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STION, June 5: Obama's overseas trip

ture where influential lawmakers, pundits and interest group leaders give their answers to a question that's driving
s around the country.

ered via e-mail, while others are gathered in person via tape recorder.

o overseas — with the Cairo speech and visit to a Nazi concentration camp — have changed America's Muslims and Israel?

ee responses below from Jeremy Ben-Ami, Rep. Pete King (D-N.Y.), Rep. Kendrick Meek (D-Fla.), Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), Rep.
Elijah Cummings (D-Md.), and Christopher Preble.

[Read the last Big Question here.](#)

Jeremy Ben-Ami, Executive Director of [J Street](#), said:

Yes and no.

There is no question that President Obama aims to fundamentally change the nature of America's relationship with the Muslim world and the direction of American policy in the Middle East.

He won't accomplish that with one speech, but his historic address in Cairo was but one part of an ongoing effort to ensure that the Muslim world understands that, under President Obama, we are turning the page on the past eight years and pressing the reset button on the American-Muslim relationship. [READ THE FULL RESPONSE HERE.](#)

Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), said:

It's a very good beginning. The speech was successful in reaching out to the Muslim world and explaining that our conflict was not with their culture but to those who might have a predatory intent towards us. The fact that he kept his promise, the fact that he went and the unique way of communicating people, it is a very good beginning. He didn't go to talk to the political elites, but rather to talk directly to the people, and the genius of President Obama is not only what he says and what he does but he reached out using the new media to grasp a new generation.

Rep. Pete King (R-N.Y.), said:

I think the president went a little too far as far as setting a moral equivalency between the United States and Iran and the United States and radical Muslims. And I mean, it wasn't it was fifty-fifty, but to me he made it too much of an equivalency.

Iran has their policy, has nuclear weapons. We have ours. To me, there is such a thing as good and evil. This whole idea of somehow he's the first president ever to reach out—I mean George Bush gave a speech in Egypt last year which was very similar to President Obama's, as far as saying that the average Muslim is a very good person and we have no problem with the religion of Islam.

Bush was saying that through September 11th onward. So I think it's sort of building up this image that the United States has a lot

to atone for. That he's the first president that's not at war with Islam. And Bush from September 12th on anyway, said we're not at war with Islam. [READ THE FULL RESPONSE HERE.](#)

[Rep. Kendrick Meek \(D-Fla.\)](#), said:

The fact that we are holding open communications with the Muslim world shows them that they have a genuine relation with the United States of America. They can not only assist us in apprehending bad actors that are out there plotting against American but also in this global economy our communications will help our relations with the Muslim world which plays a substantial role in innovation technology and trade.

[Christopher Preble](#), Director of Foreign Policy Studies at the [Cato Institute](#), said:

No. No speech or single overseas trip could do that. But it is a step in the right direction.

In his Cairo speech, the president hit the essential points without creating unrealistic expectations. He did not ignore that which divides the United States from the world at large, and many Muslims in particular, nor was he afraid to address squarely the lies and distortions — including the implication that 9/11 never happened, or was not the product of al Qaeda — that have made the situation worse than it should be. He was equally eloquent in characterizing the claims that the Holocaust never happened as “baseless, ignorant, and hateful.” His visit to Buchenwald reaffirms this point in ways that words never can. [READ THE FULL RESPONSE HERE.](#)

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By **Michael O'Brien**

This entry was posted on Friday, June 5th, 2009 at 2:32 pm and is filed under [Politics](#) .



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- This section is a Q&A slot featuring interviews with members of Congress and sometimes with senior aides, selected lobbyists and policy experts. The

Hill will ask the questions, but we welcome your input; to help us shape the discussion please [send your comment](#).

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Sen. Wyden : The history of bringing about enduring change, change that is going to last, change that people are going to rally behind — that history is predicated on bringing people together. And Senator Bennett and I have always

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