

Sen. Ted Cruz: Securing America's Freedom: Protect, Defend, and Champion American Liberties Through a Strong National Defense

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“Thank you, everyone, for coming out this morning. Good morning. It is great to be with so many good friends at Heritage. Heritage is such a jewel in this country, such a font of ideas, and creative thinking, and energy – energy that I believe is needed to change the direction of this country.

“It’s also particularly fitting that we’re here today, and in just a few months we will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of one of Ronald Reagan’s most important speeches – a speech that he gave right here at this institution, initiating an endowment drive that led to so much good, in Reagan’s times and our own.

“At that speech, Reagan discussed the present challenges, including the threat of terrorism. And in particular, he talked about the corrective that the US Air Force had just sent to Colonel Gaddafi in Libya, encouraging him to give up terrorism. The corrective came in the form of a military jet and a bomb down his front porch.

“But I especially liked President Reagan’s description of how one of his most famous appointees, UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, once explained to the rest of the world what it meant to have conservatives in charge of foreign policy.

“First, he talked about the U.S. government’s approach toward terrorism: ‘... *no nation—friend or foe, ally or adversary—should be surprised by the events of last week,*’ he said of the recent and deliberate bombing. His actions made clear his ‘*determination to protect American lives and the world from terrorism.*’

“And then he singled out Ambassador Kirkpatrick:

“*And yet, even at the start of the Administration, people like Jeane Kirkpatrick were offering some pretty broad hints that things will be different. ‘How will the Reagan Administration change American foreign policy?’ she was asked early in 1981 at the United Nations. She answered correctly. She said, ‘Well, we’ve taken down our ‘Kick Me’ sign.’ And someone said, ‘Well, does this mean that if the United States is kicked, it will kick back?’.... ‘Not necessarily,’ she said. ‘But it does mean we won’t apologize.’ Well, we haven’t been apologizing. Things are different. And perhaps you’ve noticed. I know Colonel Gaddafi has.’ That was Reagan here at Heritage 30 years ago.*

“The challenges that Ronald Reagan and Jean Kirkpatrick faced in their times were daunting: first and foremost, the threat of Soviet Communism—a threat that many in America thought could not be beaten, we were told that on an almost daily basis by elected officials, by academics, by those in the media. But with a focus, a determination, and an unshakable belief in the greatness of our exceptional nation, President Reagan won the Cold War.

“Today, we’re once again facing challenging times, both at home and abroad. Again, we face an aggressive enemy whose goal is nothing less than the eradication of our very way of life. And there are many in this country who fear once again that we cannot defeat this enemy, that to even speak its name labels us bigots.

“It reminds me of that line from the movie ‘The Usual Suspects’: ‘*The greatest trick the devil ever played was to convince the world he didn’t exist.*’

“It seems when it comes to President Obama and Hillary Clinton, radical Islamic terrorism is something that just doesn’t exist. But the rest of us living on terra firma, living in the real world are aware that it is real, it is growing, and it is profoundly dangerous.

“What America needs today is a moment of clarity. Our enemy is radical Islamic terrorism, and this is an enemy that can and will be defeated.

“As we enter the final year of the Obama Administration, proof for all that there is indeed a God, there is little hope that this President will rise to the challenge and a much greater likelihood that his successor will be dealing with an even more dangerous world than what we face today.

“Two key issues will demand the attention of our next President: Keeping America safe at home and strong abroad. Ensuring both should be the basic responsibility—and first priority—of any Commander in Chief.

“The recent terrorist attacks on Paris and San Bernadino have brought front and center the issue of radical Islamic terrorism, but the fact of the matter is that the problem has been festering unattended for the entire Obama Administration.

“For President Obama, however, such issues are peripheral at best to his core progressive agenda -- an agenda that appeases our enemies, before actually defending the national security interests of our great country.

“While the President and his Secretaries of State have chosen to ignore the problem and to recede from global leadership, terrorist groups like ISIS have mobilized and carried out a string of deadly attacks around the globe.

“It is worth noting that the attack on San Bernardino has been called ‘*the deadliest terror attack on U.S. soil since 9/11.*’ Fourteen innocent lives murdered. That depiction is actually incorrect. We’ve had one other terror attack on U.S. soil that took 14 lives, and it occurred in my home state of Texas at Fort Hood on November 9, 2009. That likewise claimed 14 lives. The littlest victim, the unborn baby of Private Franceska Valdez, was brutally murdered along with her mother, as Nadal Hassan shouted ‘Allahu Akbar.’

“The Obama Administration responded to this unspeakable terrorist attack by labeling it ‘workplace violence.’ One of the things I am most proud of my tenure in the Senate is introducing legislation in the Senate Armed Services Committee to mandate that the victims of the Fort Hood shooting receive the Purple Heart, and against the active opposition of the Obama Pentagon, I was very pleased to earn the support of both Democrats and Republicans on the Armed Services Committee. We passed that legislation into law in December, and in April of this year, finally, the Purple Heart was awarded to those victims of terrorism.

“Whether it’s Fort Hood, San Bernardino, or a number of others tragically in between—from Little Rock to Boston to Garland to Chattanooga – President Obama’s approach has been to treat each one in isolation. The Administration has called the perpetrators ‘lone wolves’ – not to be associated with formal groups like al Qaida or ISIS because they didn’t receive direct orders from them. They investigate any suspects. But they ignore the reality that our nation is under attack.

“What America needs today – just as we needed in the late 1970s, is first, a firm resolve to always protect Americans’ freedom here at home – freedom that has made this the greatest nation on the face of the planet. But second, we need moral clarity. That starts with defining the enemy. And third, we restore America’s leadership in the world through a position of strength.

“How do we do that?

“First, we protect Americans’ freedoms here at home.

“Americans no longer feel safe in their schools, their workplaces, their cities. This should not be the new standard. This is not the new normal.

“Heidi and I have two precious girls – Caroline and Catherine. They are 7 and 5. Every time I pick them up, every time I hold them in my arms, I want them to be confident that they are protected and far from any harm. And a safe America starts with a secure America.

“It is beyond time now to secure our border. When terrorists can simply swim across the Rio Grande, we are daring them to make this journey. When 40 percent of illegal immigration in our country comes from visa overstays, we are inviting evil actors to game our system – as was the case with one of the 9/11 hijackers. And when we are opening up our country to thousands of refugees from regions filled with terrorists, terrorists with the expressed intent to kill us, our immigration policy ceases to be merely an economic or social question. Border Security is national security.

“We need a president with the political will to secure the border once and for all, and I have outlined a detailed immigration plan to do just that. It includes finally completing all 700 miles of the wall, mandated by federal law that the Obama Administration refuses to build, tripling the border patrol, increasing four-fold the fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft to monitor the border and direct boots on the ground where attempted incursions are occurring, finishing the biometric exit-entry system for our visas, again mandated by federal law, again ignored by the Obama Administration, and putting in place a strong E-verify system. It includes deporting criminal illegal aliens. It includes ending welfare benefits for those here illegally. And it includes ending the indefensible practice of catch-and-release.

“I have also introduced legislation in the Senate to halt our refugee program for those coming from terror-ridden countries. In Syria in particular, there is no question that the humanitarian disaster is horrific. Millions of people have been displaced by the savage violence. Millions are now living in camps that place severe strain on the resources of our allies. And it’s natural that out of our generosity, we want to help stop that misery. And while the United States has been the largest donor to the refugee cause by a factor of ten, giving 1.2 billion dollars of taxpayer funds, 10 times what any other nation has contributed, we cannot make the mistake of extending our generosity to the extent of imperiling the safety and security of American citizens. The first obligation of the Commander-in-Chief is to protect the safety and security of the United States of America.

“Two recent episodes make clear the need for more vigilance.

“The first is the Paris attacks, which took 120 lives. We now know that one of the bombers had arrived in France under the guise of being a refugee. It only takes one in a sea of millions to destroy our safety and to take unknown numbers of innocent lives.

“The second instance is fresh in the minds and hearts of people across the country. Just over a week ago, a Muslim couple who had pledged their support to ISIS murdered 14 Americans in San Bernardino. The

woman, Tashfeen Malik, came to this country on a fiancé visa. Her application should have sent up any number of red flags, including a fake address in Pakistan that should have been fairly simple to track down, but they went unnoticed. Yesterday, FBI Director James Comey testified to Congress that the two terrorists had been in contact online before she came to the country and had discussed martyrdom and jihad.

“This appears not to be a love story between two young, pious Muslims, but rather the deliberate infiltration by an enemy of America who came here to plot and carry out a terrorist attack on our citizens. This must stop.

“Now, I will also note, there are some on both the right and the left who want to exploit the current crisis by calling on Americans to surrender our constitutional liberties as the only way to ensure our safety. The Bill of Rights is altogether compatible with protecting the safety and security of American citizens.

“On the right, there are some who have called for resurrecting the government’s bulk data collection that existed under the Patriot Act. More data from millions of law-abiding Americans is not always better data. Hoarding tens of billions of records of ordinary citizens – it didn’t stop Fort Hood, it didn’t stop Boston, it didn’t stop Chattanooga, it didn’t stop Garland, and it failed to detect the San Bernardino plot. When the focus of law enforcement and national security is on law-abiding citizens, rather than targeting the bad guys—we miss the bad guys, while violating the constitutional rights of American citizens.

“Instead, the bulk data program was emblematic of the bureaucratic tendency to gather more, not better, information, which gives the government tremendous opportunity for abuse, as has been displayed powerfully by Lois Lerner’s IRS. Like the fable of the scorpion and the frog, the government will do what is in its nature: amass power at the expense of the people.

“This week, we commemorated the 74th anniversary of Pearl Harbor – let it be a reminder that it is often not a lack of intelligence, but a lack of perception.

“I cosponsored the USA Freedom Act to enable the intelligence community to find, prosecute, and kill the bad guys, while protecting ordinary citizens’ privacy rights. Indeed, under the USA Freedom Act, intelligence capabilities are ‘enhanced.’ Those are not my words. Those are the words of James Clapper, the Director of National Intelligence, as he told Congress this last May.

“Under the USA Freedom Act, investigators have more tools to target suspected terrorists, to access their phone records, to track down those with whom they’ve communicated. Under the old bulk data program, all of us were presumed guilty at the outset, and yet the universe of phone records that could be searched was materially smaller than the universe that can now be searched under the USA Freedom Act that has expanded the number of phones that can be targeted, but requires first some evidence that the person’s phone you’re going after is actually connected with terrorism. We should not shy away from smarter policies that enhance our ability to target the bad guys, while protecting the rights of law-abiding citizens.

“In addition to those voices on the right who are suggesting sweeping aside citizens’ Fourth Amendment rights, there are voices on the left who are taking the same approach and want us to voluntarily surrender our Second Amendment rights. Both of these approaches are misguided, and chief among them going after the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens is our President.

“With all due respect, the President has it exactly backwards – we don’t stop the bad guys by giving away our guns. We stop the bad guys by using our guns.

“Let’s be very clear: The Second Amendment is not the enemy; ISIS is; radical Islamic terrorism is; those who want to murder us are. As Justice Joseph Story so rightly noted, the Second Amendment is the palladium of our liberties. These rights enable an armed citizenry to defend themselves against evil actors – whether they be criminals, or, as we are now seeing the threat increase, homegrown or migrant terrorists in our own cities.

“Rather than stripping ordinary citizens of their constitutional liberties, we should have instead a clear strategy to utterly defeat ISIS.

“And that brings me to my second point – in addition to protecting Americans here at home, the strategy to defeat the enemy begins by calling it by its name – radical Islamic terrorism.

“On Sunday, in the President’s address to the nation, he made an interesting point. He said, *‘for 7 years, I’ve confronted this evolving threat each morning in my intelligence briefing.’* And yet, though he says he understands this ‘evolving threat’ every day, he’s chosen not to deal with the reality. He’s chosen not to confront the actual enemy. He’s chosen not to call the attacks in Fort Hood, or Little Rock, or Boston, or Chattanooga concerted acts of radical Islamic terrorism on our own citizens – our own mothers, and fathers, and sons, and daughters, and service members.

“We need to take off the blinders of political correctness that prevent us from seeing what is right in front of us: that enemy is radical Islamic terrorism and it is trying to destroy our country and our way of life. In a *Wall Street Journal* column last week, Peggy Noonan wrote about the need for us to robustly defend our First Amendment right to free speech against the forces that are trying to shame us into silence. It’s a topic for another speech, but in this context it raises the specter that Americans will be labeled as bigots if they dare utter the word ‘Islam’ in connection with a terrorist attack.

“Our President refuses to do so. In fact, he spent a significant portion of his Sunday address as an apologist for radical Islamic terrorism.

“And as his Attorney General, Loretta Lynch, told a gathering the day after the San Bernardino attack that her Department would move to prosecute anyone whose ‘anti-Muslim rhetoric edged towards violence.’ The day after a terror attack – 14 lives were snuffed away. We want a president and an attorney general who is standing up to defend this nation, not an attorney general who decrees herself the speech police for any who dare speak out against this threat. As has been the case all too often in the Obama Administration, we may be facing once again the weaponization of one of our own government agencies, deployed not to protect Americans but to force them to submit to the Obama Administration’s code of what is and is not acceptable speech.

“Attorney General Lynch said that’s what she was most afraid of – that we might exercise our First Amendment rights and speak out against this threat. How about having an attorney general who is focused on keeping our children safe, rather than muzzling the free speech rights of Americans?

“And in fact, we are already seeing the consequences of fear stifling speech. The neighbors of Syed Farook and Tashfeen Malik reportedly found their behavior odd, but until now they didn’t say anything to law enforcement because they were scared they would be accused of racial profiling. Imagine how different San Bernardino would have played out, if the fear and political correctness had not silenced the neighbors, if a phone call had been made, if law enforcement had investigated, if they had discovered the abundant evidence of radicalization and intent to wage jihad, and if these two had been apprehended before they went on a murderous spree. Loretta Lynch’s ban on what she calls anti-Muslim rhetoric is

already producing its chilling effect, and it's preventing Americans from taking basic steps to protect ourselves.

“So let's take off the blinders. It's time to say that these attacks are not isolated incidents. These wolves are not 'lone'—they are instead operating as an ideological pack. And the thing that unites them is their fanatical adherence to Islamic supremacism: the conviction that the world must submit to their form of Islam or die. This evil force is present in our country. As the FBI Director reported, it is active in each one of our fifty states.

“And once we have identified the enemy, we must do everything in our power to defeat them.

“America and the world have grown more dangerous as President Obama has receded from the world stage. Every day that goes by the United States seems weaker and a more marginal actor, increasingly dismissed as irrelevant. Increasingly viewed by the world's leaders, our president is a laughing stock. And so, our third goal must be to restore America's leadership in the world. As Reagan knew well, the best way to project America's leadership is by protecting and promoting America's strength – and this principle should always guide our actions.

“The next President will have to contend with the ever-worsening state of American interests around the globe given the opportunities squandered and the enemies emboldened under President Obama's watch. Our most immediate challenge comes from the Middle East, which is what I want to talk about today, but make no mistake about it, this is a global problem and a significant potential for conflict from the Baltics to the South China Sea are made ever more difficult by President Obama's shameful and destructive defunding of our military.

“Given President Obama's detached and dismissive address to the nation on Sunday night, it is now a virtual certainty that the next president will have to deal with the scourge known as the Islamic State, and that it will not be a local threat. We now know for a fact that if we withdraw from the Middle East, the radical jihadists will not be content to stay there—they are going to attack our allies in the region and beyond. And they are on the lookout for every opportunity to attack us here at home. The next president will need to bring together the best civilian and military leadership to develop an actual and real plan to utterly defeat and destroy ISIS, a plan that is not shackled by concerns over environmental impact or the most restrictive rules of engagement that our armed forces have ever known.

“During the fifteen months of President Obama's failed military action against ISIS, I have strongly advocated for a concrete military plan, and proposed that options that we may employ would include maximizing our overwhelming air advantage with a sustained, coherent, directed bombing campaign. Instead of what we have now which is a photo op foreign policy of a bomb here and a missile there, not actually achieve the goal of defeating ISIS. We should also be arming the Kurds, the Peshmerga, who have had considerable success against ISIS, despite the fact that ISIS is fighting with American military equipment they seized in Iraq and the Peshmerga are using outdated weapons because the Obama Administration for political reasons refuses to arm them because it would displease Baghdad. Our focus should not be on currying favor with Baghdad, our focus should be on utterly defeating ISIS, and the Kurdish Peshmerga are critical boots on the ground for accomplishing that effort.

“Beyond that, we should also include the Jordanian and Egyptian militaries, in which the United States has made significant investments in past decades. And then, above and beyond that, we should do whatever is necessary and required to defeat ISIS.

“Some in the course of a political campaign have focused on the question of boots on the ground, American boots on the ground as a talismanic demonstration of strength. That is getting the deployment of military force precisely backwards. This is not a game of risk, where politicians move armies around to demonstrate their machismo. Instead, you need a Commander-in-Chief who sets an objective of destroying ISIS, and then we need to rely on the expert military judgment as to the tools necessary to carry out that objective, including overwhelming military power, including arming the Kurds, and including using whatever ground troops are necessary to kill the terrorists and then come home.

“The issue of ISIS is, however, only one piece of the complex geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, and I’d like to turn now to how we might productively approach this troubled region in a way that will improve the broader strategic posture of the United States.

“Thirty-six years ago last month, the remarkable intellect and diplomat whom I mentioned earlier, Jeane Kirkpatrick, published an essay in *Commentary* entitled ‘Dictatorships and Double Standards.’ It is an essay to which I commend everyone here today. She wrote to disprove the notion that the prime directive of American foreign policy should be ‘to democratize governments, anytime, anywhere, under any circumstances.’

“The particular target of Ambassador Kirkpatrick’s criticism was the feckless and unmoored foreign policy of our 39th president, Jimmy Carter. Convinced that democracy was in and of itself an abstract force for good, the Carter Administration had supported theoretically liberal uprisings against authoritarian governments that had been allied with the United States from Latin America to the Middle East. However well-intentioned President Carter’s efforts may have been, the result had been, time and time again, material damage to the national security interests of the United States.

“‘Dictatorships and Double Standards’ appeared the same month that the revolutionary leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Ayatollah Khamenei, who seized power unopposed by the Carter Administration, had gone on to take more than 50 hostages at the American Embassy in Tehran, hostages that he would hold for some 444 days.

“Ambassador Kirkpatrick’s political philosophy had caught the attention of an aspiring Republican presidential candidate. Ronald Reagan, that tireless champion of freedom and human rights, had been grappling with the issue of how to advance the American cause against the Soviets when many of our potential partners were not exactly paragons of democratic virtue. Reagan understood the hard truths embodied in ‘Dictatorships and Double Standards,’ which was that established liberal democracies were not the *only* valuable allies for America. They are, rather, the *best* ones and are to be prioritized, celebrated and fiercely protected. But if we refuse to work with countries that do not meet our democratic standards, who are not making a rapid enough conversion to democracy, but are still helpful to advancing our larger goals to protecting our national security, then we risk fundamentally undermining those goals and so too our national security.

“Ronald Reagan absorbed this concept without ever losing his passionate belief in freedom. He knew that the real threat was not the occasional dime store dictator but rather the existential threat of totalitarian Communism, which was on the march with the stated goal of world domination. And he knew that this is not an either-or dilemma. Even as he kept vitally important alliances with the Philippines and South Korea, he used quiet diplomacy, and sometimes very public diplomacy, to successfully encourage these nations to more democratic practices.

“Would it be nice if the progress of liberal democracy was an inevitable, linear evolution in human affairs? And that freedom, once achieved, would be a permanent state of affairs? Indeed, it would. But

even a cursory glance at the history of democracy in the some two and a half millennia since the experiment was first attempted in ancient Athens, reveals this is far from the case, and the reality is that in order to preserve and strengthen the United States, we cannot treat democracy promotion as an absolute directive; but rather as a highly-desirable ideal – one that can be reached most effectively through the promotion of the security and the interests of the United States.

“We could do worse, in my opinion, than adopting the Reagan-Kirkpatrick philosophy today. After all, the proof is in the pudding, and it is not an accident that when the American hostages were released on January 20, 1981, they came home not because President Carter had allowed the Islamic revolution to triumph unopposed, but because now a President Reagan was in the White House and the Ayatollah knew he would defend America.

“One recent case study that would have interested President Reagan and Ambassador Kirkpatrick was the January 2011 popular uprising in Tahir Square that ousted Hosni Mubarak. Mubarak made an easy target—an aging military strong man with a grim record on human rights. The fact that he had been for 30 years a staunch ally of the United States and a key partner in securing Israel was quickly discounted. The Google-fueled revolution was a heady moment that seemed a 21st century rebuke to the repression of the past. Mubarak’s fall was hailed as an opportunity for Egypt to chart a new and more hopeful democratic future and plans were made for speedy elections.

“When those elections came, however, the results were disastrous for the United States as Mohammad Morsi, who had close ties with the Muslim Brotherhood, came to power. But Barack Obama insisted that all that mattered was that Morsi was ‘duly elected’ and for that reason the Egyptians should have to suffer under his brutal rule—even while he started to undermine American interests, destroy the Egyptian economy, and allow jihadists and weapons to flow from Libya into the Sinai. While the second uprising of the summer of 2013 would not be the ideal way to change a government, we should all shudder to think what could have happened in Egypt had Morsi seen out his term. We might well have faced the prospect of Egypt on the brink of failure unable or unwilling to protect Israel’s borders from the radical Islamists that Morsi had unleashed. Now, under President al-Sisi, we have a leader who is aggressively fighting the terrorist cells in Sinai and defending his border with Libya—and who is not afraid to call out the terrible perversion of his own faith that is causing the violence.

“This past summer I wrote a book entitled ‘A Time for Truth.’ In that book, I profile a speech President al-Sisi gave on January 1 of this year at Cairo University. It was a speech in which he called out directly the threat of radical Islamic terrorism. It was a speech in which he called out fellow Muslims to stand up against the perversion, against the evil that is radical Islamic terrorism. For President al-Sisi to give this speech as a Muslim leader was a demonstration of courage and resolve. That was remarkable. He was quite literally putting a bounty on his own head, and he did so with his eyes open fully aware that the forces of evil he was standing up against would do everything they could to murder him as a result. And yet, as I discuss in the book, what does it say when the President of Egypt is more clear-eyed, more candid, more direct, more serious about defeating radical Islamic terrorism than is the President of the United States.

“Indeed, at that very same university, Cairo University, President Obama had spoken in 2009 on his so-called ‘World Apology Tour,’ where he said, among other things, that Iran has a right to nuclear power. We need a president who will stand up and unequivocally defend the national security interests of this country.

“Another instructive episode was the 2011 NATO-led intervention in Libya that toppled the repressive dictator Muammar Qaddafi. He made an even easier target than Mubarak—a violent and repressive anti-

American dictator who had sponsored vicious terrorist attacks on American interests, notably the downing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. Qaddafi had also long been suspected of pursuing a covert nuclear program that, if successful, would pose a grim threat to the United States. When a popular uprising occurred in the spring of 2011, it seemed a no-brainer to this Administration that America would come to the aid of beleaguered rebels, splashed across the international press in fatigues and keffiyehs. The mission seemed almost absurdly easy, one that could be executed with no real American sacrifice—indeed, as the Obama Administration boasted, we could ‘lead from behind’ and the result would be the establishment of a liberal democracy in Libya that would only require administrative steps, such as mobilizing international support for a transitional government and freeing up communications networks. How profoundly wrong that foreign policy view was.

“As it turns out, rather than being aspiring democrats that the Obama Administration and their allies wanted them to be, the rebels were radical jihadis with limited interest in establishing a civil society. And while it was at the time well-known that Qaddafi had abandoned his nuclear program under the very real threat of military intervention that he perceived from the George W. Bush Administration, it was less well-known that he had begun cooperating with the United States in the fight against those same violent terrorists. That he was actively working to apprehend radical Islamic terrorists, to turn them over to America. But once he was gone, things turned for the worse. Once he was gone in less than eighteen months, they would overrun our facilities at Benghazi, murdering four Americans including our ambassador - the first American ambassador killed in the line of duties since the Carter Administration. Today, Libya is a failed state controlled by warring terrorist networks that pose a significant threat to our ally Egypt and who are openly plotting attacks on our allies in Europe.

“The intervention in Libya was, in a word, a disaster. And the argument that Republicans had to, in principle, support what might have been a democratic uprising against Qaddafi, but that the Obama Administration somehow botched the job is revisionist history - and poor revisionist history at that. This took place in 2011 after the President’s Cairo speech, the Russian re-set, and the cancelling of the missile defense batteries in Poland and the Czech Republic. It should have been clear to any rational observer that the Obama Administration was not capable of a policy that would actually defend, and robustly defend, the national security interests of the United States.

“A third example that has dragged on for more than four years is the Syrian civil war. Once again, there is no doubt that Bashir al-Assad, like his father was before him, is a bad guy who has been an ally to, and at times a puppet of, Iran and an enemy to the United States and to Israel. And it may have been that in the spring of 2011, there was a secular, non-violent opposition to Assad that would have made his ouster of strategic interest to the United States. But by the time I arrived in Congress in 2013, it was clear that far darker forces were at work. In June of that year *The Economist* reported that out of the nine rebel groups that they had identified, seven had significant terrorist ties, a state of affairs that made me deeply cautious about any plan to train and equip them -- for as bad as Assad was and is, radical jihadis controlling Syria would be a significant turn for the worst.

“Nothing that has happened in the last two and a half years has given me any more confidence that intervention in the Syrian civil war is in America’s interests. In fact, the situation is now materially worse despite hundreds of millions of dollars the United States has poured into trying to identify and train the Syrian opposition as ISIS now controls a significant portion of the country, while Assad is consolidating his position as a vassal of Iran and Russia.

“Quite simply, we do not have a side in the Syrian civil war. It’s not very fashionable these days in Washington, indeed, it is not difficult to find politicians who will thunder, ‘we must topple Assad,’ with the same ferocity with which they thundered, ‘we must topple Qaddafi, we must topple Mubarak.’ And

we've seen the catastrophic results of these myopic policies, and I would note that my view that we don't have a side in the Syrian civil war is shared by at least one other world leader with a clear-eyed and direct vision to what is happening. Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu was asked when he visited Washington last month why he didn't intervene in the Syrian civil war. And he responded simply that he would only do so if he had a clear side, which at this point he did not. He said that an Iranian-controlled Assad was a disaster for Israel—but that so was the Islamic State controlling Syria. *'When two of your enemies are fighting each other, I say don't strengthen one or the other. I say weaken both, or at least don't intervene, which is what I've done.'*

"I believe today, we are at a moment like Munich in 1938, that President Obama has returned from Geneva, returned from agreeing to give over \$100 billion to the Ayatollah Khamenei, promising like Neville Chamberlain peace in our time. History teaches anything, giving hundreds of billions of dollars, strengthening homicidal maniacs who intend to murder you, has never, ever, ever worked out well. And at a time of great peril, we need the Churchillian clarity and vision that Prime Minister Netanyahu provides because he doesn't have the time for the political correctness that so hamstring the Obama Administration. I think we should listen to our closest ally in the region, and in the absence of a viable alternative to Assad that isn't ISIS, I believe we should focus on the immediate and unambiguous challenge to our security, which is utterly destroying ISIS.

"I understand this flies in the face of conventional wisdom that holds that America must always promote democracy at all costs. Some would consider any progression in Egypt that did not involve Morsi serving out his term as unacceptable. They might consider the terrorist domination of Libya as preferable to any outcome that did not oust the dictator Qaddafi. They are proclaiming today that those who do not support Assad's ouster are complicit in Iranian terrorism. There will always be those who believe it is America's obligation, as a free nation, to convince others that we are laboring for their freedom, whether they want it or not. There will always be those who believe by insisting on anything less than our own democratic ideals we are forfeiting the moral high ground.

"This is, to borrow Ms. Kirkpatrick's elegant phrase, nothing more than confusing *'revolution with idealism, change with progress.'* We do not betray the idea of America by accepting reality. Ronald Reagan was the single greatest liberator of human oppression that the world has ever known. He did not do it by forcing democracy on unwilling nations, but by an unwavering determination to defeat Communism. After two terms of an Obama-Clinton foreign policy so disastrous it makes the Carter Administration look good, we are in a desperate need once again for clarity.

"The clarity of Reagan's four most important words: *'We win, they lose.'*

"We will not win by replacing dictators, as unpleasant as they may be, with terrorists who want to kill us and destroy America. And we can take heart in the knowledge that like Reagan we are not abandoning freedom, we are doing what we must to protect it because the true threat to the spread of liberty is the radical Islamism that is every bit as oppressive as Soviet Communism. And while the rebels who oppose regional strongmen who turn out to be jihadis are not ultimately helpful in this cause, there are others who are, and we should be able to figure out the difference. As Ambassador Kirkpatrick wrote, *'It may not always be easy to distinguish between democratic and totalitarian agents of change, but it is also not too difficult. Authentic democratic revolutionaries aim at securing governments based on the consent of the governed and believe that ordinary men are capable of using freedom, knowing their own interest, [and] choosing leaders.'*

"A case in point is perhaps the single greatest blunder of the Obama Administration and one of its first in 2009—when the President ignored the Green Revolution in Iran, thereby forfeiting an opportunity to

replace the radical Islamist, terrorist-sponsoring regime in Tehran that chants ‘death to America’ and ‘death to Israel’ and pursues nuclear weapons, and instead America could have stood with a peaceful, secular rebellion that was crying out for support from the United States. There was a case where regime change squared up with our most pressing national need. But instead of standing with the Iranian people in what could have been his ‘Tear down this wall’ moment, instead President Obama fell silent and decided to open up negotiations with the mullahs instead.

“So while the paroxysms of the so-called Arab Spring did not produce a wave of flowering democracies in the Middle East, but rather a tsunami of chaos and unrest, including a new and even more virulent strain of radical Islamic terrorism most sensationally embodied by ISIS, there may be future such opportunities that the next President should not squander. We can lead by example and demonstrate the positive effects of democracy. As Ambassador Kirkpatrick further noted, *‘it is not impossible that U.S. policy could effectively encourage this process of liberalization and democratization, provided that the effort is not made at a time when the incumbent government is fighting for its life against violent adversaries, and that the proposed reforms are aimed at producing gradual change rather than perfect democracy overnight. To accomplish this, policymakers are needed who understand how actual democracies have actually come into being. History is a better guide than good intentions.’* There are a number of encouraging 20th century examples of liberalization that should give us hope. The flourishing, vibrant democracy that is Israel is one of the great gifts the last seven decades have bestowed on America. We should not squander it. The end of the Cold War produced a unified, democratic Germany, as well as the vibrant democracies of Eastern Europe—all strategic allies and assets to the United States.

“We can most effectively continue this process by embracing our own ideals; by standing unapologetically for freedom; by defending Americans here in our country; by having the courage to speak with moral clarity -- to call evil by its name; by unapologetically defending America’s interest around the globe; and by using the bully pulpit of the presidency to invite others to recognize the rights of individuals, to respect them, and to unite against the evil forces who seek to tear down freedom in every corner of the world. Thank you.”