

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

HILLARY CLINTON ADDRESSES THE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

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Introduction:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

SPEAKER: Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Strobe Talbott, the president of the Brookings Institution, and Hillary Clinton. (Applause)

MR. TALBOTT: Good morning, everybody. Welcome to you all, and especially welcome to Secretary Clinton. She, as you all know, is here today to talk to us about the Iran nuclear agreement, which I think it's safe to say is one of the most, if not the most, contentious foreign policy issue that we have debated in this country since the decision to go to war in Iraq a dozen years ago.

Last evening Brookings hosted a debate in which Senator McCain took part with three Brookings scholars who were on different sides of the issue. It was a substantive, lively, and civil debate.

Secretary Clinton, of course, is deeply knowledgeable on the subject that we're devoting this morning to. As the senior member of the cabinet, she played a critical role in shaping America's strategy to combat and thwart Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions, including having a very strong and instrumental role in setting up the international sanctions that were so important in bringing the Iranian government to the table.

Now, this issue is obviously going to reverberate in the presidential campaign. Brookings has hosted declared and potential candidates from both parties and they have been here on this stage to talk about both domestic and foreign policy matters, and we have invited several more to be with us in the future.

After her opening comments, Secretary Clinton will have a conversation with my colleague, Martin Indyk, the executive vice president of the Brookings Institution. And there will be time towards the end of the program for her to take a few questions from the invited guests who are here in the audience.

Madam Secretary?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you.

MR. TALBOTT: Welcome back to Brookings.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you so much, Strobe. Thank you so much. (Applause)

Well, let me thank you, Strobe. It's great to be back at Brookings and there are a lot of long-time friends and colleagues who perch here at Brookings, obviously including Strobe and Martin, who I'll speak to in a minute, also Bob Einhorn and Tammy Wittes.

This institution has hosted many important conversations over the years and I appreciate Strobe's reference to the event last night and the continuing dialogue about urgent issues facing our nation and the world. That's what brings me here today, back to Brookings, to talk about the question we're all grappling with, how to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and, more broadly, how to protect ourselves and our allies from the full range of threats that Iran poses.

The stakes are high and there are no simple or perfectly satisfying solutions. So these questions, and in particular the merits of the nuclear deal recently reached with Iran, have divided people of good will and raised hard issues on both sides. Here's how I see it. Either we move forward on the path of diplomacy and seize this chance to block Iran's path to a nuclear weapon or we turn down a more dangerous path leading to a far less certain and riskier future. That's why I support this deal. I support it as part of a larger strategy toward Iran.

By now the outcome in Congress is no longer in much doubt, so we've got to start looking ahead to what comes next: enforcing the deal, deterring Iran and its proxies, and strengthening our allies. These will be my goals as President and today I

want to talk about how I would achieve them.

Let me start by saying I understand the skepticism so many feel about Iran. I, too, am deeply concerned about Iranian aggression and the need to confront it. It's a ruthless, brutal regime that has the blood of Americans, many others, and including its own people, on its hands. Its political rallies resound with cries of "Death to America." Its leaders talk about wiping Israel off the face of the map, most recently just yesterday, and foment terror against it. There is absolutely no reason to trust Iran.

Now, Vice President Cheney may hope that the American people will simply forget, but the truth is by the time President Obama took office and I became Secretary of State, Iran was racing toward a nuclear capability. They had mastered the nuclear fuel cycle, meaning that they had the material, scientists, and technical know-how to create material for nuclear weapons. They had produced and installed thousands of centrifuges, expanded their secret facilities, established a robust uranium enrichment program, and defied their international obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and they hadn't suffered many consequences.

I voted for sanctions again and again as a senator from New York, but they weren't having much effect. Most of the world still did business with Iran. We needed to step up our game, so President Obama and I pursued a two-pronged strategy: pressure and engagement. We made it clear that the door to diplomacy was open if Iran answered the concerns of the international community in a serious and credible way.

We simultaneously launched a comprehensive campaign to significantly raise the cost of Iranian defiance. We systematically increased our military capability in the region, deepening our cooperation with partners and sending more firepower, an additional aircraft carrier, battleship, strike aircraft, and the most advanced radar and missile defense systems available.

Meanwhile, I traveled the world, capital by capital, leader by leader, twisting arms to help build the global coalition that produced some of the most effective sanctions in history. With President Obama's leadership, we worked with Congress and the European Union to cut Iran off from the world's economic and financial system. And one by one, we persuaded energy-hungry consumers of Iranian oil, like India and South Korea, to cut back.

Soon Iran's tankers sat rusting in port; its economy was collapsing. These new measures were effective because we made them global. American sanctions provided the foundation, but Iran didn't really feel the heat until we turned this into an international campaign so biting that Iran had no choice but to negotiate. They could no longer play off one country against another. They had no place to hide. So they started looking for a way out.

I first visited Oman to speak with the Sultan of Oman in January of 2011; went back later that year, and the Sultan helped set up a secret back channel. I sent one of my closest aides as part of a small team to begin talks with the Iranians in secret. Negotiations began in earnest after the Iranian election in 2013, first the bilateral talks led by Deputy Secretary Bill Burns and Jake Sullivan that led to the interim agreement, then the multilateral talks led by Secretary John Kerry, Secretary Ernie Moniz, and Undersecretary Wendy Sherman.

Now there's a comprehensive agreement on Iran's nuclear program. Is it perfect? Well, of course not. No agreement like this ever is. But is it a strong agreement? Yes, it is and we absolutely should not turn it down. The merits of the deal have been well argued, so I won't go through them in great detail here. The bottom line is that it accomplishes the major goals we set out to achieve: it blocks every pathway for Iran to get a bomb, and it gives us better tools for verification and inspection and to

compel rigorous compliance. Without a deal, Iran's breakout time -- how long they need to produce enough material for a nuclear weapon -- would shrink to a couple of months. With a deal, that breakout time stretches to a year, which means that if Iran cheats, we'll know it and we'll have time to respond decisively.

Without a deal we would have no credible inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities. With a deal we'll have unprecedented access. We'll be able to monitor every aspect of their nuclear program.

Now, some have expressed concern that certain nuclear restrictions expire after 15 years and we need to be vigilant about that, which I'll talk more about in a moment. But other parts are permanent, including Iran's obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and their commitment to enhanced inspections under the additional protocol. Others have expressed concern that it could take up to 24 days to gain access to some of Iran's facilities when we suspect cheating. I'd be the first to say that this part of the deal is not perfect, although the deal does allow for daily access to enrichment facilities and monitoring of the entire nuclear fuel cycle. It's important to focus on that because being able to monitor the supply chain is critical to what we will find out and how we will be able to respond.

But our experts tell us that even with delayed access to some places, this deal does the job. Microscopic nuclear particles remain for years and years. They are impossible to hide. That's why Secretary Moniz, a nuclear physicist, has confidence in this plan.

And some have suggested that we just go back to the negotiating table and get a better, unspecified deal. I can certainly understand why that may sound appealing, but as someone who started these talks in the first place and built our global coalition piece by piece, I can assure you it is not realistic. Plus, if we walk away now,

our capacity to sustain and enforce sanctions will be severely diminished. We will be blamed, not the Iranians.

So if we were to reject this agreement, Iran would be poised to get nearly everything it wants without giving up a thing. No restrictions on their nuclear program. No real warning if Tehran suddenly rushes towards a bomb. And the international sanctions regime would fall apart, so no more economic consequences for Iran either.

Those of us who have been out there on the diplomatic front lines know that diplomacy is not the pursuit of perfection, it's the balancing of risk. And, on balance, the far riskier course right now would be to walk away. Great powers can't just jump agreements and expect the rest of the world to go along with us. We need to be reasonable and consistent and we need to keep our word, especially when we're trying to lead a coalition. That's how we'll make this and future deals work.

But it's not enough just to say yes to this deal. Of course it isn't. We have to say "yes, and." "Yes, and" we will enforce it with vigor and vigilance. "Yes, and" we will embed it in a broader strategy to confront Iran's bad behavior in the region. "Yes, and" we will begin from day one to set the conditions so Iran knows it will never be able to get a nuclear weapon, not during the term of the agreement, not after, not ever.

We need to be clear and I think we need to make that very clear to Iran about what we expect from them. This is not the start of some larger diplomatic opening and we shouldn't expect that this deal will lead to broader changes in their behavior. That shouldn't be a promise for proceeding. Instead, we need to be prepared for three scenarios: first, Iran tries to cheat, something it's been quite willing to do in the past; second, Iran tries to wait us out, perhaps it waits to move for 15 years when some, but not all, restrictions expire; and, third, Iran ramps up its dangerous behavior in the region, including its support for terrorists groups, like Hamas and Hezbollah.

I believe that the success of this deal has a lot to do with how the next President grapples with these challenges, so let me tell you what I would do.

My starting point will be one of distrust. You remember President Reagan's line about the Soviets, "Trust, but verify?" My approach will be distrust and verify. We should anticipate that Iran will test the next President. They'll want to see how far they can bend the rules. That won't work if I'm in the White House. I'll hold the line against Iranian noncompliance. That means penalties even for small violations; keeping our allies on board, but being willing to snap back sanctions into place, unilaterally, if we have to; working with Congress to close any gaps in the sanctions. Right now members of Congress are offering proposals to that effect and I think the current administration should work with them to see whether there are additional steps that could be taken.

Finally, it means that ensuring that the IAEA has the resources that it needs, from finances to personnel to equipment, to hold Iran's feet to the fire. But the most important thing we can do to keep Iran from cheating or trying to wait us out is to shape Iranian expectations right from the start. The Iranians and the world need to understand that we will act decisively if we need to, so here's my message to Iran's leaders: The United States will never allow you to acquire a nuclear weapon.

As President I will take whatever actions are necessary to protect the United States and our allies. I will not hesitate to take military action if Iran attempts to obtain a nuclear weapon. And I will set up my successor to be able to credibly make the same pledge. We will make clear to Iran that our national commitment to prevention will not waiver depending on who's in office. It's permanent. And should it become necessary in the future, having exhausted peaceful alternatives to turn to military force, we will have preserved and, in some cases, enhanced our capacity to act. And because we've proven our commitment to diplomacy first, the world will more likely join us.

Then there's the broader issue of countering Iran's bad behavior across the region. Taking nuclear weapons out of the equation is crucial because an Iran with nuclear weapons is so much more dangerous than an Iran without them. But even without nuclear weapons, we still see Iran's fingerprints on nearly every conflict across the Middle East. They support bad actors from Syria to Lebanon to Yemen. They vowed to destroy Israel. And that's worth saying again, they vowed to destroy Israel. We cannot ever take that lightly, particularly when Iran ships advanced missiles to Hezbollah, and the ayatollah outlines an actual strategy for eliminating Israel or talks about how Israel won't exist in 25 years, just like he did today.

And in addition to all the malicious activity they already underwrite, we've got to anticipate that Iran could use some of the economic relief they get from this deal to pay for even more. So as President I will raise the costs for their actions and confront them across the board. My strategy will be based on five strong pillars.

First, I will deepen America's unshakeable commitment to Israel's security, including our longstanding tradition of guaranteeing Israel's qualitative military edge. I'll increase support for Israel rocket and missile defenses and for intelligence sharing. I'll sell Israel the most sophisticated fighter aircraft ever developed, the F-35. We'll work together to develop and implement better tunnel detection technology to prevent arms smuggling and kidnapping, as well as the strongest possible missile defense system for Northern Israel, which has been subjected to Hezbollah's attacks for years.

Second, I will reaffirm that the Persian Gulf is a region of vital interest to the United States. We don't want any of Iran's neighbors to develop or acquire a nuclear weapons program either, so we want them to feel and be secure. I will sustain a robust military presence in the region, especially our air and naval forces. We'll keep the Strait

of Hormuz open. We'll increase security cooperation with our Gulf allies, including intelligence sharing, military support, and missile defense to ensure they can defend against Iranian aggression, even if that takes the form of cyber attacks or other non-traditional threats. Iran should understand that the United States, and I as President, will not stand by as our Gulf allies and partners are threatened. We will act.

Third, I will build a coalition to counter Iran's proxies, particularly Hezbollah. That means enforcing and strengthening the rules prohibiting the transfers of weapons to Hezbollah, looking at new ways to choke off their funding, and pressing our partners to treat Hezbollah as the terrorist organization it is. It's time to eliminate the false distinction that some still make between the supposed political and military wings. If you're part of Hezbollah, you're part of a terrorist organization, plain and simple.

Beyond Hezbollah, I'll crack down the shipment of weapons to Hamas and push Turkey and Qatar to end their financial support. I'll press our partners in the region to prevent aircraft and ships owned by companies linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guard from entering their territories and urge our partners to block Iranian planes from entering their airspace on their way to Yemen and Syria.

Across the board, I will vigorously enforce and strengthen if necessary the American sanctions on Iran and its Revolutionary Guard for its sponsorship of terrorism, its ballistic missile program, and other destabilizing activities. I'll enforce and strengthen if necessary our restrictions on sending arms to Iran and from Iran, to bad actors like Syria. And I'll impose these sanctions on everyone involved in these activities, whether they're in Iran or overseas. This will be a special imperative as some of the U.N. sanctions lapse, so the U.S. and our partners have to step up.

Fourth, I'll stand, as I always have, against Iran's abuses of home, from its detention of political prisoners to its crackdown on freedom of expression, including

online. Its inhumane policies hold back talented and spirited people. Our quarrel is not and never has been with the Iranian people. They'd have a bright future, a hopeful future if they weren't held back by their leaders. As I've said before, I think we were too restrained in our support of the protests in June 2009, and in our condemnation of the government crackdown that followed. That won't happen again. We will enforce and, if need be, broaden our human rights sanctions. And I will not rest until every single American detained or missing in Iran is home.

Fifth, just as the nuclear agreement needs to be embedded in a broader Iran policy, our broader Iran policy needs to be embedded in a comprehensive regional strategy that promotes stability and counters extremism. Iran, like ISIS, benefits from chaos and strife. It exploits other countries' weaknesses, and the best defense against Iran are the countries and government being strong, so they can provide security and economic opportunity to their own people. And they must have the tools to push back on radicalization and extremism. Helping countries get there will take time and strategic discipline, but it's crucial that the United States leads this effort.

I will push for renewed diplomacy to solve the destructive regional conflicts that Iran fuels. We have to bring sufficient pressure on Assad to force a political solution in Syria, including a meaningful increase in our efforts to train and equip the moderate Syrian Opposition, something I called for early in the conflict. And the United States must lead in assisting those who have been uprooted by conflict, especially the millions of Syrian refugees now beseeching the world to help them. As Pope Francis has reminded us, this is an international problem that demands an international response, and the United States must help lead that response. That's who we are and that's what we do.

So our strategy needs to cover all these bases: Iran's nuclear ambitions

and its support of terrorism, its hatred of Israel and its cruelty towards its citizens, its military resources and its economic strengths and weaknesses. We need to be creative, committed, and vigilant. And on every front, we need to keep working closely with our friends and partners.

On that note, let me just spend a minute speaking about the serious concerns that Israel's leaders have about this deal. Israel has every reason to be alarmed by a regime that both denies its existence and seeks its destruction. I would not support this agreement for one second if I thought it put Israel in greater danger. I believe in my core that Israel and America must stand side by side and I will always stand by Israel's right to defend itself, as I always have.

I believe this deal and a joint strategy for enforcing it makes Israel safer. I say that with humility. I'm not Israeli. I don't know what it's like to live under constant threat from your neighbors in a country where the margin for error is so thin. I know that my saying this deal makes you safer won't alleviate the very real fears of the Israeli people. But I have stood for Israeli security for a very long time. It was one of my bedrock principles as Secretary of State. It's why I supported stronger defense systems, like the Iron Dome Anti-Rocket Defense System, which proved so effective in protecting Israeli lives during the conflicts of 2012 and last summer. It's why I've worked closely with Israel to advance the two-state vision of a Jewish and democratic Israel with secure and recognized borders. And it's why I believe we should expedite negotiations of a long-term military assistance agreement with Israel. Let's not wait until 2017, when the current deal expires. Let's get it done this year.

I would invite the Israeli prime minister to the White House during my first month in office to talk about all of these issues and to set us on a course of close, frequent consultation right from the start because we both rely on each other for support

as partners, allies, and friends. This isn't just about policy for me. It is personal. As President I'm committed to shoring up and strengthening the relationship between our countries. We have had honest disagreements about this deal. Now is the time to come together. Now is the time to remember what unites us and build upon it.

And so I know well that the same forces that threaten Israel, threaten the United States. And to the people of Israel let me say you'll never have to question whether we're with you. The United States will always be with you.

There have also been honest disagreements about the nuclear deal here at home. Smart, serious people can see issues like these differently, like my friend Chuck Schumer, who's going to be an excellent leader in the Senate. I respect the skepticism that he and others feel, and I respect differences of opinion and people who advocate vigorously for their beliefs. But I have a harder time respecting those who approach an issue as serious as this with unserious talk, especially anyone running to be President of the United States.

Several Republican candidates boast they'll tear up this agreement in 2017, more than a year after it's been implemented. That's not leadership. That's recklessness. It would set us right down the very dangerous path we've worked so hard to avoid.

I'm looking forward to a robust debate about foreign policy in this campaign. Where we have disagreements, we should lay them out, like if American ground forces in Iraq should engage in direct combat as Scott Walker wants or if we should keep Cuba closed as Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush want. Let's debate these issues. But let's debate them on the basis of facts, not fear. Let's resist denigrating the patriotism or loyalty of those who disagree with us. And let's avoid, at all costs, undermining America's credibility abroad. That only makes us weaker and I'm going to

call it out whenever I see it.

I spent four years representing America abroad as America's Secretary of State. It was one of the greatest privileges of my life. And knowing that my fellow Americans were counting on me and rooting for me, not as Democrats, not as Republicans, but as Americans, meant a great deal. We are all one team, the American team, and that doesn't change, no matter how much we might disagree. And I can tell you from personal experience, we are stronger overseas when we are united at home. So we simply have to find a way to work together better than we have been doing.

There's a lot that Democrats and Republicans can and should agree on. The United States should lead in the Middle East. We can agree on that. We should stand by our friends against Iranian aggression. We can agree on that, too. I believe that the plan I've laid out today is one that all Americans could endorse and I hope they will.

The next President will face threats from many quarters, from those we see today, like terrorism from ISIS, aggressiveness from Putin, pandemics like Ebola, to all those we can't predict yet. We need a leader who has a strong vision for the future and the skill and determination to get us there.

We can't stop the world from changing, but we can help to shape those changes. And we can do that by leading with strength, smarts, and an unyielding commitment to our values.

You know, I saw that when I was First Lady, senator, Secretary of State, that when America leads with principle and purpose, other people and governments are eager to join us. No country comes close to matching our advantages, the strength of our economy, the skill of our workforce, our tradition of innovation, our unmatched network of alliances and partnerships. So we are poised to remain the world's most

admired and powerful nation for a long time if we make the smart choices and practice smart leadership. That's what I will try to do as your President and I believe as strongly as ever that our best days are ahead of us and that America's greatest contributions to the world are yet to come.

Thank you all very much. (Applause)

MR. INDYK: Well, thank you very much, Madam Secretary. I was wondering what we could call this speech and it occurred to me at the end it'll be "From Hard Choices to Smart Choices." Right? (Laughter) Or the "Yes, And" speech.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to this second part of the event with Secretary Clinton, which is a little conversation that I will have with her and then we'll take questions from the audience.

I wanted to start by saying, number one, it's a very clear and very strong speech. And if I had to summarize the basic elements of it, the message to Iran is we will enforce, we will confront you when you try to destabilize the region, and we will deter you if you try to go for a nuclear weapon sometime down the line. And I wonder how you navigate what is a certain unspoken tension between the fact that you're going to be taking a very hard line against some of the destabilizing and nefarious activities of the Iranian and, at the same time, this agreement puts the United States into a partnership with Iran in terms of implementing it. So how do you deal with that tension?

The Iranians may feel that, hey, we're giving up all these things to do with our nuclear program and this is what we're going to get in return is a very tough American response.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I don't see Iran as our partner in implementing the agreement. I believe that Iran is the subject of the agreement, that it now faces obligations that, frankly, in many instances, it faced before the agreement, and

that they have signed an agreement where they are committing themselves to fulfill the terms of the agreement. The agreement will be enforced not by Iran. The agreement will be enforced by the rest of the negotiators, the other countries, plus the IAEA. And it will be and is intended to be quite burdensome and intrusive into Iran.

Now, maybe they believe that having signed the agreement they can somehow avoid the consequences of the inspections and the other requirements, but I think they understand very well they're at the starting line. There are these demands that they are supposed to fulfill. There is a sequencing of, you know, lifting of sanctions and other kinds of benefits that they receive in return for their having taken the action required. And I think they are, if anything, probably counting on the world, led by the United States, being distracted, being diverted, getting tired, not having the staying power to consistently enforce the agreement and hold Iran accountable. And I, for one, want to make clear to them that that is not going to happen, that we will take seriously every aspect of this agreement and we will expect them to comply, and there will be consequences if they do not.

MR. INDYK: When you called for a regional strategy and outlined the elements of that, it really seems to come down to, and you said this in the speech, Syria and what happens in Syria, where Iran is very invested in the Assad regime. Does a regional strategy on your watch mean taking down the Assad regime?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, you know, Martin, it's not only Iran that is invested. Obviously it's now becoming public, we are learning much more about Russian investment, Russian troops on the ground. It may very well be opening the door to greater Russian involvement. There's no doubt that Russia has been a principal funder and supplier throughout this entire terrible episode. So we are facing the collapse of Syria, the survival thus far of the Assad regime, although it clearly has much less to

govern than it did when this started, the open, ungoverned areas that are hosting terrorists groups, and the continuing commitment from Iran and Russia to propping up Assad.

So, you know, I was the principal negotiator on the Geneva 2012 agreement, which Russia signed on to, which laid out a pathway to a political solution. It wasn't very long until Russia reneged on what they had signed, but I think it still provides a very credible framework for us to keep doing everything we can to, you know, try to push the Iranians and the Russians in that direction.

Now, what I do believe is this. You know, the potential threat from the terrorists groups and the chaos in Syria can destabilize the region in ways that are bad for Iran. And, therefore, the higher the pressure is for some kind of reaction to what is going on inside Syria and certainly the efforts that ISIS is making to take even more and hold territory in Iraq directly against what Iran sees as its interests, the continuing destabilization along the Lebanese border, there's all kinds of reasons why Iran is going to have to confront this instability.

So I think we -- my view on this is we have to be, you know, talking and pushing on and raising the costs for Iran and for Russia all the time. Now, if Putin were sitting here, which is sort of hard to imagine, but if he were -- I should ask Strobe; Strobe's the expert -- he would say we're fighting terrorism, that's what we're doing. So there may be a way to begin to join those up.

MR. INDYK: So I remember well a speech that you gave when you were Secretary of State in the Gulf in which you warned the Gulf leaders about policies that were based on sand. And President Obama in talking about the concerns of Iran's destabilizing activity in the region said, look, we can help protect our Gulf Arab allies from external threats. The problem is hard to protect them from internal threats. And you've

been clear again that you will do that in terms of protecting them from the external threats, but I wonder how you deal with that continuing challenge.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, you know very well it's a difficult one. I apologize for my voice. I'm suffering under massive allergy assault. (Laughter) Yes, the Republican histamines are everywhere. (Laughter)

You know, Martin, this is one of the biggest problems we face. Nobody can deny that much of the extremism in the world today is a direct result of policies and funding undertaken by the Saudi government and individuals. We would be foolish not to recognize that. I think increasingly they would be mistaken not to recognize that. You can never be more extreme than the next extremist, and I think they face some very serious internal problems, as do the other regimes.

I'm not sure they're yet convinced of that. I'm not sure they yet believe that they have to figure out different ways of dealing with their own population and cooperating with each other and cutting off funding and exporting, you know, troublesome imams to elsewhere. But I think you have to be constantly beating that drum with them. And maybe now, given the rise of ISIS and the very clear threat they feel from, you know, Iranian activities in the Gulf, that maybe there's an openness there. I know that the king was here last week, had a chance to, you know, meet with the President. So perhaps there's more of an opportunity for a candid dialogue than we've had in the past.

However, having said that, I still think we have to do what we need to do to defend them because the alternatives are hardly more promising.

MR. INDYK: Israel. You made a very clear effort in your speech to say it's time for healing, it's time to come together, and if/when you're President, that you would have the prime minister there in your first month. And that's very consistent, as I think you said in the speech, with your approach, which has always been, as I know, to

put your arm around Prime Minister Netanyahu rather than --

SECRETARY CLINTON: Or any prime minister.

MR. INDYK: -- bang him on the head. Or any prime minister.

(Laughter)

And, as you know, that's a policy that I support, too. But some of my friends in Israel recently have said that's not the way to deal with us. We need tough love, which is the alternative. You know, instead of rewarding bad behavior, you should be really speaking more toughly to us. How do you respond to that?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I think there is a lot of room for tough love, particularly in private and behind, you know, closed doors. As I write in my book, you know, certainly Prime Minister Netanyahu and I have had very vigorous conversations that have gone on in person and over the phone. But I just don't think it's a particularly productive approach for the United States to take because, in large measure, it opens the door to everybody else to delegitimize Israel, to, you know, pile on in ways that are not good for the strength and stability, not just of Israel obviously, but of the region. And so in the absence of, you know, some kind of greater goal that we were trying to achieve by doing that, I just don't think that is the smartest approach.

MR. INDYK: Great. Let's go to your questions. I would ask you please to identify yourself and make sure that there's a question mark at the end of your question.

Robin Wright.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Hi, Robin.

MS. WRIGHT: Thank you. Robin Wright, the U.S. Institute of Peace and former Brookings scholar.

Madam Secretary, you talked about how you would use American

muscle to contain Iran. Can you tell us how you might use the new diplomatic channel to engage Iran on issues, whether it's support for extremist groups or specifically dealing with the crisis in Syria? Would you be willing to use that diplomatic channel to engage Iran?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yes, I would, Robin. And I would because I think that we have to attempt to do that. You know, when I first went to Oman in January of 2011, we didn't know whether any effort at some kind of secret channel would pay off. We still had P5+1 that was going on, and we knew that eventually whatever the United States did would have to merge into the international approach. But we had to begin to explore it and we did and we explored it over that summer. That's when we had the first, you know, visit to discuss whether anything could be possible.

It takes a while, as you know so well being such an expert in this region, to figure out who's at the table, what the conversation's about, how seriously it'll be taken, who's backing you up. And so then when the talks actually started just in the Iranian-American channel with Bill Burns and Jake Sullivan, and Bob Einhorn was also involved, it was exploratory and it laid down some of the ground rules that we were looking for. And then eventually it was merged into the larger P5+1 once there was a change in government in Iran and there was some real seriousness of effort.

So with respect to the other issues, I have very clearly in the public arena seen the Iranians at the highest levels reject any such discussion. They don't want to talk about Yemen. They don't want to talk about anything other than the nuclear agreement.

Now, that was a strategic decision we made back then. You know, number one, it appeared to us in the early discussions with them, trying to figure out how to proceed, they wanted to talk about everything as a way to get some items on the table to trade off for the nuclear agreement, so that they would not have to make perhaps as

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many concessions as we were expecting them to make. That's why we kept very focused on just the nuclear program.

We also had the continuing challenge, and it would be even in this instance, of our friends in the Gulf not wanting us to talk about anything that affected them in a bilateral channel with the Iranians. And you can understand why. I mean, you know, if they weren't going to be at the table, they didn't want the United States talking about Yemen or talking about anything else of interest -- of vital interest in their views -- to them. So if there were a way to construct such a channel, I would be open to it, but I'm just laying out some of the difficulties of us being able to do that on this suite of other issues that are complex, that touch many of the region's vital interests.

And I think when it comes to Syria, we have historically not wanted to talk to Iran about Syria because we knew Iran was basically the principal supporter, propped-up, if you will, of Assad. And we wanted to get the rest of the international community in harness to have a set of expectations and demands before we brought Iran in. So we have to readjust this all the time.

Just as I said, diplomacy is a balancing of risk, it's also the constant evaluation of where the opportunities are, where the openings are, what possibly could happen now that didn't happen before. So I'm open, but I am very sober about how it would have to be constructed and what it would actually cover and who would have to be either at the table or, you know, in the first chair behind so that they didn't feel that they were being left out or negotiated over.

MR. INDYK: Constance? Wait for the microphone.

SPEAKER: Thank you for your very useful words.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I think that's a very -- it's an important question. I don't know if you could hear the question, but, you know, it was aimed at

what you could do to up the cost on Russia, for example, to be a more productive partner in seeking a solution and how would we do more to, as I understood what you said, you know, work with our European partners on these security issues that are challenging Europe. And we see that every day with the refugees because it's humanitarian, but it's also a security challenge, as well.

Well, you know, I have been, I remain convinced that we need a concerted effort to really up the cost on Russia and, in particular, on Putin. I think we have not done enough. I am in the category of people who wanted us to do more in response to the annexation of Crimea and the continuing destabilizing of Ukraine. I understand the hesitation not only in our country, but, most importantly, in Europe. The sanctions came out of all of the discussions and, you know, maybe to some extent they have had some impact. I think the falling oil price has had more impact and we've got to figure out how we, you know, combine both in looking at ways to put more -- to up the cost, to put more pressure on Putin.

I think it's one of the long-term security challenges that the United States, Europe, especially NATO face. And I don't think we can dance around it very much longer. I mean, we all wish it wasn't the case. We all wish it would go away. We all wish that, you know, Putin would choose to modernize his country and move toward the West instead of, you know, sinking himself deeper into historical roots of tsar-like behavior and intimidation along borders and projecting Russian power in places like Syria and elsewhere.

But I think the jury is in. I think that he intends to continue to do what he's doing and go as far as he can get away with. And I believe that, you know, we've got to regroup and we've got to regroup quickly because I worry very much about what's happening in Syria right now. Troops on the ground to allegedly protect, you know,

military supplies.

What is Russia's real objective? You know, the stated objective, the public objective to fight terrorism has always been their rationale. Why did they support Assad? Because after Assad, there would be terrorism.

Now, obviously if we'd had a different approach from the beginning, working together, we might have avoided that. We might have actually, you know, helped to midwife a political transition. So I think we've got to spend a lot more time.

You know, all the Russian experts that thought that their work was done after the fall of the Berlin Wall, I hope that they will be dusting off their materials -- and I'm looking right at you, Strobe Talbott -- and, you know, get back in the game with us. Because I think Russia's objectives are to stymie and to confront and to undermine American power whenever and wherever they can, and I don't think there's much to be surprised about that.

So where we can work with them -- you know, that's one of the criticisms that sometimes comes from the right, the Republicans, you know, what did the reset ever accomplish? Well, while Medvedev was president actually quite a lot. We did the New START Agreement; we got cooperation on Iran because when we got the Security Council to pass the sanctions that we had been working so hard on, that was under Medvedev in June of 2010; we got support to ship lethal material and equipment across Russia to resupply our troops. We got a lot.

Now, that all changed once, you know, Putin announced he was going to be president again. I don't admire very much about Mr. Putin, but the idea you could stand up and say I will be your next president, that does have a certain, you know, attraction to it. (Laughter) So, you know, I think we've really -- we are not spending the time, we're not thinking, we're not digging deep into what our are we going to do?

So to answer the question of the woman who asked, we have to do more to get back talking about how we try to confine, contain, deter Russian aggression in Europe and beyond, and try to figure out what are the best tools for doing that. And don't lose sight of the Arctic because we're going to have a lot of issues up there, as well.

So I was always of that opinion, expressed it, you know, vocally within the administration, and nothing that has happened since has in any way persuaded me otherwise.

MR. INDYK: I'll just do a quick follow-up on that, which is more generally, you know, you've got to talk on the Russians and Putin. You've got to deal with a very comprehensive strategy for a very complicated part of the world called the Middle East. How do you do the rebalancing to Asia on top of all of this?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I do think we're capable of doing more than one thing, although sometimes it appears difficult. And I think we've got to be much more global in our thinking and globally present. The rebalancing to Asia, otherwise known as "the pivot," was in response to the very real sense of abandonment that Asian leaders expressed to me. And my phone calls to them before I ever went to the region in February of 2009, you know, they believed that because we were so focused in Afghanistan and we were so focused in Iraq, and obviously had to be given all that we had invested there, that we were just not paying attention to the developments in Asia.

I think we've come some ways in trying to rebalance, but we have a long way to go, and there's much at stake in how we deal with all the players in Asia. I'm hoping that the upcoming trip by President Xi Jinping produces some positive outcomes. I thought the climate agreement was quite consequential having been in Copenhagen in '09 with the President when we literally had to break into a meeting where the Chinese were consolidating India, South Africa, and Brazil against any kind of movement toward

the non-advanced economies taking responsibility. So I think we've got some good stakes in the ground, but we don't have a strategy yet that it's going to be consistent.

And the final thing I'll say about this, Martin, and I alluded to it in my remarks, I think one of our real problems right now is we don't have a consistent foreign policy that is bipartisan, let alone nonpartisan. And I think that's a problem. I mean, I was appalled when those Republican senators wrote to the ayatollah. I thought it was incredibly, you know, shortsighted and just wrongheaded. And I don't know how we rebuild a consistent foreign policy from administration to administration, regardless of Republican or Democrat.

You know, it was a lot easier in a bipolar world, us versus the Soviet Union. I understand that. But I think we really have to work at it and we can't work at it if we don't have a set of strategic pillars and organizing principles that we can present to our own people and present to the Congress and present to the world. So I think we have work to do.

MR. INDYK: Andrea?

MS. MITCHELL: Madam Secretary, when you talk about the policies with Syria and Putin, was it, in retrospect, a mistake for the administration after you left office to pull back on Labor Day a couple of years ago, make the deal with Russia on the chemical weapons? Yes, the weapons were disposed of, but that created a different partnership, if you will, on diplomacy.

And secondly, with reference to our colleague from Germany, what should America do to step up to the crisis of migration? Even if it's not on our front door, it is a moral issue, is it not, for the world? Thank you.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, as to the first one, you know, it's always difficult in hindsight to say what could have happened if something different had been

done. If we remember back to that time, Prime Minister Cameron had lost the vote in the Parliament. He wanted to show support for the President's policy of taking some limited military action in light of Syria's use of chemical weapons. So it became clear that there was going to be a difficult vote in the Congress, not clear at all that it would be successful, which would have left the President with authority certainly, with executive authority, to act. But since it had become a public debate, it would have been a much more difficult decision for him to make.

I do think that not being able to follow through on it cost us. I am certain of that. That still comes back in conversations that people have with me, both here at home and people from other countries. But I do think it was a net positive to get as much of the chemical weapons out as we could and there was no way we could have done that without Russian cooperation. I think there was hope after that kind of cooperation produced positive results that then we could go back to talking more broadly with the Russians about what needed to be done in Syria and what needed to be done with Assad. They did not reciprocate on that. So, you know, I think it's like much in international relations, it's a mixed picture, some positive, some negative.

With respect to the refugees, I have said I think that, you know, we're coming up on the U.N. General Assembly, I think there should be an emergency global gathering where the U.N. literally tries to get commitments. You know, we did that with Haiti. After the Haiti earthquake we had a huge gathering at the U.N., where literally it was like a pledging conference, where we said what are you going to do? You know, what can you contribute? And little countries to big countries all stepped up, and it was a great show of support in the face of a terrible natural disaster.

We need to do something similar. And I've publicly called on the U.N. to convene such a gathering. I do it again today in front of all of you. The United States

has to be at the table, has to be leading it. We were in a strong position to do that on Haiti. I think even though it's not on our doorstep, we have a real interest in working not just with our European friends, I think this is a global responsibility. And if you're too far away or for whatever reason you don't think you can take refugees, then you have to contribute money. You should be supporting not only those refugees fleeing, but the incredible work that Jordan and Lebanon and Turkey have been doing, and they have not gotten the financial support they need. In fact, the last I checked the U.N. appeal had only reached 37 percent.

So there is both financial work and contributions that need to be forthcoming, and countries need to be more open and willing to take refugees. I obviously want the United States to do our part, but I also want this to be a global response. And so I hope that with all these leaders gathered, with Pope Francis addressing the United Nations General Assembly in just about two weeks, we can see something like that very visible with people literally making their commitments nation by nation or in the case of the EU or other organizations, as well.

MR. INDYK: I think we're going to have to close it out, but I see two hands going up. Do you mind taking two together?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Sure.

MR. INDYK: First Susie Gelman and then Joe.

MS. GELMAN: Madam Secretary, I also want to add my thanks for a very forceful, unequivocal, and clear speech, laying out a position that sounds eminently defensible.

One of the silver linings, potentially, of the Iran deal is an alignment of interests in the region between Israel and the moderate Arab countries: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, et cetera. It's Gulf states. If you agree with that, how would you see

capitalizing on those shared interests, the concerns about Iran? Going forward how would you promote the shared interests as a way of bringing more peace to the region?

MR. INDYK: Joe, a quick question?

MR. CIRINCIONE: Sure. Joe Cirincione, Ploughshares Fund. Thank you for your measured and fact-based approach to this. Let me bring you to the politics of the issue.

What explains that we don't have a single Republican senator in support of this? Is this an ideological divide between the parties or raw partisan politics?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I'll restrain myself and answer the first question first. (Laughter)

I think there is an opportunity here, Susie. I really do. I don't think it's easy, but let's just go back a few years.

Not so long ago, Israel and Turkey were working very closely together on a number of issues. Then came the flotilla and then came the response by the Israeli military. Then came many years of, you know, real hard feelings that got harder and harder and we lost what was not just a working relationship, but a real bridge.

Similarly, there have been a number of instances where in the past Israel has worked in common concert with a number of the Gulf countries. Israel is now back in a very productive relationship with Egypt, obviously with Jordan. So there are the pieces of national and regional interest here that I think very diligently and probably frustratingly could be pulled back together. I don't know that it's something that the United States can lead, but it certainly is something we can try to catalyze and encourage.

And I think there is a potential there because, as I said in my speech, I will do everything I can to convince Turkey and Qatar that supporting Hamas is not in their interests. It's not in the region's interest. It's certainly not in Egypt's interest. They

both care deeply about, you know, what happens in Egypt for somewhat different reasons than others, but they care.

And so I think we have to build the case and I think American diplomats could help build that case, and then look for ways -- I mean, I spent, you know, literally years trying to get the Israelis to finally apologize to the Turks on the flotilla. And there was one memorable day during one of my vacations where I was literally talking to the Israelis, I was talking to Henry Kissinger, I was talking to everybody I could find to make the strategic argument, which we all believed that the sooner that Israel did that, the sooner they could get back to some kind of discussion perhaps.

Finally that happened when President Obama went to Israel. And I was very happy that, you know, now we have a different Turkey with a different kind of set of challenges, but interests remain the same. You know, Turkey's interests for stability are not so different than they were, even though some of the leadership attitudes seem to have altered.

So I would like to see us do everything we can. I would make a high priority of that. I hope that this administration in the last, you know, year and a half or so of its term will be similarly doing that because let's start seeing what we can do. It kind of goes back to Robin's question. You know, you don't know what you can achieve until you try to put the pieces together. And I think the more we can try to put those pieces together, the more we'll know whether or not something can come of it.

With respect to the lack of support for the agreement, honestly, I think it's in some instances genuine. Just as I said in my remarks, I think that there are people, who I deeply respect on the Democratic side certainly and I would respect them on the Republican side, as well, who just have concerns that they don't feel have been answered. But I think the driving force behind it is, you know, to close ranks against the

President, against this kind of diplomacy, but without offering an alternative. And that's what I find -- I mean, I don't mind debating alternatives. I mean, when we did the New START Treaty it was really hard to get the votes for that. I remember, you know, going up and making the case, but we got some Republican votes.

But we're living in a very partisan atmosphere right now and I think we do have to do more. Just as we -- I'll end with this by saying just as we have to in diplomacy reach out to people constantly, if not to persuade them to join with us, to eliminate an argument that they have that they won't join because they have been consulted, they have been brought along, they have been briefed, we have to do that with the Congress, as well. And it's not easy if they don't even have open minds, but we still have to do it so that we can be in the position of saying, you know, we told you this, we offered you this, we briefed you this, we gave you this information, and you haven't come forth with any kind of rational or a rationale to oppose us. You're just opposing us.

So it's very political after discounting those who I think are genuinely skeptical.

MR. INDYK: Madam Secretary, Hillary, thank you very much for a very powerful, serious, and clearheaded explication of your position on Iran and the Middle East and even broader. This is precisely what we expect from you and precisely what we at Brookings want to try to promote in this presidential debate, so we're very grateful to you. Please join me in thanking her. (Applause)

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