

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

HOW SHOULD CONGRESS VOTE ON THE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL?

THE BROOKINGS DEBATE:
AN EVENING EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

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Opening Remarks:

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Moderator:

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Vote Approve:

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BRUCE RIEDEL
Senior Fellow and Director, The Intelligence Project
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Vote Disapprove:

SENATOR JOHN McCAIN (R-AZ)
United States Senate

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. JONES: Welcome to our second Brookings' debate. My name is Bruce Jones. I'm the vice president and the director of foreign policy here at Brookings. It's my honor to welcome all of you here in the room and online. Thank you for coming and spending the evening among us.

Convening debate among top policy minds has long been an essential part of the culture at Brookings. As we approach our hundredth year we're trying to innovate and find new ways of doing that, find dynamic new ways to generate debate, and to generate serious conversations among policy experts and decision makers.

Tonight we're continuing this new series; it's not just an enjoyable way to spend an evening, combining serious policy debate and alcohol. That's not a bad way to go. But also a way to generate serious conversation among thought leaders on some of the most important issues of the day, and this sure counts. The issue at hand is, perhaps, the biggest foreign policy question in the moment. Whether or not the United States should move forward with the Iran nuclear deal, and what happens beyond. Congress will be voting on this issue as early as this week, but, of course, this is an issue that will continue to occupy American foreign policy for a long time to come.

We want to hear what you have to think both in the room and online. If you have not already voted on our poll please do so now. There are instructions on the screen and in the handout you had as you came in. Tonight we have a real treat, an opportunity to listen to a discussion and a debate among some of the biggest thinkers on foreign policy in Washington. I'm particularly delighted to welcome Senator John McCain back to Brookings. Senator, when you were here some time back and talked about Syria I wrote at the time that I thought your statement was bound to become the rallying point for conservative opposition to the administration's policy on Syria and I was wrong. It

was without any question the most clearly articulated critique from any position of the policy in Syria. I appreciate your willingness to engage with us here and to offer you view on these critical issues.

I'm delighted to welcome the rest of my colleagues at Brookings to the stage, on both sides of the debate. Without further ado I'm going to get off the stage and hand it to a professional. That is to say Major Garrett who will moderate the debate. Major Garrett was, in November of 2012, named to be CBS's chief White House correspondent. As such, he reports for all CBS news broadcasts and platforms, and is a substitute anchor on "Face the Nation." You've all seen him on TV. While covering the White House for CBS news he's traveled extensively with the President to Asia, to Europe, to the Middle East. He's reported on presidential actions to confront ISIS and Ebola and Russia and, of course, on the Iran negotiations. He's extremely well-qualified to lead the debate today. Major, thank you for joining us and over to you.

MAJOR GARRETT: Thanks very much, Bruce. It's a full house. Welcome to everyone who is here and the overflow room. It's great to be invited to participate in this very important debate. It's been a newsy day on the Iran deal, as I'm sure all of you know. We'll get to some of the news that was made today in addition to what happened in the Senate with the announcement of support for the deal. The White House, as I was coming over, issued its veto threat for the motion of disapproval. We'll get into all of that.

But before, as Bruce suggested, what we want to do here is capture the thoughts in the room, and online, and in the overflow room about what you think about the Iran deal before you have a chance to hear our four panelists, and then what you hear and what you think after you've heard the four panelists. There's a process, of course, to vote and I'd like to walk you through that.

We have a pre-debate poll which will close in about five minutes or so. If you want to participate in that pre-debate poll and let us know what you're thinking about the merits of the deal, whether you're in favor or not, or if you don't know that's another option. Here's what you do. You text the word Brookings to 22333. If you are in favor of the deal, you think Congress should approve it text 1. If you think Congress should disapprove the deal text 2. And in a new wrinkle for this format, if you are undecided text 3. Now, we added the undecided element to create a space for those who genuinely are undecided, if any are, so we could also find out after you've heard the four presenters if any minds have actually been changed. That's true here in the room and of those of you who are choosing to vote online the voting information is on your screen on the streaming video that you are watching. We encourage, of course, because this is a Twitter-happy nation and a Twitter-happy city to engage on Twitter, and the hashtag is #brookingsdebate.

I'm told in the script here this will be a very structured and fast moving debate. I guess that's my obligation, so I better live up to it. Here's how we're going to do it. It's Oxford style, I really don't know what that means because I've never been to Oxford, but it really sounds great, don't you think? Oxford style debate. Five minutes from the presenters. Then I will conduct an open question of those after they make their presentations and then closing statements of two minutes. Those are all timed very precisely. There will be lights and if the lights tell me I will then jump in, not literally, but I will encourage those who are speaking to wrap it up and we can move along. Then we'll have, as I suggested earlier, a second vote on what you think about what you've heard, and the underlying merits of the Iran deal.

Now, I don't need to explain the Iran deal to those here in the room or watching online or in the overflow room, but a couple things happened today. One is

Senate Democrats secured in the White House 41 votes which means the motion to disapprove that will be considered in the Senate is now subject to a successful filibuster if, in fact, that's what the Democrats decide to do. The White House encouraged them to do that today. Ben Cardin, the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, said that was always implied in the underlying legislation, so do Tim Kaine, Democratic Senator from Virginia. Republicans said, why would you filibuster something if you support it? Why don't you have a vote and let the country see? That's part of the debate, procedurally, that's sort of is an umbrella over the underlying merits of the deal which we'll get into very much. As I was coming over in the cab, as I had mentioned, the White House issued its veto threat with a lengthy list of objections to a motion of disapproval. We'll get into that with our panelists as well.

So you've got about 30 seconds more in the pre-debate poll if you want to register your opinion. The one last thing I will say before I invite our four panelists up here is I've been covering the Obama White House for the better part of six years, and if there is one brief that the President has carried throughout his presidency, one thing he has constantly monitored and deeply involved himself in the underlying details of it has been first, the method to obtain a nuclear deal with Iran. Its underlying specifics, the verification regime. He believes he knows this issue cold and therefore, describes his support for it and his curiosity about opposition to it in very stark ways. That has sometimes left Republicans a bit annoyed. But that is the political reality. The President does believe he has achieved the best deal imaginable, and we're not going to get into the merits of what that deal is, what it isn't, and what the future may hold.

So if I can now let you know the polls are closed in the pre-debate survey we're taking. If I can invite all four of our participants up to the stage and we'll begin tonight's conversation.

Everyone has taken their seats. Just so you know, John McCain and Leon Wieseltier will argue for disapproval of the Iran deal. Suzanne Maloney and Bruce Riedel will argue in favor of its approval. We shall begin the conversation and the debate with Suzanne Maloney who is the Deputy Director of Foreign Policy here at Brookings and a Senior Fellow in the Center for Middle East Policy also here at Brookings. Suzanne, the podium is yours.

MS. MALONEY: Thank you and good evening. I'm honored to be here tonight sharing the stage with Senator McCain and two of my most distinguished Brookings' colleagues. I'm used to following in the wake of such powerful voices, but on this night, on this issue, I'm eager to lead off our discussion. That's because I'm convinced that Congress has an obligation to vote to approve the recently concluded nuclear deal between Iran, the United States, and five other world powers. The obligation is not just a strategic one, but a moral one. Allow me, in my remaining time, to explain.

First, by any measure this is a good arms control deal. It provides deep reductions in Iran's centrifuge numbers and its stockpile of low enriched uranium. That means that the deal extends the breakout timeline. The time that it would take Iran to rush toward a bomb without a deal from a matter of weeks to at least a year for at least a decade. The deal imposes strict limits on research and development for a decade. It blocks the plutonium pathway to weapons capability for the foreseeable future, and it institutes advance verification and monitoring for the full range of nuclear related activities from mining to manufacturing and beyond.

Iran's incentives under the deal are not forthcoming until and unless it fulfills its major, potentially irreversible actions, to curb its own nuclear program. There's plenty else to like about this deal: its level of detail, its procedures for dispute resolution,

even its planning for failure through clever procedures for snapping back United Nation sanctions. But even if you don't like the deal consider the alternatives. There is no renegotiation. If somehow, someday, Congress manages to kill the joint comprehensive plan of action, as the deal is known, we go back to the bargaining table alone. Our partners at the negotiating table, the powerful states of Russia, China, the European Three, have made it very clear, including in conversations with members of Congress. Many in Congress may not be satisfied with this deal, many in this country may not be satisfied, but the rest of the world has indicated that it is.

Secondly, there is no scenario in which sanctions will be strengthened. Just examine the track record of the past 36 years in which we've failed repeatedly, even after horrific provocations by Tehran, to generate sufficient political will among even our closest allies or our adversaries to adhere to any sanctions at all on Iran. Washington can try to up the ante with new measures, and given the recent weight of the U.S. financial system we may even see a little bit of additional compliance for a while. Ultimately, however, an attempt to intensify pressure without that multilateral coalition will fail, and at no small cost to America's own economy. Russia, China they have their own experience with sanctions as targets of U.S. economic pressure, and the rest of the international community seems no interest in perpetual economic pressure on Tehran.

There is no military solution. We cannot bomb away Iran's nuclear infrastructure and its knowhow. Even the most ambitious scenarios for military strikes would it best set back Tehran's program by a year or two, or maybe three. They would, no doubt, then insight a much more determined effort by Iran to acquire nuclear weapons capability. There is no regime change. I've spent time in Tehran in a couple of decades studying the country and no one has fewer illusions about Iran than I do. But let's be frank here, the idea of an opposition movement engineered by Washington, sponsored

by Washington, even championed by Washington that actual succeeds in overthrowing the Islamic Republic is naïve. If you don't believe that Manucher Ghorbanifar and Ahmed Chalabi have a few bridges to sell you.

The realistic alternative to this deal is not a better deal, and it's also not war as the administration has sometimes argued. It's simply a much less attractive deal. The last time America turned its back on the possibility of resolving the nuclear issue we lost the chance to curtail Iran's nuclear activities at a much more preliminary stage. How will history judge Congress for scuttling a diplomatic resolution today?

Third, let me get to the heart of what I believe motivates much of the opposition to this agreement. Many of the criticisms of the deal are not about the terms or even about the alternatives, but simply because critics abhor the fact the idea of striking a deal with a quintessentially bad actor. They're outraged at the notion that Iran is going to be let out of the international penalty box without conclusively terminating its entire nuclear program or any of the other offenses that have contributed to its recent pariah status. I understand that outrage. I even sympathize with it. However, we've tried maximalism on Iran during the early years of the Bush administration and it got us nowhere. It neither forced Iran to capitulate on its nuclear program, nor halted its advances around the region.

Our partners in the P5+1 signed onto a negotiating process was restricted quite deliberately by the Bush administration to the nuclear issue as the paramount concern about Iran's foreign policy. This was the only viable construct for the talks since all of the countries that we've been negotiating with have very different approaches to the other concerns we have with Iranian policies. Until now the only party that sought to broaden the conversation was Tehran usually as a means of avoiding nuclear concessions. Go it alone didn't work for the Bush administration and it won't

work now.

But here's the good news. The nuclear deal is not the sum total of U.S. policy toward Tehran, nor should it be. We can't renegotiate the deal, but we can construct a better Iran policy. One that does begin to curtail Iran's maligned influence around the region and its support for terrorist organizations.

MAJOR GARRETT: Suzanne, I'm going to have to ask you to wrap it up.

MS. MALONEY: We've arrived as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said earlier this year when he addressed Congress at a fateful crossroads. The paths available to the United States are clear. Washington can continue to lead the broadest and most effective coalition is implementing an agreement that sets back Tehran's proximity to nuclear weapons capability for at least a decade or we can strike out on our own, alienating our allies, seeding our leverage, and leaving the Islamic Republic only two months away from nuclear capability. That's no choice at all. Congress should approve this deal.

MAJOR GARRETT: Suzanne, thank you very much. Senator John McCain.

SENATOR MCCAIN: Well, if you'd like I'll just emote from here. Thank all of you for coming. I always, when I come back to Brookings, I always mention that it's always wonderful to see old friends and enemies again. Those in the overflow room I notice there's quite a bit of alcohol back there, some of you may want to join that. Thank you. It's great to be back.

I had some prepare remarks, but I think maybe I'll just mention the scenario in which we are considering and the debate will start tomorrow afternoon. First of all, as Major Garrett just pointed out, the President, probably, has enough votes to sustain a veto, and I'm sure that that is a great triumph for those who greatly favor this

agreement. I'd also like to point out, and I am a student of history, it's the first time in history that an agreement will be voted on on a strict party-line basis, strict party-line basis. Not a single Republican Senator will be voting in favor of this agreement.

You can draw your own conclusions as to what the ramifications of that are, but they're not good. They're not good. Either somebody failed in outreach or somebody failed somewhere to, at least, obtain a degree of bipartisanship which is characterized every other treaty and agreement, major, throughout our history. Including the one I remember that was so controversial was the Panama Canal Treaty; at least there were some Republicans that voted for that.

I think also we're talking about Iran here as if it were on another planet somewhere, and that we were just discussing the virtues or the downsides of this agreement. I don't know how you do that. I don't know how you do that. They're in control in four countries, at least. They've recently in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. Recently they're giving weapons to the Taliban in Afghanistan. They're still the worlds' single most important sponsor of terrorism. Tried to plot to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador here in D.C. They're on the move, my friends. They're on the march. They're not relenting, nor has there been any indication whatsoever of a change in their behavior.

They're going to now get 100 billion, whatever it is, is there any belief whatsoever of anyone - please raise your hand if you think they aren't going to use a hell of a lot of that money to pursue their hegemonic ambitions in the region. So we're handing them tens of billions of dollars that they can now freely support the Quds Force, extend their influence in Lebanon to continue the Houthis in Yemen, whatever activities that they want to continue, motivated by their, of course, Mr. Soleimani who takes selfies outside of Baghdad as he leads the Shiite militias and their attempts to regain control of

Iraq for Iranian purposes.

By the way, also the individual who was responsible, according to General Dunford, incoming chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff, Mr. Soleimani was responsible for the deaths of at least 500, count them, 500 soldiers and Marines deaths. I have no idea how many wounded. But Soleimani's going to have a blank check right now to continue his activities.

The world is in chaos, my friends; we're seeing nothing like we have not seen since the end of World War II. We all know that. If anybody disagrees with that, of course not. Why did this happen? It's because of the failed policies of this President and this administration. The guy that wouldn't speak up. This President who would not speak up in 2009 when Iranians were demonstrating in the streets of Tehran, and a young woman named Neda bled to death, and we saw her picture and they were chanting Obama, Obama are you with us or are you with them? And not a word was spoken on their behalf. Now we see the Middle East in chaos, but we're going to treat this agreement as if it took place in some more sterile and less interesting environment.

Finally, let me just say that I've seen some bad deals in my time, and I take particular exception to the President telling the American people that there are only two options, war or this agreement. I can tell you before the Armed Services Committee, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dempsey said I can tell you we have a range of options, and I always present them. June 29th, 2015, I think there are other options besides going to war, Navy Admiral John Richardson, President Obama's nominee to the next Chief of Naval Operations.

I really am upset about the intellectual dishonesty here that we only have two choices. Obviously, there are many others, and that's according to our military leadership. My friends, this is a seminal moment, and we need to engage and discuss

this entire situation in the Middle East, not just this, but the deteriorating chaos that now envelops the entire Middle East. We need to have that conversation with the American people. Thank you.

MAJOR GARRETT: Senator McCain, thank you very much. We now turn to Bruce Riedel. Bruce is the director of the Intelligence Project and a Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy at Brookings. You can have the table or you can have the podium, as your prefer, Bruce.

MR. RIEDEL: I'm going to follow the Senator's example, particularly as I have a broken toe, so it will be much more pleasant to sit here.

Before I begin I want to say what an honor it is to be here with you, Senator. It's an honor to be with everybody, but it's a particular honor to be here with an American hero, particularly one who's had the courage to speak out against torture. I only wish that more of my colleagues at the CIA had followed his path.

We have a very, very big agenda here. I just want to cover a couple of points because I think Suzanne has set the stage. First of all, is there a better deal available? I don't think there is a better deal available. I think it's built into the inherent structure of these negotiations. It's not a six-party agreement with Iran. It's actually an eight-party agreement with Iran, the European Union and the UN Security Council. All of those other parties have already announced that they intend to implement this resolution no matter what the Congress does, and they've also indicated they're not going back to the negotiating table. So if you think there's an alternative where we go back to negotiations, I'm afraid there isn't. Is that a good thing? Maybe not, but it's a fait accompli and it was demonstrated dramatically last Friday when the King of Saudi Arabia came here, and despite everyone knowing he doesn't really like this deal, he moved on and said it's time to accept the fact that it's here. He reluctantly, and somewhat solemnly,

endorsed it.

That gets to my second point about the regional reaction. The region has already moved on. It has accepted that this deal is going to be a fait accompli, and it's going to be there reality that we have to deal with. I agree completely with the Senator, the Middle East is in flames as we have never seen it before. This is one of the most dangerous moments in the history of the Middle East, and the Iranian regime is up to no good. But it's better to have a deal from Iran that keeps it from being a nuclear weapon state and building an arsenal than it is to allow it to move to that stage next.

If the Congress of the United States votes against this deal and somehow overturns the presidential veto the regional reaction will be confusion. People won't understand how the American system works. They'll only know that the American system doesn't speak with one voice, and they will react in a consequent matter: confusion, doubt about what America stands for, and where America stands on this deal.

I have no illusions about the Iranians. I have buried colleagues who've been murdered and tortured to death by the Iranians. I know what they're going to do with additional money. It is still better to find a path to keep them from developing nuclear weapons.

The third issue I want to look at briefly is does this deal put Israel at risk? We're hearing from a lot of commentators today that this deal is the equivalent of the Munich agreement of 1938. That this deal somehow will create an Israel which is Czechoslovakia 1939, shorn of the Sudetenland and thrown under the bus. I don't believe that for a minute. The State of Israel is a very powerful and strong state. It is fully capable of defending itself. Thanks, in large part, but not only in large part, to American assistance over the last four decades. Israel has strategic superiority and the qualitative edge, not only over Iran, but any combination of its enemies conceivable

today.

First of all, Israeli has the strongest conventional military in the entire region. The Israeli Air Force flies F-15s, the state of the art jet fighter. It will soon be flying F-35s. The Iranians are flying state of the art equipment from America too, provided by the Shah in 1975, F-14s. There's no competition there.

Secondly, Israel has the best intelligence system in the entire Middle East. Believe me, I've worked with them. They know more than anyone else about what's going on around them. Third, Israel is a nuclear weapon state. I know the saying that is verboten in the Israel government and verboten in the United States government, but Israel has between 80 and 200 nuclear weapons. It has three means of delivering nuclear weapons, the F-15s and F35s we provide, French origin Jericho intermediate range ballistic missiles, and six dolphin class U boats provided by Germany with cruise missile capabilities. Israel, even in a worst case scenario, is more than fully capable of defending itself. Efraim Halevy, a close colleague and friend of 30 years, the former Chief of the Mossad has said Israel is the biggest beneficiary of this deal in the region. I think he knows what he's talking about.

In short, I think the challenge for the United States here is that Suzanne alluded to, we need to figure out ways we can bolster our allies' capability to deal with the other threats Iran poses after this agreement is put into place, particularly the terrorism subversion and political evil that Iran is likely to be up to.

MAJOR GARRETT: Bruce, thank you very much. Leon Wieseltier will now argue voting to disapprove. Leon is the Isiah Berlin Senior Fellow in Culture and Policy that is jointly appointed in the governance studies and foreign policy programs here at Brookings. Leon, the table, or the podium as you choose, is yours.

MR. WEISELTIER: My opposition to the joint comprehensive plan of

action is primarily two grounds. The first is that the accord fails to accomplish the objective that it sets out for itself which is an objective that we all, I mean all sides in this debate share. That objective, as the President has said, is to block every one of Iran's paths to a bomb. Based on the text of the agreement and on the various pronouncements about it by our senior officials it seems perfectly uncontroversial to me to insist that this deal does not do that. It provides for a respite of ten years and then a partial respite of another five years, but a respite from a problem is not a release from a problem. We have not been emancipated from our abundantly warranted anxiety about Iran's nuclear capabilities and intentions. We have only been given some help in anxiety management.

If during that ten year period the Iranians don't lie, and our respite is not consumed by verification controversies, which is a very big if, then we will have accomplished only a successful postponement to another presidency of the excruciating questions which this presidency is clearly despaired of finding a genuine solution for. The most significant fact about this negotiation was that the Iranian Regime never made a strategic decision to renounce nuclear weapons. Instead it made a tactile decision to defer nuclear weapons.

It is true that the agreement states not once, but twice, that 'Iran reaffirms that under no circumstances will Iran ever seek, develop, or acquire a nuclear weapon.' But the Iranian refusal to provide an accurate account of its military program so far and the very structure of this deal with legitimates and acknowledges the eventual resumption of Iran's enrichment activities at levels that have no purpose whatsoever for the civilian use of nuclear energy indicates to me that no Iranian renunciation of its military nuclear ambition has occurred or is likely to occurred as long as this regime persists.

When my old friend and colleague, Tony Blinken, tells Congress that we cannot sanction or negotiate or bomb Iran out of its knowledge of how to enrich he is, of course, correct. But there are other states who are in possession of the same knowledge, and we are not losing any sleep about their plans for the application of what they know. The strategic decision that the Islamic Republic did make, by contrast, was to find a way out of the increasingly crushing sanctions into which their nuclear adventurism had cast them.

So for me the joint comprehensive plan represents a change of degree, not a change in kind. It is true that a lot of arms control has aspired only to that, but not all arms control. From the standpoint of Iran's interests the renunciation of nuclear weapons would have been a perfectly rational course of action, and the administration likes to assure us that this regime is, indeed, rational. Yet it pointedly chose no such course of action. One of the reasons, surely, is that its interlockers, I mean us, did not insist that they consider it. Instead, we made a prior assessment about what is and what is not possible in terms of Iranian flexibility.

Good and honest people can disagree about that assessment, but we can all agree that it was decisive for determining the outcome of the negotiation. Good and honest people can also disagree about the deal itself. It is not hard to understand an argument for a respite in all situations of tremendous pressure. That is why I do not oppose the deal apocalyptically since I do not believe that it is permanently or even for a long time altered our strategic circumstances. I regard it as having only moderately mitigated a threat that continues to haunt the region and the world. All the ominous options must remain on all the infamous table.

The other grounds for my opposition is that in exchange for such a limited and passing amelioration the deal will strengthen a contemptable and aggressive

regime. The meanings of the deal for foreign policy must be considered along with its meanings for national security. Insofar as this deal represents some sort of rapprochement with Iran, a beginning of a détente with the Islamic Republic, it seeks to accomplish a goal that is in my view amicable to American interests and American values.

I know it is somewhat heretical to introduce values into conversations these days. Many people regard values, or at least some of them, as the slippery slope to shock and awe. But it is not always the case that conflict is based on a misunderstanding or a mistake. Sometimes conflict is a sign that fundamental differences have been accurately understood. Our previous hostility to the Islamic Republic was not based on a misreading of the Islamic Republic in its conduct within its borders or in its conduct beyond its borders.

The text of the agreement mentions, 'a desire to build a new relationship with Iran.' Not a new relationship with a new Iran, but a new relationship with this Iran. With a criminal, oppressive, theocratic, bellicose, anti-American, anti-Semitic, misogynistic, and homophobic regime that is consecrated not only to its God, but also to the thwarting of American purposes and American allies, and to the remorseless support of terrorism. What Democrat, what Pluralist, what Liberal, what Conservative, what believer, what non-believer would want this Iran for a friend? What constructive role can this Iran, I know it opposes ISIS, play in the community of nations?

It is important to note that in the period of the negotiations Iran was intervening ferociously to inflame the Shia in Iraq to prop up Assad in Syria, to support Hezbollah in Lebanon, and to arm Hamas in Gaza. Unlike us in our policies in the same conflict, Iran was not inhibited in its interventions by the fear of upsetting its interlocutors during delicate negotiations. Nor should the Islamic Republic's loud and regular call for

the destruction of Israel be treated as some sort of foible or eccentricity to be set aside while we go about the really important business.

So insofar as this arms' deal represents a new beginning in our relations with Iran, the vile behavior of Iran is germane to the discussion. Vile is a non-professional term, I know, but it seems clinically precise for the patron of the Syrian slaughterhouse. It is also important to note that when one speaks about an un-free country, when one utters the word Iran, for example, one may be referring either to its regime or to its people, but not to both because they are not on the same side. The Obama administration has not grasped this, and so its overtures to Iran have had the effect of engaging and invigorating only the regime.

MAJOR GARRETT: Leon, I need you to wrap it up.

MR. WEISELTIER: Almost done.

MAJOR GARRETT: Okay.

MR. WEISELTIER: Moreover, the idea that Iranian society will be significantly opened up by the economic windfall that will result from the suspension of sanctions is absurd. A great deal of saddening, but serious evidence exists that economic liberalization need not entail political liberalization. If the Ayatollahs and the Ayarjuci have not opened up their society until now it is not because they lack the cash. Thank you.

MAJOR GARRETT: All right. We're going to get to the stage of the debate where I'm going to try to encourage our four panelists to engage each other directly, and we're going to start here. To Suzanne and Bruce, Senator McCain said not a single Republican will vote for this and he considers that a bad sign for the deal, a bad sign for history, and a failure of the administration. Would you say the problem is with the deal or with Republicans?

SENATOR MCCAIN: I think I know the answer to that one.

MS. MALONEY: Let me jump in first, but I would hope that Bruce will follow in my wake. I think it is a sad statement on the character of politics today in Washington. What's truly unfortunate about it is so much of Iran policy has been bipartisan. What we have constructed, what brought us to this deal, what made these negotiations effective was an effort between both Congress and Presidents from two parties to construct a strategy to create a really coherent coalition that imposed the kind of pressure that brought Iran back to the table that had had an impact on its domestic politics.

Yet, despite that bipartisan agreement about the objectives of U.S. policy, about the need to engage in negotiations with Iran, which was not an Obama administration innovation, it was, in fact, a decision by George W. Bush, to understand that maximalism wasn't going to be effective. We have lost bipartisanship today, and I think that that's less about the deal than it is about the quality of politics today in Washington.

MAJOR GARRETT: Bruce.

MR. RIEDEL: I agree with Suzanne. The problem is not the Republican Party, although the Republican Party has many problems today, as the Economist has brilliantly shown this week. The problem is American politics which have moved into a --

SENATOR MCCAIN: Democrat Party, however, is in great shape.

MR. RIEDEL: No, it's not in very good shape either. Both of them are having a lot of trouble. Let me get to the next point though.

MAJOR GARRETT: The next Brookings' debate, by the way.

MR. RIEDEL: Let me move to a different point. The Middle East today that we are living with is an incredibly confused and grey area. We've already heard

some of the contents about the Iranian Regime. The Iranian Regime is a regime trying to subvert our closest allies in the region, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and others. It is also our most significant partner in the war against ISIS and the defense of Bagdad. That's not a statement of opinion. It's a statement of fact of what's going on in Iraq today.

I'm not advocating a rapprochement with Iran. I think that would be a fool's errand. What I am saying is that unlike the black and white situation we seem to see in Washington on Capitol Hill, the real situation in the Middle East is filled with greys, a lot of black, and very little white. That's the situation that this deal ought to be evaluated in the context of.

MAJOR GARRETT: Senator McCain, the suggestion is this is all politics and that the bipartisanship that led to the formation of this policy is somehow now instantly being subverted purely for politics. That's the allegation I want you to respond.

SENATOR MCCAIN: Well, first of all, could I say, thank you, Bruce, for your kind words. But let me say -- no, I mean that about torture. I thank you.

Look, to have some kind of equivalency between Israel having nuclear weapons and Iran having nuclear weapons, I mean, that is not intellectually honest.

MR. RIEDEL: I never suggested a moral equivalency between them.

SENATOR MCCAIN: You pointed out that Israel has all these nuclear weapons and they have this and that in as far as nukes are concerned. There is no equivalence. Israel has never had demonstrations, death to Iran, death to America. Israel is a country surrounded by nations committed to its extinction, and that's why we are glad that have -- overjoyed that they have nuclear weapons, so I just wanted to clear that up.

The second thing is that I voted for sanctions and saw sanctions against Iran not so much because of their path toward nuclear weapons, because their

aggression in the entire region. By the way, the fact that there are Iranians in Bagdad today that are orchestrating effort against ISIS is no greater example of the collapse of American influence of what happens when you withdraw. When you leave, my friends, there's a vacuum and others fill it. I am deeply alarmed that it's Iranians that are our friends in Bagdad, so I voted for sanctions against Iran because of the long record of hegemonic behavior of the atrocious treatment of their own people, for Americans who are still being held captured, a reporter for the Washington Post. Why wasn't that in the negotiations, for God's sake?

Their entire behavior throughout the region, anti-democratic, hegemonic, and trying to realize the ambitions that they are, obviously, pretty successful now. Now that the United States has basically left the region. I take that back, we have trained 60 people --

MR. WEISELTIER: Fifty-four.

SENATOR MCCAIN: Fifty-four.

MR. WEISELTIER: Fifty-four.

SENATOR MCCAIN: Yeah, a number of them captured. So I take it back, we're doing a lot there. So the point is, I think, is that the Iranians are about to receive a crowning victory, and if there is the slightest indication that that is going to change their behavior in the region I will be glad to see what that indication is.

MAJOR GARRETT: Leon, please jump in. It seems like you want to.

MR. WEISELTIER: I think I don't know what we mean when we say -- I'm not sure what Suzanne means and what we mean when we say that we once had a maximalist position towards the regime in Iran. If we did we certainly now have a minimalist position. We have gone from overreach to under reach without stopping at reach, as far as I can tell.

When I am not prepared to look the Iranian people in the eyes and tell them there is not possibility of regime change. By regime change I do not mean, I do not mean, I do not mean, I do not mean the Iraq War. I just want to say that 50,000 times, all right? Not the Iraq War, not the Iraq War, not the Iraq War. Now we can move on. We can move on.

In Iraq there were no indigenous democratic movement. When you, sort of, scornfully mentioned Chalabi, I share your scorn, but nobody is proposing anything like that. There was and is an indigenous popular democratic movement with Western sympathies in a country that beneath its repression includes a significantly Western-oriented society. It is a county -- change of regime in Tehran is not only, as far as I can tell, a moral obligation of ours, that is not to change the regime, but to help those people in Iran who want to change the regime. There is strategically no greater prize in the region than I can think of than an eventual, not the Iraq War, not the Iraq War, change of regime in Tehran. And the idea that --

MS. MALONEY: I share your aspirations for a democratic Iran.

MR. WEISELTIER: Well, no you don't when you --

MS. MALONEY: But I see absolutely no possibility in the past 60 years of American policy toward Iran that we have any capacity to influence that in a positive setting.

MR. WEISELTIER: Look, in 2009. Suzanne --

SENATOR MCCAIN: How about when they were demonstrating in the streets over a --

MR. WEISELTIER: In 2009 --

MS. MALONEY: I can tell you that all of the people --

SENATOR MCCAIN: -- corrupt election and they were about to

overthrow --

MS. MALONEY: -- most of the leaders of those who were --

SENATOR MCCAIN: -- the government, and we wouldn't even speak up
in their behalf.

MR. WEISELTIER: It was even worse than that.

MS. MALONEY: Most of the people who were demonstrating --

MR. WEISELTIER: They were calling Obama --

MS. MALONEY: -- in the street today support this deal. Many of the
leaders of that movement have come out publicly in favor of this deal. They do not
believe further sanctions, further securitization of Iranian politics are in the interest of a
democratic movement in Iran.

MR. WEISELTIER: My understanding --

MS. MALONEY: They are the people who understand what's happening
on the ground best, not people sitting here in ivory towers in Washington.

MR. WEISELTIER: Well, look, we all sit wherever we sit. We all sit
wherever we sit. My understanding is that the dissident community in Iran is not --

SENATOR MCCAIN: May I ask, Suzanne, have you ever been to Syria
lately? Have you?

MS. MALONEY: I in no way --

SENATOR MCCAIN: You've never been to Syria.

MS. MALONEY: Under, under --

SENATOR MCCAIN: I've been to Syria. How many times have you
been to Iraq? I've been some 22 times. How many times have you been in Kabul?

MS. MALONEY: My argument is not that Iran is not --

SENATOR MCCAIN: No, I resent --

MS. MALONEY: -- directly responsible for the malevolence --

SENATOR MCCAIN: -- I resent a great deal when you say that --

MS. MALONEY: -- in Syria and in Iraq.

SENATOR MCCAIN: -- I'm sitting in an ivory tower. When you say that I'm sitting in an ivory tower --

MR. WEISELTIER: She meant me.

SENATOR MCCAIN: Well --

MAJOR GARRETT: Go ahead, Senator. Go ahead, Senator.

SENATOR MCCAIN: It was probably Leon. I take it all back.

MR. WEISELTIER: I think she meant me.

MR. RIEDEL: One very quick pick.

MAJOR GARRETT: Bruce, before I throw another question before you.

MR. RIEDEL: One quick point. I never suggested an equivalency between Israel and Iran, and I agree with you. We are better off Israel having nuclear weapons. My point is Israel is not a weak Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of a Munich Agreement, and that kind of argument just doesn't consist to be with the facts.

I don't want to fight the Iraq War over again. I agree with you, Leon. Let's not fight the Iraq War over again. But I do remember what the late Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud said, he said the Bush administration handed Iraq to Iran on a silver platter. I think that's where the mortal, the sin of letting the Iranians getting into Iraq occurred. I agreed with you completely, the Obama administration just helped them come in further. If we're going to debate all the errors of the Bush and Obama administration tonight we'll never have any time to talk about the Iran nuclear deal.

MAJOR GARRETT: Which I want to talk about.

MR. WEISELTIER: Can I say one thing?

MAJOR GARRETT: Very quickly, Leon.

MR. WEISELTIER: I think it's very important, and we've learned this from previous episodes of arms control. Arms control cannot only be evaluated in its own terms. It needs to be assessed in terms of larger strategic, historical, and even moral considerations. It seems to me, obvious, that since the President's first inaugural address, since his very first public pronouncement as president that he has dreamed, for good reasons or bad, I'm speaking now just as a matter of fact. That he had dreamed of a new relationship with Iran.

Now, my own view is that many people who want a new relationship with Iran suffer from this feeling that the United States comes to Iran with some sort of prior disqualifying guilt from helping it advance towards a democratic society. But the fact is, that in 2009 when those astonishingly valiant people were in the streets in Tehran and we turned their back on them they were screaming Obama's name and he was in the White House thinking about Mossadegh. Most of the kids on the street of Tehran in 2009 were too young to even know who Mossadegh was. I mean, they're --

MS. MALONEY: And yet they understand that history far better than most people here in Washington do. The simple reality is we do not have the leverage to influence Iranian politics. People did not leave the streets in 2009 because of what we failed to do. They left the streets because they didn't have a leadership in the opposition movement that was prepared to go to the mattresses with a very repressive regime. That's a simple reality.

MR. WEISELTIER: We did not have the leverage --

MS. MALONEY: I would like to actually get back to the question of moral responsibility since you raised that very issue. What is our moral responsibility if we walk away from this deal? These negotiations are proof of concept of American leadership on

tough foreign policy issues. We did this, not just one administration, but Congress working with President Bush and with President Obama built this strategy and came up with a solution. It's not a perfect solution. It's not a comprehensive solution because none of our allies are signed on to a comprehensive solution.

But, in fact, it solves one piece of the Iranian puzzle for a less than optimal period of time and gives us more leverage and more leeway to address the other issues. If we walk away from this deal now how does that help Syria? How does that help Iraq?

MAJOR GARRETT: I want to ask you two, Suzanne and Bruce, about the President's statements and the administration's evolving metrics for the deal itself. Because, as someone who's been at the White House for many, many years, I remember the President saying the original concept, you just said proof of concept, was to block all available Iranian path to a nuclear weapon and, among other things, to have a verified and comprehensive accounting for previous military dimensions of what they were doing subversively, lying to the international community and the IEA about what was actually going on.

The critics would say A, it only delays, does not block, and there is, apparently, no requirement in any way that is consistent with the underlying language about verifying and accounting for the previous military dimensions of what they were doing and lying to the world about. Why does not the agreement then, therefore, fall not based on what the critics say, but on what the administration said it should achieve in the first place?

MR. RIEDEL: This administration, like every administration engaged in negotiations has adjusted its bar over time. I'm not shocked. That's what happens in negotiations. Let's look at the Iranian side of the bargain just for a minute. The Iranians

went into this saying we don't have any aspiration for a nuclear weapons' program and we never had an aspiration for the nuclear weapons' program. Where do they stand today? They have identified facility after facility which needs to be changed in a fundamental and significant way, and the number of centrifuges reduced. All of which is an admission that they were lying up front.

MR. WEISELTIER: Right.

MR. RIEDEL: Now, did we get a historical replay of the intricacies of their lying? No. And anyone who seriously thought that was going to happen does not know how negotiations really work. The key to the deal here is not whether we go back and find out what happened in 2004 or 2003 or 2007, but are we in a position now to have reasonable confidence that if they start to cheat we will know it.

I think every expert who's looked at arms control inspections agrees that this agreement has more teeth than we've seen before. Is it perfect? No. We've put it, ultimately, into the hands of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I have a great deal of confidence in that organization because its track record in the past has been very good. I promise not to fight the Iraq War again, but I'm going to fight one part of it again. The IAEA had it dead right. There was no nuclear weapons program in Iraq. I trust their verification because they've done it before. I don't trust those critics of this deal which said, oh, the next thing you hear will be a mushroom cloud.

MAJOR GARRETT: Any reaction, Senator McCain, Leon?

SENATOR MCCAIN: Well, again, you know, to say that the Iranian people would not go to the mattresses while the Iranian Revolutionary Guard was slaughtering them in the street. You know, I've heard of some revisionist of history. Anyone who, and we all did, I hope, see a young woman named Neda bleed to death in the square that's just really quite remarkable to me. They didn't have weapons. I don't

know how they would have gone to the 'mattresses,' but they sure wanted to the President of the United States, the leader of the free world, to speak up on their behalf and he refused to do so. That is historical fact.

April 6, 2015, 'under this deal you have anywhere, anytime, 24/7 access as it relates to the nuclear facilities that Iran has,' U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes. April 2015, 'we expect to have anywhere, anytime access in the sense of a well-defined process with a well-defined in time for access to places that are suspected out of bounds activities.' That was our Energy Secretary. We all know the deal allows Iran to delay the inspection for 24 days before the IEA can visit a suspected site. A majority of the eight members of the Joint Commission have to approve an IEA request for access before Tehran is obliged to comply. Iran itself would be a voting member of the Commission with equal standing.

The agreement specifies no means of enforcing Joint Commission rulings, although if Iran fails to comply U.S. could terminate the agreement by invoking its snap-back provision, and we know how ludicrous that is. And Fordow, of course, the deal concedes Iran will convert the Fordow facility into a nuclear physics and technology center, so they've got to have a nuclear and physics and technology center inside of a mountain. Yes, sure. But they won't be enriching uranium nor have any nuclear material.

Finally, I just want to get back to the conventional weapons embargo if I could real quick. That is, of course, that's going to be lifted within five years. Both our Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter, says, no, we want Iran to continue to be isolated as a military and limited in terms of the kind of equipment and material they're able to have. That embargo leaves in five years. Then, of course, under no circumstances should we relieve pressure on Iran relative to ballistic missile capabilities and arms trafficking. That

was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Military recommendations to the Congress. Neither of those statements are valid.

MAJOR GARRETT: I want to put to you two gentleman because both Suzanna and Bruce have said, there is no better deal than this deal. Voting to disapprove and making that policy, which as we've already acknowledged legislative appears impossible, but it's still a position you defend, so describe for this audience --

SENATOR MCCAIN: I'll give a very brief audience in litany.

MAJOR GARRETT: -- what the better deal look like and how it's manifest?

SENATOR MCCAIN: Why did the Iranians come to the table to start with? Why did the Iranians come? That they found themselves on the road to Damascus? Yes, they did that too, but the point is they came to a negotiating table because their economy was hurt terribly by these sanctions. So we, of course, have and had that leverage, although we've given it up now in this agreement. But they didn't come because they wanted to see a new Middle East they came because of an incredible punishment that was inflicted by these sanctions. I don't think it's more complicated.

MS. MALONEY: What made those sanctions effective --

MR. RIEDEL: But if the sanctions go away --

MS. MALONEY: Can I just jump in here?

MR. RIEDEL: Go ahead. Sure, please.

MS. MALONEY: What made those sanctions effective was their adherence by much of the international community. Particularly by Iran's traditional major trading partners in Europe. These are countries that did not agree to sanctions after Iran seized our embassy in 1979. They did not agree to sanctions after Iran

sponsored terrorist activities against Americans and Europeans all across the Middle East and in Europe. They only agreed to sanctions as a result of the fairly unprecedented level of urgency around the Iranian nuclear issue, not about the rest of Iran's disturbing policies.

MR. WEISELTIER: Actually they --

MS. MALONEY: And they're not prepared to sustain them. They're not prepared to continue to adhere to them. The Russians and the Chinese, the Indians, the Turks, all of the major purchasers of Iranian energy are not interested in further reducing their supplies in this --

SENATOR MCCAIN: And of course that assumes there's no American leadership, which there isn't. I will agree with you. There's no American leadership. There's no American pressure to --

MS. MALONEY: But leadership is not a magic word that forces --

SENATOR MCCAIN: -- on these other countries to --

MS. MALONEY: -- other countries to do what we want them to do.

SENATOR MCCAIN: -- keep those sanctions on. There is no deal that we can say, and we should, that if they're going to do business with Iran then they don't do business with us. That's pretty simple and we could do that. But that's when America leads, but you see, America doesn't lead anymore.

MS. MALONEY: Are you prepared to tell the American people that there will be no further business between the United States and Europe?

SENATOR MCCAIN: I am prepared to tell the American people as to how, what this deal is, and what its implications are, and that there's millions of refugees now flowing into Europe and probably the United States because an abject failure of American leadership. We have to restore that leadership. Otherwise things are going to

get one hell of a lot worse in the next year and a half until we have a new president. Look at a map of the Middle East in 2009. Look at a map of the Middle East today and then tell me how things are going.

MR. WEISELTIER: I have to say I think that this argument -- I mean, I agree with everything that my friend has just said, but I want to add that this argument that there is no alternative has always seemed a bit demagogic to me. In the first place, the argument that there is no alternative to this deal that gives a respite of 10 years and 15 years would have been made for a deal that gives a respite of 7, of 7 and 12 or a respite of 3 and 8 or a respite of one month and six months. In other words, this is some sort of casuistic game. If the deal is a bad deal it's a bad alternative. If it's a good deal it's a good alternative. If the deal does not furnish the solution to the problem that it sets out to solve then I don't understand how it could be defended as an acceptable alternative.

The only thing that matters to me is that we get out of the strategic predicament posed by the Iranian desire to develop a military nuclear capability, and I see no evidence in this agreement that that is what this agreement accomplishes. Moreover, you know, we get a Band-Aid and they get a banquet. I have to say, I have a very, very deep fear that we are being played for fools because I believe that this agreement, this negotiation was not conducted in the spirit of tough leadership that Suzanne mentioned earlier. Toughness is exactly not the word I would describe. It was conducted in a spirit of reconciliation, and I have nothing against reconciliation.

Diplomats like to say that we should talk to our enemies. We should talk to our enemies.

MR. RIEDEL: I think we're going off track here.

MR. WEISELTIER: We have talked to our enemies, but they are still our

enemies.

MR. RIEDEL: I think in humility we're going off track here. This is becoming a debate about the Obama administration's Middle East policies. I don't think there are a lot of people who are here tonight who are enthusiastic about the Obama administration's Middle East policies. This is a debate a particular --

MR. WEISELTIER: That's the vote I want actually.

MR. RIEDEL: Right. I know that's what both of you want. You're doing a very good job of turning it into a debate about Obama's admistrational policies, but this is supposed to be a debate about a particular initiative which is the nuclear deal.

MR. WEISELTIER: Right.

MR. RIEDEL: As Suzanne said at the beginning, this is not a deal to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons in perpetuity. Nobody says that. This is a deal to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons for the next 15 years. Does it do that? I think the biggest argument that's been made against that is that the verification process is not tough enough and not stringent enough.

I know a lot about verification and about intelligence collection tactics to verify a deal. It is, let me tell you, infinitely easier to work to verify if the other side is cheating if you have inspectors who can go inside on the ground. Even if they can't go anytime, anywhere, it's ten trillion times easier if they're on the ground looking around. It's also a lot easier if you have an international agreement that says, here's the standards of behavior that Iran is going to have to hold up to.

At the end of the day, any verification system depends upon the United States intelligence community and how good it can do its job. I think this deal significantly enhances the capacity of the American intelligence community to do that. It also depends on the ability of our allies, particularly Israel, to be able to do that. Here's

where I go back to the point I made about my friend Efraim Halevy. He says, quite rightly, the Mossad will be better able to verify this deal than it is to be able to verify the current status quo. Is it perfect? No. Is the Obama administration pursuing the perfect foreign policy in the Middle East? No. But is this deal --

MAJOR GARRETT: Bruce, Bruce, Bruce --

MR. RIEDEL: -- worthy of being voted in favor of? I think the answer is, in the end, yes.

MAJOR GARRETT: Bruce, do you believe in snapback? Given what we know and what we hear by defenders of the deals, and it's absolutely true about the imminent collapse of the sanctions' regime internationally. In the event that, in fact, it were verified that they were cheating do you believe that snapback or any serious --

MR. RIEDEL: I believe that this deal has moved further toward snapback than we've ever seen before. The proof of the pudding will come when the moment a violation occurs. The United States not only has the option of snapback. The United States at that moment will also have all of its other options, including use of the military option. We're not forgoing any of those options.

MAJOR GARRETT: This will be the last question I put before you and then we'll go to closing remarks. You both have talked, Suzanne, you at length, about the lack of appetite within the international community and the P5+1 partners to continue economic sanctions, and that is a reason by which the negotiations had to reach a conclusion and why the deal should be verified and upheld as written. But doesn't that suggest, and this is one thing the critics bring up, that if there is a legitimate disagreement over verification and compliance that the very same partners who are no longer interested in economic sanctions and believe that they have run their course not only politically, but they no longer want to create economic dislocations for their very own

populations for political and other strategic reasons will not, to use your phrase in a different context, go to the mattresses to require verification of Iran? That Iran can by dragging this process out keep going what we, in the international community, would like to block?

MS. MALONEY: I think we're going to be tested, as Bruce has said, during the implementation phase, and it's going to test the alliance that we've put together to bring us to this date. I agree with some of the criticisms of the deal. I think it will be difficult, if not impossible, to even achieve this level of international economic pressure on Iran. As I said, we never achieved it before. But the simple reality is it's not going to stay if we disapprove the deal. We don't sustain our alliances if we tear up an agreement that they have already committed to.

MAJOR GARRETT: All right. With that. I want to let you know we are out of time for the back and forth. It's been an extraordinarily vibrant and lively back and forth, I think you would all agree. Let's give a round of applause to our four panelists.

Now, we're going to here --

MR. WEISELTIER: Not partisan, vibrant.

MAJOR GARRETT: I said vibrant. I said vibrant.

MR. WEISELTIER: Yes, yes.

MAJOR GARRETT: I didn't say partisan. I said vibrant.

MR. WEISELTIER: Yes, yes vibrant.

MAJOR GARRETT: The wordsmith is working on the wordsmith here, so I defer.

MR. WEISELTIER: No, no, no.

MAJOR GARRETT: Yeah, I said vibrant. Here we go.

MR. WEISELTIER: I know. I'm going to prove you.

MAJOR GARRETT: So we are going to have another vote, as I promised earlier, as we, sort of, beat into your heads earlier. We have a vote. We're going to take one of the options away from you though. You can no longer say you're undecided. We want to know whether you think the Congress should vote to approve to disprove the deal. Text 1 if you think Congress should approve the deal. Text 2 if you think Congress should disapprove the deal.

Now, we're going to have closing statements from all four. The polling will close as soon as Senator McCain concludes his remarks. You can gather by that that he will be the last of the speakers giving closing remarks. Each speaker will have two minutes and we will start with Bruce Riedel. Bruce.

MR. RIEDEL: I encourage you all to continue to vote undecided and to throw this thing up in the air and make it more complicated because this really is a complicated issue.

Final point I would make to you is this. Right now the United States and its allies have successfully concluded an agreement in the Middle East. It's the first one in 17 years that the United States has successfully concluded in the region. What it has done is put Iran in the pariah box as the country that has violated international norms and has failed to live up to its obligations after it signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Congress of the United States has an enormous task in front of it and it's very important that they do it. It's very important that we hear how each and every Congressman and Senator votes, but at the end of the day I don't want the Congress of the United States to put us at the outlier, to put the United States as the partner to this deal that was the first to renege on going forward with it. I think the Congress has been put in an awkward position. Frankly, I don't think you negotiated the negotiations for talking about the deal very well on the Hill. You put yourself in a position

where if you vote no against it you then become the problem and the United States becomes the problem. That would not be good for American leadership in the region, for American leadership around the world.

What we need is to now find out if this deal goes forward how can we better ensure that its implementation leads to all of the outcomes we want. First, that Iran does not get a nuclear weapon. Not now, not in 10 years, and not later. Secondly, that we address those other issues which both the Senator and Leon have rightly pointed out we need to put on the table for multilateral and unilateral measures between the United States and Iran.

MAJOR GARRETT: That was precisely two minutes. Bruce, well done. Leon, you have two minutes.

MR. WEISELTIER: Thank you. I think it's ironic that people will begin to be concerned about the consequences to American leadership in the region and the world in their attitude towards this deal when, in fact, we have been witnessing an attrition of American leadership in the region in the world for many years now.

I think that this deal, and I said earlier, I'm not against it apocalyptically because, as I said, I do not think it changes our strategic situation in kind, but merely in degree. You know, my heart sinks when I hear my friend Bruce, who was a proponent of the deal, mention that we can always use the military option. That means this deal -- that's correct, by the way, but that means that this deal has not advanced us beyond the strategic situation that troubles us to begin with.

I worry very much that this deal is the latest expression of a certain spirit in American foreign policy that I regard as responsible for some of the disasters that we've been witnessing in the region and in the world. I think that it was not ipso facto the case that the Iranians, who as Senator McCain said, came to the table under duress and

not out of an idealistic design, and not because they read Saul Alinsky or Reinhold Niebuhr, who came to the table under duress. That it was ipso facto the case that we could not have gotten a tougher deal with the Iranians.

If it is the fact that this deal is in their interest. If it is the fact that they're hurting so bad economically. If it is the fact that they really do want to renounce nuclear weapons then it seems perfectly obvious to me that it's wrong to have ruled out the possibility of a tougher negotiating position, and more generally, of a tougher position regarding this repulsive regime in Tehran. The United States is historically the only country that will ever create obstacles and impediments to certain evils in the world. There is no other country. Where without American leadership then there will not be the obstacles and the impediments to which I'm referring.

It seems to me that the adoption of this deal which, of course, will be adopted will be a very fine occasion to begin a new discussion of the first principles of American foreign policy after both Bush and Obama.

MAJOR GARRETT: Leon, thank you very much. Suzanne.

MS. MALONEY: Well, there we go. We can actually change the question for this debate because I think we agree, perhaps, on more than we disagree. I share all of the aspirations that Senator McCain and Leon Wieseltier have expressed for greater American leadership in the Middle East in a grave and strategic and humanitarian tragedy that is unfolding before our eyes today. I also share their abhorrence of Iranian policies that are primarily responsible of many of these threats that are unfolding in the region.

I oppose normalization or rapprochement both as unhelpful and unrealistic, but that's not what this deal is, and that's where we disagree. Where we disagree is whether an imperfect solution to the most urgent, but certainly not the only

part of Iran's threat, is one that we should, in fact, move forward with to test the possibilities of whether we can, after 36 years, begin to mitigate some of the challenges that Iran poses to our interest in the region and around the world.

I believe it's an imperfect solution for two simple reasons. One, we have an international coalition. We couldn't negotiate this deal on our own. We needed the leverage that was provided by all of our allies contributing to the sanctions' pressure. Two, simple because of the realities of negotiations. The Bush administration originally opposed Iran having nuclear anything, nuclear dentistry, as one of my colleagues used to say at the State Department, but by the time President Bush moved into a second term he recognized that he had to come to the table and offer a deal that Iran might see in its interest. That's the only kind of a deal that's going to hold.

Where we disagree is what the consequences of disapproving this deal would mean. Walking away from this deal would leave Washington with less influence, not more, at the very moment when the role of a responsible global super power is sorely needed. We should be doubling down on the strategies, on the bipartisanship, that brought us to these negotiations and to this agreement. We should use it to build a larger coalition on the broader range of concerns that we have with respect to Iran.

MAJOR GARRETT: Suzanne, thank you. I think that's something we can all agree on. We're all forthrightly opposed to nuclear dentistry. Senator McCain, before I give you the floor for the last two minutes I want to remind folks that polls will close as soon as Senator McCain wraps us his remarks. So if you want to vote please take your time to do so now. Senator McCain, wrap us up, you have two minutes.

SENATOR MCCAIN: About 20 minutes. Thank you, Major, for some very excellent questions and conducting this. I want to thank Bruce and Suzanne also for very articulate presentation of their point of view, and, of course, a man gifted with poetry

I am always proud to be in his company.

My friends, I'm concerned about the verification aspects of this agreement, especially from where we began and the statements where at the beginning and where we ended up. I'm concerned about the relaxation of any restriction on developments of ICBMs. You develop ICBMs to deliver nuclear weapons. I'm concerned about the relaxation on prohibition of conventional weapons which, obviously, are being used throughout the Middle East today.

The money is really something that bothers me as much as anything else because right now there's 230,000 Syrians who've been slaughtered. Millions of them have fled and we've now seen the consequences of it. We all know that Bashar Assad was about to fall and the Iranians brought in Hezbollah, 5,000 of them, and then they brought in weapons, and then the barrel bombings started. Then the poison gas was used. Someone needs to show me what the Iranians are going to do with these additional funds of \$100 billion as they attempt to extend their hegemony throughout the region. Has there been any indication of any slight change in Iranian behavior?

I think it's a very bad deal because I believe it puts the Iranians on the path to nuclear weapons in ten years, a blink of an eye in the Middle East. But I'm very more concerned or as concerned about the implications of this agreement as we basically legitimize this regime which is the worlds' greatest sponsor of terror. That, frankly, is what keeps me awake at night. When I see all of us, when our hearts are broken, as we see these children. When we see a little baby washed up on the shore, on a beach it breaks our hearts. A lot of those things did not have to happen. This agreement, I'm afraid, may facilitate other crisis of this nature. I thank you.

MAJOR GARRETT: Senator McCain, thank you very much. The polls are now closed. I just want to say one thing. It's rare in this city to have an assemblage

as distinguished as this, and it's rarer still to see them engage each other as directly as they did, as forcefully as they did, but to disagree agreeably, so I want to give them a round of applause and I want to invite you to join me in that. Really great discussion.

I also just want to add this thought, because there is a sense or there could be a sense that because the White House has secured the requisite votes in the Senate that this is anti-climactic. I don't think this debate is anti-climactic. I don't think it will be on the Hill. I think everything said in public about what this deal is or isn't is important to the historical record, not just for this administration, but for the next administration because this deal is going to survive. Everything that everyone in the policy field and politics says about this will resonate for many years, and for that I want to thank the panelists as well.

With your indulgence I'm going to ask the panelists to stay here for just a second. I'm going to walk off stage. I'll get the results of the poll we took before and after and I'll be right back, so give me just one second.

Don't you feel the American Idol sort of tension in the room? I know I feel it. All right. For those of you curious, and I count myself among those, 73% of you before our conversation felt that Congress should approve the deal, 15% said Congress should disapprove, and 12% undecided. After the debate, 85% felt Congress should approve, and 15% still believe Congress should disapprove. That, ladies and gentleman, are our final results, 16% variation from before and after. One more time, a big round of applause for our four panelists. They were fantastic. Thank you.

If you can just hang in the room one second while we escort Senator McCain out. He has earned and deserves those privileges, and other than that we can run wild. Just give us a couple minutes for Senator McCain to leave the building.

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CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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