

(3) 9 countries are classified as being in the prevention of malaria reintroduction phase of malaria control;

Whereas continued national, regional, and international investment in efforts to eliminate malaria, including prevention and treatment efforts, the development of a vaccine to immunize children from the malaria parasite, and advancements in insecticides, are critical in order to—

(1) continue to reduce malaria deaths;

(2) prevent backsliding in areas where progress has been made; and

(3) equip the United States and the global community with the tools necessary to fight malaria and other global health threats;

Whereas the United States Government has played a leading role in the recent progress made toward reducing the global burden of malaria, particularly through the President's Malaria Initiative (referred to in this preamble as the "PMI") and the contribution of the United States to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria;

Whereas, in 2011, an independent, external evaluation, prepared by Boston University, examining 6 objectives of the PMI, found the PMI to be a successful, well-led program that has "earned and deserves the task of sustaining and expanding the United States Government's response to global malaria control efforts";

Whereas the PMI Strategy 2015-2020 articulates the malaria goal of the United States Government of working with countries and partners to further reduce malaria deaths and substantially decrease malaria morbidity, towards the long-term goal of elimination;

Whereas the United States Government is pursuing a comprehensive approach to ending malaria deaths through the PMI, which is led by the United States Agency for International Development and implemented with assistance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of State, the Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Defense, and private sector entities;

Whereas the PMI focuses on helping partner countries achieve major improvements in overall health outcomes through improved access to, and quality of, healthcare services in locations with limited resources; and

Whereas the PMI, recognizing the burden of malaria on many partner countries, has set a target by 2020 of reducing malaria mortality by 1/3 from 2015 levels in PMI-supported countries, achieving a greater than 80 percent reduction from original 2000 baseline levels set by the PMI, reducing malaria morbidity in PMI-supported countries by 40 percent from 2015 levels, and assisting not fewer than 5 PMI-supported countries to meet the criteria of the World Health Organization for national or sub-national pre-elimination; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the goals and ideals of World Malaria Day;

(2) recognizes the importance of reducing malaria prevalence and deaths to improve overall child and maternal health, especially in sub-Saharan Africa;

(3) commends the recent progress made toward reducing global malaria morbidity, mortality, and prevalence, particularly through the efforts of the President's Malaria Initiative and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria;

(4) welcomes ongoing public-private partnerships to research and develop more effective and affordable tools for malaria diagnosis, treatment, and vaccination;

(5) recognizes the goals, priorities, and authorities to combat malaria set forth in the Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-293; 122 Stat. 2918);

(6) supports continued leadership by the United States in bilateral, multilateral, and private sector efforts to combat malaria and to work with developing countries to create long-term strategies to increase ownership over malaria programs; and

(7) encourages other members of the international community to sustain and increase their support for and financial contributions to efforts to combat malaria worldwide.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to; the committee-reported amendment to the preamble be agreed to; the preamble, as amended, be agreed to; and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 436) was agreed to.

The committee-reported amendment to the preamble in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The preamble, as amended, was agreed to.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE PUBLIC TRUST

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I rise this evening to read into the RECORD a portion of the New York Times Magazine profile yesterday of Ben Rhodes, Deputy National Security Advisor to President Obama.

Before reading the article, though, titled "The Story-Teller and the President," I wish to explain briefly why I think this piece is so important for us to consider in this Chamber.

We live in a time of precipitous change, both in American Government and in communications more broadly. We don't admit it enough in this body, but the Congress in the last decade-plus is extraordinarily weak by historical standards. At the same time, the media is rapidly fragmenting. These two vacuums are being filled by the executive branch in ways that are badly damaging, both to the separation of powers and to the idea of a meaningfully engaged citizenry. There can be little doubt that our Founders would be troubled by what is occurring in our time.

Washington is in the process of replacing self-evident truths with self-serving spin, and this is dangerous, for no one is entitled to his or her own facts. I sit intentionally at the desk of Daniel Patrick Moynihan in this body precisely because he was committed to the idea of a shared set of facts before our debates began. Yet this story makes clear that the executive branch

feels empowered to proclaim its own narratives.

This is bigger than Republicans and Democrats. This is about the legislature's check on the Executive, and it is about all of our accountability in this city to the people. To my Democratic colleagues who supported the Iran deal, does it trouble you at all that the White House displays obvious contempt for you? For your voters and for my voters, will you stand for this kind of fundamentally dishonest spin from future Republican administrations—because I pledge to you that I will not from any administration of either party.

Some will say this is just one story of one staffer who wanted to brag and got carried away—someone who wanted to boast about if the whole world could be his canvas, but we should be clear that it is ultimately elected officials who bear responsibility for the ongoing evaporation of public trust in our time.

I want to underscore this point. These, my comments tonight, are not about whether you share the President's view that the Iranian nuclear deal was a prudent move or whether you share my view that it was a disaster. That is not the point at issue today. Obviously, foreign policy is critically important, but this story tonight is about whether we take truth seriously. It is about whether we care about the public trust.

There is a widespread view around here that our chief job is "to pass legislation." That is incorrect. Our main job, and indeed the oath we took, is to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution, which is about limited government and about the separation of powers.

Our job is to ensure that the Nation is well governed and that the public can believe that the public can have trust and confidence that the Nation is well governed. This necessarily means that oversight is at least as important as passing or repealing particular pieces of legislation. This horrific story should be a screaming siren to all of us of both parties.

Newsrooms are obviously still struggling to understand what vigorous and independent reporting will look like in the digital age, but it remains true that freedom that ordered liberty will remain dependent on an informed citizenry, and that requires a serious and a free press. Good journalism, serious journalism, that takes actual facts seriously and then grapples with those facts honestly, is an important and a high calling.

I plan to read about one-fourth of this New York Times piece into the RECORD, but please note that I will skip over many proper names for ease of audible understanding. Picking up then about 40 percent of the way into the profile, the story continues:

The job he [Ben Rhodes] was hired to do, [was] namely to help the President of the United States communicate with the public, [and this job] was changing in equally significant ways, thanks to the impact of digital technologies that people in Washington

were just beginning to wrap their minds around. It is hard for many of us to absorb the true magnitude of the changes in the news business—40 percent of newspaper industry professionals have lost their jobs [inside] the last decade—in part because readers can absorb all [forms of new] news they want from social media platforms like Facebook, which are valued in the tens and hundreds of billions of dollars and pay nothing for the [so-called] “content” they provide to their readers. You have to have skin in the game—[that is] to be in the news business, or depend in a life-or-death way on its products—to understand the radical and qualitative ways in which words appear in familiar typefaces [but have yet] been changed. Rhodes [was singling] out a key example to me one day, laced with the brutal contempt that is a hallmark of his private utterances. “All these newspapers used to have foreign bureaus,” he said. “[But] now they don’t. They call us to explain to them what’s happening in Moscow [or in] Cairo. [And] most of the outlets are reporting on world events from Washington. The average reporter we talk to is [just] 27 years old, and their only reporting experience consists of being around [a few] political campaigns. That’s a sea change. They literally know nothing.”

In this environment, Rhodes has become adept at ventriloquizing many people at once. Ned Price, Rhodes’s assistant, gave me a primer on the way it’s done. The easiest way for the White House to shape the news, he explained, is [just] from the briefing podiums, each of which has its own dedicated press corps. “But then there are [all of these force] multipliers,” he said, adding, “We have our compadres, [and I] reach out to a couple [of] people, and you know I wouldn’t wanted to name them—”

[I interrupt him and I say] “I can name them,” [and I tick] off a few names of prominent Washington reporters and columnists who often tweet in sync with [the] White House [s] messaging [operation].

Price [laughs]. “I’ll say, ‘Hey, look, some people are spinning this narrative that this is a sign of . . . weakness,’” he [continues].

[And I interrupt again] “but—”

“In fact, it’s a sign of strength!” I [say, chuckling with him].

“And I’ll give them some color,” Price [continues] “and the next thing I know, lots of these guys are in the dot-com publishing space, and [they] have [their] huge Twitter followings, and [then] they’ll be putting this message [as their own].”

This is something different from old-fashioned spin, which tended to be an art best practiced in person. In a world where experienced reporters competed for scoops and where carrying water for the White House was a cause for shame, no matter which party was in power, it was much harder to sustain a “narrative” over any serious period of time. Now the most effectively weaponized 140-character idea or quote will almost always carry the day, and it [will be] very difficult for even good reporters to necessarily know where the spin is coming from or why.

When I later visited Obama’s former campaign mastermind David Axelrod in Chicago, I brought up the soft Orwellian vibe of an information space where old media structures and hierarchies have been erased by Silicon Valley billionaires who convinced the suckers that information was “free” and everyone with access to Google was now a reporter. Axelrod, a former newspaperman, sighed. “It’s not as easy as standing in front of a press conference and speaking to 70 million people like past presidents have been

able to do,” he said. The bully pulpit by and large doesn’t exist anymore, he explained. “So more and more, over the last couple of years, there’s been an investment in alternative means of communication: using digital more effectively, going to nontraditional sources, understanding where on each issue your constituencies are going to be found,” he said. “I think they’ve approached these major foreign policy challenges as campaign challenges, and they’ve run campaigns, and [their] campaigns have been very sophisticated.”

Rhodes’s innovative campaign to sell the Iran deal is likely to be a model for how future administrations explain foreign policy to the Congress—

Note that. The administration is going to have to campaign to the Congress—

and the public. The way in which most Americans have heard the story of the Iran deal presented—that the Obama administration began seriously engaging with the Iranian officials in 2013 in order to take advantage of a new political reality in Iran, which came about because of elections that brought [so-called] moderates to power in that country—[this story of 2013] was largely manufactured [“manufactured” is their verb] for the purpose of selling the deal. Even where the particulars of that story are true, the implications that readers and viewers are encouraged to take away from those particulars are often misleading [and] false. Obama’s closest advisers always understood him to be eager [for] a deal with Iran [back in 2012] and even since the beginning of his presidency. “It’s the center of the arc,” Rhodes explained to me two days after the deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, was implemented. He then checked off the ways in which the administration’s foreign policy aims and priorities converged [in] Iran. “We don’t have to be [in the kind of] cycles of conflict if we can find other ways to resolve these issues,” he said. “We can do things that challenge the conventional thinking that, you know, ‘AIPAC doesn’t like this,’ or ‘the Israeli government doesn’t like this,’ or ‘the gulf countries don’t like it.’ It’s the possibility of improved relations with adversaries. It’s non-proliferation. So all these threads that the president’s been spinning—[and in this sense I don’t mean it] in the press sense [of spinning, spinning] for almost a decade, they kind of all converged around Iran.”

In the narrative that Rhodes shaped, the “story” of the Iran deal began in 2013, when a “moderate” faction inside the Iranian regime led by Hassan Rouhani beat a regime of [so-called] “hardliners” in an election and then began to pursue a policy of “openness,” which included a newfound willingness to negotiate the dismantling of its [so-called] nuclear weapons program. The president set out the timeline himself in his speech announcing the nuclear deal on July 14, 2015, [President Obama]: “Today, after two years of negotiations, the United States, together with our international partners, has achieved something that decades of animosity has not.” While the president’s statement was technically accurate—there had in fact been two years of formal negotiations leading up to the signing of the J.C.P.O.A.—it was also actively misleading, because the most meaningful part of the negotiations with Iran [were from mid-2012] many months before Rouhani and the “moderate” camp were chosen in an election among candidates handpicked by Iran’s supreme leader, the Ayatollah. . . . The idea that there was a

new reality in Iran was politically useful to the Obama administration. By obtaining broad public currency for the thought that there was a significant split in the regime, and that the administration was reaching out to moderate-minded Iranians who wanted peaceful relations with their neighbors and with America, Obama was [therefore] able to evade what might have otherwise been a divisive but clarifying debate over the actual policy choices that [the] administration was making.

I want to repeat that sentence, by misleading the public on the date on which negotiations began and therefore seizing upon this election that happened a year later, “Obama was able to evade what might have otherwise been a divisive but clarifying debate over the actual policy choices that [the] administration was making.”

By eliminating the fuss about Iran’s nuclear program, the administration hoped to eliminate a source of structural tension between the two countries, which would create the space for America to disentangle itself from its established system of alliances with countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel and Turkey. With one bold move, the administration would effectively begin the process of a large-scale disengagement from the Middle East.

The nerve center for the selling of the Iran deal to Congress, which took place in a concentrated three-month period between July and September of last year, was located inside the White House, and is referred to by its former denizens as “the war room.” The White House Office of Legislative Affairs helped run the team, which included three to six people from each of several agencies . . . which were the State Department, Treasury, the American delegation to the United Nations (i.e., Samantha Power), at times . . . the Department of Defense and also the Department of Energy and the National Security Council. Rhodes “was kind of like the quarterback,” running the daily video conferences and coming up with lines of attack and parry. “He was extremely good about immediately getting to a phrase or a way of getting the message out that just made more sense,” [staff members report]. Framing the deal as a choice between peace and war was Rhodes’s go-to move—and proved to be a winning argument.

And just to be clear, that wasn’t the choice. The choice wasn’t between war and peace, and they knew it. They were spinning the public, the press, and the Congress.

The person [credited] with running the digital side of the campaign . . . the director of digital response for the White House Office of Digital Strategy, . . . became known in the war room and on Twitter as @TheIranDeal.

That is the Twitter handle.

Early on, Rhodes asked her to create a rapid-response account that fact-checked everything related to the Iran deal. “So, we developed a plan that was like: The Iran deal is literally going to be the tip of everything we stand up online,” [we were told]. “And we’re going to map it onto what we [already] know about the different audiences we’re dealing with: the public, pundits, experts, the right wing, Congress.” By applying 21st century data and networking tools to the white glove world of foreign affairs, the White House was

able to track what United States senators and the people who worked for them, and influenced them, were seeing [at different moments] online—and make sure that no potential negative comment passed without a tweet.

As she explained how the process worked, I was struck by how naive the assumption of a “state of nature” must seem in an information environment that is mediated less and less by experienced editors and reporters with any real prior knowledge of the subjects they write about. “People construct their own sense of source and credibility now,” [the staffer told me]. “They elect whoever they’re going to believe.” For those in need of more traditional-seeming forms of validation, handpicked Beltway insiders like Jeffrey Goldberg of *The Atlantic* and Laura Rozen of *Al-Monitor* helped retail the administration’s narrative. “Laura Rozen was my RSS feed,” [the staffer said]. “She would just find everything and retweet it.”

Rhodes’s messaging campaign was so effective not simply because it was a perfectly planned and executed example of digital strategy, but also because he was personally involved in guiding the deal itself.

In the interest of time, I am going to skip over a few paragraphs that tell how Jake Sullivan and other administration players traveled to Oman to secretly meet with the Iranians in the summer of 2012.

The White House point person during the later stage of the negotiations was Rob Malley, a favored troubleshooter who is currently running negotiations that could keep the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad in power. During the course of the Iran talks, Malley told me, he always kept in close contact with Rhodes. “I would often just call him and say, ‘Give me a reality check,’” Malley explained. “He could say, ‘Here is where I think the president is, and here is where he will be.’” He continued, “Ben would try to anticipate: Does it make sense policywise? But then he would also ask himself: How do we sell it Congress? How do we sell it to the public? What is it going to do to our narrative?”

Malley is a particularly keen observer of the changing art of political communication; his father . . . who was born in Cairo, edited [a] politics magazine . . . and proudly pro-

vided a platform for Fidel Castro and Yasir Arafat, in the days when the leaders’ words might take [several] weeks to travel from Cuba or Cairo to Paris. “The Iran experience was the place where I saw firsthand how policy, politics and messaging all had to be brought together, and I think that Ben is really at the intersection of all three. He reflects and he shapes [all three] at the same time.”

As Malley and representatives of the State Department, including Wendy Sherman and Secretary of State John Kerry, engaged in formal negotiations with the Iranians, to ratify details of a framework that had already been agreed upon, Rhodes’s war room did its work on Capitol Hill and with reporters. In the spring of last year, legions of arms-control experts began popping up at think tanks and on social media, and then became key sources for hundreds of often-clueless reporters. “We created an echo chamber,” he admitted, when I asked him to explain the onslaught of freshly minted experts [who were] cheerleading for the deal. [He continued:] “They were saying things that validated what we had given them to say.”

When I suggested that all this dark metafictional play seemed a bit removed from rational debate over America’s future role in the world, Rhodes nodded. “In the absence of rational discourse, we are going to discourse the [expletive] out of this,” he said. “We had test drives to know who was going to be able to carry our message effectively, and how to use outside groups like Ploughshares, the Iran Project and whomever else [they needed to use]. So we knew the tactics that worked” [he said]. He is [very] proud of the way he sold the Iran deal. “We drove them crazy,” he said of the deal’s opponents.

Yet Rhodes bridled at the suggestion that there has been anything deceptive about the way the agreement itself was sold. “Look,” [he said] “with Iran, in a weird way, these are state-to-state issues. They’re agreements between governments. Yes, I would prefer that it turns out that Rouhani and Zarif . . . are real reformers who are going to be steering this country into the direction I believe it can go in, because their public is educated and, in some respects, pro-American. But we are not betting on [any of] that.”

Do you all remember what we heard last summer when they were testifying before us? We never heard this. We never heard this was the spin, but they didn’t actually believe it. But now here, when the guy’s thinking about his next step in life, we hear the real story. I will continue.

In fact, Rhodes’s passion seems to derive not from any investment in the technical specifics of sanctions or centrifuge arrays, or any particular optimism about the future course of Iranian politics and society. Those are matters for the negotiators and area specialists. Rather, it derived from his own sense of urgency of radically reorienting American policy in the Middle East in order to make the prospect of American involvement in the region’s future wars a lot less likely. When I asked him whether the prospect of this same kind of far-reaching spin campaign being run by a different administration is something that scares him, he admitted that it does. “I mean, I’d prefer a sober, reasoned public debate, after which members of Congress reflect and take a vote. . . . But that’s impossible” [he concluded].

Mr. President, truth is bigger than talking points, and self-government deserves more than spin. Does President Obama think there is such a thing as domestic propaganda? Does he think it is OK? Do we in this Chamber think it is OK?

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 2:15 P.M. TOMORROW

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order as a further mark of respect to the late Senators Conrad Burns of Montana and Bob Bennett of Utah.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 7:10 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, May 10, 2016, at 2:15 p.m.