

Chairman Royce Reacts to the President's Iran Speech at American University

The President is right that Members of Congress will face a hugely consequential vote in September. But he is wrong that this agreement is the only choice. Indeed, in front of Congress last week, our country's top military officer disputed the assertion that the only alternative to this agreement is military action, noting that the United States would have 'a range of options.'

The fact is, by removing economic sanctions against Iran, the President is withdrawing one of our most successful, peaceful tools for confronting the Iranian regime. At the same time, Iran is free to build up its tanks, fighter jets, and intercontinental ballistic missiles, while sending billions of dollars to support terrorism. This leaves the region less stable and conflict more likely.

The President didn't even try to justify the 11th hour lifting of the restrictions against Iran's intercontinental ballistic program. That's because there is no excuse for this concession, which was counter to the advice of our military and which leaves our homeland threatened.

The President was quick to question the judgment of those criticizing this deal. But the Obama Administration isn't immune to its own misjudgments in this region; hugely underestimating ISIS is one example. And let's not forget, some of the same people who negotiated this deal were involved in the failed agreement with North Korea — an agreement that was hailed at the time with some of the same language President Obama used today. Of course, North Korea now has multiple nuclear weapons.

The President was quick to refer back to the Cold War, but he was wrong to suggest that this agreement could be extended like a U.S.-Soviet arms agreement. When this deal expires, Iran will have an internationally blessed advanced nuclear program able to quickly produce a nuclear weapon. There will be no second deals. Iran will have won.

And if we are going to call on history, we must recognize that this agreement — by allowing Iran an advanced uranium enrichment capacity — dramatically departs from decades of bipartisan, non-proliferation policy. Iran can have a peaceful nuclear program without this dangerous technology.

President Obama says Iranian 'hardliners' chanting 'Death to America' do not represent all Iranians. He is right. But they do represent Iran's leaders such as Supreme Leader Khamenei, who has led the chants. Those leaders signed the deal because they believe it will help achieve their goals.

The President challenged Congress to listen to the experts. Since these negotiations began, the House Foreign Affairs Committee has held two dozen hearings. On a bipartisan basis, we've heard from scientists, former weapons inspectors, and experts on Iran and economic sanctions — many of whom are deeply skeptical. This review will continue as Members prepare to vote. We must ask ourselves, does this deal make the world safer?

