Thank you so much. It is wonderful to be here and see so many friends. I've spoken at a lot of AIPAC conferences in the past, but this has to be one of the biggest yet and there are so many young people here, thousands of college students from hundreds of campuses around the country. I think we should all give them a hand for being here and beginning their commitment to this important cause.

You will keep the U.S.-Israel relationship going strong. You know, as a senator from New York and secretary of state I've had the privilege of working closely with AIPAC members to strengthen and deepen America's ties with Israel. Now, we may not have always agreed on every detail, but we've always shared an unwavering, unshakable commitment to our alliance and to Israel's future as a secure and democratic homeland for the Jewish people.

And your support helped us expand security and intelligence, cooperation, develop the Iron Dome missile defense system, build a global coalition to impose the toughest sanctions in the history on Iran and so much more. Since my first visit to Israel 35 years ago, I've returned many times and made many friends. I've worked with and learned from some of Israel's great leaders, although, I don't think Yitzhak Rabin ever forgave me for banishing him to the White House balcony when he wanted to smoke.

Now I'm here as a candidate for president and I know that all of you understand what's at stake in this election. Our next president will walk into the Oval Office next January and immediately face a world of both perils we must meet with strength and skill and opportunities we must seize and build on. The next president will sit down at that desk and start making decisions that will affect both the lives and livelihoods of every American and the security of our friends around the world.

So we have to get this right. As AIPAC members, you understand that while the turmoil of the Middle East presents enormous challenge and complexity, walking away is not an option.

Candidates for president who think the United States can outsource Middle East security to dictators or that America no longer has vital national interests at stake in this region are dangerously wrong. It would be a serious mistake for the United States to abandon our responsibilities or cede the mantle of leadership for global peace and security to anyone else.

As we gather here, three evolving threats, Iran's continued aggression, a rising tide of extremism across a wide ark of instability and the growing effort to delegitimize Israel on the world stage are converging to make the U.S.-Israel alliance more indispensable than ever.

We have to combat all these trends with even more intense security and diplomatic cooperation. United States and Israel must be closer than ever, stronger than ever and more determined than ever to prevail against our common adversaries and to advance our shared values.

This is especially true at a time when Israel faces brutal terrorist stabbings, shootings and vehicle attacks at home. Parents worry about letting their children walk down the street, families live in fear. Just a few weeks ago, a young American veteran and West Point graduate named Taylor Force was murdered by a Palestinian terrorist near the Jaffa Port. These attacks must end immediately and Palestinian leaders need to stop inciting violence, stop celebrating terrorists as martyrs and stop paying rewards to their families.

Because we understand the threats Israel faces, we know we can never take for granted the strength of our alliance or the success of our efforts. Today, Americans and Israelis face momentous choices that will shape the future of our relationship and of both our nations. The first choice is this, are we prepared to take the U.S.-Israel alliance to the next level? This relationship has always been stronger and deeper than the headlines might lead you to believe. Our work together to develop the Iron Dome saved many Israeli lives when Hamas rockets began to fly.

I saw its effectiveness firsthand in 2012, when I worked with Prime Minister Netanyahu to negotiate a seize fire in Gaza and if I'm fortunate enough to be elected president, the United States will reaffirm we have a strong and enduring national interest in Israel's security.  And we will never allow Israel's adversaries to think a wedge can be driven between us.

When we have differences, as any friends do, we will work to resolve them quickly and respectfully. We will also be clear that the United States has an enduring interest in and commitment to a more peaceful, more stable, more secure Middle East and we will step up our efforts to achieve that outcome. Indeed, at a time of unprecedented chaos and conflict in the region, America needs an Israel strong enough to deter and defend against its enemies, strong enough to work with us to tackle shared challenges and strong enough to take bold steps in the pursuit of peace.

That's why I believe we must take our alliance to the next level. I hope a new 10-year defense memorandum of understanding is concluded as soon as possible to meet Israel's security needs far into the future. That will also send a clear message to Israel's enemies that the United States and Israel stand together united. It's also why, as president, I will make a firm commitment to ensure Israel maintains its qualitative military edge.

The United States should provide Israel with the most sophisticated defense technology so it can deter and stop any threat. That includes bolstering Israeli missile defenses with new systems, like the Arrow 3 and David's Sling, and we should work together to develop better tunnel detection technology to prevent arms smuggling, kidnapping and terrorist attacks.

One of the first things I'll do in office is invite the Israeli prime minister to visit the White House and I will send a delegation from the Pentagon and the Joint Chiefs to Israel forearly consultations. Let's also expand our collaboration beyond security. Together we can build an even more vibrant culture of innovation that tightens the links between Silicon Valley and Israeli tech companies and entrepreneurs.

There is much Americans can learn from Israel from cybersecurity to energy security to water security and just on an everyday people to people level. And it's especially important to continue fostering relationships between American and Israeli young people who may not always remember our shared past. They are the future of our relationship and we have to do more to promote that. Many of the young people here today are on the front lines of the battle to oppose the alarming boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement known as BDS.

Particularly at a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise across the world, especially in Europe, we must repudiate all efforts to malign, isolate and undermine Israel and the Jewish people.

I've been sounding the alarm for a while now. As I wrote last year to the heads of major American-Jewish organizations, we have to be united in fighting back against BDS. Many of its proponents have demonized Israeli scientists and intellectuals, even students. To all the college students who may have encountered this on campus, I hope you stay strong, keep speaking out, don't let anyone silence you, bully you or try to shut down debate, especially in places of learning like colleges and universities.

Anti-Semitism has no place in any civilized society. Not in America, not in Europe, not anywhere.

Now, all of this work defending Israel's legitimacy, expanding security and economic ties, taking our alliance to the next level depends on electing a president with a deep, personal commitment to Israel's future as a secure, democratic Jewish state and to America's responsibilities as a global leader. Tonight, you'll hear from candidates with very different visions of American leadership in the region and around the world. You'll get a glimpse of a potential U.S. foreign policy that would insult our allies, not engage them and embolden our adversaries, not defeat them.

For the security of Israel and the world, we need America to remain a respected global leader committed to defending and advancing the international order, an America able to block efforts to isolate or attack Israel. The alternative is unthinkable.

Yes, we need steady hands, not a president who says he's neutral on Monday, pro-Israel on Tuesday and who knows what on Wednesday, because everything's negotiable.  Well, my friends, Israel's security is non-negotiable.

I have sat in Israeli hospital rooms holding the hands of men and women whose bodies and lives were torn apart by terrorist bombs. I've listened to doctors describe the shrapnel left in a leg, an arm or even a head. That's why I feel so strongly that America can't ever be neutral when it comes to Israel's security or survival. We can't be neutral when rockets rain down on residential neighborhoods, when civilians are stabbed in the street, when suicide bombers target theinnocent. Some things aren't negotiable and anyone who doesn't understand that has no business being our president.

The second choice we face is whether we will have the strength and commitment to confront the adversaries that threaten us, especially Iran. For many years, we've all been rightly focused on the existential danger of Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon. After all, this remains an extremist regime that threatens to annihilate Israel.

That's why I led the diplomacy to impose crippling sanctions and force Iran to the negotiating table and why I ultimately supported the agreement that has put a lid on its nuclear program. Today, Iran's enriched uranium is all but gone, thousands of centrifuges have stopped spinning, Iran's potential breakout time has increased and new verification measures are in place to help us deter and detect any cheating.

I really believe the United States, Israel and the world are safer as a result, but still, as I laid out in a speech at the Brookings Institution last year, it's not good enough to trust and verify. Our approach must be distrust and verify.

This deal must come with vigorous enforcement, strong monitoring, clear consequences for any violations and a broader strategy to confront Iran's aggression across the region. We cannot forget that Tehran's fingerprints are on every conflict across the Middle East from Syria to Lebanon to Yemen. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and its proxies are attempting to establish a position on the Golan from which to threaten Israel and they continue to fund Palestinian terrorists.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah is amassing an arsenal of increasingly sophisticated rockets and artillery that well may be able to hit every city in Israel. Tonight, you will hear a lot of rhetoric from the other candidates about Iran, but there's a big difference between talking about holding Tehran accountable and actually doing it. Our next president has to be able to hold together our global coalition and impose real consequences for even the smallest violations of this agreement.

We must maintain the legal and diplomatic architecture to turn all the sanctions back on if needed. If I'm elected, the leaders of Iran will have no doubt that if we see any indication that they are violating their commitments not to seek, develop or acquire nuclear weapons, the United States will act to stop it and that we will do so with force if necessary.

Iranian provocations, like the recent ballistic missile tests also are unacceptable and should be answered firmly and quickly, including with more sanctions.

Those missiles were stamped with words declaring, and I quote, "Israel should be wiped from the pages of history." We know they could reach Israel or hit the tens of thousands of American troops stationed in the Middle East. This is a serious danger and it demands a serious response.

The United States must also continue to enforce existing sanctions and impose additional sanctions as needed on Iran and the Revolutionary Guard for their sponsorship of terrorism, illegal arms transfers, human rights violations and other illicit behaviors, like cyber-attacks. We should continue to demand the safe return of Robert Levinson and all American citizens unjustly held in Iranian prisons.

And we must work closely with Israel and other partners to cut off the flow of money and arms from Iran to Hezbollah. If the Arab League can designate all of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, surely it is time for our friends in Europe and the rest of the international community to do so as well and to do that now.

At the same time, America should always stand with those voices inside Iran calling for more openness. Now look, we know the supreme leader still calls the shots and that the hardliners are intent on keeping their grip on power, but the Iranian people themselves deserve a better future and they are trying to make their voices heard. They should know that America is not their enemy, they should know we will support their efforts to bring positive change to Iran.

Now, of course, Iran is not the only threat we and Israel face. The United States and Israel also have to stand together against the threat from ISIS and other radical jihadists. An ISIS affiliate in the Sinai is reportedly stepping up attempts to make inroads in Gaza and partners with Hamas.

On Saturday, a number of Israelis and other foreigners were injured or killed in a bombing in Istanbul that may well be linked to ISIS. Two of the dead are U.S.-Israeli dual nationals. This is a threat that knows no borders. That's why I've laid out a plan to take the fight to ISIS from the air, on the ground with local forces and online where they recruit and inspire. Our goal cannot be to contain ISIS; we must defeat ISIS.

And here is a third choice, will we keep working toward a negotiated peace or lose forever the goal of two states for two peoples? Despite many setbacks, I remain convinced that peace with security is possible and that it is the only way to guarantee Israel's long-term survival as a strong Jewish and democratic state.

It may be difficult to imagine progress in this current climate when many Israelis doubt that a willing and capable partner for peace even exists, but inaction cannot be an option. Israelis deserve a secure homeland for the Jewish people. Palestinians should be able to govern themselves in their own state in peace and dignity and only a negotiated two-state agreement can provide those outcomes.

If we look at the broader, regional context, converging interests between Israel and key Arab states could make it possible to promote progress on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Israelis and Palestinians could contribute to our greater cooperation between Israel and Arabs. I know how hard all of this is. I remember what it took just to convene Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas for the three sessions of direct face-to-face peace talks in 2010 that I presided over, but Israelis and Palestinians cannot give up on the hope of peace.

That will only make it harder later. All of us need to look for opportunities to create the conditions for progress, including by taking positive actions that can rebuild trust. Like the recent constructive meetings between the Israeli and Palestinian finance ministers aiming to help bolster the Palestinian economy or the daily on-the-ground security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

But at the same time, all of us must condemn actions that setback the cause of peace. Terrorism should never be encouraged or celebrated and children should not be taught to hate in schools.

That poisons the future. Everyone has to do their part by avoiding damaging actions, including with respect to settlements. Now, America has an important role to play in supporting peace efforts and as president, I would continue the pursuit of direct negotiations. And let me be clear, I would vigorously oppose any attempt by outside parties to impose a solution, including by the U.N. Security Council.

There is one more choice that we face together and in some ways, it may be the most important of all, will we as Americans and as Israelis stay true to the shared democratic values that have always been at the heart of our relationship? We are both nations built by immigrants and exiles seeking to live and worship in freedom, nations built on principles of equality, tolerance and pluralism.

At our best, both Israel and America are seen as a light unto the nations because of those values. This is the real foundation of our alliance and I think it's why so many Americans feel such a deep emotional connection with Israel. I know that I do and it's why we cannot be neutral about Israel and Israel's future, because in Israel's story, we see our own and the story of all people who struggle for freedom and self-determination.

There's so many examples. You know, we look at the pride parade in Tel Aviv, one of the biggest and most prominent in the world and we marvel that such a bastion of liberty exists in a region so plagued by intolerance. We see the vigorous, even raucous debate in Israeli politics and feel right at home.

And of course, some of us remember a woman, Golda Meir, leading Israel's government decades ago and wonder what's taking us so long here in America.

But we cannot rest on what previous generations have accomplished. Every generation has to renew our values and yes, even fight for them. Today, Americans and Israelis face currents of intolerance and extremism that threaten the moral foundations of our societies. Now, in a democracy, we're going to have differences, but what Americans are hearing on the campaign trail this year is something else entirely, encouraging violence, playing coy with white supremacists, calling for 12 million immigrants to be rounded up and deported, demanding we turn away refugees because of their religion and proposing a ban on all Muslims entering the United States.

Now, we've had dark chapters in our history before, we remember the nearly 1,000 Jews aboard the St. Louis who were refused entry in 1939 and sent back to Europe, but America should be better than this and I believe it's our responsibility as citizens to say so.  If you see bigotry, oppose it. If you see violence, condemn it. If you see a bully, stand up to him.

On Wednesday evening, Jews around the world will celebrate the Festival of Purim and children will learn the story of Esther who refused to stay silent in the face of evil. It wasn't easy, she had a good life and by speaking out, she risked everything, but as Mordecai reminded her, we all have an obligation to do our part when danger gathers and those of us with power or influence have a special responsibility to do what's right.

As Elie Wiesel said when accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, "Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented." So my friends, let us never be neutral or silent in the face of bigotry. Together, let's defend the shared values that already make America and Israel great.

Let us do the hard work necessary to keep building our friendship and reach out to the next generation of Americans and Israelis so the bonds between our nations grow even deeper and stronger. We are stronger together and if we face the future side by side, I know for both Israel and America our best days are still ahead.

Thank you so much.