



A QUICK GUIDE TO THE FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS OF THE DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

By Brandon George Whitehill



We are pleased to present this compilation of the foreign policy views of the Democratic candidates for president by FPRI Intern Brandon Whitehill, a rising sophomore in the Elliott School of International Affairs at The George Washington University. This essay complements his earlier ebook, [A Quick Guide to the Foreign Policy Views of the Republican Presidential Candidates](#), the third most sought-after publication on our website in the month of July. We enjoyed an excellent crew of interns this summer, and they recount their experiences and their views of world affairs in [this podcast](#) produced by FPRI intern Sam Koffman.

As of this writing, five Democrats are running for their party's nomination for President of the United States: Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Jim Webb, Martin O'Malley, and Lincoln Chafee. Of these candidates for president, three (Sanders, Clinton, Chafee) were members of Congress during 9/11 and the votes on Afghanistan and Iraq Wars; two (Clinton, Webb) served on the Senate Armed Services Committee, two (Webb, Sanders) on the Veterans Affairs Committee, one (Webb) on the Foreign Relations Committee, and one (Chafee) on the Homeland Security Committee; one (Webb) was the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Secretary of the Navy, and a Marine Captain; and one (Clinton) was the nation's top diplomat as Secretary of State. Among the Democrats, Webb, Sanders, O'Malley, and Chafee opposed the 2003 Iraq War from the beginning (initially supported by Clinton) and the 2011 intervention in Libya (supported vigorously by then-Secretary Clinton). Webb stands alone in his opposition to the current deal with Iran. Sanders opposed the Gulf War in 1991 in which the US and its allies ousted Iraq from Kuwait; he also opposed Obama's troop surge in Afghanistan in 2009.

Jim Webb: The Military Man

As the only veteran currently running for the Democratic nod, the former Marine Captain, assistant Secretary of Defense, Secretary of the Navy, and Senator of Virginia is perhaps the best candidate to match former Secretary of State and current frontrunner Hillary Clinton's grasp of foreign policy issues. In his presidential announcement press release, Webb touted his military background, saying "there is no greater responsibility for our President than the vital role of Commander in Chief. I have spent my entire life in and around the American military."¹ Webb seeks to capitalize on his long military record along with his time in politics as a senator to offer a "fresh perspective" and serve as a viable alternative to Hillary Clinton.

The question about whether or not the Iraq War was a mistake has been predominantly confined to the Republican Party, but Webb's stance has always been clear. From the beginning Webb was against invading Iraq. In a 2002 op-ed, Webb charged, "American military leaders have been trying to bring a wider focus to the band of neoconservatives that began beating the war drums on Iraq before the dust had even settled on the World Trade Center," concluding, "Unilateral wars designed to bring about regime change and a long-term occupation should be undertaken only when a nation's existence is at stake."² He reiterates in his presidential announcement, "Let me assure you, as President I would not have urged an invasion of Iraq, nor

¹ [Webb, Jim. Presidential Announcement Press Release. Jim Webb Official Website, July 2, 2015.](#)

² [Webb, Jim. Heading for Trouble: Do We really Want to Occupy Iraq for the Next 30 Years? The Washington Post, September 4, 2002.](#)

as a Senator would I have voted to authorize it.”³ He predicted a decades-long occupation and the accumulation of American enemies in the region, and during his time in the Senate pushed for an end to the war. In the coming primary contests, his long-established anti-Iraq message will stand in stark contrast to then-Senator Clinton’s vote in favor of the war.

Another prominent distinction between Webb and Clinton is his opposition to the intervention in Libya during the Arab Spring. In the same tone as his Iraq warnings, he declares, “Sure, Qadhafi was a bad guy, we understand that, but we had no treaties in place, we had no Americans at risk, we were not under any threat of attack.”⁴ Clinton, conversely, claims credit in her recent memoir for constructing the strategy to intervene in Libya. Webb further distinguishes himself by laying out several foreign policy values that are applicable to any issue abroad. (1) “Explain clearly the threat to our national security, the specific objectives of the operations, and the end result he or she wishes to obtain;” (2) honor treaty commitments, but never allow America to be dragged involuntarily into war; (3) “maintain superiority in our strategic systems” via nuclear weapons, technology, space and cyberspace; (4) exercise the right of self-defense; (5) preserve and strengthen relationships with close allies, especially in Asia and the Middle East; (6) act “vigorously” against terrorist threats internationally or in countries that are unable to address it themselves—but never occupy territory; (7) the right to use force outside of direct threats to national security or treaty commitments lies solely with Congress.⁵

Webb places some of the blame for the rise of ISIL and violence in the Middle East with the United States as one of many unavoidable consequences of a long-term foreign invasion and occupation. “If you take a look at Syria, and these other parts of Iraq, we now have a situation where we’re asking these freedom fighters, or whatever you want to call them, who were going after Assad, to help us go after ISIS,” Webb posits, “The elements that are fighting there are very fluid in terms of the people who declare their alliances. I would be willing to bet that we had people at the top of ISIS who actually have been trained by Americans at some point.”⁶ As such, Webb would be hesitant to send more troops to the region or blithely provide arms and assistance to fighters on the ground. When asked what he would do about ISIL right now, Webb responded, “ISIS has demonstrated, I think, clearly that they are an international terrorist organization. Their principal focus is not the United States. It is in that region. But since they have demonstrated that they are an international terrorist organization, we should be carefully articulating a military policy that goes after these people.”⁷ In the long run, Webb believes that the US has tools and strategies with which it can assert its interests without placing American troops in harm’s way.⁸

Webb has also extended his Iraq criticisms to Iran, claiming that the invasion and its results have only served to strengthen the regime and its standing in the region. He is committed to stopping Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, but worries that President Obama’s negotiations could lead to just that: “The end result of this could well be our acquiescence in allowing Iran to develop a nuclear weapon. We don’t want that.”⁹ He cites the differing interpretations of the terms of the deal on the part of the Obama Administration and Iranian leaders as evidence that the US ought to “scrub this whole idea.” When the deal was released, Webb broke from the mainstream Democratic position, expressing, “I have a lot of concerns about this deal... They get immediate lifting of sanctions and over a period of 10 years they are going to be able to say they can move forward with a nuclear weapons policy with the acceptance of the U.S. and the other countries.”¹⁰ He also supports more congressional oversight for the terms of the deal and their ability to reject or accept it by voting and debating, like a treaty. “I do not believe that you can have a legally binding international commitment without the full consent of Congress,” says Webb.¹¹ Webb adopts the rhetoric of Henry Kissinger and his former boss Ronald Reagan in his support for smart negotiations with stringent verification measures to ensure the Iranians desist.

Webb has vocally criticized the administration’s policies in the Asia-Pacific region. He believes that the United States has an obligation to ensure stability and maintain a presence there. Where once America’s leading role liberated oppressed peoples and bolstered burgeoning economies, now “American vacillations have for years emboldened China. U.S. policy with respect to sovereignty issues in Asian-Pacific waters has been that we take no sides.”¹² Webb believes that China’s actions in the South China Sea and broader region have escalated beyond the point of honest sovereignty disputes to actual aggression, with no resolution in sight. He posits, “They [China] are waiting to see whether America will live up to its uncomfortable but necessary

³ [Webb, Jim. Presidential Announcement Press Release. Jim Webb Official Website, July 2, 2015.](#)

⁴ [Webb, Jim. Interview with David Axelrod. The University of Chicago Institute of Politics, April 8, 2015.](#)

⁵ [Webb, Jim. "On the Issues: Foreign Policy." Jim Webb Official Website, July 2015.](#)

⁶ [Webb, Jim. Interview with Chuck Todd. Meet the Press. NBC, October 4, 2014.](#)

⁷ [Webb, Jim. Interview with Judy Woodruff. Newshour. PBS, February 26, 2015.](#)

⁸ [Webb, Jim. Interview with Jake Tapper. The Lead. CNN, May 18, 2015.](#)

⁹ [Webb, Jim. Interview with Jake Tapper. State of the Union. CNN, April 20, 2015.](#)

¹⁰ [Webb, Jim. Interview with Diane Rehm. NPR, July 15, 2015.](#)

¹¹ [Ibid.](#)

¹² [Webb, Jim. "The South China Sea's Gathering Storm." The Wall Street Journal, August 20, 2012.](#)

role as the true guarantor of stability in East Asia, or whether the region will again be dominated by belligerence and intimidation.”¹³ Webb also recognizes the web of economic relations among China, countries in East Asia and the South Pacific, and the United States, but has doubts about the Trans-Pacific Partnership currently under negotiation. He supports the idea of free trade, but says the Senate should not be voting on Trade Promotion Authority unless the administration releases more details about the deal and relaxes the security around it. In a Facebook post, he wrote, “Trans-Pacific Partnership—too much at stake for Congress to vote on Fast Track without seeing full details of the trade agreement beforehand. Show us the language!”¹⁴

During his time in the Senate, Webb traveled to Burma, a communist country, in order to inspire relations between the United States and the Burmese dictator. He faced criticisms for engaging with an ideological adversary, but he maintained, “We can take advantage of these gestures as a way to begin laying a foundation of good will and confidence-building in the future.”¹⁵ Following his trip, Burma released a jailed American journalist and the Obama administration opened up to relations with the Burmese government. A similar parallel exists today with Cuba. While still in the Senate, Webb advocated for allowing travel between the US and Cuba. After over fifty years of embargo in the name of combatting communism, Webb praises President Obama’s moves to normalize relations. In response to Obama’s announcement, Webb tweeted, “POTUS made right decision on [#Cuba](#). Proud of having worked years toward normalization of relations w/ Vietnam & leading the way in Burma.”¹⁶ Webb sees no difference between having relations with communist countries like China and Vietnam and having relations with other communist countries like Burma and Cuba; in all cases, diplomatic ties are beneficial.

Webb, whose military service coincided with the final years of the Soviet Union’s existence, believes, “The most important thing that we have been lacking since the end of the Cold War has been a clearly articulated national security policy, a set of principles.”¹⁷ He names the Nixon Doctrine as his favorite set of principles and guidelines for foreign policy: “[The Nixon Doctrine] tries to figure out when it is that the United States should assist a friend or an ally, and when they should actually inject military force, and what our responsibility is in terms of nuclear power, including proliferation.”¹⁸ Webb hopes to once again establish a clear American foreign policy that intervenes and acts consistently with clearly articulable guidelines.

Bernie Sanders: Feel the Bern

Bernie Sanders is not the first socialist to ever run for president, but he seems the first poised to present the mainstream Democrat Party—represented by frontrunner Hillary Clinton—with an ultimatum: shift to the left or face a passionate, populist challenger. Sanders supports a staunchly antiwar foreign policy in stark contrast to Clinton’s historical willingness to intervene militarily. To evince his restraint abroad, Sanders often steers foreign policy discussions to America’s own economic woes, saying, “The United States has a lot to be concerned about, and we should be concerned, absolutely, about the Assad regime. We should be concerned about ISIS. We should be concerned about the terrible poverty that exists in Africa and parts of Asia, but we should also be concerned that in America, our middle class is disappearing, and that we have more people living in poverty than almost any time in the history of this country.”¹⁹

Sanders was a member of the House of Representatives during the September 11th attacks and critical votes thereafter. He voted in favor of using force against al-Qaeda, but this vote stands as an exception to his well-established rule against exerting military force. He voted against authorizing force against Saddam Hussein in 1991, in the Balkans in 1999, and troop surge in Afghanistan in 2009. The authorization that is proving itself most relevant to the 2016 election, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, also received a dissenting vote from then-Representative Sanders. In a speech on the House floor during debate, Sanders outlined five reasons for his opposition: “One, I have not heard any estimates of how many young American men and women might die in such a war or how many tens of thousands of women and children in Iraq might also be killed,” “Second, I am deeply concerned about the precedent that a unilateral invasion of Iraq could establish in terms of international law and the role of the United Nations,” “Third, an attack on Iraq at this time would seriously jeopardize, if not destroy, the global counterterrorist campaign we have undertaken,” “Fourth, at a time when this country has a \$6 trillion national debt and a growing deficit, we should be clear that a war and a long-term American occupation of Iraq could be extremely expensive,” and “Fifth, I am concerned about the problems of so-called unintended consequences. Who will govern Iraq when Saddam

¹³ [Ibid.](#)

¹⁴ [Webb, Jim. Post on the Official Jim Webb Facebook Page. Facebook, April 28, 2015.](#)

¹⁵ [Webb, Jim. "Visit May Offer Opening with Burma." Jim Webb Official Website, August 16, 2009.](#)

¹⁶ [Webb, Jim. Post on Official Twitter Feed. Twitter, December 17, 2014.](#)

¹⁷ [Webb, Jim. Interview with Ezra Klein. Vox, March 9, 2015.](#)

¹⁸ [Ibid.](#)

¹⁹ [Sanders, Bernie. Interview with Steve Inskeep. NPR, November 20, 2014.](#)

Hussein is removed and what role will the U.S. play in an ensuing a civil war that could develop in that country?"²⁰ By most accounts, his concerns raised questions with striking foresight, and Sanders plans to use his consistent opposition to the Iraq War and other Middle East interventions against Hillary Clinton, who voted in favor of them all.

Sanders sees ISIL as a threat to national security and therefore deserving of action on the part of the United States, but remains resistant to sending American troops to intervene in Middle East affairs. He opposed US airstrikes in Syria against President Bashar al-Assad, calling it "a third Middle East war in 12 years" and "an interminable conflict."²¹ "We have billions to spend on a war but no money to take care of the very pressing needs of the American people. That bothers me a lot,"²² he remarked. As for ISIL, Sanders believes, "If we're going to be successful in defeating this brutal organization called ISIS, what needs to happen is that the people in the region—the Muslim nations—are going to have to take the responsibility of leading that effort. It cannot be the United States of America."²³ He says heavy US intervention is exactly what ISIL wants so that they can pit their conflict as a grand one against the west: "They want this to be a war of the United States versus ISIS, of the West versus the East, of Christianity versus Islam."²⁴ He thinks that local countries like Saudi Arabia, which he points out has the fourth largest defense budget in the world, must assume an expanded role in maintaining peace and stability in the region. "I'll be damned, Sanders exclaimed, "If kids in the state of Vermont—or taxpayers in the state of Vermont—have to defend the royal Saudi family, which is worth hundreds of billions of dollars."²⁵ The full list of countries that Sanders argues should be "fully engaged" includes Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Turkey, Iran and Jordan. He concludes, "The U.S. and the international community should be fully supportive but the leadership in this war must come from the Muslim world."²⁶

On the ongoing negotiations with Iran, Sanders maintains the ubiquitous position that they must not be allowed to develop nuclear weapons. Sanders has said, "It is imperative that we do everything we can to reach a diplomatic solution and avoid never-ending war in the Middle East."²⁷ He voted in favor of a bill proposed by Senator Bob Corker to have Congress review the deal President Obama negotiated, about which he said, "I congratulate President Obama, Secretary Kerry and the leaders of other major nations for producing a comprehensive agreement to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon," adding that it represents a "victory for diplomacy over saber-rattling."²⁸ When Senator Tom Cotton wrote an open letter to the Iranian Ayatollah, Sanders criticized the action: "When you sabotage the effort to reach a peace agreement by the leader of the United States of America—the man who is charged with dealing with foreign policy—that, to me, is really unspeakable."²⁹ He charged that Senate Republicans are "itching for war" with Iran, adding, "Apparently, some of my Republican colleagues do not believe that two wars are enough. I think that is a very, very tragic position to hold."³⁰ He plans to vote in favor of the deal in the Senate.

The only Jewish candidate for president from either party, Sanders has maintained a centrist approach to Israel in contrast somewhat with others on the left. He hopes "The United States will, in the future, help play a leading role in creating a permanent two-state solution,"³¹ with settlements existing only within legitimate geographical claims and Palestinians disavowing Hamas, which Sanders says "is very clear: their [Hamas] view is that Israel should not have a right to exist."³² A turning point in Sanders' rhetoric, however, occurred in response to the violent 2014 conflict between Israel and Gaza, during which the "Israeli attacks that killed hundreds of innocent people – including many women and children – in bombings of civilian neighborhoods and UN controlled schools, hospitals, and refugee camps" were "disproportionate," "completely unacceptable," and "took an enormous human toll."³³ Sanders was one of many Congressional Democrats to boycott Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's address, contending, "He doesn't have the right to inject himself into an American political discussion by being the speaker before a joint session of Congress to criticize the President of the United States."³⁴ In another

²⁰ [Sanders, Bernie. Speech on House of Representatives Floor. CSPAN, October 10, 2002.](#)

²¹ [Sanders, Bernie. Interview with Ed Sullivan. The Ed Show. MSNBC, September 6, 2013.](#)

²² [Ibid.](#)

²³ [Sanders, Bernie. Interview with Steve Inskeep. NPR, November 20, 2014.](#)

²⁴ [Ibid.](#)

²⁵ [Sanders, Bernie. Interview with Chris Cuomo. New Day. CNN, September 30, 2014.](#)

²⁶ [Sanders, Bernie. Statement on Senate Website. Official Bernie Sanders Senate Website, October 1, 2014.](#)

²⁷ <http://www.sanders.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/sanders-statement-on-iran-negotiations>

²⁸ [Sanders, Bernie. "Democracy Daily: A Victory for Diplomacy." Official Bernie Sanders Website, July 14, 2015.](#)

²⁹ [Sanders, Bernie. Speech at Presidential Forum. The International Association of Firefighters, March 10, 2015.](#)

³⁰ [Ibid.](#)

³¹ [Sanders, Bernie. "War and Peace: Israel and Gaza." Official Bernie Sanders Senate Website, September 2014.](#)

³² [Sanders, Bernie. Town Hall in Cabot, Vermont. *Mondoweiss*, May 1, 2015.](#)

³³ [Sanders, Bernie. "War and Peace: Israel and Gaza." Official Bernie Sanders Senate Website, September 2014.](#)

³⁴ [Sanders, Bernie. Interview with Brooke Baldwin. Newsroom. CNN, February 10, 2015.](#)

interview, Sanders more directly said, “I gotta tell you, I am not a great fan of [Prime Minister] Netanyahu.”³⁵

In response to President Vladimir Putin’s advance into Crimea, Sanders supported President Obama’s use of sanctions. “The entire world has got to stand up to Putin, Sanders said, “And we’ve got to deal with sanctions.”³⁶ Sanders also left himself open to other means to isolate and stand up to Russia, but cautioned, “This is what you don’t do: You don’t go to war. You don’t sacrifice lives of young people in this country as we did in Iraq and Afghanistan.”³⁷ While Sanders sees Russia as an aggressor, he “applauds” President Obama’s restoration of normal relations with Cuba. “While we have our strong differences with Cuba, it is not a terrorist state. This is a major step forward in ending the 55-year Cold War with Cuba,” Sanders maintains, “Normal diplomatic relations would mean not only that Americans have the opportunity to visit Cuba, but businesses in Vermont and elsewhere can sell products there.”³⁸ He additionally was a member of the Congressional delegation that visited Cuba earlier this year to discuss human rights, healthcare, and trade.

Sanders’ positions on China are predominantly economically motivated. Every year, he opposes permanent normal trade relations with China because of the loss of jobs, especially in manufacturing. “Since PNTR with China was signed into law in 2000,” Sanders argues, “The U.S. trade deficit with China has exploded.”³⁹ Sanders especially took issue with the revelation that bronze busts of US presidents in the gift shops at the Smithsonian Museum of American History were made in China, which he called “extraordinary symbolism” and “pretty pathetic.”⁴⁰ As such, Sanders was one of the most outspoken critics of the Trans-Pacific Partnership in the Senate, opposing both the President’s Trade Promotion Authority and the deal itself. He calls the TPP “A disastrous trade agreement designed to protect the interests of the largest multi-national corporations at the expense of workers, consumers, the environment and the foundations of American democracy.”⁴¹ He detests the secret nature of its drafting and on his website lists ten extensively detailed ways that the deal “would hurt working families.”⁴²

On domestic surveillance, Sanders unequivocally sides with privacy rights. He voted against the Patriot Act originally in Congress, and subsequently in the Senate every time it was due for reauthorization. “Let me be clear: We must do everything we can to protect our country from the serious potential of another terrorist attack,” Sanders assures, “We can and must do so, however, in a way that also protects the constitutional rights of the American people and maintains our free society.”⁴³ He decries the Patriot Act as “Orwellian surveillance of every American,” and would rather the government have to establish “reasonable suspicion” to procure a “court order” to “monitor business records related to a specific terrorism suspect.”⁴⁴ After the Patriot Act was defeated in a protracted Senate debate, Sanders ultimately voted against the bipartisan reforms of the Freedom Act as well.

When discussing foreign policy, Sanders has repeatedly said, “I don’t have a magic solution.” But he does say he has almost always opposed and learned the lessons of American-led wars, and adds, “I get very, very nervous when I hear Republicans who apparently just can’t get enough of war — whether it’s going to war in Syria, going to war in Iraq, going to war in Iran, or going to war with Russia.”⁴⁵ He calls for a more “rational” and “intelligent” approach to foreign policy that is more rooted in multilateralism and employs force only when US national security is directly at stake.

Lincoln Chafee: Prepare to Wage Peace

Lincoln Chafee enters the Democratic race with both broad political experience and party affiliation. He was the Republican Senator from Rhode Island during 9/11 and the votes for Afghanistan and Iraq. He was then the Independent Governor of Rhode Island. Then in 2013, he switched to the Democratic Party. In the announcement of his candidacy, he focused almost entirely on foreign policy. Chafee said the legacy of the War on Terror has left us with “prodigious repair work in the Middle East.” The axiom of his strategy is to “rewrite the neocon’s New American Century” and above all, “wage peace”⁴⁶ with an

³⁵ [Sanders, Bernie. Interview with Diane Rehm. NPR, June 11, 2015.](#)

³⁶ [Sanders, Bernie. "Sanctions on Russia." Official Bernie Sanders Senate Website, March 17, 2014.](#)

³⁷ [Ibid.](#)

³⁸ [Sanders, Bernie. "Statement on Cuba Announcements." Official Bernie Sanders Senate Website, December 17, 2014.](#)

³⁹ [Sanders, Bernie. Senate Speech on Unfettered Free Trade. Official Bernie Sanders Senate Website, October 12, 2011.](#)

⁴⁰ [Sanders, Bernie. "US Presidents Made in China." Official Bernie Sanders Senate Website, January 19, 2011.](#)

⁴¹ [Sanders, Bernie. "The TPP Must be Defeated." Official Bernie Sanders Senate Website, May 21, 2015.](#)

⁴² [Ibid.](#)

⁴³ [Sanders, Bernie. "It's Time To End Orwellian Surveillance of Every American." Time Magazine, May 7, 2015.](#)

⁴⁴ [Ibid.](#)

⁴⁵ [Sanders, Bernie. Interview with Jessica Taylor. NPR, June 25, 2015.](#)

⁴⁶ [Chafee, Lincoln. Presidential Campaign Announcement. Time Magazine, June 3, 2015.](#)

“aversion to foreign entanglements.”⁴⁷

Iraq is Chafee’s favorite topic of discussion. In 2002, he was one of 23 senators and the sole Republican senator to vote against the authorization of force in Iraq. He outlined three reasons for his opposition: first, it reminded him too much of Vietnam; second, he had a “revulsion to the mendacity” of the Bush administration, many of whom, Chafee says, were “cheerleaders” who “had been writing about regime change in Iraq and American unilateralism for years;”⁴⁸ and third, claiming he saw “everything the intelligence community had,” he remained absolutely unconvinced that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. Expanding on the second and third points, Chafee goes as far as to charge, “They [neocons] knew there were no weapons of mass destruction but wanted their war badly enough to purposely deceive us.”⁴⁹ He laments the lost and injured lives, squandered tax dollars, and lack of sufficient care for veterans that have resulted from the war. He intends to pit Iraq as a rallying issue against Republicans and Hillary Clinton, saying “I don’t think anybody should be president of the United States that made that mistake. It’s a huge mistake, and we live with broad, broad ramifications today—of instability not only in the Middle East but far beyond and the loss of American credibility.”⁵⁰

Chafee speaks about ISIL unlike any other candidates. He has refused to rule out open discussions and negotiations with ISIL, about whom he said, “ISIS is emerging. It’s a phenomenon that’s ever-changing and everyone is surprised what’s happened in Palmyra. We expected the devastation of antiquities and it hasn’t happened, adding, “We’re coming to grips as to who these people are and what they want.”⁵¹ Using the word “rapprochement,” he said, “You have to think that it’s always possible.”⁵² In another interview, Chafee said that if necessary, he would be willing to work multilaterally with Middle East countries to fight ISIL. The countries he identified: Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, the Europeans, Russia, “and even the Iranians.”⁵³ He asserted, “It is a chaotic mess over there. It’s a Republican chaotic mess, and so we need, as Democrats, a nominee that opposed the war, as we look ahead to fixing it,” concluding that he is “the person who would be better to strengthen these alliances and then move forward.”⁵⁴

As part of his plan to “wage peace,” Chafee supports “warming relations” with several countries around the world with whom America’s relationship has cooled, including Iran. “Of course we should be talking with them [Iran],” Chafee remarked, “That’s what we did right in the Cold War...that is the right way to make peace.”⁵⁵ When asked whether or not Iran poses a threat to United States national security, Chafee responded, “In this dangerous world of nuclear proliferation which is now occurring, yes, but only because of our own mistakes. I don’t think the Iranians want this level of hostility, but when our administration labels them one of the three axes of evil—North Korea, Iran, and Iraq—and we invade one, it’s only human nature that you’re going to arm.”⁵⁶ He fully supports the deal that President Obama negotiated with the Iranians, praising it as a “historic breakthrough:” “Strong, patient diplomacy should continue to be the model for resolving conflicts.”⁵⁷ In a broader strategy to deal with Iran and other threatening or adversarial countries, Chafee submits, “Go back to the success of the Cold War; what worked is that we opened the gates between China and the United States with ping pong teams—ping pong diplomacy—and it was a tremendous breakthrough. And the same with Russia until we aren’t pointing missiles at each other. These things can break down the hostility and rhetoric that citizens, both American and Iranian, don’t want.”⁵⁸

Chafee believes that fostering improved relations with Russia should be “one of the US’s highest priorities.”⁵⁹ He opposes imposing sanctions on the country, arguing, “I don’t know about these sanctions. I should think that there would be better ways of getting rapprochement with Russia. They’re so important in the world.”⁶⁰ He has posited that Russia should join the European Union and that Crimea and Ukraine are stuck in a “tug-of-war between Europe and Russia,”⁶¹ maintaining that the United States should not be involved. Similarly, Chafee supports the normalization of relations with Cuba and recalls his visit

⁴⁷ [Chafee, Lincoln. "Priorities: Foreign Policy." Official Lincoln Chafee Website, June 2015.](#)

⁴⁸ [Chafee, Lincoln. Presidential Campaign Announcement. *Time Magazine*, June 3, 2015.](#)

⁴⁹ [Ibid.](#)

⁵⁰ [Chafee, Lincoln. Interview with Philip Rucker. *The Washington Post*, April 9, 2015.](#)

⁵¹ [Chafee, Lincoln. Press Conference with Reporters at George Mason University. *The Guardian*, June 3, 2015.](#)

⁵² [Chafee, Lincoln. Press Conference with Reporters at George Mason University. *Bloomberg News*, June 3, 2015.](#)

⁵³ [Chafee, Lincoln. Interview with Jake Tapper. *The Lead. CNN*, June 15, 2015.](#)

⁵⁴ [Ibid.](#)

⁵⁵ [Chafee, Lincoln. Interview with Joe Scarborough. *Morning Joe. MSNBC*, April 10, 2015.](#)

⁵⁶ [Chafee, Lincoln. Interview with the Watson Institute for International Studies. *Brown University*, 2010.](#)

⁵⁷ [Chafee, Lincoln. Statement on Iranian Nuclear Deal. *CBS News*, July 14, 2015.](#)

⁵⁸ [Chafee, Lincoln. Interview with the Watson Institute for International Studies. *Brown University*, 2010.](#)

⁵⁹ [Chafee, Lincoln. Interview with Jake Tapper. *State of the Union. CNN*, June 7, 2015.](#)

⁶⁰ [Ibid.](#)

⁶¹ [Chafee, Lincoln. Interview with Joe Scarborough. *Morning Joe. MSNBC*, April 10, 2015.](#)

to Cuba and meeting with Fidel Castro as “one of my most vivid memories of my time in the Senate.”⁶² When President Obama announced that embassies would be reopened in each country, Chafee celebrated: “Today is a great day for Americans!”⁶³ Going even further, he has expressed a desire to “repair relations with Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia.”⁶⁴ Accordingly, with the stipulation of addressing currency manipulation and environmental concerns, Chafee is supportive of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, saying “For me, waging peace includes negotiating fair trade agreements...The TPP has the potential to set fair guidelines for the robust commerce taking place in the Pacific Rim.”⁶⁵

Chafee supports a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians, but laments that amid all of America’s involvement in the Middle East, it has not happened already. “I am deeply distressed to observe that, in the almost five years since, it seems that President Bush has become the only U.S. President in more than three decades to have removed himself from the peace process,” Chafee said, then identifying President Bush’s “Road Map” and “Mission Accomplished” speeches as “two critical junctures when conditions were particularly ripe for true progress toward an Arab-Israeli peace settlement.”⁶⁶ Chafee has not shied away from criticizing Israel, and several times in the Senate voted against sanctioning Israel’s enemies and against resolutions supporting Israel. In a statement responding to critics about his position against Israeli settlements in the West Bank, he asserted, “The whole premise of peace between the Israelis and Palestinians is the West Bank and trading land for peace.”⁶⁷ Chafee says his “dogged” position on Israel is in its “long-term best interests.”⁶⁸

To better project America’s values and “wage peace” abroad, Chafee proposed a series of reforms domestically. In the realm of domestic surveillance, Chafee originally voted for the Patriot Act but upon learning the revelations exposed by Edward Snowden, said, “I don’t believe it granted any power to tap phones or any other surveillance without a warrant. That’s a definite stretch.”⁶⁹ He continues, “Recently, certain of our rights have been wrongfully infringed upon. Particularly the Fourth Amendment forbids the tapping of our phones without a warrant.”⁷⁰ He is calling for the government to welcome Edward Snowden back to America as well. Other reforms include: increased funding and participation to “reinvigorate” the United Nations; ban giving ambassadorships to political donors because “it isn’t an easy career and they deserve the very best in support and respect;” better adhere to the Geneva Convention by ending the practice of torture, capital punishment, and extrajudicial killings—especially via drones—which is an “antagonistic, nefarious activity” that causes “upheaval,” “collateral damage,” and “toxic hatred;” and even join the rest of the world in using the metric system.⁷¹

Chafee is likely most dovish and antiwar of all candidates running for president. He criticizes neoconservatives, saying “For the hawks, disorder and chaos sweeping through the region would not be an unfortunate side-effect of war with Iraq, but a sign that everything is going according to their plan.”⁷² Instead of military solutions, Chafee would open discussions with America’s adversaries, including her bitterest of enemies, all to serve his ultimate goal: “We have to change our thinking. We have to find a way to wage peace.”⁷³ Chafee wants more transparency and diplomacy in foreign policy, and for the United States to create and honor international agreements. “In this New American Century,” Chafee proclaims, “It is very important to continue to have a ready and strong military. The eagle in our Great Seal holds both arrows and an olive branch. Let’s lead responsibly with a commitment to our unwavering defense and our peaceful purposes.”⁷⁴

Martin O’Malley: Progressively Moderate

In contrast to some other Democratic candidates who capitalize on a war-weary electorate to advocate military retrenchment, the former Governor of Maryland and Mayor of Baltimore posits a message of responsible engagement. “After twelve years on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan and after a global financial crisis and long recession that our people are still struggling to recover from it is understandable that many Americans would like to disengage from the world. Understandable, but not responsible. Because our country’s security—and our children’s prosperity—demand that we be more engaged with

⁶² [Chafee, Lincoln. "US-Cuba Ties: Embassies Re-open." Official Lincoln Chafee Website, July 1, 2015.](#)

⁶³ [Ibid.](#)

⁶⁴ [Chafee, Lincoln. Presidential Campaign Announcement. *Time Magazine*, June 3, 2015.](#)

⁶⁵ [Ibid.](#)

⁶⁶ [Chafee, Lincoln. Stephen A. Ogden Jr ‘60 Memorial Lecture. Brown University, February 12, 2007.](#)

⁶⁷ [Chafee, Lincoln. Statement against Accusations by Stephen Laffey. *Free Republic*, April 16, 2006.](#)

⁶⁸ [Ibid.](#)

⁶⁹ [Chafee, Lincoln. Interview with Steven Nelson. *US News and World Report*, April 10, 2015.](#)

⁷⁰ [Chafee, Lincoln. "My Priorities: Protection of Personal Liberties." Official Lincoln Chafee Website, June 2015.](#)

⁷¹ [Chafee, Lincoln. Presidential Campaign Announcement. *Time Magazine*, June 3, 2015.](#)

⁷² [Ibid.](#)

⁷³ [Ibid.](#)

⁷⁴ [Ibid.](#)

the world around us, not less.”⁷⁵ O’Malley envisions a more proactive foreign policy that dispenses with unilateralism in favor of collaboration, and focuses more on strengthening the homeland than building nations abroad. “No fighter jet or troop battalion will keep us as safe as a vibrant economy, a strong democracy and a growing middle class,”⁷⁶ O’Malley says.

O’Malley has laid out a unique platform for foreign policy that includes a comprehensive refocus of priorities. These new focal points include building a strong domestic economy, addressing climate change, securing cyberspace, and confronting immediate threats. He sees the middle class as the foundation of American strength and security, and worries that the Trans-Pacific Partnership will favor large, multinational corporations and leave the average American worker behind. “What gain for the United States can be found in secret trade deals that fast-track the export of American jobs and undermine wages for American workers?”⁷⁷ he ponders. While he concurrently opposes protectionism, “it is a call for fair competition—the kind that that is consistent with our most deeply-held principles.”⁷⁸

O’Malley believes that climate change poses a severe and immediate threat to the United States. Pointing out that 97 percent of climate scientists agree that climate change is real and man-made, O’Malley posits, “As a combat leader, if 97% of my intelligence indicated that I was about to face a lethal danger that would risk the lives of my paratroopers, I would be committing unconscionable malpractice if I did not listen and act.”⁷⁹ He calls on America to lead the way and pursue an “ambitious plan” to convert to “100% clean energy” by the year 2050. “Climate change is not only a very real existential threat to human life, it is also the greatest business opportunity to come to our country in a hundred years,” he says. He also garnered attention when he linked global climate change directly to the rise of ISIL. “One of the things that preceded the failure of the nation state of Syria and the rise of ISIS,” O’Malley maintained, “was the effect of climate change and the mega-drought that affected that nation, wiped out farmers, drove people to cities, created a humanitarian crisis that created the symptoms — or rather, the conditions — of extreme poverty that has now led to the rise of ISIS and this extreme violence.”⁸⁰

O’Malley continues that in the information age, securing America’s cyberspace is a national security necessity. “Nuclear power plants, public transportation, air traffic control, water systems, and even the electric grid itself are all in danger of being shut down with a few lines of malicious code.” He wants to create a program through every state’s National Guard to hire private sector “engineers, designers and scholars—from Silicon Valley to Fort Meade—to secure our networks.”⁸¹ He sees China, which he calls “neither [a] trusted ally nor total adversary,” as the greatest transgressor of cybersecurity and warns that the next president will inevitably face the growing danger of cyberwarfare. In terms of data collection on the part of the United States with domestic surveillance, O’Malley appreciates the delicate balance between the right of privacy and the need for intelligence. He offered supportive words for sunseting the Patriot Act and passing the Freedom Act, but said that Senator Rand Paul’s actions against metadata collection and the NSA could render the United States “less safe if we resort to obstructionism when it comes to something as important as protecting our homeland from the threat of terror attacks.”⁸² At the same time, O’Malley said that the Freedom Act did not go far enough to protect privacy rights: “The USA Freedom act was a step in the right direction,” he contends, but “I would like to see us go further in terms of a role for a public advocate in the FISA court.”⁸³

Shifting to the more immediate threats that confront foreign policy, O’Malley identifies the Middle East as the most volatile and dangerous region in the world. He articulates America’s three core values in the Middle East: (1) “to protect our allies and prevent regional war,” (2) “to keep sea lanes open and provide humanitarian assistance,” and (3) “to prevent terrorist safe havens and nuclear proliferation.”⁸⁴ While all candidates are united in their opposition to Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon, O’Malley’s rhetoric on prevention and humanitarian assistance puts him at odds with other candidates for the Democratic nomination that oppose preventative measures, endorse non-intervention, and would rather devote American resources to the homeland. O’Malley believes in strengthening the domestic economy, but purports to “craft a new foreign policy of engagement and collaboration.”⁸⁵

⁷⁵ [O’Malley, Martin. Speech to Truman National Security Project at TruCon15 Conference. Center for National Policy, June 26, 2015.](#)

⁷⁶ [Ibid.](#)

⁷⁷ [Ibid.](#)

⁷⁸ [Ibid.](#)

⁷⁹ [Ibid.](#)

⁸⁰ [O’Malley, Martin. Interview with Mark Halperin. With All Due Respect. Bloomberg News, July 21, 2015.](#)

⁸¹ [O’Malley, Martin. Speech to Truman National Security Project at TruCon15 Conference. Center for National Policy, June 26, 2015.](#)

⁸² [O’Malley, Martin. Speech in Bedford, New Hampshire. Martin O’Malley Campaign Meet and Greet, May 31, 2015.](#)

⁸³ [O’Malley, Martin. Speech in Des Moines, Iowa. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, June 17, 2015.](#)

⁸⁴ [O’Malley, Martin. Speech to Truman National Security Project at TruCon15 Conference. Center for National Policy, June 26, 2015.](#)

⁸⁵ [Ibid.](#)

Like most other Democratic candidates, O'Malley opposed the Iraq War from the beginning. "The invasion of Iraq, along with the subsequent disbanding of the Iraqi military," O'Malley contends, "will be remembered as one of the most tragic, deceitful, and costly blunders in US history. We are still paying the price of a war pursued under false pretenses and acquiesced to by the appalling silence of the good."⁸⁶ He attributes the Iraq war to a lack of understanding, which he says must become a pillar of foreign policy before the United States acts. O'Malley has a cautious but proactive approach to "containing, degrading, and confronting" ISIL, which he calls "a gang of murderous thugs who have perverted the name of one of the world's greatest religions."⁸⁷ He warns of mission creep and says boots on the ground would be counterproductive to America's desired outcome, adding that the emergence of ISIL "illustrates the unintended consequences of a mindless rush to war and a lack of understanding."⁸⁸ He believes the United States should aid its partners in the Middle East and supply them with what they need to fight ISIL, devote resources to counter ISIL propaganda and "amplify credible local voices," and encourage the Iraqi government to be more inclusive.

Another immediate threat in O'Malley's eyes is the prospect of a nuclear Iran. He spoke favorably of the Obama administration's framework, saying, "I believe negotiations are the best way to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, the best way to avoid even greater conflict in the region, and the best way to stop widespread nuclear proliferation across the Middle East."⁸⁹ When the deal was released, he said, "I am of the belief that a negotiated agreement, provided it's verifiable and enforceable, is the best path to a nuclear-free Iran. So I think that the initial news is promising."⁹⁰ Emulating Chafee, he later added, "We have to be about waging peace. And perhaps this deal is that path forward."⁹¹ As for America's close ally in the Middle East, O'Malley has always advocated for Israel's right to self-defense—whether with regard to Iran, Hamas, and others. He firmly supports the two-state solution: "I think the relationship between the United States and Israel is strong, will remain strong, and must be strong for our own security," he posits, "Also, we have to continue to wage peace, and in this context, waging peace means pushing for a two-state solution."⁹² Like many other Democrats, O'Malley expressed criticism when Republicans invited Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address Congress, saying, "I think leaders in both of our countries would be well advised not to get into the electoral politics of the other nation."⁹³

Finally, O'Malley has been consistently supportive of the administration's resumption of normalized relations with Cuba. "I think it's a very positive development, that we are normalizing relations with Cuba," O'Malley contends, "There is tremendous potential to collaborate and to cooperate, especially where food and energy issues are concerned. And it's in our best interest."⁹⁴ O'Malley sees this as an opportunity to strengthen his idea of the global middle class through cooperation that the world has not seen in over 50 years. Condensing his position clearly on twitter, O'Malley wrote, "Diplomacy creates opportunities. Embargoes don't."⁹⁵

O'Malley seeks to combine progressive and moderate elements of the Democratic Party by addressing issues like climate change and income inequality while maintaining strong American presence and leadership abroad. He cites Harry Truman as his favorite foreign policy president for ending World War II, immediately recognizing Israel, and executing the Marshall Plan, among other feats: "We must take the broader lessons of what worked in Truman's day and apply them to the emerging threats of our own time. Because today, we face an equally daunting array of threats."⁹⁶ Combining the many elements of his proposals as he lays out his vision for foreign policy, O'Malley concludes, "We will give our children a future with more opportunity, rather than less, and we will make our planet a healthier, more peaceful, and more just place for all of humanity. These are the ambitions worthy of a truly great people."⁹⁷

Hillary Clinton: #Ready

After coming tantalizingly close to securing the Democratic nomination in 2008, the former Secretary of State, New York Senator, and First Lady has been the clear favorite of a wide coalition of Democrats, progressives, and liberals. For many,

⁸⁶ [Ibid.](#)

⁸⁷ [Ibid.](#)

⁸⁸ [Ibid.](#)

⁸⁹ [Ibid.](#)

⁹⁰ [O'Malley, Martin. Interview with Rachel Maddow. The Rachel Maddow Show. MSNBC, July 15, 2015.](#)

⁹¹ [O'Malley, Martin. Interview with Clay Masters. Iowa Public Radio, July 24, 2015.](#)

⁹² [O'Malley, Martin. Interview with Scott Conroy. The Huffington Post, March 26, 2015.](#)

⁹³ [Ibid.](#)

⁹⁴ [O'Malley, Martin. Speech in Des Moines. Iowa. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, June 17, 2015.](#)

⁹⁵ [O'Malley, Martin. Statement on Normalization of Relations with Cuba. Official Martin O'Malley Twitter, December 17, 2014.](#)

⁹⁶ [O'Malley, Martin. Speech to Truman National Security Project at TruCon15 Conference. Center for National Policy, June 26, 2015.](#)

⁹⁷ [Ibid.](#)

Hillary Clinton's nomination is a foregone conclusion, but especially in the foreign policy arena, several candidates have risen to challenge her on her hawkish record. During her time in the Senate, Clinton voted in favor of such measures as the Patriot Act and the Iraq War, and as Secretary of State she was an outspoken advocate for intervening in Libya and arming rebels throughout many of the Arab Spring uprisings. After three decades in politics, four years of which spent as America's chief diplomat, Hillary sees foreign policy as her strong suit, promising, "I believe the future holds far more opportunities than threats if we exercise creative and confident leadership that enables us to shape global events rather than be shaped by them."⁹⁸

Hillary lays out her vision for international American strength with four pillars in what she calls the "framework for American leadership." First, a strong foundation: "America's ability to protect our interests abroad is rooted in our strength and vitality at home. Our economy provides the foundation for our leadership and military might. We succeed when we invest in our people, our infrastructure, and our technological edge."⁹⁹ Second, a secure and resilient homeland: "We can meet every threat to our country and people—from terrorist groups to aggressive states to cyber attacks—by confronting challenges head-on and standing up for our most fundamental values."¹⁰⁰ Third, a military on the cutting edge: "With innovation, adaptation, and smart investment, we will ensure the United States maintains the best-trained, best-equipped, and strongest military the world has ever known."¹⁰¹ And fourth, a vision centered on ideals: "America is defined by our diversity and our openness, our devotion to human rights and democracy, and our belief that we can always do more to perfect our ideals. So we will place a deliberate emphasis on gender equality, defend the rights of LGBTQ individuals around the globe, and stand up for an open internet to ensure that all people have equal access to information and ideas."¹⁰²

In 2002, then-Senator Hillary Clinton voted to authorize military force in Iraq and defended her support of it in the 2008 Democratic Primaries in contrast to fellow candidate Barack Obama. As the only Democratic candidate who previously supported the war, she now wants to ensure voters that she sees it as a mistake, which she writes for the first time in her 2014 memoir *Hard Choices*: "Many Senators came to wish they had voted against the resolution. I was one of them...I thought I had acted in good faith and made the best decision I could with the information I had. And I wasn't alone in getting it wrong. But I still got it wrong. Plain and simple."¹⁰³ On the preeminent issue in Iraq right now, Clinton says ISIL and its recruits "pose a serious threat to America and our allies." She wants to "empower" America's allies in the region to "confront and defeat" ISIL without "miring our troops in another misguided ground war."¹⁰⁴ Clinton made the open-ended statement that she would "do whatever it takes" to protect Americans, but has renounced sending American ground troops to defeat ISIL: "This has to be fought by and won by Iraqis. There is no role whatsoever for American soldiers on the ground to go back, other than in the capacity as trainers and advisers."¹⁰⁵ She praises the current administration's general policies of providing resources like air support to those willing to fight ISIL. She diverges with the current administration, however, with respect to its unwillingness to aid Syrian rebels at the outset of the Syrian civil war. "I know that the failure to help build up a credible fighting force of the people who were the originators of the protests against Assad—there were Islamists, there were secularists, there was everything in the middle," she maintains, "The failure to do that left a big vacuum, which the jihadists have now filled."¹⁰⁶ In her memoir, Clinton writes that she was a vocal advocate for military aid to the rebels, and subsequent events—such as the rise of ISIL—vindicate her stance.

Another intervention which Hillary strongly supported as Secretary of State was the Libyan civil war. Along with the United Nations, the United States enforced a no-fly zone over Libyan airspace to hinder Muammar Qaddafi's forces against civilians. The United States expanded its role by conducting airstrikes against regime targets and providing arms to rebel forces. Clinton designed many of these initiatives, and when the Qaddafi was removed from power and killed, Clinton quipped, "We came, we saw, he died."¹⁰⁷ She hailed the effort as a great success and the administration dubbed it an example for future interventions. Then, terror struck with the storming of America's embassy in Benghazi and the murder of four Americans, including Ambassador Chris Stevens. Controversy ensued when the State Department maintained that the attack was the result of a spontaneous protest against an inflammatory anti-Muslim video, an assertion that proved false. She defended the Department against allegations of negligence and dishonesty when it came to the causes and preventable nature of the

⁹⁸ [Clinton, Hillary. Presidential Campaign Relaunch. *Time Magazine* Transcript, June 13, 2015.](#)

⁹⁹ [Clinton, Hillary. "The Framework of American Leadership." Official Hillary Clinton Campaign Website, June 2015.](#)

¹⁰⁰ [Ibid.](#)

¹⁰¹ [Ibid.](#)

¹⁰² [Ibid.](#)

¹⁰³ [Clinton, Hillary. *Hard Choices*. New York: Simon and Schuster, June 10, 2014.](#)

¹⁰⁴ [Clinton, Hillary. "The Framework of American Leadership." Official Hillary Clinton Campaign Website, June 2015.](#)

¹⁰⁵ [Clinton, Hillary. Statement during Press Conference. Hampton, New Hampshire, May 22, 2015.](#)

¹⁰⁶ [Clinton, Hillary. Interview with Jeffrey Goldberg. *The Atlantic*, August 10, 2014.](#)

¹⁰⁷ [Clinton, Hillary. Interview with Corbett Daly. *CBS News*, October 20, 2011.](#)

attack.¹⁰⁸ In response to a line of questioning regarding Clinton's inaction on reports of an imminent attack and requests for added security, Clinton notoriously remarked, "The fact is we had four dead Americans. Was it because of a protest or was it because of guys out for a walk one night who decided that they'd they go kill some Americans? What difference at this point does it make?"¹⁰⁹ Congress, four years later, still searches for answers with the establishment of the Benghazi committee, issuing of subpoenas, and continued investigations of Clinton's email correspondence.

Another partial legacy of Clinton's tenure as Secretary of State is the negotiations with Iran to abandon its nuclear program. She touts that she "led the global effort to sanction Iran,"¹¹⁰ to which many have credited Iran's willingness to negotiate in the first place, and writes in her memoir about sending her advisors to Oman to meet with Iranians to initiate talks.¹¹¹ During the 2008 campaign, Clinton criticized President Obama for saying he would negotiate with Iran without preconditions, saying he was "irresponsible and frankly naïve,"¹¹² but she has since been supportive of the P5+1 talks, saying of the final deal, "I support the agreement because it can help us prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon."¹¹³ She adds that verification and enforcement are vital measures of the deal: "Signing is just the beginning. As president I would use every tool in our arsenal to compel rigorous Iranian compliance."¹¹⁴ She says this deal is good for America's Arab allies in the Middle East as well as Israel. Towing the line between supporting the administration's deal and assuaging the concerns of critics, she pledges this as her message to Iran as President: "The message to Iran should be loud and clear: we will never allow you to acquire a nuclear weapon; not just during the term of this agreement – never."¹¹⁵

Touting more State Department Experience, she says, "I have reinforced allies like Israel."¹¹⁶ She recently penned a letter to Jewish leaders condemning the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction movement, a show of support and solidarity for Israel. Clinton writes that the BDS movement represents "attempts to isolate and delegitimize Israel," adding, "Israel is a vibrant democracy in a region dominated by autocracy, and it faced existential threats to survival. Particularly at a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise across the world, we need to repudiate forceful efforts to malign and undermine Israel and the Jewish people."¹¹⁷ During her time as Secretary of State, Clinton said she had a good relationship with Benjamin Netanyahu, but that she was the "designated yeller" of the Obama administration: "Something would happen, a new settlement announcement would come and I would call him up, what are you doing? You've got to stop this. And we understood each other because I know how hard it is to be the leader of a relatively small country that is under constant pressure and does face a lot of legitimate threats to its existence from those around it."¹¹⁸ Clinton supports a two-state solution, calling it the "best outcome"¹¹⁹ for both the Israelis and Palestinians and noting, "I was the first person associated with any administration to say that out loud."¹²⁰

Where Hillary becomes more hawkish than most is in her stand against Vladimir Putin and Russian aggression. Before Putin returned as Russia's President and advanced into Crimea, Clinton led the United States in its "reset" of relations with Russia, famously manifesting itself in a photo op of Clinton with her counterpart Sergey Lavrov pressing a red button in a mislabeled yellow box.¹²¹ Though the subject of much criticism, Clinton stands by the effort, maintaining, "The reset worked...It was an effort to try to obtain Russian cooperation on some key objectives while Medvedev was president."¹²² After Putin annexed Crimea, however, Clinton's tone took a hostile turn. "Now if this sounds familiar," Clinton remarked, "It's what Hitler did back in the '30s."¹²³ She lambasted European countries for being "too wimpy" with how they deal with Putin, according to

¹⁰⁸ Many of these allegations—the preventable nature of the attack, the speculation of how much Hillary Clinton and the State Department knew and when they knew it, and the rise of radicals following the fall of Qaddafi and attack in Benghazi—are explored by the House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence: [Investigative Report on the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2011.](#)

¹⁰⁹ [Clinton, Hillary. Hearing on Beghazi with Senate Armed Services Committee. United States Senate. January 23, 2013.](#)

¹¹⁰ [Clinton, Hillary. "The Framework of American Leadership." Official Hillary Clinton Campaign Website. June 2015.](#)

¹¹¹ [Clinton, Hillary. Hard Choices. New York: Simon and Schuster. June 10, 2014.](#)

¹¹² [Clinton, Hillary. Interview with Quad City Times. July 24, 2007.](#)

¹¹³ [Clinton, Hillary. Statement on Iran Nuclear Deal. Official Hillary Clinton Website. July 14, 2015.](#)

¹¹⁴ [Ibid.](#)

¹¹⁵ [Ibid.](#)

¹¹⁶ [Clinton, Hillary. Presidential Campaign Relaunch. Time Magazine Transcript. June 13, 2015.](#)

¹¹⁷ [Clinton, Hillary. Letter to Haim Sabam. Official Hillary Clinton Campaign. July 2, 2015.](#)

¹¹⁸ [Clinton, Hillary. Interview with Fareed Zakaria. GPS. CNN, July 27, 2014.](#)

¹¹⁹ [Clinton, Hillary. Statement at Campaign Event. Greenville, South Carolina. July 23, 2015.](#)

¹²⁰ [Clinton, Hillary. Interview with Fareed Zakaria. GPS. CNN, July 27, 2014.](#)

¹²¹ The inscription on the box was in Russian and supposed to say "reset," but Lavrov pointed out that the word on the box translated to "overcharge" or "overload."

¹²² [Clinton, Hillary. Interview with John Harwood. On Point. NPR. July 24, 2014.](#)

¹²³ [Clinton, Hillary. Speech at Boys and Girls Club Fundraiser. Long Beach, California. March 4, 2014.](#)

London Mayor Boris Johnson.¹²⁴ She is concerned that Putin will continue to seize land and oppress people to the extent of the borders of the former USSR. She describes her presidential platform as “Standing up to Putin,” explaining, “We will support our European friends in their effort to decrease dependence on Russian oil, and we will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our NATO allies. With Europe, we will make clear that the choice to turn Russia around is in Vladimir Putin's hands.”¹²⁵ It is worth noting that current allegations of wrongdoing exist as Clinton, while Secretary of State, authorized deals that gave Russia control of Asian and U.S. uranium mines after the Clinton Foundation received a \$2.35 million undisclosed donation from a Russian businessman and Bill Clinton gave a \$500,000 speech in Moscow.¹²⁶ The White House and Clinton Campaign disavow any notion of misconduct.¹²⁷

Clinton similarly bases her China policy on “holding China accountable.”¹²⁸ She has spoken against cyberattacks and hacking on the part of the Chinese, accusing them of “trying to hack into everything that doesn't move in America.”¹²⁹ As president, she would “promote China’s adherence to cyber norms,” as well as raise issues of environmental degradation, humanitarian concerns, and regional antagonism.¹³⁰ Though she sees accountability as a major element of US-China relations, she does not view China, as many others do, as an adversary: “Some in the region and some here at home see China’s growth as a threat that will lead either to Cold War-style conflict or American decline. And some in China worry that the United States is bent on containing China’s rise and constraining China’s growth, a view that is stoking a new streak of assertive Chinese nationalism. We reject those views.”¹³¹ In a 2011 piece, Clinton outlined the administration’s new “pivot to Asia,” whose thesis is essentially that the future of American politics and foreign policy is not in interminable wars in the Middle East, but in the burgeoning countries of the Asia-Pacific. She posits, “At a time when the region is building a more mature security and economic architecture to promote stability and prosperity, U.S. commitment there is essential.”¹³² On the economic front, Clinton criticizes both the Chinese for not living up to trade partnerships and American leaders for not holding them accountable. After remaining silent on the issue for some time, saying she would rather read the deal before taking a position (the deal is currently secret), Clinton spoke out against fast-track authority for President Obama to negotiate the Trans-Pacific Partnership. “I believe that one of the ways the president could get fast-track authority is to deal with the legitimate concerns of those Democrats who are potential 'yes' voters to see if what's in the negotiation, or even what's in the existing framework agreement that is being drafted, could be modified or changed,” she offered.¹³³ China and the greater Asia-Pacific will present a unique but delicate opportunity for Clinton as she was the architect for America’s refocus of relations, but also must guard against Chinese hacking and economic malfeasance.

Clinton adds several other elements to her extensive foreign policy proposals. “Meeting today’s global challenges requires every element of American power. It requires skillful diplomacy, economic influence, and knowing how to build partnerships around the world with people, not just governments,” she says.¹³⁴ This diplomacy, influence, and partnership includes “nations [that] are fighting to build democratic and economically free societies” and “resolv[ing] familiar conflicts and nurture[ing] new democracies to empower moderates and marginalize extremists, and to open markets and champion human rights.”¹³⁵ In this spirit, she supports the administration’s normalization of relations with Cuba, and celebrated the opening of a Cuban embassy by tweeting, “New US Embassy in Havana helps us engage Cuban people & build on efforts to support positive change. Good step for US & Cuban people.”¹³⁶ She reveals herself as a longtime supporter of normalization, writing in her memoir, “Near the end of my tenure I recommended to President Obama that he take another look at our embargo. It wasn’t achieving its goals and it was holding back our broader agenda across Latin America. After twenty years of observing and dealing with the U.S.-Cuba relationship, I thought we should shift the onus onto the Castros to explain why they remained undemocratic and

¹²⁴ [Johnson, Boris. Statement at Politico Playbook Breakfast, Washington, DC, February 13, 2015.](#)

¹²⁵ [Clinton, Hillary. "The Framework of American Leadership." Official Hillary Clinton Campaign Website, June 2015.](#)

¹²⁶ [Boyer, Dave and S.A. Miller. "Hillary Clinton under fire for foreign donations, link to Russia uranium deal." *The Washington Times*, April 23, 2015.](#)

¹²⁷ These revelations were part of a series of investigations into possible Clinton misconduct as Secretary of State by conservative author Peter Schweizer in his book *Clinton Cash*. The subsequent allegations of wrongdoing have not gained traction in the form of a criminal investigation, but Clinton is currently under a [criminal probe by the Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) for mishandling classified information as Secretary of State by using a private email server.

¹²⁸ [Clinton, Hillary. "The Framework of American Leadership." Official Hillary Clinton Campaign Website, June 2015.](#)

¹²⁹ [Clinton, Hillary. Speech at Campaign Event, New Hampshire, July 5, 2015.](#)

¹³⁰ [Clinton, Hillary. "The Framework of American Leadership." Official Hillary Clinton Campaign Website, June 2015.](#)

¹³¹ [Clinton, Hillary. Address before Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit, United States Department of State, January 14, 2011.](#)

¹³² [Clinton, Hillary. "America's Pacific Century." *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011.](#)

¹³³ [Clinton, Hillary. Statement at campaign event, Concord, New Hampshire, June 16, 2015.](#)

¹³⁴ [Clinton, Hillary. "The Framework of American Leadership." Official Hillary Clinton Campaign Website, June 2015.](#)

¹³⁵ [Ibid.](#)

¹³⁶ [Clinton, Hillary. Tweet about opening of Cuban embassy, Official Hillary Clinton Twitter, July 1, 2015.](#)

abusive."¹³⁷

As Secretary of State, Clinton did not have to handle domestic surveillance programs, but as a Senator following the attacks of September 11th, Clinton voted in favor of the Patriot Act, which has since been used in the massive collection of major telecommunications companies' metadata. Though less vocally than several other candidates—both Republican and Democrat—Clinton called for the end of the Patriot Act as the Senate considered its reauthorization and expressed support for the bipartisan reforms in the Freedom Act. "Congress should move ahead now with the USA Freedom Act—a good step forward in ongoing efforts to protect our security & civil liberties," she tweeted.¹³⁸ When asked about Edward Snowden, Clinton opined, "I think turning over a lot of that material—intentionally or unintentionally—drained, gave all kinds of information, not only to big countries, but to networks and terrorist groups and the like."¹³⁹ She feels his actions harmed national security and questioned why a liberty and privacy advocate would take refuge in such countries as China and Russia.

Hillary undoubtedly has unparalleled firsthand experience in foreign policy, as any former Secretary of State would. Incorporating more elements into her platform, she ties the necessity to address climate change to national security, prioritizes improving global and public health to prevent disastrous outbreaks like Ebola, and advocates engaging the private sector's science and technology fields to offer insights and skills to improve America's understanding of both cyberspace and outer space. She also sees a need to foster a prosperous economy and raise the incomes of Americans in order to project American strength and values abroad. "The United States can, must and will lead in this new century," she proclaims, "This is a moment that must be seized through hard work and bold decisions, to lay the foundations for lasting American leadership for decades to come."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ [Clinton, Hillary. *Hard Choices*. New York: Simon and Schuster, June 10, 2014.](#)

¹³⁸ [Clinton, Hillary. Tweet about the Freedom Act. Official Hillary Clinton Twitter, May 7, 2015.](#)

¹³⁹ [Clinton, Hillary. Speech to university students. University of Connecticut, April 25, 2014.](#)

¹⁴⁰ [Clinton, Hillary. "The Framework of American Leadership." Official Hillary Clinton Campaign Website, June 2015.](#)