

Identifying Rhetorical Appeals in Argument: United States Foreign Policy and Iran

Overview

Students will employ rhetorical analysis skills to analyze four major Iran-related speeches from the last four presidential administrations. The speeches provide a chance for students to apply their understanding of rhetoric and annotation skills, and also think about the question of change vs. continuity in U.S. foreign policy. This two-day lesson is intended to be used as part of broader teaching on rhetoric and rhetorical analysis. This lesson ideally falls after the theoretical introduction to rhetoric in which students are introduced to the concept of rhetoric, rhetorical and Aristotelian appeals, and persuasive strategies.

Lesson Objectives

After the lesson, students will be able to

- Recognize the similarities between successful oral and written argument.
- Assess an argument for its rhetorical strengths and weaknesses.
- Competently discuss argument with peers.
- Translate the basic argumentative analytical skills they learned into the writing they will be expected to produce in their basic, paragraphed, in-class and out-of-class essays and final exam. (Note: English III and IV, and AP English instructors teach students to write complex, multiparagraphed, genre-specific products that do not follow the five paragraph model. However, the expectation of their timed, in-class argument is that they will be able to produce a coherent, logical, argument in one hour; thus, a five-paragraph structure is allowed and promoted but only for this type of writing).

Grade(s)

Advanced eleventh and twelfth grade students

Subject(s)

A.P. Language and Composition

Materials

- Classroom computer and projection
- Major Iran-related speeches from the last four presidential administrations (PDF):
 - Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, American-Iranian Council, March 17, 2000
 - President George W. Bush, 2002 State of the Union Address, January 29, 2002
 - President Barack Obama, White House Office of the Press Secretary Nowruz Message, March 20, 2010
 - President Donald Trump, Washington, D.C., May 8, 2018
- [CSPAN recording of Madeleine Albright's speech to the American-Iranian Council](#)
- YouTube video: [George W. Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address](#)
- YouTube video: [Barack Obama's 2010 Nowruz message](#)
- YouTube video: [Donald Trump's 2018 address on Iranian nuclear weapons programs](#)
- Handout: Essential Rhetorical Analysis Questions
- Handout: S.O.A.P.S.tone Chart

- Student laptops or Chromebooks (Currituck is a one-to-one school district, uses google platforms, and GoGuardian, and zscaler. Teachers have access and approval rights for YouTube videos so I can guarantee my students will be able to access videos with a provided link. I build the links into a google.classroom assignment tab.)
- Pens and highlighters, various colors for students to annotate (Or students can use [an online annotation platform](#) with functionality similar to TurnItIn.com)
- Chart or bulletin board paper for each group to draw out their diagrams on ethos, logos and pathos

Duration

Two 87-minute class periods

Prior Understanding:

- Essential understanding of rhetoric¹,
- Rhetorical Analysis²,
- Rhetorical appeals,
- Persuasive and Rhetorical Strategies.
- Essential Essay Writing ³
- Annotation Skills ⁴

Before Class: prepare google.classroom, canvas, or blackboard assignment page for students to have easy access to each video and speech. Instruct students to bring headphones or earbuds; or you may wish to show each video to the whole class, together (perhaps engaging in [think aloud](#)⁵ strategy).

Session 1: (re)introduction to rhetorical analysis

1. All students will benefit from a memory-refresher on rhetorical analysis, or this lesson may be used as an activity to practice rhetorical skills after building that background.
2. **Introduction [5 minutes]:** *Throughout the first two weeks of this course, we have studied rhetoric, rhetorical analysis, appeals, and strategies. In two weeks, you have been overwhelmed with rhetorical concepts that are new and foreign to you. Today and tomorrow, I am going to prove that all of these terms you are learning are not as overwhelming as you think. You use them all of the*

¹ the first four weeks of A.P. Language and Composition, using the textbook *The Language of Composition* or *Patterns for College Writing* covers rhetoric, rhetorical strategies and appeals, and rhetorical analysis

²Linked here is the slide deck I use to introduce students to the concepts of rhetoric and rhetorical analysis <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1BtzmH45WcoMmJDxYBmWrTjAs2iOjjXWdR1sTRQ303hQ/edit?usp=sharing>

³ Linked here is the slide deck I use during the first two or three weeks of an AP English or solid honors Junior or Senior English Language Arts Course o refresh students' memories on basic essay writing https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1YTSDwZSWk1pcmsX3m_T6eCWVIRGiRsFBB36Axyaalo/edit?usp=sharing

⁴ Linked here is the slide deck I use during the first two weeks of AP English and Honors Junior and Senior English to refresh student memories on how to annotate texts https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1UzpBPV2welyapN3WxnTxek2sm_cZPlx8GEqRPSgKGnU/edit?usp=sharing

⁵ <https://www.teachervision.com/problem-solving/think-aloud-strategy>

time, every day, unconsciously, in any communication where you are attempting to argue with or persuade someone. Today, in groups we are going to look at several oral arguments. We are going to take these strategies that seem so complex on paper, and analyze them in a different and less intimidating medium – video. Let students know that they will be reading/viewing speeches related to U.S. Foreign Policy and Iran. You might want to shift students focus to Iran with a quick KWL chart activity – what do they think they know about Iran, what do they want to learn from the speeches, and filling out what they learned about Iran at the end of day two.

3. Break students into groups. In these groups, they will analyze major Iran-related speeches from the last four presidential administrations by both reading the text, as well as watch a video of the speech:

- i. [CSPAN recording of Madeleine Albright’s speech to the American-Iranian Council](#), March 17, 2000
- ii. [George W. Bush’s 2002 State of the Union Address](#), January 29, 2002
- iii. [Barack Obama’s 2010 Nowruz message](#), March 20, 2010
- iv. [Donald Trump’s 2018 address on Iranian nuclear weapons programs](#), May 8, 2018

You will need at least four groups. Assign two speeches to each group, one shorter speech and one longer speech (I pair Albright with Trump and Bush with Obama). Give each student a copy of the rhetorical analysis questions handout as well as their assigned speeches. Using google.classroom, Canvas, or Blackboard, each group will have access to the videos. Give each group enough time to completely view their video and time to answer the rhetorical analysis questions. Viewing and reading the speeches will take about fifty minutes.

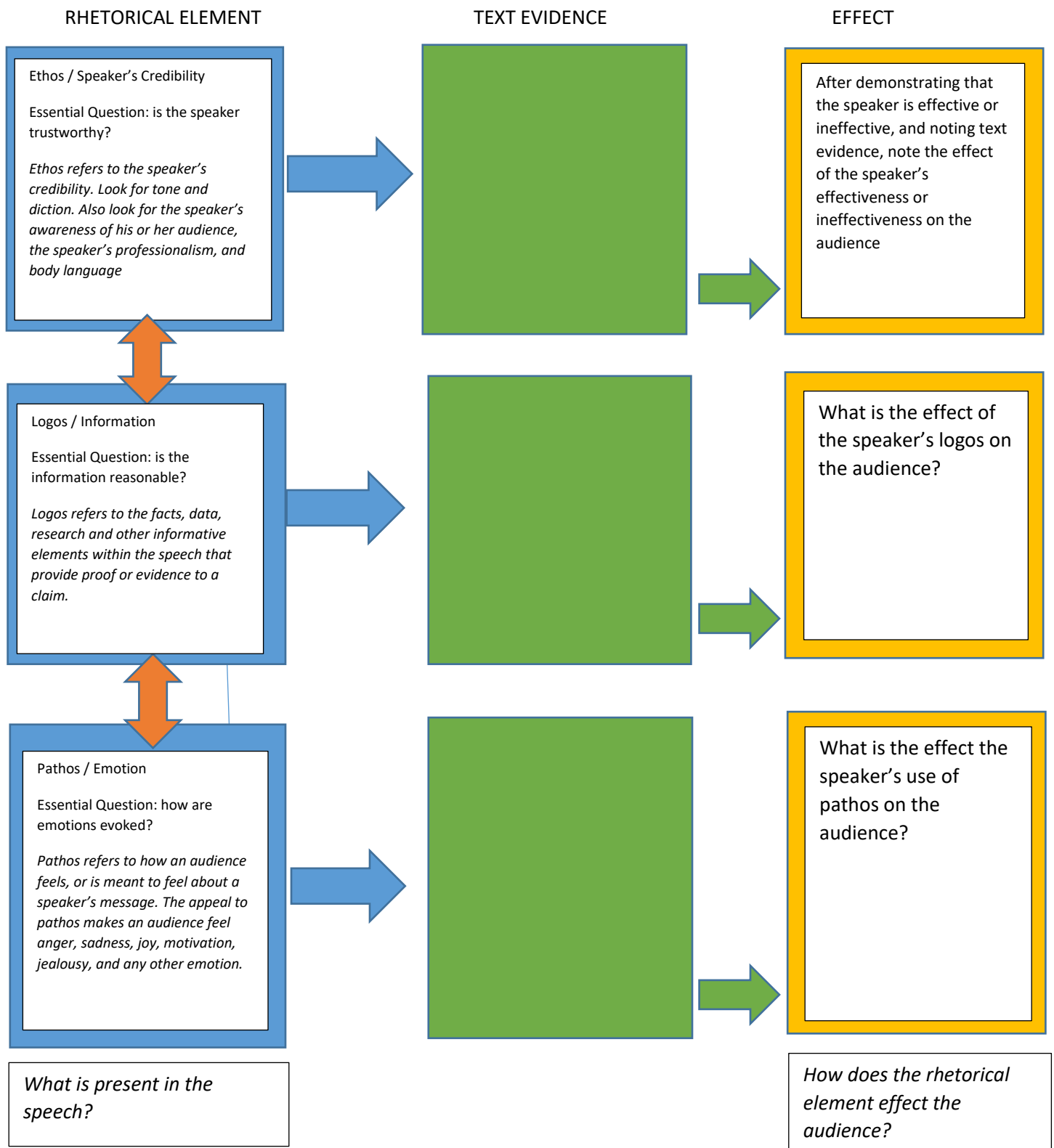
4. After students have read, viewed, and annotated their speeches, discuss the rhetoric present as a class. Ask students:
 - i. *What needs to be present in order for a speech to occur?* Students will be confused at first. The question may seem perplexing, seem too difficult, or too simple, depending on the class, they will come to the answer: students will eventually identify ‘speaker, message, audience.’
 - ii. Discuss audience and the importance of identifying the audience for speeches, since they occur in particular moments in time and are delivered to specific audiences. This is a good time to remind students of the Rhetorical Triangle or recall attention to a chapter on audience from your or previous lessons textbook. (I use [The Language of Composition](#). Audience is covered in chapters one and two.)
5. Session 1 Homework: Students should conduct a SOAPStone Analysis on their assigned speeches.
*The essential rhetorical analysis asks essentially the same questions as a SOAPStone analysis; the SOAPStone offers a slightly different thought process, or at least a different way of visualizing the analysis.

Session 2: One 87 minute Class Period

6. **Set Up:** each group will need two or three pieces of chart paper or bulletin board paper. Desks may be grouped in sets of four. I have tables in my classroom that makes facilitating this variant on written conversation easy to lay out in my classroom. The media center is also an ideal location.

7. **Introduction:** *Yesterday we read and annotated. Today, we will re-engage these speeches. We are going to diagram these speeches using SOAPStone analysis as our starting point. You will want your Rhetorical Analysis Questions and SOAPStone charts with you. You will also want the speeches with you. Your job today is to analyze your speech for its use of ethos, logos, and pathos. Before we begin, we will review your SOAPStone analysis.*
8. Review the SOAPStone with students before beginning (Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Subject(s), Tone).
9. Students will return to their groups, the same people they were working with yesterday. Draw the diagram on the board or project on screen (detailed below). Students will copy the chart format onto their own chart paper.
 - a. Column 1, highlighted in blue: students will provide a broad gist of the speaker's ethos, logos and pathos. Column 1 should record broad strokes or a general summary of the speaker's ethos, logos, and pathos. Column 2 should detail textual evidence to support the gist, or general summary, from column 1. Column 3 should explain the effect on the audience; in other words, given the students' impression recorded in column 1, and the evidence provided in column 2, column 3 will prove that column 1's reading is correct. For example, if students identify Madeline Albright's ethos as credible those students, in their group or pair, will detail why Madeline Albright's ethos is credible using the textual evidence from column two.
10. Lead a class discussion where students share their results. Ask students:
 - a. Using examples from the text, discuss how U.S. foreign policy towards Iran has changed over time. Consider domestic and global events that have affected the relationship between the two countries.
 - b. How do you think relations between the two governments have impacted relations and perceptions between Americans and Iranians?
 - c. Ask students what they have learned about Iran by reading the various speeches; did something they read challenge their previous thinking/perceptions of Iran? Have them fill in the last column on their KWL chart as an exit ticket.

Chart Format



Essential Rhetorical Analysis Questions

What is the rhetorical situation?

- What occasion gives rise to the need or opportunity for persuasion?
- What is the historical occasion that would give rise to the composition of this text?

Who is the author/speaker?

- How does he or she establish ethos (personal credibility)?
- Does he/she come across as knowledgeable? fair?
- Does the speaker's reputation convey a certain authority?

What is his/her intention in speaking?

- To attack or defend?
- To exhort or dissuade from certain action?
- To praise or blame?
- To teach, to delight, or to persuade?

Who make up the audience?

- Who is the intended audience?
- What values does the audience hold that the author or speaker appeals to?
- Who have been or might be secondary audiences?
- If this is a work of fiction, what is the nature of the audience within the fiction?

What is the content of the message?

- Can you summarize the main idea?
- What are the principal lines of reasoning or kinds of arguments used?
- What topics of invention are employed?
- How does the author or speaker appeal to reason? to emotion?

What is the form in which it is conveyed?

- What is the structure of the communication; how is it arranged?
- What oral or literary genre is it following?
- What figures of speech (schemes and tropes) are used?
- What kind of style and tone is used and for what purpose?

How do form and content correspond?

- Does the form complement the content?
- What effect could the form have, and does this aid or hinder the author's intention?

Does the message/speech/text succeed in fulfilling the author's or speaker's intentions?

- For whom?
- Does the author/speaker effectively fit his/her message to the circumstances, times, and audience?
- Can you identify the responses of historical or contemporary audiences?

What does the nature of the communication reveal about the culture that produced it?

- What kinds of values or customs would the people have that would produce this?
- How do the allusions, historical references, or kinds of words used place this in a certain time and location?

S.O.A.P.S.tone Chart

	Complete Sentences Please
Speaker	
Occasion	
Audience	
Purpose	
Subject(s)	
Tone	

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright
American-Iranian Council
March 17, 2000

Thank you very much. (Applause) Wait 'till I finish! Thank you very much, Professor Amirahmadi and Ambassador Pelleteau, Excellencies from the Diplomatic corps, distinguished colleagues, guests and friends.

Today's conference reflects a coming together of a real pantheon of organizations. Not just the American-Iranian Council, but also the Asia Society, the Middle East Institute and the Georgetown School of Foreign Service. The wealth of expertise in this room is enormous. And it is testimony to Iran's importance.

As this audience well knows, Iran is one of the world's oldest continuing civilizations. It has one of the globe's richest and most diverse cultures. Its territory covers half the coastline of the Gulf and on one side of the Straits of Hormuz through which much of the world's petroleum commerce moves. It borders the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus in Central and South Asia, where a great deal of the world's illegal narcotics are produced, several major terrorist groups are based, and huge reserves of oil and gas are just beginning to be tapped. And it is currently chairing the organization of the Islamic Conference.

There is no question that Iran's future direction will play a pivotal role in the economic and security affairs of what much of the world reasonably considers the center of the world. So I welcome this opportunity to come to discuss relations between the United States and Iran. It is appropriate, I hope, to do so in anticipation both of the Iranian New Year and the start of spring. And I want to begin by wishing all Iranian-Americans a Happy New Year, Eid-e-shuma-Mubarak. (Applause.)

I extend the same wishes to the Iranian people overseas. Spring is the season of hope and renewal; of planting the seeds for new crops. And my hope is that in both in Iran and the United States, we can plant the seeds now for a new and better relationship in years to come.

That is precisely the prospect I would like to discuss with you today. President Clinton especially asked me to come to this group to have this discussion with you. It is no secret that, for two decades, most Americans have viewed Iran primarily through the prism of the U.S. Embassy takeover in 1979, accompanied as it was by the taking of hostages, hateful rhetoric and the burning of the U.S. flag. Through the years, this grim view is reinforced by the Iranian Government's repression at home and its support for terrorism abroad; by its assistance to groups violently opposed to the Middle East peace process; and by its effort to develop a nuclear weapons capability.

America's response has been a policy of isolation and containment. We took Iranian leaders at their word, that they viewed America as an enemy. And in response we had to treat Iran as a threat. However, after the election of President Khatami in 1997, we began to adjust the lens

through which we viewed Iran. Although Iran's objectionable external policies remain fairly constant, the political and social dynamics inside Iran were quite clearly beginning to change.

In response, President Clinton and I welcomed the new Iranian's President's call for a dialogue between our people. We encouraged academic, cultural and athletic content. We updated our advisory to Americans wishing to travel to Iran. We reiterated our willingness to engage in officially authorized discussions with Iran regarding each others principle concerns, and said we would monitor future developments in that country closely, which is what we have done. Now we have concluded the time is right to broaden our perspective even further.

Because the trends that were becoming evident inside Iran are plainly gathering steam, the country's young are spearheading a movement aimed at a more open society and a more flexible approach to the world.

Iran's women have made themselves among the most politically active and empowered in the region. Budding entrepreneurs are eager to establish winning connections overseas. Respected clerics speak increasingly about the compatibility of reverence and freedom, modernity and Islam. An increasingly competent press is emerging despite attempts to muzzle it. And Iran has experienced not one but three increasingly democratic rounds of elections in as many years.

Not surprisingly, these developments have been stubbornly opposed in some corners, and the process they have set in motion is far from complete. Harsh punishments are still meted out for various kinds of dissent. Religious persecution continues against the Baha'i and also against some Iranians who have converted to Christianity.

And governments around the world, including our own, have expressed concerns about the need to ensure the process for 13 Iranian Jews, who were detained for more than a year without official charge, and are now scheduled for trial next month. We look to the procedures and the results of this trial as one of the barometers of US-Iran relations.

Moreover, in the fall of 1998, several prominent writers and publishers were murdered, apparently by rogue elements in Iran security forces. And just this past weekend, a prominent editor and advisor to President Khatami was gravely wounded in an assassination attempt.

As in any diverse society, there are many currents swirling about in Iran. Some are driving the country forward; others are holding it back. Despite the trend towards democracy, control over the military, judiciary, courts and police remains in unelected hands, and the elements of its foreign policy, about which we are most concerned, have not improved. But the momentum in the direction of internal reform, freedom and openness is growing stronger.

More and more Iranians are unafraid to agree with President Khatami's assessment of 15 months ago, and I quote, "Freedom and diversity of thought do not threaten the society's security," he said. "Rather, limiting freedom does so. Criticizing the government and state organizations at any level is not detrimental to the system. On the contrary, it is necessary."

The democratic winds in Iran are so refreshing, and many of the ideas espoused by its leaders so encouraging. There is a risk we will assume too much. In truth, it is too early to know precisely where the democratic trends will lead. Certainly the primary impetus for change is not ideology

but pragmatism. Iranians want a better life. They want broader social freedom, greater government accountability and wider prosperity. Despite reviving oil prices, Iran's economy remains hobbled by inefficiency, corruption and excessive state control. Due in part to demographic factors, unemployment is higher and per capita income lower than 20 years ago.

The bottom line is that Iran is evolving on its own terms and will continue to do so. Iranian democracy, if it blossoms further, is sure to have its own distinctive features consistent with the country's traditions and culture. And like any dramatic and political and social evolution, it will go forward at its own speed on a timetable Iranians set for themselves.

The question we face is how to respond to all this. On the people-to-people level, the answer is not hard to discern. Americans should continue to reach out. We have much to learn from Iranians and Iranians from us. We should work to expand and broaden our exchanges. We should engage Iranian academics and leaders in civil society on issues of mutual interest. And, of course, we should strive even more energetically to develop our soccer skills. (Laughter.)

The challenge of how to respond to Iran on the official is more complex, and it requires a discussion not only of our present perception and future hopes but also of the somewhat tumultuous past.

At their best, our relations with Iran have been marked by warm bonds of personal friendship. Over the years, thousands of American teachers, health care workers, Peace Corps volunteers and others have contributed their energy and goodwill to improving the lives and well-being of the Iranian people.

As is evident in this room, Iranians have enriched the United States as well. Nearly a million Iranian-Americans have made our country their home. Many other Iranians have studied here before returning to apply their knowledge in their native land. In fact, some were among my best students when I taught at Georgetown School of Foreign Service.

It's not surprising, then, that there is much common ground between our two peoples. Both are idealistic, proud, family-oriented, spiritually aware and fiercely opposed to foreign domination.

But that common ground has sometimes been shaken by other factors. In 1953 the United States played a significant role in orchestrating the overthrow of Iran's popular Prime Minister, Mohammed Massadeh. The Eisenhower Administration believed its actions were justified for strategic reasons; but the coup was clearly a setback for Iran's political development. And it is easy to see now why many Iranians continue to resent this intervention by America in their internal affairs.

Moreover, during the next quarter century, the United States and the West gave sustained backing to the Shah's regime. Although it did much to develop the country economically, the Shah's government also brutally repressed political dissent.

As President Clinton has said, the United States must bear its fair share of responsibility for the problems that have arisen in U.S.-Iranian relations. Even in more recent years, aspects of U.S. policy towards Iraq, during its conflict with Iran appear now to have been regrettably shortsighted, especially in light of our subsequent experiences with Saddam Hussein.

However, we have our own list of grievances, and they are serious.

The embassy takeover was a disgraceful breach of Iran's international responsibility and the trauma for the hostages and their families and for all of us. And innocent Americans and friends of America have been murdered by terrorist groups that are supported by the Iranian Government.

In fact, Congress is now considering legislation that would mandate the attachment of Iranian diplomatic and other assets as compensation for acts of terrorism committed against American citizens.

We are working with Congress to find a solution that will satisfy the demands of justice without setting a precedent that could endanger vital U.S. interests in the treatment of diplomatic or other property, or that would destroy prospects for a successful dialog with Iran.

Indeed, we believe that the best hope for avoiding similar tragedies in the future is to encourage change in Iran's policies, and to work in a mutual and balanced way to narrow differences between our two countries.

Neither Iran, nor we, can forget the past. It has scarred us both.

But the question both countries now face is whether to allow the past to freeze the future or to find a way to plant the seeds of a new relationship that will enable us to harvest shared advantages in years to come, not more tragedies. Certainly, in our view, there are no obstacles that wise and competent leadership cannot remove.

As some Iranians have pointed out, the United States has cordial relations with a number of countries that are less democratic than Iran. Moreover, we have no intention or desire to interfere in the country's internal affairs. We recognize that Islam is central to Iran's cultural heritage and perceive no inherent conflict between Islam and the United States.

Moreover, we see a growing number of areas of common interest. For example, we both have a stake in the future stability and peace in the Gulf. Iran lives in a dangerous neighborhood. We welcome efforts to make it less dangerous and would encourage regional discussions aimed at reducing tensions and building trust.

Both our countries have fought conflicts initiated by Iraq's lawless regime; both have a stake in preventing further Iraqi aggression. We also share concerns about instability and illegal narcotics being exported from Afghanistan. Iran is paying a high price for the ongoing conflict there.

It has long been host to as many as two million refugees from the Afghan civil war. And thousands of Iranians have been killed in the fight against drug traffickers. Moreover, Iran is now a world leader in the quantity of illegal drugs annually seized. This is one area where increased US-Iranian cooperation clearly makes sense for both countries.

But there are numerous other areas of potential common interest, such as encouraging stable relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, regional economic development, the protection of historic cultural sites and preserving the environment.

So the possibility of a more normal and mutually productive relationship is there. But it will not happen unless Iran continues to broaden its perspective of America just as we continue to broaden our view of Iran.

When we oppose terrorism and proliferation, the norms we uphold are not narrowly American, they are global. These standards are designed to safeguard law-abiding people in all countries and reflect obligations that most nations, including Iran, have voluntarily assumed.

When we strive to support progress towards a Middle East Peace, we serve the interest and embrace the aspirations of tens of millions of people, Arab and Israeli alike, of all backgrounds and faiths.

When we talk about human rights, we're not trying to impose our values. We are affirming the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that people everywhere are entitled to basic freedoms of religion, expression and equal protection under the law.

And when we talk about the value of an official dialogue with Iran, we have no secret agenda, nor do we attach any conditions. We are motivated solely by a realistic interest in taking this relationship to a higher level so that we may use diplomacy to solve problems and benefit the people of both countries.

In recent months, Iranian leaders have talked about their nation's policy of detente. And Foreign Minister Kharazmi said not long ago that "Iran is ready to act as an anchor of stability for resolving regional problems and crises."

The United States recognizes Iran's importance in the Gulf, and we've worked hard in the past to improve difficult relationships with many other countries -- whether the approach used has been called detente or principle engagements or constructive dialogue or something else.

We are open to such a policy now. We want to work together with Iran to bring down what President Khatami refers to as "the wall of mistrust."

For that to happen, we must be willing to deal directly with each other as two proud and independent nations and address on a mutual basis the issues that have been keeping us apart.

As a step towards bringing down that wall of mistrust, I want today to discuss the question of economic sanctions. The United States imposed sanctions against Iran because of our concerns about proliferation, and because the authorities exercising control in Tehran financed and supported terrorist groups, including those violently opposed to the Middle East Peace Process.

To date, the political developments in Iran have not caused its military to cease its determined effort to acquire technology, materials and assistance needed to develop nuclear weapons, nor have those developments caused Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps or its Ministry of Intelligence and Security to get out of the terrorism business. Until these policies change, fully normal ties between our governments will not be possible, and our principle sanctions will remain.

The purpose of our sanctions, however, is to spur changes in policy. They are not an end in themselves, nor do they seek to target innocent civilians.

And so for this reason, last year I authorized the sale of spare parts needed to ensure the safety of civilian passenger aircraft previously sold to Iran, aircraft often used by Iranian-Americans transiting to or from that country. And President Clinton eased restrictions on the export of food, medicine and medical equipment to sanctioned countries including Iran. This means that Iran can purchase products such as corn and wheat from America.

And today, I am announcing a step that will enable Americans to purchase and import carpets and food products such as dried fruits, nuts and caviar from Iran.

This step is a logical extension of the adjustments we made last year. It also designed to show the millions of Iranian craftsmen, farmers and fisherman who work in these industries, and the Iranian people as a whole, that the United States bears them no ill will.

Second, the United States will explore ways to remove unnecessary impediments to increase contact between American and Iranian scholars, professional artists, athletes, and non-governmental organizations. We believe this will serve to deepen bonds of mutual understanding and trust.

Third, the United States is prepared to increase efforts with Iran aimed at eventually concluding a global settlement of outstanding legal claims between our two countries.

This is not simply a matter of unfreezing assets. After the fall of the Shah the United States and Iran agreed on a process to resolve existing claims through an arbitral tribunal in The Hague. In 1981, the vast majority of Iranian assets seized during the hostage crisis were returned to Iran. Since then, nearly all of the private claims have been resolved through The Hague Tribunal process.

Our goal now is to settle the relatively few but very substantial claims that are still outstanding between our two governments at The Hague. And by so doing, to put this issue behind us once and for all.

The points I've made and the concrete measures I have announced today reflect our desire to advance our common interests through improved relations with Iran. They respond to the broader perspective merited by the democratic trends in that country, and our hope that these internal changes will gradually produce external effects. And that as Iranians grow more free, they will express their freedom through actions and support of international law and on behalf of stability and peace.

I must emphasize, however, that in adopting a broader view of events in Iran, we are not losing sight of the issues that have long troubled us. We looked toward Iran truly fulfilling its promises to serve as an "anchor of stability," and to live up, indeed as well as were, to the pledges its leaders have made in such areas as proliferation and opposition to terrorism.

We have no illusions that the United States and Iran will be able to overcome decades of estrangement overnight. We can't build a mature relationship on carpets and grain alone. But the direction of our relations is more important than the pace. The United States is willing either to proceed patiently, on step-by-step basis, or to move very rapidly if Iran indicates a desire and commitment to do so.

Next Tuesday will mark the beginning of a new year for Iran and the start of spring for us all. And it is true that for everything under Heaven there is a season. Surely the time has come for America and Iran to enter a new season in which mutual trust may grow and a quality of warmth supplant the long, cold winter of our mutual discontent.

For we must recognize that around the world today the great divide is no longer between East and West or North and South; nor is it between one civilization and another.

The great divide today is between people anywhere who are still ensnared by the perceptions and prejudices of the past, and those everywhere who have freed themselves to embrace the promise of the future.

This morning on behalf of the government and the people of the United States, I call upon Iran to join us in writing a new chapter in our shared history. Let us be open about our differences and strive to overcome them. Let us acknowledge our common interests and strive to advance them. Let us think boldly about future possibilities and strive to achieve them, and thereby, turn this new year and season of hope into the reality of a safer and better life for our two peoples.

To that mission I pledge my own best efforts this morning. And I respectfully solicit the counsel and understanding and support of all.

Thank you very much.

President George W. Bush
2002 State of the Union Address
January 29, 2002

Mr. Speaker, Vice President Cheney, members of Congress, distinguished guests, fellow citizens, as we gather tonight, our nation is at war, our economy is in recession and the civilized world faces unprecedented dangers. Yet the state of our union has never been stronger.

We last met in an hour of shock and suffering. In four short months, our nation has comforted the victims, begun to rebuild New York and the Pentagon, rallied a great coalition, captured, arrested and rid the world of thousands of terrorists, destroyed Afghanistan's terrorist training camps, saved a people from starvation and freed a country from brutal oppression.

The American flag flies again over our embassy in Kabul. Terrorists who once occupied Afghanistan now occupy cells at Guantanamo Bay.

And terrorist leaders who urged followers to sacrifice their lives are running for their own.

America and Afghanistan are now allies against terror. We will be partners in rebuilding that country. And this evening we welcomed the distinguished interim leader of a liberated Afghanistan: Chairman Hamid Karzai.

The last time we met in this chamber, the mothers and daughters of Afghanistan were captives in their own homes, forbidden from working or going to school.

Today women are free, and are part of Afghanistan's new government. And we welcome the new minister of women's affairs, Dr. Sima Samar.

Our progress is a tribute to the spirit of the Afghan people, to the resolve of our coalition and to the might of the United States military.

When I called our troops into action, I did so with complete confidence in their courage and skill. And tonight, thanks to them, we are winning the war on terror.

The men and women of our armed forces have delivered a message now clear to every enemy of the United States: Even 7,000 miles away, across oceans and continents, on mountaintops and in caves you will not escape the justice of this nation.

For many Americans, these four months have brought sorrow and pain that will never completely go away. Every day a retired firefighter returns to ground zero to feel closer to his two sons who died there....

Our cause is just, and it continues. Our discoveries in Afghanistan confirmed our worst fears and showed us the true scope of the task ahead. We have seen the depth of our enemies' hatred in videos where they laugh about the loss of innocent life.

And the depth of their hatred is equaled by the madness of the destruction they design. We have found diagrams of American nuclear power plants and public water facilities, detailed instructions for making chemical weapons, surveillance maps of American cities, and thorough descriptions of landmarks in America and throughout the world.

What we have found in Afghanistan confirms that, far from ending there, our war against terror is only beginning. Most of the 19 men who hijacked planes on September the 11th were trained in Afghanistan's camps. And so were tens of thousands of others. Thousands of dangerous killers, schooled in the methods of murder, often supported by outlaw regimes, are now spread throughout the world like ticking time bombs, set to go off without warning.

Thanks to the work of our law enforcement officials and coalition partners, hundreds of terrorists have been arrested, yet tens of thousands of trained terrorists are still at large. These enemies view the entire world as a battlefield, and we must pursue them wherever they are.

So long as training camps operate, so long as nations harbor terrorists, freedom is at risk and America and our allies must not, and will not, allow it. Our nation...

Our nation will continue to be steadfast, and patient and persistent in the pursuit of two great objectives. First, we will shut down terrorist camps, disrupt terrorist plans and bring terrorists to justice.

And second, we must prevent the terrorists and regimes who seek chemical, biological or nuclear weapons from threatening the United States and the world.

Our military has put the terror training camps of Afghanistan out of business, yet camps still exist in at least a dozen countries. A terrorist underworld -- including groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad and Jaish-i-Mohammed -- operates in remote jungles and deserts, and hides in the centers of large cities.

While the most visible military action is in Afghanistan, America is acting elsewhere.

We now have troops in the Philippines helping to train that country's armed forces to go after terrorist cells that have executed an American and still hold hostages.

Our soldiers, working with the Bosnian government, seized terrorists who were plotting to bomb our embassy.

Our Navy is patrolling the coast of Africa to block the shipment of weapons and the establishment of terrorist camps in Somalia.

My hope is that all nations will heed our call and eliminate the terrorist parasites who threaten their countries and our own.

Many nations are acting forcefully. Pakistan is now cracking down on terror, and I admire the strong leadership of President Musharraf.

But some governments will be timid in the face of terror. And make no mistake about it: If they do not act, America will.

Our second goal is to prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction.

Some of these regimes have been pretty quiet since September 11, but we know their true nature. North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens.

Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom.

Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax and nerve gas and nuclear weapons for over a decade.

This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens, leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world.

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.

We will work closely with our coalition to deny terrorists and their state sponsors the materials, technology and expertise to make and deliver weapons of mass destruction.

We will develop and deploy effective missile defenses to protect America and our allies from sudden attack.

And all nations should know: America will do what is necessary to ensure our nation's security.

We'll be deliberate, yet time is not on our side. I will not wait on events while dangers gather. I will not stand by as peril draws closer and closer. The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons.

Our war on terror is well begun, but it is only begun. This campaign may not be finished on our watch, yet it must be and it will be waged on our watch....

Time and distance from the events of September the 11th will not make us safer unless we act on its lessons. America is no longer protected by vast oceans. We are protected from attack only by vigorous action abroad and increased vigilance at home.

My budget nearly doubles funding for a sustained strategy of homeland security....Once we have funded our national security and our homeland security, the final great priority of my budget is economic security for the American people....

During these last few months, I've been humbled and privileged to see the true character of this country in a time of testing. Our enemies believed America was weak and materialistic, that we would splinter in fear and selfishness. They were as wrong as they are evil.

The American people have responded magnificently, with courage and compassion, strength and resolve. As I have met the heroes, hugged the families and looked into the tired faces of rescuers, I have stood in awe of the American people.

And I hope you will join me in expressing thanks to one American for the strength and calm and comfort she brings to our nation in crisis: our first lady, Laura Bush.

None of us would ever wish the evil that was done on September the 11th, yet after America was attacked, it was as if our entire country looked into a mirror and saw our better selves. We were reminded that we are citizens with obligations to each other, to our country, and to history. We began to think less of the goods we can accumulate, and more about the good we can do.

For too long our culture has said, "If it feels good, do it." Now America is embracing a new ethic and a new creed: "Let's roll."

In the sacrifice of soldiers, the fierce brotherhood of firefighters, and the bravery and generosity of ordinary citizens, we have glimpsed what a new culture of responsibility could look like. We want to be a nation that serves goals larger than self. We have been offered a unique opportunity, and we must not let this moment pass....

And America needs citizens to extend the compassion of our country to every part of the world, so we will renew the promise of the Peace Corps, double its volunteers over the next five years...

... and ask it to join a new effort to encourage development and education and opportunity in the Islamic world.

This time of adversity offers a unique moment of opportunity, a moment we must seize to change our culture. Through the gathering momentum of millions of acts of service and decency and kindness, I know we can overcome evil with greater good.

And we have a great opportunity during this time of war to lead the world toward the values that will bring lasting peace. All fathers and mothers, in all societies, want their children to be educated and live free from poverty and violence.

No people on Earth yearn to be oppressed or aspire to servitude or eagerly await the midnight knock of the secret police.

If anyone doubts this, let them look to Afghanistan, where the Islamic street greeted the fall of tyranny with song and celebration. Let the skeptics look to Islam's own rich history, with its centuries of learning and tolerance and progress.

America will lead by defending liberty and justice because they are right and true and unchanging for all people everywhere.

No nation owns these aspirations, and no nation is exempt from them. We have no intention of imposing our culture, but America will always stand firm for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women, private property, free speech, equal justice and religious tolerance.

America will take the side of brave men and women who advocate these values around the world -- including the Islamic world -- because we have a greater objective than eliminating threats and containing resentment.

We seek a just and peaceful world beyond the war on terror....

The last time I spoke here, I expressed the hope that life would return to normal.

In some ways it has. In others it never will.

Those of us who have lived through these challenging times have been changed by them. We've come to know truths that we will never question: Evil is real, and it must be opposed.

Beyond all differences of race or creed, we are one country, mourning together and facing danger together.

Deep in the American character there is honor, and it is stronger than cynicism. And many have discovered again that even in tragedy -- especially in tragedy -- God is near.

In a single instant, we realized that this will be a decisive decade in the history of liberty; that we have been called to a unique role in human events. Rarely has the world faced a choice more clear or consequential.

Our enemies send other people's children on missions of suicide and murder. They embrace tyranny and death as a cause and a creed. We stand for a different choice, made long ago, on the day of our founding. We affirm it again today. We choose freedom and the dignity of every life.

Steadfast in our purpose, we now press on. We have known freedom's price. We have shown freedom's power. And in this great conflict, my fellow Americans, we will see freedom's victory.

Thank you all and may God bless.

President Barack Obama
White House Office of the Press Secretary
Nowruz Message: March 20, 2010

Today, I want to extend my best wishes to all who are celebrating Nowruz in the United States and around the world. On this New Year's celebration, friends and family have a unique opportunity to reflect on the year gone by; to celebrate their time together; and to share in their hopes for the future.

One year ago, I chose this occasion to speak directly to the people and leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to offer a new chapter of engagement on the basis of mutual interests and mutual respect. I did so with no illusions. For three decades, the United States and Iran have been alienated from one another. Iran's leaders have sought their own legitimacy through hostility to America. And we continue to have serious differences on many issues.

I said, last year, that the choice for a better future was in the hands of Iran's leaders. That remains true today. Together with the international community, the United States acknowledges your right to peaceful nuclear energy – we insist only that you adhere to the same responsibilities that apply to other nations. We are familiar with your grievances from the past – we have our own grievances as well, but we are prepared to move forward. We know what you're against; now tell us what you're for.

For reasons known only to them, the leaders of Iran have shown themselves unable to answer that question. You have refused good faith proposals from the international community. They have turned their backs on a pathway that would bring more opportunity to all Iranians, and allow a great civilization to take its rightful place in the community of nations. Faced with an extended hand, Iran's leaders have shown only a clenched fist.

Last June, the world watched with admiration, as Iranians sought to exercise their universal right to be heard. But tragically, the aspirations of the Iranian people were also met with a clenched fist, as people marching silently were beaten with batons; political prisoners were rounded up and abused; absurd and false accusations were leveled against the United States and the West; and people everywhere were horrified by the video of a young woman killed in the street.

The United States does not meddle in Iran's internal affairs. Our commitment – our responsibility – is to stand up for those rights that should be universal to all human beings. That includes the right to speak freely, to assemble without fear; the right to the equal administration of justice, and to express your views without facing retribution against you or your families.

I want the Iranian people to know what my country stands for. The United States believes in the dignity of every human being, and an international order that bends the arc of history in the direction of justice – a future where Iranians can exercise their rights, to participate fully in the global economy, and enrich the world through educational and cultural exchanges beyond Iran's borders. That is the future that we seek. That is what America is for.

That is why, even as we continue to have differences with the Iranian government, we will sustain our commitment to a more hopeful future for the Iranian people. For instance, by increasing opportunities for educational exchanges so that Iranian students can come to our colleges and universities and to our efforts to ensure that Iranians can have access to the software and Internet technology that will enable them to communicate with each other, and with the world without fear of censorship.

Finally, let me be clear: we are working with the international community to hold the Iranian government accountable because they refuse to live up to their international obligations. But our offer of comprehensive diplomatic contacts and dialogue stands. Indeed, over the course of the last year, it is the Iranian government that has chosen to isolate itself, and to choose a self-defeating focus on the past over a commitment to build a better future.

Last year, I quoted the words of the poet Saadi, who said: "The children of Adam are limbs to each other, having been created of one essence." I still believe that – I believe it with every fiber of my being. And even as we have differences, the Iranian government continues to have the choice to pursue a better future, and to meet its international responsibilities, while respecting the dignity and fundamental human rights of its own people.

Thank you. And Aid-e-Shoma Mobarak.

President Donald Trump
Washington, D.C.
May 8, 2018

My fellow Americans,

Today, I want to update the world on our efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

The Iranian regime is the leading state sponsor of terror. It exports dangerous missiles, fuels conflicts across the Middle East, and supports terrorist proxies and militias such as Hezbollah, Hamas, the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

Over the years, Iran and its proxies have bombed American Embassies and military installations, murdered hundreds of American service members, and kidnapped, imprisoned, and tortured American citizens.

The Iranian regime has funded its long reign of chaos and terror by plundering the wealth of its own people.

No action taken by the regime has been more dangerous than its pursuit of nuclear weapons — and the means of delivering them.

In 2015, the previous administration joined with other nations in a deal regarding Iran's nuclear program. This agreement was known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or J.C.P.O.A.

In theory, the so-called "Iran deal" was supposed to protect the United States and our allies from the lunacy of an Iranian nuclear bomb, a weapon that will only endanger the survival of the Iranian regime.

In fact, the deal allowed Iran to continue enriching uranium and — over time — reach the brink of a nuclear breakout.

The deal lifted crippling economic sanctions on Iran in exchange for very weak limits on the regime's nuclear activity — and no limits at all on its other malign behavior, including its sinister activities in Syria, Yemen, and other places all around the world.

In other words, at the point when the United States had maximum leverage, this disastrous deal gave this regime — and it's a regime of great terror — many billions of dollars, some of it in actual cash — a great embarrassment to me as a citizen and to all citizens of the United States.

A constructive deal could easily have been struck at the time, but it wasn't.

At the heart of the Iran deal was a giant fiction: that a murderous regime desired only a peaceful nuclear energy program.

Today, we have definitive proof that this Iranian promise was a lie. Last week, Israel published intelligence documents — long concealed by Iran — conclusively showing the Iranian regime and its history of pursuing nuclear weapons.

The fact is, this was a horrible, one-sided deal that should have never, ever been made. It didn't bring calm, it didn't bring peace, and it never will.

In the years since the deal was reached, Iran's military budget has grown by almost 40 percent — while its economy is doing very badly. After the sanctions were lifted, the dictatorship used its new funds to build its nuclear-capable missiles, support terrorism, and cause havoc throughout the Middle East and beyond.

The agreement was so poorly negotiated that even if Iran fully complies, the regime can still be on the verge of a nuclear breakout in just a short period of time. The deal's sunset provisions are totally unacceptable.

If I allowed this deal to stand, there would soon be a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. Everyone would want their weapons ready by the time Iran had theirs.

Making matters worse, the deal's inspection provisions lack adequate mechanisms to prevent, detect, and punish cheating and don't even have the unqualified right to inspect many important locations, including military facilities. Not only does the deal fail to halt Iran's nuclear ambitions, but it also fails to address the regime's development of ballistic missiles that could deliver nuclear warheads.

Finally, the deal does nothing to constrain Iran's destabilizing activities, including its support for terrorism.

Since the agreement, Iran's bloody ambitions have grown only more brazen. In light of these glaring flaws, I announced last October that the Iran deal must either be renegotiated or terminated.

Three months later, on January 12th, I repeated these conditions. I made clear that if the deal could not be fixed, the United States would no longer be a party to the agreement.

Over the past few months, we have engaged extensively with our allies and partners around the world, including France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. We have also consulted with our friends from across the Middle East. We are unified in our understanding of the threat and in our conviction that Iran must never acquire a nuclear weapon.

After these consultations, it is clear to me that we cannot prevent an Iranian nuclear bomb under the decaying and rotten structure of the current agreement. The Iran deal is defective at its core. If we do nothing, we know exactly what will happen. In just a short period of time, the world's leading state sponsor of terror will be on the cusp of acquiring the world's most dangerous weapons.

Therefore, I am announcing today that the United States will withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal.

In a few moments, I will sign a presidential memorandum to begin reinstating U.S. nuclear sanctions on the Iranian regime. We will be instituting the highest level of economic sanction. Any nation that helps Iran in its quest for nuclear weapons could also be strongly sanctioned by the United States.

America will not be held hostage to nuclear blackmail. We will not allow American cities to be threatened with destruction. And we will not allow a regime that chants “Death to America” to gain access to the most deadly weapons on Earth.

Today’s action sends a critical message. The United States no longer makes empty threats. When I make promises, I keep them. In fact, at this very moment, Secretary Pompeo is on his way to North Korea in preparation for my upcoming meeting with Kim Jong-un. Plans are being made, relationships are building. Hopefully, a deal will happen, and with the help of China, South Korea, and Japan, a future of great prosperity and security can be achieved for everyone.

As we exit the Iran deal, we will be working with our allies to find a real, comprehensive, and lasting solution to the Iranian nuclear threat. This will include efforts to eliminate the threat of Iran’s ballistic missile program, to stop its terrorist activities worldwide, and to block its menacing activity across the Middle East.

In the meantime, powerful sanction also go into full effect. If the regime continues its nuclear aspirations, it will have bigger problems than it has ever had before. Finally, I want to deliver a message to the long-suffering people of Iran.

The people of America stand with you.

It has now been almost 40 years since this dictatorship seized power and took a proud nation hostage. Most of Iran’s 80 million citizens have sadly never known an Iran that prospered in peace with its neighbors and commanded the admiration of the world.

But the future of Iran belongs to its people. They are the rightful heirs to a rich culture and an ancient land, and they deserve a nation that does justice to their dreams, honor to their history and glory to God.

Iran’s leaders will naturally say that they refuse to negotiate a new deal. They refuse, and that’s fine. I’d probably say the same thing if I was in their position. But the fact is, they are going to want to make a new and lasting deal, one that benefits all of Iran and the Iranian people.

When they do, I am ready, willing, and able. Great things can happen for Iran. And great things can happen for the peace and stability that we all want in the Middle East. There has been enough suffering, death, and destruction. Let it end now. Thank you. God bless you. Thank you.