

OPINION and ANALYSIS

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local and international writings on the Middle East**

<http://www.sazionfed.co.za>

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It's highly likely that Iran's supreme leader will have to declare a new set of compromises at the nuclear talks, partly due to Khamenei's failure to make his nuclear policies a nationalist issue. Fortunately, the same challenges that may force a nuclear compromise are also likely to deter a mad dash for the bomb.

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'Why do I dismiss the apartheid analogies so emphatically? Because I straddle both apartheid South Africa and Israel today and have knowledge of the good and the ill in both societies.'

Humanitarian hypocrisy

Raymond Ibrahim, Middle East Forum, 26 October 2012

<http://www.meforum.org/3366/humanitarian-hypocrisy>

The world's double standards concerning which peoples qualify as oppressed and deserving of help are staggering. Two recent stories illustrate this point:

First, a report exposed, in the words of the Turkish Coalition of America, "Turkey's continued interest in expanding business and cultural ties with the American Indian community" and "Turkey's interest in building bridges to Native American communities across the U.S." Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla., even introduced a bill that would give Turks special rights and privileges in Native American tribal areas, arguing that "[t]his bill is about helping American Indians," and about "helping the original inhabitants of the new world, which is exactly what this legislation would do."

The very idea that Turkey's Islamist government is interested in "helping American Indians" is preposterous, both from a historical and contemporary point of view. In the 15th century, when Christian Europeans were discovering the Americas, Muslim Turks were conquering and killing Christians in Europe (which, of course, is why Europeans started sailing west in the first place). If early European settlers fought and killed natives, only recently, Turkey committed a mass genocide against Armenian Christians. And while the U.S. has made many reparations to its indigenous natives, Turkey not only denies the Armenian holocaust, but still abuses and persecutes its indigenous Christians.

In short, if Turkey is looking to help the marginalized and oppressed, it should start at home.

But of course, Turkey is only looking to help itself; the American Indians are mere tools of infiltration. One need not elaborate on the dangers involved in thousands of Muslim Turks settling in semi-autonomous areas in America and working closely with a minority group that holds a grudge against the United States.

Yet if one can understand Turkey's machinations, what does one make of another recent report? Fifteen leaders from U.S. Christian denominations—mostly Protestant, including the Lutheran, Methodist, and UCC Churches—are asking Congress to reevaluate U.S. military aid to Israel, since "military aid will only serve to sustain the status quo and Israel's military occupation of the Palestinian territories."

These are the same church leaders who utter nary a word concerning the rampant persecution of millions of Christians from one end of the Muslim world to the other—a persecution that makes the Palestinians' situation insignificant in comparison.

If Muslims are subjugated on Israeli land, at least one can argue that, historically, the Jews were there first—millennia before Muslims conquered Jerusalem in the 7th century. On the other hand, millions of Christians—at least 10 million in Egypt alone, the indigenous Copts—have been suffering in their own homelands for 14 centuries, since Islam burst in with the sword.

Nor is this limited to history: from Nigeria in the west, to Pakistan in the east, Christians at this very moment are being imprisoned for apostasy and blasphemy; their churches are being bombed and burned down; their women and children are being kidnapped, enslaved, and raped. For an idea, see my monthly Muslim Persecution of Christians series, where I collate dozens of anecdotes of persecution every month—any of which, if Palestinians experienced, would make headlines around the world; but as it is only "unfashionable" Christians who are experiencing these atrocities, they are regularly overlooked.

Nor are Palestinian Christians immune from this phenomenon: a pastor recently noted that "animosity towards the Christian minority in areas controlled by the PA continues to get increasingly worse. People are always telling [Christians], *Convert to Islam. Convert to Islam.*"

Indeed, the American Jewish Committee, which was "outraged by the Christian leaders' call," got it right by saying: "When religious liberty and safety of Christians across the Middle East are threatened by the repercussions of the Arab Spring, these Christian leaders have chosen to initiate a polemic against Israel, a country that protects religious freedom and expression for Christians, Muslims and others."

By any *objective* measure, the atrocities currently being committed against Christians around the Muslim world are far more outrageous and deserving of attention and remedy than the so-called "Palestinian Question." Incidentally, Israeli treatment of the Palestinians—some of whom, like Hamas, openly declare their intent to eradicate the Jewish state—is largely predicated on the aforementioned: Israel knows Islam's innate animus for non-Muslims and does not wish to be on its receiving end, hence the measures it takes to exist.

There is a final important point of irony concerning the differences between Turkey's Muslims and America's liberal Christians: the former engage in hypocrisy to empower Islam; the latter engage in hypocrisy to *disempower* Christianity, even if unwittingly. Just like secular/liberal Americans who strive to disassociate themselves from their European heritage—seeing it as the root of all evil and championing the rights of non-whites like American Indians—liberal American Christians strive to disassociate themselves from their Christian heritage and champion the rights of non-Christians, hence their keen interest for Muslim Palestinians.

And all the while, the one religious group truly persecuted from one end of the Islamic world to the other—Christians—are devoutly ignored by the humanitarian hypocrites.

The limits of friendship

David Horowitz, The Times of Israel, 23 October 2012

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/the-limits-of-friendship/>

Really, they couldn't have been nicer. Two very important men, engaged in a uniquely public job interview for the position of leader of the free world, and they went out of their way, both of them, to tell us how much they care about us.

We're a tiny outpost of life-affirming freedom and democracy thousands of miles away, there are fewer than eight million of us, and yet both these gents used a lot of their precious TV time to assure us they "have our back."

Essentially, they argued about who loves us more. President Barack Obama began talking up Israel as America's best ally just a few minutes into Monday night's debate, and then quickly

dropped in a second reference, in the context of Syria and Israel's concerns about what was unfolding there. From there on, it was clear we were in for a starring role.

Republican challenger Mitt Romney reserved some of his most resonant soundbites for us, lamenting the president's "apology tour" of the region, in which "you skipped Israel, our closest friend in the region, but you went to the other nations. And by the way, they noticed that you skipped Israel."

Obama was ready for that one, sniping at Romney that, when he *had* visited, as a candidate in 2008, he went to Yad Vashem, "to remind myself [of] the nature of evil and why our bond with Israel will be unbreakable." The governor, recalled Obama by contrast, took donors on his Israel trip earlier this summer and used some of his time here for a fundraiser.

What we were watching for in the small hours of our Tuesday morning, quite simply, were specifics on how each of these men would stop Iran

Was Romney being noble in choosing not to hit back with a Yad Vashem reference of his own? I was assured by one usually credible source today that he has visited the Holocaust memorial. Or maybe that assurance were inaccurate. Yad Vashem itself told me it could neither confirm nor deny that he'd ever been there. [Update: The Times of Israel has now confirmed that Romney did visit Yad Vashem, in 2007.]

But fine words and recalled visits of solidarity are not really the point for Israel in late 2012. Being fought over by our would-be best friends for the immediate presumed benefit of undecided voters in key swing states is not particularly comforting for us.

What we *were* watching for in the small hours of our Tuesday morning, quite simply, were specifics on how each of these men would stop Iran getting the bomb. And on this, our life-and-death debating point, our BFFs did not provide solace.

Iran wants us wiped out, and is closing in on the means to achieve that ambition. Obama and Romney both said they'd stop the regime, but both also gave us reasons to wonder about that — no matter how good their intentions.

Obama indicated that there would be a need to take action before it was too late, but employed language that was worryingly vague given the stakes: "We have a sense of when they [the Iranians] would get breakout capacity, which means that we would not be able to intervene in time to stop their nuclear program," he said. A "sense"?

Meanwhile Romney, while notably vowing to stop Iran attaining even a nuclear *capability*, highlighted in remarks throughout the debate his determination to avoid new wars and military conflicts if at all possible. On Iran, specifically, he said, "a military action is the last resort. It is something one would only, only consider if all of the other avenues had been tried to their full extent."

Clearly, Romney had taken the tactical decision in this debate to try to deny Obama the capacity to brand him as a warmonger, a would-be president overly ready to spill American blood overseas. And it needs hardly be stressed that Israel fervently hopes that Iran can be stopped short of *anyone's* military intervention.

But if I were an Iranian leader watching Monday's debate, I would draw the happy conclusion that both these men know the American public is deeply resistant to a resort to force in its name, in anything but the most desperate circumstances. And that's why the differences between the

candidates on Iran — differences that do matter, and that are being analyzed and fought over endlessly by those who care about Israel in the respective American political camps — are nonetheless less significant than the context in which the next president will be operating.

Israel has been asked by the Obama administration to hold its fire on Iran, and thus far has done so. Pretty soon, it will no longer have the military capacity to impact the Iranian program. Obama assures us “we are going to take all options necessary to make sure they don’t have a nuclear weapon.” Romney assures us that Iran’s “nuclear folly” is “unacceptable to America.”

Watching those two eminent gentlemen, for all that they fought to outdo each other in their doubtless heartfelt professions of friendship on Monday night, will have left many Israeli viewers feeling far from reassured

But the key question for us here is whether the next American president, *whoever he is*, will be leading a nation that will want him to intervene in Iran, if all else fails. There is a limit, after all, to what even the first among equals can do if sufficient forces are stacked up against him. Just ask George W. Bush, after the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate stripped away his grounds for any assault on Iran. Or just ask Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for that matter, after a combination of pressure from current and past Israeli security chiefs and the Obama administration impacted his considerations this summer.

Iran, for one, is betting that when push comes to shove, the US will hold its fire. Israel’s leadership will have to make a critical assessment on this, and urgently.

It’s not only a question — for American voters for whom Israel’s well-being is a priority — of which of these two men might be ready to resort to force. It’s also, indeed mainly, a question for Israel — of whether *either of these two men*, should they deem it necessary, could persuade America of the imperative to resort to force.

Subcontracting our security in the face of Iran to our best ally, even when it pledges over and over that it has our back, is an immense and unprecedented risk. Subcontracting our security in the face of Iran to our best ally, when that ally may be too constrained by domestic public circumstances to adequately cover our back, is potentially suicidal.

That’s why watching those two eminent gentlemen, for all that they fought to outdo each other in their doubtless heartfelt professions of friendship on Monday night, will have left many Israeli viewers feeling far from reassured.

America, as indicated by the thrust of so much of what the candidates had to say Monday night, is anxious to avoid almost any war, at almost any cost. And who can blame Americans for that? But how agonizing the dilemma that leaves for Israel on Iran.

USA at a crossroads: Interview with Senator Joe Lieberman

Matthew Brodsky, inFocus Quarterly, Fall 2012

<http://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/3528/us-crossroads>

On September 13, *inFOCUS* editor Matthew RJ Brodsky interviewed Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut. Over the course of his four terms in the U.S. Senate, Senator Lieberman became known as one of Congress’ most influential voices on security issues. He has been at the forefront of efforts to increase American investment in defense and transform the U.S. armed forces to better meet the threats of the 21st century. Domestically, Senator Lieberman supports

economic policies that spark business growth and innovation, legislation protecting the environment, and investing in public schools. Senator Lieberman is Chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and is a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Small Business Committee.

JF: In the Special Report that you released on the lessons from the U.S. government's failure to prevent the Fort Hood attack, you concluded that the Defense Department and FBI "had sufficient information that detected Hassan's radicalization to violent Islamist extremism but failed to understand and to act on it." What should the government have done differently and what lessons should Americans learn about homegrown terrorism?

JL: To start at the end of your question, homegrown terrorism, particularly by lone wolves—individuals—is a growing threat to us. In fact, the most damaging terrorist attacks that we've had in this country since 9/11 have been carried out by homegrown, more-or-less self-radicalized terrorists: Major Nidal Hasan, who killed 13 people at Fort Hood was one, and there was another man in Arkansas by the name of Carlos Bledsoe who killed an army recruiter.

The army should have created a climate in which people could tell the difference between Islamist religious feelings and extreme Islamist political opinions. And it also should have encouraged people to speak out if they saw suspicious behavior, similar to the New York City program of "See Something, Say Something." Hasan said so many things in public at Walter Reed that were flashing enough red lights to indicate he was dangerous. If somebody had reported that up the chain of command, I think they would have taken him out of the American army, where he didn't belong, and he never would have had the chance to kill 13 people at Fort Hood.

But the FBI—it was almost a bureaucratic slip up, though bureaucratic is not really an adequate explanation—but they had information that he was emailing with Anwar al-Awlaki, the radical cleric in Yemen. And they should have known that Hasan was in the American military. That should have set off alarms immediately. So, I think the FBI has really reacted in response to the Special Report and I think it's much less likely that anything similar would happen again. The army, I'm afraid, and it's true the administration still is not willing to use the terms "violent Islamist extremism..."

JF: That was my next question. To what extent is that political correctness affecting America's ability to defeat radical Islamist ideology at home and abroad?

JL: Well that unwillingness, I presume for reasons of political correctness, to use the term "violent Islamist extremism" creates a climate: first of unreality, because there is such a thing as violent Islamist extremism, which is different from the religion of Islam. So, it's actually respectful of Muslims to distinguish between the two. But it also creates the kind of climate that existed in the army at Walter Reed where people don't want to get involved for fear of causing trouble or for fear of being labeled anti-Muslim. But, what they would be is anti-violent Islamist extremism and pro-American, which is a good thing to be.

JF: In the statement you released yesterday (September 12) with Senators McCain and Graham, you said, "Despite this horrific attack, we cannot give in to the temptation to believe that our support for the democratic aspirations of the people in Libya, Egypt, and elsewhere in the broader Middle East is naive or mistaken." So how should the U.S. support democracy in the Middle East in places where the future outcome is uncertain?

JL: The one word answer is: Carefully. What's happened in these Arab countries is really remarkable, historic, and significant. As a matter of principle we can't oppose what's happened—

that is the overthrow of the dictators—because it's consistent with our national values of democracy and human rights.

Now obviously, the governments that have followed these "Arab Spring" uprisings have gone in different directions. Some, ironically, like the Libyans have been encouraging because they elected a moderate, more secular leadership. Some like Tunisia have been encouraging because even though they elected Islamists, they seem committed to human rights, democracy, and rule of law. Some like Egypt are unsettling and we have to see where they go. I think our support for each government should be determined by how committed the leadership of these countries are to democracy, to human rights, and to having good relations with the United States. In other words, we should be guided by our national principles but also by our national interests. So we can't just blindly be writing checks to people who are fomenting anti-American feeling. We have to judge people by their behavior. That's the bottom line.

JF: You have been outspoken about the need for the U.S. to do more to support the protestors in Syria. Why should Syria be considered a strategic interest to the United States and what specifically should the U.S. do to assist the opposition?

JL: Syria is one of those cases where humanitarian and strategic interests converge. In the first place, for more than a year-and-a-half the government of Bashar al-Asad has been slaughtering its own people who began this uprising with peaceful protests. So we have a moral obligation along with the rest of the world community. It is even a concept in the United Nations that a government has the responsibility to protect its own people, which this Syrian government is not doing.

Secondly, the strategic interest that America has in Syria is, of course, that Asad is the number one ally in the Middle East and Arab world of our number one enemy in the world, which is Iran. And if Asad goes down it will be a significant setback for Iran. The Iranian regime understands this and that is why they have doubled down on their support for Asad. So what do I think we should do? For a long time I've felt that there is a very committed, brave opposition to Asad in Syria. They don't want us to fight for them, but they desperately need weapons from us, and to me that's the most significant thing we can do.

I would also like us to consider assisting the opposition in setting up a safe zone in areas they now control, particularly in the north of Syria. And we, probably with allies in the Arab world and in Europe, will need to provide air cover for a no-fly zone. It could serve as a base not only for training the Syrian opposition army, but more importantly it can serve as the location of a transitional alternative government for Syria. Once that happens, it will send a message to the people of Syria and to Asad that his days are numbered.

JF: When President Obama broadcasts to the Asad regime in Syria that using chemical weapons would be a red line for the U.S., are you concerned that he is essentially telling Asad that anything short of using WMD is acceptable?

JL: Frankly, some of the Syrian opposition reacted that way; they reacted very negatively to President Obama's statement. I'm sure he didn't mean it that way. I'm sure he was trying to give a specific warning to Asad not to use his chemical weapons on his own people. But it was subject to misunderstanding in the context of American policy, which has done less for Asad's opposition than they had hoped and prayed for.

I was in Turkey again last week meeting with the Free Syrian Army, the political opposition to Asad. They are increasingly frustrated, disappointed, and angry that the U.S. has not done more to help them. A day will come when Asad will fall—I hope sooner rather than later—and when that

day comes, as one of the Free Syrian Army colonels told me, they will always remember who was with them and who was not.

JF: Do you think that it is possible for the U.S. to devise a red line for Iran that satisfies the Israelis and is consistent with our strategic interests? And what might that look like?

JL: This is not going to be easy, but the important point is that we do have an overriding American strategic national interest in stopping Iran from becoming a nuclear power. It matters to our safety; it matters to all of our allies in the Middle East, both Israel and the Arab world. They are very anxious about the Iranian nuclear program.

In the specific case of Israel, which obviously is worried based on what Iran's leaders have said about being willing to annihilate the Israelis—they are concerned about whether they should be acting by themselves to stop the Iranian nuclear program. In my opinion, that's not the best course to follow because the Israelis don't possess the military capacity that we have. On the other hand, President Obama has said that he respects that the government of Israel has a responsibility to protect the security of its own people.

So that's where you come to a point where President Obama has to find a better way to spell out to the Israelis that he does not believe it is possible to contain a nuclear Iran, and he is committed to preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear power. But we've got to be more explicit about what that means. And, of course to me, with Iran not responding to sanctions or diplomacy, the Israelis have to understand that America is prepared to use our military might to knock out the Iranian nuclear program because the Iranians will give us no choice sometime soon.

JF: Do you believe that President Obama is at all likely to order a strike on Iran given this administration's track record and our current defense posture?

JL: It's impossible for me to say. People have asked me: Is President Obama capable of launching a military strike on Iran? And I would say yes, he's capable of it. If somebody says, "There is no way that President Obama would ever launch a military attack on Iran's nuclear weapons program," I would say that's not true. I base that on what the president has done in office. It's not just the gutsy decision to send the SEAL team in to take out Osama bin Laden, which had risk involved in it more than other alternatives such as dropping a bomb on that compound. But he has also persistently used drones to strike at terrorists in critical areas of the world. To me, this says that the president is capable of ordering such a strike. Will he? I don't know.

JF: Given the lack of trust between President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu, as well as the stakes for Israel when it comes to Iran, is there something you think that the Israeli leader might be missing from Obama that would enable him to feel a greater degree of confidence that this administration is a reliable partner?

JL: In my opinion the personal relationship between President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu is not as bad as the media makes it out to be. But it's also not as good as we would like it to be. This is not new in the U.S.-Israel relationship over the years. Some presidents have had better relationships with prime ministers, others worse. But this is a critical moment. The Iranian threat is really a very dangerous and significant threat. It's important that the Israelis and Americans work very close together.

President Obama will say that the military and intelligence cooperation between our two countries has probably never been better, and everything I know says that's true. Nonetheless, it's really important that the heads of government, the president and prime minister, are talking to each other regularly and have a deep trust in one another. We are speaking today on September 13.

Two days ago the president and prime minister apparently spent an hour on the phone together. Both sides said it was a good conversation. So the more that happens the better we all should feel, since it means we are actually cooperating in our mutual defense.

And frankly and interestingly, I think when that happens, the leadership of the Arab world feels a growing confidence because they are very concerned about whether the U.S. will take action against the Iranian nuclear program soon enough.

JF: Turning to the domestic front, what combination of tax entitlements and fiscal policies would you recommend to those who will be confronting the problems of a struggling economy, the fiscal cliff, and unsustainable entitlement programs after you leave office?

JL: The best thing we can do to get our economy growing again and creating jobs is to adopt a bipartisan, long-term, balanced budget program. That will give certainty and confidence to our business community, which is now sitting on more liquid assets than ever in our history because they're not confident about what the future holds. If we can create that confidence they'll invest, which will create trillions, which will create more jobs than any government program could.

Secondly, it's clear that something like the Simpson-Bowles recommendation, a bipartisan commission, is the way to fix our debt problem. Right now, with this sequester we are dealing with, all of the savings are coming out of discretionary spending—it's a governmental word, but it basically means what's in the federal government besides entitlements and interest payments. It only amounts to about a third of the budget, and it's not by any means the fastest growing part. So if you're trying to save all the money out of a third of the budget, you're not dealing with the other parts. And the biggest part that's growing the fastest is entitlements, including Medicare and Medicaid. We've got to act together, not to cut Medicare and Medicaid, but to slow the increase in spending for Medicare and Medicaid, or else those programs and the whole federal government will go bankrupt.

The other thing we have to do is raise taxes. You could call it tax reform, it's a good idea. But tax reform, which would lower rates and close some of the loopholes including capping some popular deductions, is the way that we're ultimately going to have to go.

JF: Looking back at your long history of service to this nation, what accomplishments are you most proud of?

JL: I feel overall very grateful for the privilege of serving in the Senate for 24 years. It's really been an honor. And I feel good about a lot of the things I've been able to do in different areas.

Probably the most significant accomplishment I am most proud of is my involvement in keeping our country safe after 9/11. I was the co-sponsor of the legislation that created the Department of Homeland Security. Then another piece of legislation created the 9/11 Commission and then I co-sponsored the legislative recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. All of which together were, I think, the most substantial reforms in our national security agencies since the beginning of the Cold War in the late 1940s because we were facing a new enemy—violent Islamist terrorism. And I believe that legislation has made us a lot safer.

That's probably the most significant thing I've done. There are a lot of other achievements I am proud of as well. I worked on environmental legislation including the Clean Air Act amendments in the early 90s. I've always been very supportive of civil rights and I'm particularly proud that I've played a leading roll in a series of measures aimed at protecting gay and lesbian Americans from discrimination. Probably the most significant was to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

JF: Thank you very much for your time.

Why Khamenei will compromise

Meir Javedanfar, AL Monitor, 23 October 2012

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2012/al-monitor/khamenei-compromise.html>

The Iranian regime is currently facing tough open-ended sanctions. Judging by the recent presidential foreign-policy debate, there is no end on the horizon as neither candidate would be willing to reduce sanctions unless Iran Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei backs down.

The economic challenges posed by the current sanctions are by far the biggest foreign-induced challenge that Khamenei has faced since assuming the role in 1989.

Should the current sanctions and isolation regime imposed by the West against Iran continue in their current format, in my opinion it is highly likely that Khamenei will be forced to make a new set of compromises at the nuclear talks. This could happen within two to three years, at most. Compromises are likely to include the following:

1. Closing Iran's nuclear site at Fordow near Qom
2. Agreeing to ship all of its 20%-enriched uranium abroad for conversion into nuclear fuel
3. Agreeing to answer all outstanding IAEA questions regarding its past nuclear activities
4. Agreeing to a tougher inspection regime for Iran's nuclear facilities
5. Dropping the demand that the West recognize Iran's right to enrich uranium as a precondition (This recognition is likely to be postponed until all other outstanding issues have been resolved.)

The Iranian regime is likely to offer these compromises as part of a step-by-step program. After each step is taken, part of the current sanctions against Iran would be lifted and nuclear fuel would be supplied, at stages agreed on by both parties.

Khamenei is also very likely to insist that ultimately Iran be allowed to enrich at lower levels on its soil. It is likely that the Israeli government would accept such a proposal, as its biggest concern is enrichment at Fordow and Iran's current unwillingness to answer IAEA questions. A clean bill of health for Iran's nuclear program from the IAEA, as well as a subsequent tough inspection regime by it, would alleviate many of Israel's major concerns.

These compromises would be in contrast to Khamenei's current proposal to the P5+1, which does not show any willingness on Iran's part to compromise on its enrichment facility at Fordow or to answer questions about its previous activities to the IAEA. Although president Ahmadinejad has in the past offered to stop enrichment at 20% if nuclear fuel is supplied to Iran, this offer was not pursued as he has no authority over Iran's nuclear program.

Khamenei would need to offer new compromises in order to secure his regime's survival. By allowing the sanctions to continue, Khamenei could ultimately face the economic collapse of his regime. This is a price which Iran's most powerful man would be unwilling to pay. Nothing is worth more to him than the stability of his government.

There are numerous reasons behind the Iranian regime's inability to get through the current challenges without having to offer a new set of compromises. The supreme leader's style of leadership and its consequences are one of them.

Khamenei is no Mohammad Mossadegh. In other words, he has failed to convert his nuclear policies into a nationalistic consensus issue as Mossadegh was able to do with his oil-nationalization policies. This is due to numerous reasons. Khamenei does not have the charisma and, more importantly, the nationalist credentials of the former prime minister, who was overthrown by the CIA and MI6 in 1953. Also, Mossadegh was elected democratically, whereas Khamenei was not. Mossadegh had the backing of the majority of the Iranian people, whereas I believe that Khamenei only has the support of a minority.

When Mossadegh resigned in 1952 and was replaced by Ahmad Qavam, protests erupted after he announced his intention to reverse Mossadegh's stance and to negotiate with the British in order to end the oil dispute. However, if Khamenei announces that he is willing to show compromise at the nuclear talks, instead of protesting, many inside Iran are likely to celebrate.

Evidence of Khamenei's failure to make the nuclear issue into a nationalistic one are not difficult to find. These include his refusal to hold a referendum on the issue, something which opposition leader Mir-Hossein Mousavi has called for. Even online questions on this issue are prevented after a recent poll on the the Islamic Republic of Iran News Network's (IRINN) website showed 63% of respondents want the regime to compromise at the nuclear talks. That poll was soon removed and nothing similar has appeared since.

Khamenei is no Ruhollah Khomeini either. He does not have the credentials of Iran's charismatic leader of the 1979 revolution. Khomeini managed to unite the regime behind him for eight years to fight Saddam Hussein. This is in addition to being able to get through numerous domestic challenges. Khamenei has failed to create such unity. His falling out with every single president who has served under him including Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is testimony of the divisive nature of his leadership. This is in addition to the 2009 post-election uprising in Iran, something which never happened under Khomeini as he was more successful in uniting the different regime factions. This is one of the reasons why the regime has failed to create the same atmosphere which Khomeini did during Iran's war against Saddam's army.

This failure has meant that Khamenei has needed to buy the loyalty of those around him, especially Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), far more than Khomeini had to do. Lack of oil income could reduce the IRGC's loyalty. It could also create more infighting between the different factions, conflicts that until recently had been contained by regime funds. Such important factors are likely to be crucial in Khamenei's likely decision to make new nuclear compromises.

There are other reasons which make it improbable for the regime to get through the current open-ended sanctions. These include massive economic mismanagement by Ahmadinejad that has ravaged Iran's economy for the last eight years, adding to the negative impact of sanctions. It also seems that the regime was caught off guard as it did not believe that US President Barack Obama would be able to impose such extensive sanctions. This has meant that it is economically unprepared to meet the challenge of the current sanctions in the long term.

The same challenges that are likely to force Khamenei to make nuclear compromises are also likely to deter him from making a mad dash for the bomb. His regime is too divided, too economically weak and most probably, too concerned about the concerns of the military attack this could invite. Israel's prime minister may not have heard Obama's red line, but Iran's supreme leader is likely to have heard Obama's declaration that when it comes to a nuclear Iran, containment is "no option" loud and clear.

'Israel has moved to the right, but it is not an apartheid state'

Benjamin Pogrund, The Guardian UK, 26 October 2012

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/oct/26/israel-arabs-not-apartheid?INTCMP=SRCH>

That Israel's Jewish public has moved sharply to the right in recent years is well known. There's a rightwing government to prove it – and so beyond challenge is Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, and so confident about his hold on power, that he has called early elections for January. Indeed the government will shift even further to the right with this week's dramatic announcement that Netanyahu's Likud party will join forces for the elections with the foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel Our Home).

Lieberman, who speaks for many of the Russian immigrants who form about 20% of the population, stands well to the right of even the rightwing Likud, so Netanyahu could run into problems with some of his own members in addition to their resentment at being pushed down the list for parliamentary seats. If the link endures greater curtailment of civil liberties can be expected, harsher attitudes towards Israeli Arabs who also form about 20% of the population, and less influence for Jewish religious parties.

Even with all this, the extent of the hostility expressed by Israeli Jews towards the country's Arab citizens, reported in an opinion survey this week, still comes as a shock: among much else, 42% said they don't want their children in the same school class with Arab children and 42% don't want to live in the same building with Arabs.

A second look moderates the shock. The survey notes that those with the strongest anti-Arab prejudices are religious and ultra-Orthodox Jews – and this is no surprise. Rabbis incite feelings against Arabs and issue circulars urging Jews not to rent or sell property to Arabs.

The ultra-Orthodox go further and not only shun Arabs but, perhaps even more, fellow Jews and especially those who are secular. The ultra-Orthodox keep their children in their own separate schools and live in their own separate neighbourhoods. Not only do they keep seculars and Arabs, and indeed the whole world, at bay but they also discriminate among themselves: many Ashkenazim (Jews of Western origin) view Sephardim (Jews who originate mainly from Arab countries) as less "pure" in their practice of Judaism and thus some Ashkenazi schools for girls impose a quota for Sephardim.

The survey's picture is very different for the secular – who form the majority of Israel's Jews: 73% did not object to having Arabs in their children's school, and 68% would live in an apartment building alongside Arabs.

These are remarkably positive views in light of the effect of the Palestinian suicide bombings during the Second Intifada in driving many Israeli Jews to the right, plus the continuing threats to Israel's existence by Iran and Palestinian militants and their supporters in the world. The firing of rockets and mortars – more than 80 this week – at southern Israel from the Gaza Strip by Hamas and others adds to antipathy towards Palestinians. Rightwing leaders gain support by playing on Jewish fears.

The survey's handling of Jewish views about the West Bank, based on a hypothetical annexation by Israel, raises questions about the way it was conducted and how the results were presented to the public: 69% of Israeli Jews, according to the survey, would oppose giving the West Bank's 2.5 million Palestinians the vote inside Israel. The summary of the survey is headlined: "In case of annexation, most Jews will support apartheid."

I know about apartheid. I was born in South Africa and spent 26 years as a journalist specialising in reporting apartheid; I have also written several books about it. I only left South Africa because

my newspaper, the Rand Daily Mail, of which I was then deputy editor, was closed down by its commercial owners under pressure from the government. We paid the price for being the country's leading voice against apartheid.

I also am familiar with Israel. I have lived in Jerusalem since 1997 and for more than 12 years was founder director of the Yakar Center for Social Concern whose purpose was to promote dialogue between Jews and Christians, Jews and Muslims, and Israelis and Palestinians. I was surprised by the survey's findings: could it really be true that most Jews in Israel support apartheid?

Scratch this a little bit and there is a much simpler explanation than alleged "apartheid" for so many opposing giving Palestinians the vote: to do so would, in demographic terms, mean the end of Israel as a Jewish state; on the other hand, denying Palestinians the vote in a one-nation state would end Israel's democratic basis.

With all the survey's references to "apartheid" it cannot be said how those interviewed understood the word. Was it explained to them? How?

The apartheid theme was projected strongly in Haaretz, Israel's liberal newspaper. The writer, Gideon Levy, is famed for his exposes of the evils of occupation; he is also one of the small, perhaps tiny, number of Israeli journalists and academics who seek to pin the "apartheid" tag on Israel.

He wrote that, "a sweeping 74% majority is in favour of separate roads for Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank". But the sentence that follows needs to be noted: 24% believed separate roads were "a good situation" and 54% believed they were "a necessary situation". Decoded, this gets to the heart of the issue of the separate roads which Israel has built for some settlements. Critics say this is apartheid. But as the 54% indicate, they see it as a security issue; that is, it is the (expensive and extravagant) way to counter drive-by and roadside shootings which have killed many settlers. Nor (and this is little understood) are the roads only for Jews: the cars allowed on it are those with Israeli black and yellow number plates, irrespective of whether the driver is an Israeli Jew or Arab; the barred cars are those with Palestinian green and white plates.

Levy's report said that the survey had been commissioned by the US-based New Israel Fund's Yisraela Goldblum Fund. But the New Israel Fund, a major player in fostering equality and democracy in Israel, quickly announced that it had nothing to do with the survey. With equal speed its deputy communications director, Noam Shelef, wrote in New York's Daily Beast that the survey actually shows that Israelis want to separate themselves from the West Bank: "So, claiming the poll demonstrates support for 'apartheid' is spin at its worst." He said it "seems to amount to a misrepresentation of the data".

Whatever attitudes might be claimed for Israel's Jewish public the situation on the ground does not support accusations of apartheid. The Arab population, some 20%, certainly suffers discrimination but to liken their lot to apartheid South Africa is baseless, indeed ridiculous. Arabs have the vote, which in itself makes them fundamentally different from South Africa's black population under apartheid. And even the current rightwing government says that it wants to overcome Arab disadvantage and promises action to upgrade education and housing and increase job opportunities. Of course time will show how genuine it is.

The West Bank is a linked but separate issue: it's a military occupation which, in its nature, is violent and discriminatory. Trying to put an erroneous apartheid label on it confuses and distorts and is propagandistic.

Why do I dismiss the apartheid analogies so emphatically? Because I straddle both apartheid South Africa and Israel today and have knowledge of the good and the ill in both societies.

- Comments on this article are set to remain open for 24 hours from the time of publication but may be closed overnight
- The original headline of this article, "Israel is hostile towards Arabs, but it is not an apartheid state", was changed at 17:46 on 26 October 2012 at the request of the author

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South African Zionist Federation

Tel : (011) 645-2505

Fax: (011) 640-6758

E-mail: froma@beyachad.co.za

Website: [<http://sazionfed.co.za](http://sazionfed.co.za)

PBO NUMBER: 930014277