the Iranian government has defined itself in opposition to my country. But faced with the opportunity to find a new way forward -- one that would benefit its own people -- the Iranian government has chosen instead to remain a prisoner of the past.

Saturday will mark one year from the day that an election captivated the attention of the world -- an event that should have been remembered for how the Iranian people participated with remarkable enthusiasm, but will instead be remembered for how the Iranian government brutally suppressed dissent and murdered the innocent, including a young woman left to die in the street.

Actions do have consequences, and today the Iranian government will face some of those consequences. Because whether it is threatening the nuclear non-proliferation regime, or the human rights of its own citizens, or the stability of its own neighbors by supporting terrorism, the Iranian government continues to demonstrate that its own unjust actions are a threat to justice everywhere.

want and hope for the people of Iran that the government of Iran will make a different choice. It can make a different choice and pursue a course that will reaffirm the NPT as the basis of global non-proliferation and disarmament -- a course that will advance Iran's own security and prosperity, and the peace of the wider world. Today's sanctions are yet another signal that if the Iranian government continues to undermine the

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NPT and the peace that it protects, then Iran will find itself more isolated, less prosperous and less secure.

Thank you.

END

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### **3. Statement By The President On First Step Agreement On Iran's Nuclear Program**

The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary  
For Immediate Release  
November 23, 2013  
Statement By The President On First Step Agreement On Iran's Nuclear Program

Watch the full speech here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emQGKQ6D0sE>

THE PRESIDENT:

Good evening. Today, the United States -- together with our close allies and partners -- took an important first step toward a comprehensive solution that addresses our concerns with the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear program.

Since I took office, I've made clear my determination to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. As I've said many times, my strong preference is to resolve this issue peacefully, and we've extended the hand of diplomacy. Yet for many years, Iran has been unwilling to meet its obligations to the international community. So my administration worked with Congress, the United Nations Security Council and countries around the world to impose unprecedented sanctions on the Iranian government.

These sanctions have had a substantial impact on the Iranian economy, and with the election of a new Iranian President earlier this year, an opening for diplomacy emerged. I spoke personally with President Rouhani of Iran earlier this fall. Secretary Kerry has met multiple times with Iran's Foreign Minister. And we have pursued intensive diplomacy -- bilaterally with the Iranians, and together with our P5-plus-1 partners -- the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China, as well as the European Union.

Today, that diplomacy opened up a new path toward a world that is more secure -- a future in which we can verify that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful and that it cannot build a nuclear weapon.

While today's announcement is just a first step, it achieves a great deal. For the first time in nearly a decade, we have halted the progress of the Iranian nuclear program, and key parts of the program will be rolled back. Iran has committed to halting certain levels of enrichment and neutralizing part of its stockpiles. Iran cannot use its next-generation centrifuges, which are used for enriching uranium. Iran cannot install or start up new centrifuges, and its production of centrifuges will be limited. Iran will halt work at its plutonium reactor. And new inspections will provide extensive access to Iran's nuclear facilities and allow the international community to verify whether Iran is keeping its commitments.

These are substantial limitations which will help prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon. Simply put, they cut off Iran's most likely paths to a bomb. Meanwhile, this first step will create time and space over the next six months for more negotiations to

fully address our comprehensive concerns about the Iranian program. And because of this agreement, Iran cannot use negotiations as cover to advance its program.

On our side, the United States and our friends and allies have agreed to provide Iran with modest relief, while continuing to apply our toughest sanctions. We will refrain from imposing new sanctions, and we will allow the Iranian government access to a portion of the revenue that they have been denied through sanctions. But the broader architecture of sanctions will remain in place and we will continue to enforce them vigorously. And if Iran does not fully meet its commitments during this six-month phase, we will turn off the relief and ratchet up the pressure.

Over the next six months, we will work to negotiate a comprehensive solution. We approach these negotiations with a basic understanding: Iran, like any nation, should be able to access peaceful nuclear energy. But because of its record of violating its obligations, Iran must accept strict limitations on its nuclear program that make it impossible to develop a nuclear weapon.

In these negotiations, nothing will be agreed to unless everything is agreed to. The burden is on Iran to prove to the world that its nuclear program will be exclusively for peaceful purposes.

If Iran seizes this opportunity, the Iranian people will benefit from rejoining the international community, and we can begin to chip away at the mistrust between our two nations. This would provide Iran with a dignified path to forge a new beginning with the wider world based on mutual respect. If, on the other hand, Iran refuses, it will face growing pressure and isolation.

Over the last few years, Congress has been a key partner in imposing sanctions on the Iranian government, and that bipartisan effort made possible the progress that was achieved today. Going forward, we will continue to work closely with Congress. However, now is not the time to move forward on new sanctions — because doing so would derail this promising first step, alienate us from our allies and risk unraveling the coalition that enabled our sanctions to be enforced in the first place.

That international unity is on display today. The world is united in support of our determination to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. Iran must know that security and prosperity will never come through the pursuit of nuclear weapons -- it must be reached through fully verifiable agreements that make Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons impossible.

As we go forward, the resolve of the United States will remain firm, as will our commitments to our friends and allies — particularly Israel and our Gulf partners, who have good reason to be skeptical about Iran's intentions.

Ultimately, only diplomacy can bring about a durable solution to the challenge posed by Iran's nuclear program. As President and Commander-in-Chief, I will do what is necessary to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. But I have a profound responsibility to try to resolve our differences peacefully, rather than rush towards conflict. Today, we have a real opportunity to achieve a comprehensive, peaceful settlement, and I believe we must test it.

The first step that we've taken today marks the most significant and tangible progress that we've made with Iran since I took office. And now we must use the months

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ahead to pursue a lasting and comprehensive settlement that would resolve an issue that has threatened our security -- and the security of our allies -- for decades. It won't be easy, and huge challenges remain ahead. But through strong and principled diplomacy, the United States of America will do our part on behalf of a world of greater peace, security, and cooperation among nations.

Thank you very much.

END

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#### **4. Remarks by the President Before Meeting with Secretary of Defense Carter**

##### **The White House**

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 03, 2015

Remarks by the President Before Meeting with Secretary of Defense Carter

Oval Office

1:40 P.M. EST

Watch the full speech/briefing here: <https://youtu.be/P2OveRqqSzM>

##### THE PRESIDENT:

Well, this is going to be the first opportunity that I have to get an extensive debriefing from Secretary Carter, who took a trip last week to Afghanistan and other parts of the region. He'll be giving me some impressions about how we're planning our drawdown and transition in Afghanistan, and talk about some other regional issues.

One issue that we will be discussing is Iran. And obviously that's been a topic of great interest today, so let me just make a couple comments on that. I did not have a chance to watch Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech -- I was on a video conference with our European partners with respect to Ukraine. I did have a chance to take a look at the transcript and as far as I can tell, there was nothing new.

The Prime Minister appropriately pointed out that the bond between the United States of America is unbreakable, and on that point I thoroughly agree. He also pointed out that Iran has been a dangerous regime and continues to engage in activities that are contrary to the interests of the United States, to Israel, and to the region. And on that, we agree. He also pointed out the fact that Iran has repeatedly threatened Israel and engaged in the most venomous of anti-Semitic statements. And no one can dispute that.

But on the core issue, which is how do we prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, which would make it far more dangerous and would give it scope for even greater action in the region, the Prime Minister didn't offer any viable alternatives. So let's be clear about what exactly the central concern should be, both for the United States and for Israel.

I've said since before I became President that one of my primary goals in foreign policy would be preventing Iran from getting nuclear weapons. And with the help of Congress and our international partners, we constructed an extraordinarily effective sanctions regime that pressured Iran to come to the table to negotiate in a serious fashion. They have now been negotiating over the last year, and during that period, Iran has, in fact, frozen its program, rolled back some of its most dangerous highly enriched uranium, and subjected itself to the kinds of verifications and inspections that we had not previously seen.

Keep in mind that when we shaped that interim deal, Prime Minister Netanyahu made almost the precise same speech about how dangerous that deal was going to be. And yet, over a year later, even Israeli intelligence officers and, in some cases,

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members of the Israeli government, have to acknowledge that, in fact, it has kept Iran from further pursuing its nuclear program.

Now, the deal that we are trying to negotiate that is not yet completed would cut off the different pathways for Iran to advance its nuclear capabilities. It would roll back some elements of its program. It would ensure that it did not have what we call a breakout capacity that was shorter than a year's time. And it would subject Iran to the most vigorous inspections and verifications regimes that have ever been put in place.

And the alternative that the Prime Minister offers is no deal, in which case Iran will immediately begin once again pursuing its nuclear program, accelerate its nuclear program, without us having any insight into what they're doing, and without constraint. And his essential argument is that if we just double down on sanctions, Iran won't want to do that.

Well, we have evidence from the past decade that sanctions alone are not sufficient to prevent Iran from pursuing its nuclear ambitions. And if it, in fact, does not have some sense that sanctions will be removed, it will not have an interest in avoiding the path that it's currently on.

So the bottom line is this: We don't yet have a deal. It may be that Iran cannot say yes to a good deal. I have repeatedly said that I would rather have no deal than a bad deal. But if we're successful in negotiating, then, in fact, this will be the best deal possible to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Nothing else comes close. Sanctions won't do it. Even military action would not be as successful as the deal that we have put forward.

And I think it is very important not to be distracted by the nature of the Iranian regime's ambitions when it comes to territory or terrorism -- all issues which we share a concern with Israel about and are working consistently with Israel on. Because we know that if, in fact, they obtain a nuclear weapon, all those problems would be worse.

So we're staying focused on the central issue here: How do we prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. The path that we've proposed, if successful, by far is the best way to do that. That's demonstrable. And Prime Minister Netanyahu has not offered any kind of viable alternative that would achieve the same verifiable mechanism to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

So I would urge the members of Congress who were there to continue to express their strong support for Israel's security, to continue to express their strong interest in providing the assistance Israel needs to repel attacks. I think it's important for members of Congress, on a bipartisan basis, to be unified in pushing back against terrorism in the region and the destabilizing efforts that Iran may have engaged in with our partners. Those are all things in which this administration and Israel agree.

But when it comes to this nuclear deal, let's wait until there's actually a deal on the table that Iran has agreed to, at which point everybody can evaluate it; we don't have to speculate. And what I can guarantee is that if it's a deal I've signed off on, I will be able to prove that it is the best way for us to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

And for us to pass up on that potential opportunity would be a great mistake. It's not one that I intend to make, and I will take that case to every member of Congress once we actually have a deal.



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I'll take one question from Julie. Go ahead.

**Question:** Now that you've had a chance to read the Prime Minister's remarks at least, do you feel like the speech he gave was appropriate, considering his upcoming elections and the upcoming deadline? And you also talked to other foreign leaders today -- the call on Ukraine. Did Iran come up at all, and are you expecting any signs of support from them vis-à-vis your position versus the Prime Minister?

**President Obama:** No. All the folks on the call today share my position that we should see if we can get this deal done. It was not a topic of conversation.

With respect to the decision of the Speaker to offer up the House Chamber two weeks before Mr. Netanyahu's election to make this case, I think that question should be directed to Mr. Boehner.

As I said, it is very important for us not to politicize the relationship between Israel and the United States. It's very important for all of us Americans to realize that we have a system of government in which foreign policy runs through the executive branch and the President, not through other channels.

And I think it's important for us to stay focused on the problem at hand. And the specific problem that is being debated right now is not whether we trust the Iranian regime or not -- we don't trust them. It's not whether Iran engages in destabilizing activities -- everybody agrees with that.

The central question is, how can we stop them from getting a nuclear weapon.

And what we know is that if we're able to get a deal, not only do we cut off all the various pathways for Iran getting a nuclear weapon, but we also know that we'll have a verification mechanism and an inspection mechanism where if they cheat and if they engage in a covert program we are far more likely to see it in time to do something about it.

What I also know is if we don't have a deal, as Prime Minister Netanyahu suggested -- if, in fact, he's right that they're not trustworthy, they intend to pursue a covert program, and they cheat, we'll be far less aware of it until it is potentially too late.

What I also know is, is that he made the same argument before this current interim deal, and even officials in his own government had to acknowledge that Iran has, in fact, maintained their end of the bargain.

So what I'm focused on right now is solving this problem. I'm not focused on the politics of it, I'm not focused on the theater of it. And my strong suggestion would be that members of Congress, as they evaluate it, stay similarly focused.

All right. Thank you, guys.

END

1:51 P.M. EST

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## **5. Statement by the President on the Framework to Prevent Iran from Obtaining a Nuclear Weapon**

The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary  
For Immediate Release  
April 2, 2015  
Statement by the President on the Framework to Prevent Iran from Obtaining a Nuclear Weapon  
Rose Garden  
2:25 P.M. EDT

Watch the full speech here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVIxURU9kbA>

THE PRESIDENT:

Good afternoon, everybody. Today, the United States -- together with our allies and partners -- has reached a historic understanding with Iran, which, if fully implemented, will prevent it from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

As President and Commander-in-Chief, I have no greater responsibility than the security of the American people. And I am convinced that if this framework leads to a final, comprehensive deal, it will make our country, our allies, and our world safer.

This has been a long time coming. The Islamic Republic of Iran has been advancing its nuclear program for decades. By the time I took office, Iran was operating thousands of centrifuges, which can produce the materials for a nuclear bomb -- and Iran was concealing a covert nuclear facility. I made clear that we were prepared to resolve this issue diplomatically, but only if Iran came to the table in a serious way. When that did not happen, we rallied the world to impose the toughest sanctions in history -- sanctions which had a profound impact on the Iranian economy.

Now, sanctions alone could not stop Iran's nuclear program. But they did help bring Iran to the negotiating table. Because of our diplomatic efforts, the world stood with us and we were joined at the negotiating table by the world's major powers -- the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China, as well as the European Union.

Over a year ago, we took the first step towards today's framework with a deal to stop the progress of Iran's nuclear program and roll it back in key areas. And recall that at the time, skeptics argued that Iran would cheat, and that we could not verify their compliance and the interim agreement would fail. Instead, it has succeeded exactly as intended. Iran has met all of its obligations. It eliminated its stockpile of dangerous nuclear material. Inspections of Iran's program increased. And we continued negotiations to see if we could achieve a more comprehensive deal.

Today, after many months of tough, principled diplomacy, we have achieved the framework for that deal. And it is a good deal, a deal that meets our core objectives. This framework would cut off every pathway that Iran could take to develop a nuclear weapon. Iran will face strict limitations on its program, and Iran has also agreed to the most robust and intrusive inspections and transparency regime ever

negotiated for any nuclear program in history. So this deal is not based on trust, it's based on unprecedented verification.

Many key details will be finalized over the next three months, and nothing is agreed to until everything is agreed. But here are the basic outlines of the deal that we are working to finalize.

First, Iran will not be able to pursue a bomb using plutonium, because it will not develop weapons-grade plutonium. The core of its reactor at Arak will be dismantled and replaced. The spent fuel from that facility will be shipped out of Iran for the life of the reactor. Iran will not build a new heavy-water reactor. And Iran will not reprocess fuel from its existing reactors -- ever.

Second, this deal shuts down Iran's path to a bomb using enriched uranium. Iran has agreed that its installed centrifuges will be reduced by two-thirds. Iran will no longer enrich uranium at its Fordow facility. Iran will not enrich uranium with its advanced centrifuges for at least the next 10 years. The vast majority of Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium will be neutralized.

Today, estimates indicate that Iran is only two or three months away from potentially acquiring the raw materials that could be used for a single nuclear bomb. Under this deal, Iran has agreed that it will not stockpile the materials needed to build a weapon. Even if it violated the deal, for the next decade at least, Iran would be a minimum of a year away from acquiring enough material for a bomb. And the strict limitations on Iran's stockpile will last for 15 years.

Third, this deal provides the best possible defense against Iran's ability to pursue a nuclear weapon covertly -- that is, in secret. International inspectors will have unprecedented access not only to Iranian nuclear facilities, but to the entire supply chain that supports Iran's nuclear program -- from uranium mills that provide the raw materials, to the centrifuge production and storage facilities that support the program. If Iran cheats, the world will know it. If we see something suspicious, we will inspect it. Iran's past efforts to weaponize its program will be addressed. With this deal, Iran will face more inspections than any other country in the world.

So this will be a long-term deal that addresses each path to a potential Iranian nuclear bomb. There will be strict limits on Iran's program for a decade. Additional restrictions on building new facilities or stockpiling materials will last for 15 years. The unprecedented transparency measures will last for 20 years or more. Indeed, some will be permanent. And as a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran will never be permitted to develop a nuclear weapon.

In return for Iran's actions, the international community has agreed to provide Iran with relief from certain sanctions -- our own sanctions, and international sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council. This relief will be phased as Iran takes steps to adhere to the deal. If Iran violates the deal, sanctions can be snapped back into place. Meanwhile, other American sanctions on Iran for its support of terrorism, its human rights abuses, its ballistic missile program, will continue to be fully enforced.

Now, let me reemphasize, our work is not yet done. The deal has not been signed. Between now and the end of June, the negotiators will continue to work through the details of how this framework will be fully implemented, and those details matter. If

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there is backsliding on the part of the Iranians, if the verification and inspection mechanisms don't meet the specifications of our nuclear and security experts, there will be no deal. But if we can get this done, and Iran follows through on the framework that our negotiators agreed to, we will be able to resolve one of the greatest threats to our security, and to do so peacefully.

Given the importance of this issue, I have instructed my negotiators to fully brief Congress and the American people on the substance of the deal, and I welcome a robust debate in the weeks and months to come. I am confident that we can show that this deal is good for the security of the United States, for our allies, and for the world.

For the fact is, we only have three options for addressing Iran's nuclear program. First, we can reach a robust and verifiable deal -- like this one -- and peacefully prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

The second option is we can bomb Iran's nuclear facilities, thereby starting another war in the Middle East, and setting back Iran's program by a few years -- in other words, setting it back by a fraction of the time that this deal will set it back. Meanwhile we'd ensure that Iran would race ahead to try and build a bomb.

Third, we could pull out of negotiations, try to get other countries to go along and continue sanctions that are currently in place or add additional ones, and hope for the best -- knowing that every time we have done so, Iran has not capitulated but instead has advanced its program, and that in very short order, the breakout timeline would be eliminated and a nuclear arms race in the region could be triggered because of that uncertainty. In other words, the third option leads us very quickly back to a decision about whether or not to take military action, because we'd have no idea what was going on inside of Iran.

Iran is not going to simply dismantle its program because we demand it to do so. That's not how the world works, and that's not what history shows us. Iran has shown no willingness to eliminate those aspects of their program that they maintain are for peaceful purposes, even in the face of unprecedented sanctions. Should negotiations collapse because we, the United States, rejected what the majority of the world considers a fair deal, what our scientists and nuclear experts suggest would give us confidence that they are not developing a nuclear weapon, it's doubtful that we can even keep our current international sanctions in place.

So when you hear the inevitable critics of the deal sound off, ask them a simple question: Do you really think that this verifiable deal, if fully implemented, backed by the world's major powers, is a worse option than the risk of another war in the Middle East? Is it worse than doing what we've done for almost two decades, with Iran moving forward with its nuclear program and without robust inspections? I think the answer will be clear.

Remember, I have always insisted that I will do what is necessary to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, and I will. But I also know that a diplomatic solution is the best way to get this done, and offers a more comprehensive -- and lasting -- solution. It is our best option, by far. And while it is always a possibility that Iran may try to cheat on the deal in the future, this framework of inspections and transparency makes it far more likely that we'll know about it if they try to cheat -- and I, or future

Presidents, will have preserved all of the options that are currently available to deal with it.

To the Iranian people, I want to reaffirm what I've said since the beginning of my presidency. We are willing to engage you on the basis of mutual interests and mutual respect. This deal offers the prospect of relief from sanctions that were imposed because of Iran's violation of international law. Since Iran's Supreme Leader has issued a fatwa against the development of nuclear weapons, this framework gives Iran the opportunity to verify that its program is, in fact, peaceful. It demonstrates that if Iran complies with its international obligations, then it can fully rejoin the community of nations, thereby fulfilling the extraordinary talent and aspirations of the Iranian people. That would be good for Iran, and it would be good for the world.

Of course, this deal alone -- even if fully implemented -- will not end the deep divisions and mistrust between our two countries. We have a difficult history between us, and our concerns will remain with respect to Iranian behavior so long as Iran continues its sponsorship of terrorism, its support for proxies who destabilize the Middle East, its threats against America's friends and allies -- like Israel. So make no mistake: We will remain vigilant in countering those actions and standing with our allies.

It's no secret that the Israeli Prime Minister and I don't agree about whether the United States should move forward with a peaceful resolution to the Iranian issue. If, in fact, Prime Minister Netanyahu is looking for the most effective way to ensure Iran doesn't get a nuclear weapon, this is the best option. And I believe our nuclear experts can confirm that.

More importantly, I will be speaking with the Prime Minister today to make clear that there will be no daylight, there is no daylight, when it comes to our support for Israel's security and our concerns about Iran's destabilizing policies and threats toward Israel. That's why I've directed my national security team to consult closely with the new Israeli government in the coming weeks and months about how we can further strengthen our long-term security cooperation with Israel, and make clear our unshakeable commitment to Israel's defense.

Today, I also spoke with the King of Saudi Arabia to reaffirm our commitment to the security of our partners in the Gulf. And I'm inviting the leaders of the six countries who make up the Gulf Cooperation Council -- Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain -- to meet me at Camp David this spring to discuss how we can further strengthen our security cooperation, while resolving the multiple conflicts that have caused so much hardship and instability throughout the Middle East.

Finally, it's worth remembering that Congress has, on a bipartisan basis, played a critical role in our current Iran policy, helping to shape the sanctions regime that applied so much pressure on Iran and ultimately forced them to the table. In the coming days and weeks, my administration will engage Congress once again about how we can play -- how it can play a constructive oversight role. I'll begin that effort by speaking to the leaders of the House and Senate today.

In those conversations, I will underscore that the issues at stake here are bigger than politics. These are matters of war and peace, and they should be evaluated based on the facts and what is ultimately best for the American people and for our national

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security. For this is not simply a deal between my administration and Iran. This is a deal between Iran, the United States of America, and the major powers in the world -- including some of our closest allies. If Congress kills this deal -- not based on expert analysis, and without offering any reasonable alternative -- then it's the United States that will be blamed for the failure of diplomacy. International unity will collapse, and the path to conflict will widen.

The American people understand this, which is why solid majorities support a diplomatic resolution to the Iranian nuclear issue. They understand instinctively the words of President Kennedy, who faced down the far greater threat of communism, and said: "Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate." The American people remember that at the height of the Cold War, Presidents like Nixon and Reagan struck historic arms control agreements with the Soviet Union, a far more dangerous adversary -- despite the fact that that adversary not only threatened to destroy our country and our way of life, but had the means to do so. Those agreements were not perfect. They did not end all threats. But they made our world safer. A good deal with Iran will do the same.

Today, I'd like to express my thanks to our international partners for their steadfastness and their cooperation. I was able to speak earlier today with our close allies, Prime Minister Cameron and President Hollande and Chancellor Merkel, to reaffirm that we stand shoulder-to-shoulder in this effort.

And most of all, on behalf of our nation, I want to express my thanks to our tireless -- and I mean tireless -- Secretary of State John Kerry and our entire negotiating team. They have worked so hard to make this progress. They represent the best tradition of American diplomacy. Their work -- our work -- is not yet done and success is not guaranteed. But we have an historic opportunity to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons in Iran, and to do so peacefully, with the international community firmly behind us. We should seize that chance.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

END

2:43 P.M. EDT

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## **6. Statement by the President on the Framework to Prevent Iran from Obtaining a Nuclear Weapon**

The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary  
For Immediate Release  
July 14, 2015  
Statement by the President on Iran  
State Floor

\*\*Please see below for a correction, marked with an asterisk.  
7:02 A.M. EDT

Watch the full speech here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLhV3JRWKUM>

THE PRESIDENT:

Today, after two years of negotiations, the United States, together with our international partners, has achieved something that decades of animosity has not -- a comprehensive, long-term deal with Iran that will prevent it from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

This deal demonstrates that American diplomacy can bring about real and meaningful change -- change that makes our country, and the world, safer and more secure. This deal is also in line with a tradition of American leadership. It's now more than 50 years since President Kennedy stood before the American people and said, "Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate." He was speaking then about the need for discussions between the United States and the Soviet Union, which led to efforts to restrict the spread of nuclear weapons.

In those days, the risk was a catastrophic nuclear war between two super powers. In our time, the risk is that nuclear weapons will spread to more and more countries, particularly in the Middle East, the most volatile region in our world.

Today, because America negotiated from a position of strength and principle, we have stopped the spread of nuclear weapons in this region. Because of this deal, the international community will be able to verify that the Islamic Republic of Iran will not develop a nuclear weapon.

This deal meets every single one of the bottom lines that we established when we achieved a framework earlier this spring. Every pathway to a nuclear weapon is cut off. And the inspection and transparency regime necessary to verify that objective will be put in place. Because of this deal, Iran will not produce the highly enriched uranium and weapons-grade plutonium that form the raw materials necessary for a nuclear bomb.

Because of this deal, Iran will remove two-thirds of its installed centrifuges -- the machines necessary to produce highly enriched uranium for a bomb -- and store them under constant international supervision. Iran will not use its advanced centrifuges to produce enriched uranium for the next decade. Iran will also get rid of 98 percent of its stockpile of enriched uranium.

To put that in perspective, Iran currently has a stockpile that could produce up to 10 nuclear weapons. Because of this deal, that stockpile will be reduced to a fraction of what would be required for a single weapon. This stockpile limitation will last for 15 years.

Because of this deal, Iran will modify the core of its reactor in Arak so that it will not produce weapons-grade plutonium. And it has agreed to ship the spent fuel from the reactor out of the country for the lifetime of the reactor. For at least the next 15 years, Iran will not build any new heavy-water reactors.

Because of this deal, we will, for the first time, be in a position to verify all of these commitments. That means this deal is not built on trust; it is built on verification. Inspectors will have 24/7 access to Iran's key nuclear facilities.

\*Iran [Inspectors] will have access to Iran's entire nuclear supply chain -- its uranium mines and mills, its conversion facility, and its centrifuge manufacturing and storage facilities. This ensures that Iran will not be able to divert materials from known facilities to covert ones. Some of these transparency measures will be in place for 25 years.

Because of this deal, inspectors will also be able to access any suspicious location. Put simply, the organization responsible for the inspections, the IAEA, will have access where necessary, when necessary. That arrangement is permanent. And the IAEA has also reached an agreement with Iran to get access that it needs to complete its investigation into the possible military dimensions of Iran's past nuclear research.

Finally, Iran is permanently prohibited from pursuing a nuclear weapon under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which provided the basis for the international community's efforts to apply pressure on Iran.

As Iran takes steps to implement this deal, it will receive relief from the sanctions that we put in place because of Iran's nuclear program -- both America's own sanctions and sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council. This relief will be phased in. Iran must complete key nuclear steps before it begins to receive new sanctions relief. And over the course of the next decade, Iran must abide by the deal before additional sanctions are lifted, including five years for restrictions related to arms, and eight years for restrictions related to ballistic missiles.

All of this will be memorialized and endorsed in a new United Nations Security Council resolution. And if Iran violates the deal, all of these sanctions will snap back into place. So there's a very clear incentive for Iran to follow through, and there are very real consequences for a violation.

That's the deal. It has the full backing of the international community. Congress will now have an opportunity to review the details, and my administration stands ready to provide extensive briefings on how this will move forward.

As the American people and Congress review the deal, it will be important to consider the alternative. Consider what happens in a world without this deal. Without this deal, there is no scenario where the world joins us in sanctioning Iran until it completely dismantles its nuclear program. Nothing we know about the Iranian government suggests that it would simply capitulate under that kind of pressure. And the



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world would not support an effort to permanently sanction Iran into submission. We put sanctions in place to get a diplomatic resolution, and that is what we have done.

Without this deal, there would be no agreed-upon limitations for the Iranian nuclear program. Iran could produce, operate and test more and more centrifuges. Iran could fuel a reactor capable of producing plutonium for a bomb. And we would not have any of the inspections that allow us to detect a covert nuclear weapons program. In other words, no deal means no lasting constraints on Iran's nuclear program.

Such a scenario would make it more likely that other countries in the region would feel compelled to pursue their own nuclear programs, threatening a nuclear arms race in the most volatile region of the world. It would also present the United States with fewer and less effective options to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

I've been President and Commander-in-Chief for over six years now. Time and again, I have faced decisions about whether or not to use military force. It's the gravest decision that any President has to make. Many times, in multiple countries, I have decided to use force. And I will never hesitate to do so when it is in our national security interest. I strongly believe that our national security interest now depends upon preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon -- which means that without a diplomatic resolution, either I or a future U.S. President would face a decision about whether or not to allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon or whether to use our military to stop it.

Put simply, no deal means a greater chance of more war in the Middle East. Moreover, we give nothing up by testing whether or not this problem can be solved peacefully. If, in a worst-case scenario, Iran violates the deal, the same options that are available to me today will be available to any U.S. President in the future. And I have no doubt that 10 or 15 years from now, the person who holds this office will be in a far stronger position with Iran further away from a weapon and with the inspections and transparency that allow us to monitor the Iranian program.

For this reason, I believe it would be irresponsible to walk away from this deal. But on such a tough issue, it is important that the American people and their representatives in Congress get a full opportunity to review the deal. After all, the details matter. And we've had some of the finest nuclear scientists in the world working through those details. And we're dealing with a country -- Iran -- that has been a sworn adversary of the United States for over 35 years. So I welcome a robust debate in Congress on this issue, and I welcome scrutiny of the details of this agreement.

But I will remind Congress that you don't make deals like this with your friends. We negotiated arms control agreements with the Soviet Union when that nation was committed to our destruction. And those agreements ultimately made us safer. I am confident that this deal will meet the national security interest of the United States and our allies. So I will veto any legislation that prevents the successful implementation of this deal.

We do not have to accept an inevitable spiral into conflict. And we certainly shouldn't seek it. And precisely because the stakes are so high, this is not the time for politics or posturing. Tough talk from Washington does not solve problems. Hard-nosed diplomacy, leadership that has united the world's major powers offers a more effective way to verify that Iran is not pursuing a nuclear weapon.

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Now, that doesn't mean that this deal will resolve all of our differences with Iran. We share the concerns expressed by many of our friends in the Middle East, including Israel and the Gulf States, about Iran's support for terrorism and its use of proxies to destabilize the region. But that is precisely why we are taking this step -- because an Iran armed with a nuclear weapon would be far more destabilizing and far more dangerous to our friends and to the world.

Meanwhile, we will maintain our own sanctions related to Iran's support for terrorism, its ballistic missile program, and its human rights violations. We will continue our unprecedented efforts to strengthen Israel's security -- efforts that go beyond what any American administration has done before. And we will continue the work we began at Camp David to elevate our partnership with the Gulf States to strengthen their capabilities to counter threats from Iran or terrorist groups like ISIL.

However, I believe that we must continue to test whether or not this region, which has known so much suffering, so much bloodshed, can move in a different direction. Time and again, I have made clear to the Iranian people that we will always be open to engagement on the basis of mutual interests and mutual respect. Our differences are real and the difficult history between our nations cannot be ignored. But it is possible to change. The path of violence and rigid ideology, a foreign policy based on threats to attack your neighbors or eradicate Israel -- that's a dead end. A different path, one of tolerance and peaceful resolution of conflict, leads to more integration into the global economy, more engagement with the international community, and the ability of the Iranian people to prosper and thrive.

This deal offers an opportunity to move in a new direction. We should seize it. We have come a long way to reach this point -- decades of an Iranian nuclear program, many years of sanctions, and many months of intense negotiation. Today, I want to thank the members of Congress from both parties who helped us put in place the sanctions that have proven so effective, as well as the other countries who joined us in that effort.

I want to thank our negotiating partners -- the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, China, as well as the European Union -- for our unity in this effort, which showed that the world can do remarkable things when we share a vision of peacefully addressing conflicts. We showed what we can do when we do not split apart.

And finally, I want to thank the American negotiating team. We had a team of experts working for several weeks straight on this, including our Secretary of Energy, Ernie Moniz. And I want to particularly thank John Kerry, our Secretary of State, who began his service to this country more than four decades ago when he put on our uniform and went off to war. He's now making this country safer through his commitment to strong, principled American diplomacy.

History shows that America must lead not just with our might, but with our principles. It shows we are stronger not when we are alone, but when we bring the world together. Today's announcement marks one more chapter in this pursuit of a safer and more helpful and more hopeful world.

Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.

END

7:17 A.M. EDT

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## **7. Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal**

The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary  
For Immediate Release  
August 05, 2015  
Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal  
American University  
Washington, D.C.  
11:58 A.M. EDT

Watch the full speech here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vb1Mtx9BONA&t=583s>

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. (Applause.) Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you very much. I apologize for the slight delay. Even Presidents have problems with toner. (Laughter.)

It is a great honor to be back at American University, which has prepared generations of young people for service in public life. I want to thank President Kerwin and the American University family for hosting us here today.

Fifty-two years ago, President Kennedy, at the height of the Cold War, addressed this same university on the subject of peace. The Berlin Wall had just been built. The Soviet Union had tested the most powerful weapons ever developed. China was on the verge of acquiring a nuclear bomb. Less than 20 years after the end of World War II, the prospect of nuclear war was all too real. With all of the threats that we face today, it's hard to appreciate how much more dangerous the world was at that time.

In light of these mounting threats, a number of strategists here in the United States argued that we had to take military action against the Soviets, to hasten what they saw as inevitable confrontation. But the young President offered a different vision. Strength, in his view, included powerful armed forces and a willingness to stand up for our values around the world. But he rejected the prevailing attitude among some foreign policy circles that equated security with a perpetual war footing. Instead, he promised strong, principled American leadership on behalf of what he called a "practical" and "attainable peace" -- a peace "based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions -- on a series of concrete actions and effective agreements."

Such wisdom would help guide our ship of state through some of the most perilous moments in human history. With Kennedy at the helm, the Cuban Missile Crisis was resolved peacefully. Under Democratic and Republican Presidents, new agreements were forged -- a Non-Proliferation Treaty that prohibited nations from acquiring nuclear weapons, while allowing them to access peaceful nuclear energy; the SALT and START Treaties which bound the United States and Soviet Union to cooperation on arms control. Not every conflict was averted, but the world avoided nuclear catastrophe, and

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we created the time and the space to win the Cold War without firing a shot at the Soviets.

The agreement now reached between the international community and the Islamic Republic of Iran builds on this tradition of strong, principled diplomacy. After two years of negotiations, we have achieved a detailed arrangement that permanently prohibits Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. It cuts off all of Iran's pathways to a bomb. It contains the most comprehensive inspection and verification regime ever negotiated to monitor a nuclear program. As was true in previous treaties, it does not resolve all problems; it certainly doesn't resolve all our problems with Iran. It does not ensure a warming between our two countries. But it achieves one of our most critical security objectives. As such, it is a very good deal.

Today, I want to speak to you about this deal, and the most consequential foreign policy debate that our country has had since the invasion of Iraq, as Congress decides whether to support this historic diplomatic breakthrough, or instead blocks it over the objection of the vast majority of the world. Between now and the congressional vote in September, you're going to hear a lot of arguments against this deal, backed by tens of millions of dollars in advertising. And if the rhetoric in these ads, and the accompanying commentary, sounds familiar, it should -- for many of the same people who argued for the war in Iraq are now making the case against the Iran nuclear deal.

Now, when I ran for President eight years ago as a candidate who had opposed the decision to go to war in Iraq, I said that America didn't just have to end that war -- we had to end the mindset that got us there in the first place. It was a mindset characterized by a preference for military action over diplomacy; a mindset that put a premium on unilateral U.S. action over the painstaking work of building international consensus; a mindset that exaggerated threats beyond what the intelligence supported. Leaders did not level with the American people about the costs of war, insisting that we could easily impose our will on a part of the world with a profoundly different culture and history. And, of course, those calling for war labeled themselves strong and decisive, while dismissing those who disagreed as weak -- even appeasers of a malevolent adversary.

More than a decade later, we still live with the consequences of the decision to invade Iraq. Our troops achieved every mission they were given. But thousands of lives were lost, tens of thousands wounded. That doesn't count the lives lost among Iraqis. Nearly a trillion dollars was spent. Today, Iraq remains gripped by sectarian conflict, and the emergence of al Qaeda in Iraq has now evolved into ISIL. And ironically, the single greatest beneficiary in the region of that war was the Islamic Republic of Iran, which saw its strategic position strengthened by the removal of its long-standing enemy, Saddam Hussein.

I raise this recent history because now more than ever we need clear thinking in our foreign policy. And I raise this history because it bears directly on how we respond to the Iranian nuclear program.

That program has been around for decades, dating back to the Shah's efforts -- with U.S. support -- in the 1960s and '70s to develop nuclear power. The theocracy that overthrew the Shah accelerated the program after the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, a war in

which Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons to brutal effect, and Iran's nuclear program advanced steadily through the 1990s, despite unilateral U.S. sanctions. When the Bush administration took office, Iran had no centrifuges -- the machines necessary to produce material for a bomb -- that were spinning to enrich uranium. But despite repeated warnings from the United States government, by the time I took office, Iran had installed several thousand centrifuges, and showed no inclination to slow -- much less halt -- its program.

Among U.S. policymakers, there's never been disagreement on the danger posed by an Iranian nuclear bomb. Democrats and Republicans alike have recognized that it would spark an arms race in the world's most unstable region, and turn every crisis into a potential nuclear showdown. It would embolden terrorist groups, like Hezbollah, and pose an unacceptable risk to Israel, which Iranian leaders have repeatedly threatened to destroy. More broadly, it could unravel the global commitment to non-proliferation that the world has done so much to defend.

The question, then, is not whether to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, but how. Even before taking office, I made clear that Iran would not be allowed to acquire a nuclear weapon on my watch, and it's been my policy throughout my presidency to keep all options -- including possible military options -- on the table to achieve that objective. But I have also made clear my preference for a peaceful, diplomatic resolution of the issue -- not just because of the costs of war, but also because a negotiated agreement offered a more effective, verifiable and durable resolution.

And so, in 2009, we let the Iranians know that a diplomatic path was available. Iran failed to take that path, and our intelligence community exposed the existence of a covert nuclear facility at Fordow.

Now, some have argued that Iran's intransigence showed the futility of negotiations. In fact, it was our very willingness to negotiate that helped America rally the world to our cause, and secured international participation in an unprecedented framework of commercial and financial sanctions. Keep in mind unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran had been in place for decades, but had failed to pressure Iran to the negotiating table. What made our new approach more effective was our ability to draw upon new U.N. Security Council resolutions, combining strong enforcement with voluntary agreements from nations like China and India, Japan and South Korea to reduce their purchases of Iranian oil, as well as the imposition by our European allies of a total oil embargo.

Winning this global buy-in was not easy -- I know. I was there. In some cases, our partners lost billions of dollars in trade because of their decision to cooperate. But we were able to convince them that absent a diplomatic resolution, the result could be war, with major disruptions to the global economy, and even greater instability in the Middle East. In other words, it was diplomacy -- hard, painstaking diplomacy -- not saber-rattling, not tough talk that ratcheted up the pressure on Iran.

With the world now unified beside us, Iran's economy contracted severely, and remains about 20 percent smaller today than it would have otherwise been. No doubt this hardship played a role in Iran's 2013 elections, when the Iranian people elected a new government that promised to improve the economy through engagement with the

world. A window had cracked open. Iran came back to the nuclear talks. And after a series of negotiations, Iran agreed with the international community to an interim deal -- a deal that rolled back Iran's stockpile of near 20 percent enriched uranium, and froze the progress of its program so that the P5+1 -- the United States, China, Russia, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and the European Union -- could negotiate a comprehensive deal without the fear that Iran might be stalling for time.

Now, let me pause here just to remind everybody that when the interim deal was announced, critics -- the same critics we're hearing from now -- called it "a historic mistake." They insisted Iran would ignore its obligations. They warned that sanctions would unravel. They warned that Iran would receive a windfall to support terrorism.

The critics were wrong. The progress of Iran's nuclear program was halted for the first time in a decade. Its stockpile of dangerous materials was reduced. The deployment of its advanced centrifuges was stopped. Inspections did increase. There was no flood of money into Iran, and the architecture of the international sanctions remained in place. In fact, the interim deal worked so well that the same people who criticized it so fiercely now cite it as an excuse not to support the broader accord. Think about that. What was once proclaimed as a historic mistake is now held up as a success and a reason to not sign the comprehensive deal. So keep that in mind when you assess the credibility of the arguments being made against diplomacy today.

Despite the criticism, we moved ahead to negotiate a more lasting, comprehensive deal. Our diplomats, led by Secretary of State John Kerry, kept our coalition united. Our nuclear experts -- including one of the best in the world, Secretary of Energy Ernie Moniz -- worked tirelessly on the technical details. In July, we reached a comprehensive plan of action that meets our objectives. Under its terms, Iran is never allowed to build a nuclear weapon. And while Iran, like any party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, is allowed to access peaceful nuclear energy, the agreement strictly defines the manner in which its nuclear program can proceed, ensuring that all pathways to a bomb are cut off. Here's how. Under this deal, Iran cannot acquire the plutonium needed for a bomb. The core of its heavy-water reactor at Arak will be pulled out, filled with concrete, and replaced with one that will not produce plutonium for a weapon. The spent fuel from that reactor will be shipped out of the country, and Iran will not build any new heavy-water reactors for at least 15 years.

Iran will also not be able to acquire the enriched uranium that could be used for a bomb. As soon as this deal is implemented, Iran will remove two-thirds of its centrifuges. For the next decade, Iran will not enrich uranium with its more advanced centrifuges. Iran will not enrich uranium at the previously undisclosed Fordow facility, which is buried deep underground, for at least 15 years. Iran will get rid of 98 percent of its stockpile of enriched uranium, which is currently enough for up to 10 nuclear bombs, for the next 15 years. Even after those 15 years have passed, Iran will never have the right to use a peaceful program as cover to pursue a weapon.

And, in fact, this deal shuts off the type of covert path Iran pursued in the past. There will be 24/7 monitoring of Iran's key nuclear facilities. For decades, inspectors will have access to Iran's entire nuclear supply chain -- from the uranium mines and mills where they get raw materials, to the centrifuge production facilities

where they make machines to enrich it. And understand why this is so important: For Iran to cheat, it has to build a lot more than just one building or a covert facility like Fordow. It would need a secret source for every single aspect of its program. No nation in history has been able to pull off such subterfuge when subjected to such rigorous inspections. And under the terms of the deal, inspectors will have the permanent ability to inspect any suspicious sites in Iran.

And finally, Iran has powerful incentives to keep its commitments. Before getting sanctions relief, Iran has to take significant, concrete steps like removing centrifuges and getting rid of its stockpile. If Iran violates the agreement over the next decade, all of the sanctions can snap back into place. We won't need the support of other members of the U.N. Security Council; America can trigger snapback on our own. On the other hand, if Iran abides by the deal and its economy begins to reintegrate with the world, the incentive to avoid snapback will only grow.

So this deal is not just the best choice among alternatives -- this is the strongest non-proliferation agreement ever negotiated. And because this is such a strong deal, every nation in the world that has commented publicly, with the exception of the Israeli government, has expressed support. The United Nations Security Council has unanimously supported it. The majority of arms control and non-proliferation experts support it. Over 100 former ambassadors -- who served under Republican and Democratic Presidents -- support it. I've had to make a lot of tough calls as President, but whether or not this deal is good for American security is not one of those calls. It's not even close.

Unfortunately, we're living through a time in American politics where every foreign policy decision is viewed through a partisan prism, evaluated by headline-grabbing sound bites. And so before the ink was even dry on this deal -- before Congress even read it -- a majority of Republicans declared their virulent opposition. Lobbyists and pundits were suddenly transformed into arm-chair nuclear scientists, disputing the assessments of experts like Secretary Moniz, challenging his findings, offering multiple -- and sometimes contradictory -- arguments about why Congress should reject this deal. But if you repeat these arguments long enough, they can get some traction. So let me address just a few of the arguments that have been made so far in opposition to this deal.

First, there are those who say the inspections are not strong enough because inspectors can't go anywhere in Iran at any time with no notice.

Well, here's the truth: Inspectors will be allowed daily access to Iran's key nuclear sites. If there is a reason for inspecting a suspicious, undeclared site anywhere in Iran, inspectors will get that access, even if Iran objects. This access can be with as little as 24 hours' notice. And while the process for resolving a dispute about access can take up to 24 days, once we've identified a site that raises suspicion, we will be watching it continuously until inspectors get in. And by the way, nuclear material isn't something you hide in the closet. It can leave a trace for years. The bottom line is, if Iran cheats, we can catch them -- and we will.

Second, there are those who argue that the deal isn't strong enough because some of the limitations on Iran's civilian nuclear program expire in 15 years. Let me



repeat: The prohibition on Iran having a nuclear weapon is permanent. The ban on weapons-related research is permanent. Inspections are permanent. It is true that some of the limitations regarding Iran's peaceful program last only 15 years. But that's how arms control agreements work. The first SALT Treaty with the Soviet Union lasted five years. The first START Treaty lasted 15 years. And in our current situation, if 15 or 20 years from now, Iran tries to build a bomb, this deal ensures that the United States will have better tools to detect it, a stronger basis under international law to respond, and the same options available to stop a weapons program as we have today, including -- if necessary -- military options.

On the other hand, without this deal, the scenarios that critics warn about happening in 15 years could happen six months from now. By killing this deal, Congress would not merely pave Iran's pathway to a bomb, it would accelerate it.

Third, a number of critics say the deal isn't worth it because Iran will get billions of dollars in sanctions relief. Now, let's be clear: The international sanctions were put in place precisely to get Iran to agree to constraints on its program. That's the point of sanctions. Any negotiated agreement with Iran would involve sanctions relief. So an argument against sanctions relief is effectively an argument against any diplomatic resolution of this issue.

It is true that if Iran lives up to its commitments, it will gain access to roughly \$56 billion of its own money -- revenue frozen overseas by other countries. But the notion that this will be a game-changer, with all this money funneled into Iran's pernicious activities, misses the reality of Iran's current situation. Partly because of our sanctions, the Iranian government has over half a trillion dollars in urgent requirements -- from funding pensions and salaries, to paying for crumbling infrastructure. Iran's leaders have raised the expectations of their people that sanctions relief will improve their lives. Even a repressive regime like Iran's cannot completely ignore those expectations. And that's why our best analysts expect the bulk of this revenue to go into spending that improves the economy and benefits the lives of the Iranian people.

Now, this is not to say that sanctions relief will provide no benefit to Iran's military. Let's stipulate that some of that money will flow to activities that we object to. We have no illusions about the Iranian government, or the significance of the Revolutionary Guard and the Quds Force. Iran supports terrorist organizations like Hezbollah. It supports proxy groups that threaten our interests and the interests of our allies -- including proxy groups who killed our troops in Iraq. They try to destabilize our Gulf partners. But Iran has been engaged in these activities for decades. They engaged in them before sanctions and while sanctions were in place. In fact, Iran even engaged in these activities in the middle of the Iran-Iraq War -- a war that cost them nearly a million lives and hundreds of billions of dollars.

The truth is that Iran has always found a way to fund these efforts, and whatever benefit Iran may claim from sanctions relief pales in comparison to the danger it could pose with a nuclear weapon.

Moreover, there's no scenario where sanctions relief turns Iran into the region's dominant power. Iran's defense budget is eight times smaller than the combined budget of our Gulf allies. Their conventional capabilities will never compare with Israel's, and

our commitment to Israel's qualitative military edge helps guarantee that. Over the last several years, Iran has had to spend billions of dollars to support its only ally in the Arab World -- Bashar al-Assad -- even as he's lost control of huge chunks of his country. And Hezbollah has suffered significant blows on the same battlefield. And Iran, like the rest of the region, is being forced to respond to the threat of ISIL in Iraq.

So contrary to the alarmists who claim that Iran is on the brink of taking over the Middle East, or even the world, Iran will remain a regional power with its own set of challenges. The ruling regime is dangerous and it is repressive. We will continue to have sanctions in place on Iran's support for terrorism and violation of human rights. We will continue to insist upon the release of Americans detained unjustly. We will have a lot of differences with the Iranian regime.

But if we're serious about confronting Iran's destabilizing activities, it is hard to imagine a worse approach than blocking this deal. Instead, we need to check the behavior that we're concerned about directly: By helping our allies in the region strengthen their own capabilities to counter a cyber-attack or a ballistic missile; by improving the interdiction of weapons shipments that go to groups like Hezbollah; by training our allies' special forces so that they can more effectively respond to situations like Yemen. All these capabilities will make a difference. We will be in a stronger position to implement them with this deal. And, by the way, such a strategy also helps us effectively confront the immediate and lethal threat posed by ISIL.

Now, the final criticism -- this sort of a catch-all that you may hear -- is the notion that there's a better deal to be had. "We should get a better deal" -- that's repeated over and over again. "It's a bad deal, need a better deal" -- (laughter) -- one that relies on vague promises of toughness, and, more recently, the argument that we can apply a broader and indefinite set of sanctions to squeeze the Iranian regime harder.

Those making this argument are either ignorant of Iranian society, or they're just not being straight with the American people. Sanctions alone are not going to force Iran to completely dismantle all vestiges of its nuclear infrastructure -- even those aspects that are consistent with peaceful programs. That oftentimes is what the critics are calling "a better deal." Neither the Iranian government, or the Iranian opposition, or the Iranian people would agree to what they would view as a total surrender of their sovereignty.

Moreover, our closest allies in Europe, or in Asia -- much less China or Russia -- certainly are not going to agree to enforce existing sanctions for another 5, 10, 15 years according to the dictates of the U.S. Congress. Because their willingness to support sanctions in the first place was based on Iran ending its pursuit of nuclear weapons. It was not based on the belief that Iran cannot have peaceful nuclear power. And it certainly wasn't based on a desire for regime change in Iran.

As a result, those who say we can just walk away from this deal and maintain sanctions are selling a fantasy. Instead of strengthening our position as some have suggested, Congress's rejection would almost certainly result in multilateral sanctions unraveling. If, as has also been suggested, we tried to maintain unilateral sanctions, beefen them up, we would be standing alone. We cannot dictate the foreign, economic and energy policies of every major power in the world.

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In order to even try to do that, we would have to sanction, for example, some of the world's largest banks. We'd have to cut off countries like China from the American financial system. And since they happen to be major purchasers of our debt, such actions could trigger severe disruptions in our own economy and, by the way, raise questions internationally about the dollar's role as the world's reserve currency.

That's part of the reason why many of the previous unilateral sanctions were waived. What's more likely to happen, should Congress reject this deal, is that Iran would end up with some form of sanctions relief without having to accept any of the constraints or inspections required by this deal. So in that sense, the critics are right: Walk away from this agreement and you will get a better deal -- for Iran. (Applause.)

Now, because more sanctions won't produce the results that the critics want, we have to be honest. Congressional rejection of this deal leaves any U.S. administration that is absolutely committed to preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon with one option -- another war in the Middle East.

I say this not to be provocative. I am stating a fact. Without this deal, Iran will be in a position -- however tough our rhetoric may be -- to steadily advance its capabilities. Its breakout time, which is already fairly small, could shrink to near zero. Does anyone really doubt that the same voices now raised against this deal will be demanding that whoever is President bomb those nuclear facilities?

And as someone who does firmly believe that Iran must not get a nuclear weapon, and who has wrestled with this issue since the beginning of my presidency, I can tell you that alternatives to military action will have been exhausted once we reject a hard-won diplomatic solution that the world almost unanimously supports.

So let's not mince words. The choice we face is ultimately between diplomacy or some form of war -- maybe not tomorrow, maybe not three months from now, but soon. And here's the irony. As I said before, military action would be far less effective than this deal in preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. That's not just my supposition. Every estimate, including those from Israeli analysts, suggest military action would only set back Iran's program by a few years at best, which is a fraction of the limitations imposed by this deal. It would likely guarantee that inspectors are kicked out of Iran. It is probable that it would drive Iran's program deeper underground. It would certainly destroy the international unity that we've spent so many years building.

Now, there are some opponents -- I have to give them credit; there are opponents of this deal who accept the choice of war. In fact, they argue that surgical strikes against Iran's facilities will be quick and painless. But if we've learned anything from the last decade, it's that wars in general and wars in the Middle East in particular are anything but simple. (Applause.) The only certainty in war is human suffering, uncertain costs, unintended consequences. We can also be sure that the Americans who bear the heaviest burden are the less than 1 percent of us, the outstanding men and women who serve in uniform, and not those of us who send them to war.

As Commander-in-Chief, I have not shied from using force when necessary. I have ordered tens of thousands of young Americans into combat. I have sat by their bedside sometimes when they come home. I've ordered military action in seven

countries. There are times when force is necessary, and if Iran does not abide by this deal, it's possible that we don't have an alternative.

But how can we in good conscience justify war before we've tested a diplomatic agreement that achieves our objectives; that has been agreed to by Iran; that is supported by the rest of the world; and that preserves our options if the deal falls short? How could we justify that to our troops? How could we justify that to the world or to future generations?

In the end, that should be a lesson that we've learned from over a decade of war. On the front end, ask tough questions. Subject our own assumptions to evidence and analysis. Resist the conventional wisdom and the drumbeat of war. Worry less about being labeled weak; worry more about getting it right.

I recognize that resorting to force may be tempting in the face of the rhetoric and behavior that emanates from parts of Iran. It is offensive. It is incendiary. We do take it seriously. But superpowers should not act impulsively in response to taunts, or even provocations that can be addressed short of war. Just because Iranian hardliners chant "Death to America" does not mean that that's what all Iranians believe. (Applause.)

In fact, it's those hardliners who are most comfortable with the status quo. It's those hardliners chanting "Death to America" who have been most opposed to the deal. They're making common cause with the Republican caucus. (Laughter and applause.)

The majority of the Iranian people have powerful incentives to urge their government to move in a different, less provocative direction -- incentives that are strengthened by this deal. We should offer them that chance. We should give them that opportunity. It's not guaranteed to succeed. But if they take it, that would be good for Iran, it would be good for the United States. It would be good for a region that has known too much conflict. It would be good for the world.

And if Iran does not move in that direction, if Iran violates this deal, we will have ample ability to respond. The agreements pursued by Kennedy and Reagan with the Soviet Union, those agreements, those treaties involved America accepting significant constraints on our arsenal. As such, they were riskier. This agreement involves no such constraints. The defense budget of the United States is more than \$600 billion. To repeat, Iran's is about \$15 billion. Our military remains the ultimate backstop to any security agreement that we make. I have stated that Iran will never be allowed to obtain a nuclear weapon. I have done what is necessary to make sure our military options are real. And I have no doubt that any President who follows me will take the same position.

So let me sum up here. When we carefully examine the arguments against this deal, none of them stand up to scrutiny. That may be why the rhetoric on the other side is so strident. I suppose some of it can be ascribed to knee-jerk partisanship that has become all too familiar; rhetoric that renders every decision that's made a disaster, a surrender -- "you're aiding terrorists; you're endangering freedom."

On the other hand, I do think it's important to acknowledge another, more understandable motivation behind the opposition to this deal, or at least skepticism to this

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deal, and that is a sincere affinity for our friend and ally, Israel -- an affinity that, as someone who has been a stalwart friend to Israel throughout my career, I deeply share. When the Israeli government is opposed to something, people in the United States take notice. And they should. No one can blame Israelis for having a deep skepticism about any dealings with a government like Iran's -- which includes leaders who have denied the Holocaust, embrace an ideology of anti-Semitism, facilitate the flow of rockets that are arrayed on Israel's borders, are pointed at Tel Aviv. In such a dangerous neighborhood, Israel has to be vigilant, and it rightly insists that it cannot depend on any other country -- even its great friend the United States -- for its own security. So we have to take seriously concerns in Israel.

But the fact is, partly due to American military and intelligence assistance, which my administration has provided at unprecedented levels, Israel can defend itself against any conventional danger -- whether from Iran directly or from its proxies. On the other hand, a nuclear-armed Iran changes that equation.

And that's why this deal ultimately must be judged by what it achieves on the central goal of preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. This deal does exactly that. I say this as someone who has done more than any other President to strengthen Israel's security. And I have made clear to the Israeli government that we are prepared to discuss how we can deepen that cooperation even further. Already we've held talks with Israel on concluding another 10-year plan for U.S. security assistance to Israel. We can enhance support for areas like missile defense, information sharing, interdiction -- all to help meet Israel's pressing security needs, and to provide a hedge against any additional activities that Iran may engage in as a consequence of sanctions relief.

But I have also listened to the Israeli security establishment, which warned of the danger posed by a nuclear-armed Iran for decades. In fact, they helped develop many of the ideas that ultimately led to this deal.

So to friends of Israel, and to the Israeli people, I say this: A nuclear-armed Iran is far more dangerous to Israel, to America, and to the world than an Iran that benefits from sanctions relief.

I recognize that Prime Minister Netanyahu disagrees -- disagrees strongly. I do not doubt his sincerity. But I believe he is wrong. I believe the facts support this deal. I believe they are in America's interest and Israel's interest. And as President of the United States, it would be an abrogation of my constitutional duty to act against my best judgment simply because it causes temporary friction with a dear friend and ally. I do not believe that would be the right thing to do for the United States. I do not believe it would be the right thing to do for Israel. (Applause.)

Over the last couple weeks, I have repeatedly challenged anyone opposed to this deal to put forward a better, plausible alternative. I have yet to hear one. What I've heard instead are the same types of arguments that we heard in the run-up to the Iraq War: Iran cannot be dealt with diplomatically; we can take military strikes without significant consequences; we shouldn't worry about what the rest of the world thinks, because once we act, everyone will fall in line; tougher talk, more military threats will force Iran into submission; we can get a better deal.

I know it's easy to play on people's fears, to magnify threats, to compare any attempt at diplomacy to Munich. But none of these arguments hold up. They didn't back in 2002 and 2003; they shouldn't now. (Applause.) The same mindset, in many cases offered by the same people who seem to have no compunction with being repeatedly wrong, led to a war that did more to strengthen Iran, more to isolate the United States than anything we have done in the decades before or since. It's a mindset out of step with the traditions of American foreign policy, where we exhaust diplomacy before war, and debate matters of war and peace in the cold light of truth.

"Peace is not the absence of conflict," President Reagan once said. It is "the ability to cope with conflict by peaceful means." President Kennedy warned Americans, "not to see conflict as inevitable, accommodation as impossible, and communication as nothing more than the exchange of threats." It is time to apply such wisdom. The deal before us doesn't bet on Iran changing, it doesn't require trust; it verifies and requires Iran to forsake a nuclear weapon, just as we struck agreements with the Soviet Union at a time when they were threatening our allies, arming proxies against us, proclaiming their commitment to destroy our way of life, and had nuclear weapons pointed at all of our major cities -- a genuine existential threat.

We live in a complicated world -- a world in which the forces unleashed by human innovation are creating opportunities for our children that were unimaginable for most of human history. It is also a world of persistent threats, a world in which mass violence and cruelty is all too common, and human innovation risks the destruction of all that we hold dear. In this world, the United States of America remains the most powerful nation on Earth, and I believe that we will remain such for decades to come. But we are one nation among many.

And what separates us from the empires of old, what has made us exceptional, is not the mere fact of our military might. Since World War II, the deadliest war in human history, we have used our power to try to bind nations together in a system of international law. We have led an evolution of those human institutions President Kennedy spoke about -- to prevent the spread of deadly weapons, to uphold peace and security, and promote human progress.

We now have the opportunity to build on that progress. We built a coalition and held it together through sanctions and negotiations, and now we have before us a solution that prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, without resorting to war. As Americans, we should be proud of this achievement. And as members of Congress reflect on their pending decision, I urge them to set aside political concerns, shut out the noise, consider the stakes involved with the vote that you will cast.

If Congress kills this deal, we will lose more than just constraints on Iran's nuclear program, or the sanctions we have painstakingly built. We will have lost something more precious: America's credibility as a leader of diplomacy; America's credibility as the anchor of the international system.

John F. Kennedy cautioned here, more than 50 years ago, at this university, that "the pursuit of peace is not as dramatic as the pursuit of war." But it's so very important. It is surely the pursuit of peace that is most needed in this world so full of strife.

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My fellow Americans, contact your representatives in Congress. Remind them of who we are. Remind them of what is best in us and what we stand for, so that we can leave behind a world that is more secure and more peaceful for our children.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

12:54 P.M. EDT

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