



# Obama's 'foreign-policy guru' Ben Rhodes, turns out to be a lying sociopath

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ben rhodes

Ben Rhodes, the deputy US national security adviser, during the Washington Ideas Forum in Washington, D.C., on September 30.

President Barack Obama's deputy national security adviser, Ben Rhodes, gave a surprisingly blunt and honest interview to [The New York Times Magazine](#) about how the administration has sought to shape its foreign policy and sell it to the general public.

The interview - published Thursday with the headline "The Aspiring Novelist Who Became Obama's Foreign-Policy Guru" - received widespread attention for its unusually honest tone and Rhodes' willingness to share details about the meticulous foreign-policy narrative he has helped Obama construct.

There are some fascinating revelations, many of which revolve around Obama's nuclear deal with Iran:

- **The White House consciously created an "echo chamber" of experts and commentators to shape the public's perception of the Iran deal:** "We created an echo chamber," Rhodes told The Times' David Samuels. "They were saying things that validated what we had given them to say ... We had test drives to know who was going to be able to carry our message effectively. So we knew the tactics that worked."
- **Rhodes' "story" of the Iran deal began in 2013, but it was not the full story:** As many foreign-policy experts have noted, Obama began negotiating with Iran at least a year before Hassan Rouhani, Iran's new "moderate" president, defeated Iran's hardliners in a landslide 2013 election. Still, Samuels wrote, "The idea that there was a new reality in Iran was politically useful to the Obama administration."

- **The administration "is not betting on" Iran's moderates being real reformers:** "I would prefer that it turns out that Rouhani and [foreign minister] Zarif are real reformers who are going to be steering this country into the direction that I believe it can go in, because their public is educated and, in some respects, pro-American," he told Samuels. "But we are not betting on that."
- **Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta is not sure Obama is still "serious" about preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon:** Part of Panetta's job in holding up the nuclear deal was to assure Israel that Obama would not allow Iran to develop an atomic weapon. "Would I make that same assessment now? Probably not," he tells Samuels.

Others provided a glimpse into the administration's perception of political "experts" and the press:

- **Rhodes hates Washington's foreign-policy establishment - and doesn't care if they hate him back:** He refers to the foreign-policy elite, which he said includes Hillary Clinton and Robert Gates, as "the Blob," and he "gives zero [expletive] about what most people in Washington think," said Jon Favreau, the Obama campaign's former lead speechwriter.
- **The White House relies on "handpicked Beltway insiders" to help the administration spread its message:** These apparently include The Atlantic's Jeffrey Goldberg and Al-Monitor's Laura Rozen.
- **Rhodes thinks most of the reporters the White House has to deal with "literally know nothing":** "They call us to explain to them what's happening in Moscow and Cairo," Rhodes told Samuels. "Most of the outlets are reporting on world events from Washington. The average reporter we talk to is 27 years old, and their only reporting experience consists of being around political campaigns. That's a sea change. They literally know nothing."

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From left, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest, Rhodes, and National Security Adviser Susan Rice boarding the Marine One helicopter to depart with President Barack Obama for Camp David from the South Lawn of the White House on May 14.

In his piece, Samuels interviewed multiple administration officials - most did not give their names, except for Panetta and Valerie Jarrett -

about what they think has shaped Obama's worldview and, as Samuels put it, the evolution of his ability "to get comfortable with tragedy."

The answer is summed up best by one anonymous official: "Clearly the world has disappointed him."