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Article 1.

Al-Monitor

Why Khamenei Will Compromise

Meir Javedanfar

Oct 25, 2012 -- 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:

- Closing Iran's nuclear site at Fordow near Qom
- Agreeing to ship all of its 20%-enriched uranium abroad for conversion into nuclear fuel
- Agreeing to answer all outstanding IAEA

questions regarding its past nuclear activities

- Agreeing to a tougher inspection regime for Iran's nuclear facilities
- 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 prposal 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.

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Article 2.

The Newsweek/Daily Beast

In Saudi Arabia and Israel, Signals That Iran Has Retaliation in Works

Bruce Riedel

October 26, 2012 -- The Iranians and their Hizbullah ally are sending warning signals about how they might fight a future war with the United States and Israel. The signals aren't subtle—Tehran intends to retaliate for any attack on its nuclear facilities with blows against America's allies in the region, hitting their most sensitive oil and nuclear facilities.

A Palestinian man listens to a speech by Hizbullah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah on Hizbullah's Al-Manar TV, Oct. 11, 2012. Hassan Nasrallah claimed Thursday responsibility for sending a drone which "flew over important installations" in Israel on Oct. 6 and was downed over the northern part of the Negev desert. (Wissam Nassar, Xinhua / Landov)

The U.S and Iran have been adversaries since 1979; we fought an undeclared naval war in the late 1980s. The American presidential election has seen both candidates threaten Iran with military action if it does not forsake development of a nuclear arsenal and halt its nuclear enrichment program. Iran has long threatened it will retaliate dramatically and decisively if it is attacked by the U.S., Israel or both. Now it is

showing some of its plans for doing just that.

On Aug. 15, a cyberattack hit Saudi oil giant Aramco with devastating results. According to U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, 30,000 computer workstations were rendered useless and had to be replaced. Aramco, which Forbes magazine ranks as the world's largest oil company and is the key to Saudi Arabia's production, had data on many of its hard drives erased and replaced with photos of a burning U.S. flag. Panetta did not directly accuse Iran of responsibility, but other U.S. officials have pointed right at Tehran. Panetta concluded that Iran has "undertaken a concerted effort to use cyberspace to its advantage."

A few days later in Qatar, a similar virus attacked the RasGas natural-gas company, a joint venture between Exxon Mobil and the state-owned Qatar Petroleum, which operates the world's largest natural-gas field. According to Panetta, the two attacks were "probably the most destructive attack the private sector has seen to date." Neither attack directly targeted the sensitive Aramco and RasGas computer systems that operate the oil industry itself—the attacks were more aimed at its management systems.

The timing was significant. The attack was launched on the eve of the Islamic holy "night of power," or Lailat al Qadr, which commemorates when the Quran was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. Shia Muslims believe it also coincides with the date on which Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, was fatally wounded by a poison-coated

sword in Iraq. The Saudi and Qatari governments would understand the message clearly; Iran can attack your economy. In effect: we don't need to shut the Strait of Hormuz, we will shut down your computer instead.

At least the Saudi attack was an inside job. According to The New York Times, a company insider or insiders probably inserted a memory stick that contained the virus. Aramco has almost 60,000 employees, about 70 percent of which are Shia Muslims from the kingdom's Eastern Province along the Persian Gulf, and where almost all of Saudi Arabia's oil is found. The Saudi Shia community has been in a state of growing unrest since the start of the Arab Awakening in 2011. There have been increasingly violent protests against the House of Saud in the Shia community, which has long faced discrimination by the Saudis. Since Saudi troops crossed the King Fahd Causeway last year to suppress demonstrations in neighboring Bahrain by the Shia majority there, anger at the Saudi royal family has become even more pronounced among Shia in Eastern Province. Aramco, in short, is a target-rich environment for angry Saudi Shia with ties to Iran. Only a tiny minority would need to seek Iranian technical help to penetrate the digital heart of the kingdom's oil industry.

The Saudi Ministry of Interior has long been obsessed with Iranian intelligence activity among the Shia minority. The ministry has always believed a Shia terror group with links to Iran was responsible for the

1996 attack on the U.S. air base in Khobar that killed 19 U.S. servicemen and wounded 372 Americans, Saudis, and other nationalities. The Khobar Towers are located close to Aramco headquarters in Dhahran. The Oct. 6 drone was intended to signal Israel that both Iran and Hizbullah see Dimona as an attractive target for missile attacks if Iran is attacked.

Hizbullah followed up the cyberattack with a drone mission on Oct. 6. An Iranian-built surveillance drone dubbed Ayoub flew from Lebanon into southern Israel before being shot down by the Israeli air force. Officials from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Force told the Al Arabiya newspaper that the target was the Israeli nuclear reactor at Dimona, the centerpiece of Israel's nuclear program. Hizbullah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, later gave a speech taking credit for the drone flight and warned Israel that more would follow. Again the timing was no accident. It was the 39th anniversary of the start of the 1973 war, the devastating Arab-Israeli conflict in which 10,000 Israelis were killed or wounded. It was also a stunning failure for Israeli intelligence, which failed to see the attack coming until just hours before Egypt and Syria struck. Hizbullah was warning it, too, might surprise Israel. At the Israel Defense Forces, Major General Aviv Kochavi, director of military intelligence, estimates that Hizbullah today has some 80,000 rockets and missiles aimed at Israel from Lebanon.

The Oct. 6 drone was intended to signal Israel that both Iran and Hizbullah see Dimona as an attractive target for missile attacks if Iran is attacked.

Iran's capabilities to inflict substantial damage on the Saudi and other gulf-state oil industries by cyberwarfare are difficult for outsiders to assess. Iran is a relative newcomer; until now, it has been mostly a victim. Iranian and Hizbullah abilities to penetrate Israel's anti-missile defenses are also hard to estimate. Those defenses are among the best in the world, thanks to years of U.S. military assistance and Israeli ingenuity. So it is hard to know how hard Iran can really strike back if it is attacked. Bluffing and chest-thumping are a big part of the Iranian game plan. But the virus and the drone together sent a signal, don't underestimate Iran.

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Article 3.

Foreign Policy

Why Is Qatar Mucking Around in Gaza?

David B. Roberts

October 25, 2012 -- A deeply contrarian streak has taken hold in Qatar these days. Insulated by U.S. security guarantees, eager to use its burgeoning fiscal reserves, and propelled by its elites' reformist zeal, Doha continues to exert a disproportionate influence

on regional politics. Emir Hamad bin Khalifah Al Thani's latest move was a dramatic visit to the Gaza Strip, becoming the first head of state to visit the Palestinian territory since Hamas wrested control of it in 2007.

Unlike some of its less imaginative Arab rivals, Qatar saw Hamas's regional isolation as an opportunity rather than a problem. Despite its alliance with the United States, Doha has been nurturing its ties with the Palestinian Islamist group for some time: Its worst kept secret is that Khaled Meshal, Hamas's leader, has had a house there for many years and has been increasingly seen in Doha since Hamas was forced to leave Syria in early 2012. Doha has also opened its pocketbook to Hamas, pledging $250 million in February -- a gift that was increased to $400 million upon the emir's visit.

The injection of funds, however, is not the most important aspect of Sheikh Hamad's trip. By breaking Hamas's regional isolation and explicitly recognizing its rule over Gaza, Doha has strengthened the militant group's hand against its Palestinian rivals. An official from the Palestinian Authority, which is in charge of the West Bank, begrudgingly welcomed the visit while noting that "no one should deal with Gaza as a separate entity from the Palestinian territories and from the Palestinian Authority."

Unlike the Palestinian Authority, Israel felt no need to Israel soften its criticism. An Israeli spokesman carped bitterly about the emir's trip, saying that the emir was "throwing peace under a bus."

The visit further highlights Israel's loss of influence with Qatar. Relations between the two countries warmed with the opening of an Israeli trade office in Doha in 1996 (reputedly close to Meshal's house) as the two sides looked to ship Qatari gas to Israel, with Enron acting as the intermediary. The deal failed, however, and relations ebbed and flowed until December 2008, when Qatar cut ties in protest of Israel's offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Rumors that Doha was attempting to restart relations were finally put to rest with a leaked memo from Israel's Foreign Ministry labelling Qatar as a "leading activist" against Israel, decisively cutting whatever informal relations remained.

The Iranian angle

Iran, with whom Qatar maintains cordial official relations, joins Israel and the Palestinian Authority in an unlikely triumvirate watching proceedings in Gaza with glum resignation. Tehran officials are doubtlessly looking back nostalgically to happier times only a few years back, when their proxy Hezbollah all but defeated the Zionist Entity -- winning Iran no small degree of Arab support for its material support to the Lebanese militant organization. Back then, Hamas was also still ensconced in Iran's camp, and Syria was a stable ally that appeared to be gradually increasing its influence in the Middle East.

Indeed, while Israel and the Palestinian Authority may view Qatar's embrace of Hamas with chagrin, it is Iran that is the central loser in this drama. The emir's visit is part of a larger Qatari policy to unseat and reorient

crucial Iranian allies around the Middle East -- and by extension, amputate a long-used, effective limb of Iranian foreign policy. This is a remarkably forthright policy, for Iran will not -- and cannot -- take it lying down.

This new policy is most evident in Syria, where Qatar is explicitly and unashamedly supporting the 19-month insurgency with money, equipment, and at the very least light weaponry -- little less than a declaration of war against President Bashar al-Assad, Iran's core ally.

But Qatar's new activism is also apparent in Gaza, where Doha has likely decided to take action precisely because of Hamas's break from Iran. When Tehran stopped sending money to Hamas after the group failed to publically support Iran's embattled ally in Syria, Qatar saw an opportunity to split the Palestinian group from its long-time sponsor. While its $400 million donation is earmarked for humanitarian development, not only is such support fungible, but there are doubtless other financial arrangements being made between Qatar and Hamas on this trip -- further strengthening the ties between the Palestinian Islamist movement and Doha.

This move will, of course, catalyze another round of speculation that Qatar is supporting the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood across the Arab world. That Qatar's supports the Brotherhood is not in doubt -- indeed, it hardly tries to conceal its efforts at engaging with the Islamist movement in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria and now with Hamas, another Brotherhood

offshoot. Yet Qatar is not nefariously trying to replace the Shia Crescent with a Brotherhood Banana, curving from Syria through Gaza, Egypt, and on to Libya and Tunisia. Doha is much more pragmatic and less Machiavellian than that: It is leveraging its relations where they exist, and looking to bolster popular, effective, moderate Muslim parties with whom it has relations.

Qatar's vanguard role in weakening a key plank of Iranian foreign policy indicates that Doha must feel deeply secure with its relationship with Tehran, for it would hardly undertake such aggressive moves if it felt imminently threatened. Indeed, there is an obvious flashpoint between the two regional powers: Qatar and Iran share the world's largest gas field, which has been responsible for Qatar's recent spike in wealth. Traditionally, this has meant that Qatar treated Iran with a great deal of respect. Relations were carefully improved in the 1990s as the field was being developed, as Doha sought to avoid an escalation after numerous instances of Iran attacking and stealing equipment from unmanned Qatari gas rigs.

Today, Qatar's relations with Iran are as pleasant as ever on the surface. However, the fact that Qatar is overturning one of the key tenets of its foreign policy by antagonizing Iran is a surprising and forthright move by the Qatari elite, which clearly does not accept conventional limits on what is and what is not possible in the Middle East.

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Article 4.

Foreign Affairs

Why Israel Should Trade Its Nukes

Uri Bar-Joseph

October 25, 2012 -- On September 19, to nobody's surprise, Shaul Chorev, the director-general of Israel's Atomic Energy Commission, announced that his government would not attend an upcoming conference devoted to establishing a nuclear-free Middle East. The announcement reaffirmed Israel's long-standing position that a nuclear-free zone can come about only as a consequence of a lasting regional peace. Until such a peace is achieved, Jerusalem will not take any tangible steps toward eliminating its nuclear weapons. At least on the face of it, this stand is sensible. For 45 years, Israel has been the only nuclear power in the Middle East, enjoying a formidable strategic safety net against any existential threat. Since 1957, Israel has invested tremendous resources in building up a solid nuclear arsenal in Dimona. Today, according to various estimates, this stockpile comprises some 100–300 devices, including two-stage thermonuclear warheads and a variety of delivery systems, the most important of which are modern German-built submarines, which constitute the backbone of Israel's

second-strike capability. For Israel to give up these assets in the midst of an ongoing conflict strikes most Israelis as irrational.

This consensus, however, overlooks the fact that Israel's nuclear capability has not played an important role in the country's defense. [1] Unlike other nuclear-armed states, Israel initiated its nuclear project not because of an opponent's real or imagined nuclear capability but because of the worry that, in the long run, Arab conventional forces would outstrip the power of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). As early as the 1950s, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion sought to manage the threat of modernizing Arab armies, which were inspired by pan-Arab sentiment and backed by the Soviet Union, by developing the ultimate deterrent. Shimon Peres, the architect of Israel's nuclear program and now Israel's president, relentlessly argued in public speeches and writings that Israel needed to compensate for the large size of the Arab armies with "science" -- a code word for nuclear arms.

As it turned out, however, Arab conventional superiority never materialized. Ever since Israel crossed the nuclear threshold on the eve of the 1967 war, the qualitative gap between Israel's conventional forces and those of its Arab neighbors has only grown. Today, particularly as the Syrian army slowly disintegrates, the IDF could decisively rout any combination of Arab (and Iranian) conventional forces. This advantage, combined with the United States' support for Israel, is what has kept Arab

countries from taking up arms against the Jewish state -- not the fear of nuclear retaliation.

If, of course, Iran were to obtain a nuclear weapon, the arsenal at Dimona would no longer be irrelevant; it would be an important hedge against Iran. But far from being a secure balance, as the international relations theorist Kenneth Waltz has argued [2], this state of affairs would be highly unstable, especially at first. The two states deeply distrust one another and lack any effective channels of communications. Since Iran would not have a second-strike capability and the Israelis often prefer preemption in conflicts, Jerusalem might be tempted to launch a nuclear first strike. Moreover, other nearby countries, such as Saudi Arabia, might themselves seek nuclear weapons, further destabilizing the region and raising the possibility of an unintentional nuclear exchange. Fearing the prospect of living in the shadow of such terror, many Israeli officials have openly called for a military strike to halt Iran's nuclear program. They are spurred by anxieties that are deeply rooted in Israeli culture, stemming from the trauma of the Holocaust and of two thousand years of perceived and real victimhood throughout the Jewish Diaspora. Israeli leaders, particularly Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, now evince a belief that the country can rely only on itself when it comes to ensuring its security and its existence.

The problem for Israel, however, is that a strike on Iran might carry grave consequences, especially since the IDF cannot completely destroy Iran's nuclear

infrastructure on its own. Israel can delay Iran's nuclearization, but it cannot prevent it. Meanwhile, a military strike could provoke a great backlash, including missile and rocket attacks by Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas on Israeli population centers. Just as worrisome, a strike would provide the Iranian regime with a handy justification for its decision to go nuclear.

And so Israel finds itself in a strategic dilemma: it considers an Iranian bomb an existential threat, but it cannot stop Iran's nuclearization by itself or without provoking an unpredictable backlash.

Fortunately, Israel has a way out of this strategic limbo: by agreeing to give up its nuclear arsenal. Instead of rejecting the calls for a region free of weapons of mass destruction, Jerusalem could participate in such an initiative -- joining in a similar sacrifice by all other regional actors, including Iran. The conventional wisdom is that this would be a bad bargain for Israel, giving up too much in exchange for too little. But such a bold move could set in motion a long-term process that might end the bitter stalemate over Iran's nuclear program. Iran has been calling for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East since 1974 and perceives the Israeli arsenal as a great threat, so it will have no choice but to support the initiative. And purely from a security perspective, Israel would be safer in a WMD-free region. It would maintain its conventional superiority and its ability to deter conventional challenges -- all the while eliminating the prospect of nonconventional threats, such as an

Iranian nuclear bomb or Syrian chemical weapons. Of course, Israel is not likely to actually abandon its own nuclear arsenal anytime soon, and, even if it did, it would not lose the know-how and the capability to produce nuclear arms in the future. But a change in policy that started Israel in this direction would at the very least increase the pressure on Iran to give up its own nuclear project.

Several developments might eventually encourage Jerusalem to take the plunge. As Iran inches its way to a bomb, the status quo of the last 45 years, during which Israel succeeded in maintaining its regional nuclear monopoly with hardly any external pressures, is becoming increasingly untenable. If Israel does ultimately resort to the unilateral use of military force against Iran, international pressure will build for Israel to give up its strategy of nuclear opacity [3], to come clean about its own arsenal, and to take tangible steps toward establishing a nuclear-free Middle East. After all, the logic of using force to secure a nuclear monopoly flies in the face of international norms. The same pressure might come about if the international sanctions against Iran prove to be successful and Tehran agrees to limit the country's nuclear development, or if an American-led coalition destroys Iran's nuclear facilities. Moving toward a nuclear-free Middle East may be the price that Jerusalem will be asked to pay for the efforts taken by the international community to bail Israel out of a threatening situation. On the other hand, if Iran does become a nuclear state, Israeli voters may pressure their government to give

up the country's nuclear weapons in exchange for Iran doing the same. According to a 2011 survey conducted by Shibley Telhami of the University of Maryland, 65 percent of Israeli Jews prefer that neither Iran nor Israel have nuclear weapons.
Israel's nuclear capability has never been essential for the defense of the country, and it would become important only if Iran were to get its own nuclear weapon. But that dangerous outcome, especially for a one-bomb state like Israel, need not materialize. If Israel commits to a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, offering up its own nuclear capability as a bargaining chip, it may finally make good use of its most controversial strategic asset.

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Links:

[1] http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137374/dmitry-adamsky/why-israel-should-learn-to-stop-worrying-and-love-the-bomb?gp=134621:d83124a950ad18a2
[2] http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137731/kenneth-n-waltz/why-iran-should-get-the-bomb?gp=134957:57f66a6e50ad1831
[3] http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66569/avner-cohen-and-marvin-miller/bringing-israels-bomb-out-of-the-basement?gp=66682:bf11089c50ad1821

Article 5.

Wall Street Journal

The Islamist Threat Isn't Going Away

Michael J. Totten

October 25, 2012 -- President Barack Obama and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney wrapped up their trilogy of presidential debates on Monday this week and spent most of the evening arguing foreign policy. Each demonstrated a reasonable grasp of how the world works and only sharply disagreed with his opponent on the margins and in the details. But they both seem to think, 11 years after 9/11, that calibrating just the right policy recipe will reduce Islamist extremism and anti-Americanism in the Middle East. They're wrong.

Mr. Romney said it first, early in the debate: "We're going to have to put in place a very comprehensive and robust strategy to help the world of Islam . . . reject this violent extremism." Later Mr. Obama spoke as though this objective is already on its way to being accomplished: "When Tunisians began to protest," he said, "this nation, me, my administration, stood with them earlier than just about any other country. In Egypt, we stood on the side of democracy. In Libya, we stood on the side of the people. And as a consequence, there is no doubt that attitudes about Americans have changed."

The Middle East desperately needs economic development, better education, the rule of law and gender equality, as Mr. Romney says. And Mr. Obama was right to take the side of citizens against dictators—especially in Libya, where Moammar Gadhafi ran one of the most thoroughly repressive

police states in the world, and in Syria, where Bashar Assad has turned the country he inherited into a prison spattered with blood. But both presidential candidates are kidding themselves if they think anti-Americanism and the appeal of radical Islam will vanish any time soon.

First, it's simply not true that attitudes toward Americans have changed in the region. I've spent a lot of time in Tunisia and Egypt, both before and after the revolutions, and have yet to meet or interview a single person whose opinion of Americans has changed an iota.

Second, pace Mr. Romney, promoting better education, the rule of law and gender equality won't reduce the appeal of radical Islam. Egyptians voted for Islamist parties by a two-to-one margin. Two-thirds of those votes went to the Muslim Brotherhood, and the other third went to the totalitarian Salafists, the ideological brethren of Osama bin Laden. These people are not even remotely interested in the rule of law, better education or gender equality. They want Islamic law, Islamic education and gender apartheid. They will resist Mr. Romney's pressure for a more liberal alternative and denounce him as a meddling imperialist just for bringing it up. Anti-Americanism has been a default political position in the Arab world for decades. Radical Islam is the principal vehicle through which it's expressed at the moment, but anti-Americanism specifically, and anti-Western "imperialism" generally, likewise lie at the molten core of secular Arab nationalism of every variety. The

Islamists hate the U.S. because it's liberal and decadent. (The riots in September over a ludicrous Internet video ought to make that abundantly clear.) And both Islamists and secularists hate the U.S. because it's a superpower.

Everything the United States does is viewed with suspicion across the political spectrum. Gamal Abdel Gawad Soltan, the director of Egypt's Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, admitted as much to me in Cairo last summer when I asked him about NATO's war against Gadhafi in Libya. "There is a general sympathy with the Libyan people," he said, "but also concern about the NATO intervention. The fact that the rebels in Libya are supported by NATO is why many people here are somewhat restrained from voicing support for the rebels." When I asked him what Egyptians would think if the U.S. sat the war out, he said, "They would criticize NATO for not helping. It's a lose-lose situation for you."

So we're damned if we do and we're damned if we don't. And not just on Libya. An enormous swath of the Arab world supported the Iraqi insurgency after an American-led coalition overthrew Saddam Hussein. Thousands of non-Iraqi Arabs even showed up to fight. Yet today the U.S. is roundly criticized all over the region for not taking Assad out in Syria.

The U.S. has decent relations with Tunisia's elected coalition government, yet nearly every liberal Tunisian I interviewed a few months ago looks at that and sees a big conspiracy between Americans and Islamists. The Islamists, of course, see U.S. plots against them.

We can't win.
We can't even win when we stand against Israel. President Dwight D. Eisenhower tried that during the Suez Crisis in 1956. He backed Egypt, not Israel, and not Britain or France. How did Egypt and its ruler Gamal Abdel Nasser pay back the U.S.? By forging an alliance with Moscow and making Egypt a Soviet client state for two decades.
Libyans are the big exception. They're more pro-American than their neighbors, and they're less prone to extremism. American flags are a common sight there—absolutely unheard of everywhere else in the Arab world. The Islamists lost the post-Gadhafi elections. The only demonstrations there recently were against the terrorist cell that assassinated U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three others at the American consulate in Benghazi. Just a few weeks later, another group of demonstrators forced an Islamist militia to flee town by overrunning their headquarters.
Here Mr. Obama deserves credit. After all, he helped get rid of Gadhafi. But Libyans were already something of an exception. They were force-fed anti-American propaganda daily for decades, but it came from a lunatic and malevolent tyrant they hated. Libyans and Americans were quietly on the same side longer than most people there have been alive. Libya has at least that much in common with Eastern Europe during the communist period. Unfortunately, that just isn't true of anywhere else.
When he was elected president in 2008, Mr. Obama

thought he could improve America's relations with the Arab world by not being George W. Bush, by creating some distance between himself and Israel, and by delivering a friendly speech in Cairo. He was naïve. He should know better by now, especially after the unpleasantness last month in the countries where he thinks we're popular.

It's not his fault that the Middle East is immature and unhinged politically. Nobody can change that right now. This should be equally obvious to Mr. Romney even though he isn't president. No American president since Eisenhower could change it, nor can Mr. Romney. We may be able to help out here and there, and I wholeheartedly agree with him that we should. But Arab countries will mostly have to work this out on their own.

It will take a long time.

Mr. Totten is a contributing editor at World Affairs and City Journal, and is the prize-winning author of "Where the West Ends" (Belmont Estate, 2012) and "The Road to Fatima Gate" (Encounter, 2011).

Article 6.

The New York Times

How Castro Held the World Hostage

James G. Blight and Janet M. Lang

October 25, 2012 -- ON Oct. 26-27, 1962, human civilization came close to being destroyed. Schoolchildren were ordered into shelters; supermarket shelves were emptied of soup cans and bottled water. It was the most perilous moment of the Cuban missile crisis, and of the cold war. But the danger of Armageddon did not begin, as legend has it, when the United States learned that Soviet missiles had reached Cuba's shores earlier that month. Rather, it was driven by Fidel Castro's fears and insecurities after the botched Bay of Pigs invasion and by the failures of President John F. Kennedy and Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev to take him seriously. With Soviet missiles stationed on the island and America poised to attack, Cuba 50 years ago was far more dangerous than Iran or North Korea is today. But the 1962 crisis shows that a small, determined revolutionary state, backed into a corner and convinced of its inevitable demise, can bring the world to the brink of catastrophe.

Twenty years ago, we spent four days in Havana discussing the missile crisis with Mr. Castro, former Soviet officials and American decision makers from the Kennedy administration, including the former defense secretary Robert S. McNamara.

Mr. Castro's interest had been piqued by the declassification and release of Soviet and American documents in 1991 and 1992, which both surprised and angered him. These included long-suppressed

passages from memoirs, released 20 years after Khrushchev's death, in which he wrote that Mr. Castro had become irrational and possibly suicidal and that the crisis had to end before Cuba ignited a nuclear war.

In addition, declassified letters between Khrushchev and Kennedy revealed the extent to which Washington and Moscow cut Cuba out of negotiations, refused to consider Cuban demands and eventually resolved the crisis in spite of Mr. Castro's objections. So to truly understand how the world came close to Armageddon, one must look not to Washington and Moscow but to Havana.

After the American-sponsored Bay of Pigs debacle, Fidel Castro, then just 35 but already Cuba's unquestioned ruler, drew an astonishing conclusion. "The result of aggression against Cuba will be the start of a conflagration of incalculable consequences, and they will be affected too," he told the Cuban people. "It will no longer be a matter of them feasting on us. They will get as good as they give."

For the next 18 months, Mr. Castro prepared for nuclear Armageddon, while Kennedy and Khrushchev sleepwalked toward the abyss. Focused on their global competition, the United States and the Soviet Union were clueless about the mind-set of the smaller, weaker, poorer party. Kennedy wanted Cuba off his agenda and he resolved never again to cave in to his hawkish advisers and critics, who had continued clamoring for an invasion of the island, even after the Bay of Pigs disaster.

Khrushchev, for his part, was worried about "losing Cuba" and decided in early 1962 to offer nuclear missiles to Mr. Castro to deter the invasion they both believed was being planned but that Kennedy was privately resolved to avoid. But as Khrushchev wrote in his memoirs, the Soviet Union never intended to actually use the missiles; they were merely pawns in a game of superpower competition.

However, Mr. Castro believed the fundamental purpose of Soviet nuclear weapons was to destroy the United States in the event of an invasion. After centuries of humiliation and irrelevance, he concluded, Cuba would matter fundamentally to the fate of humanity. Cuba couldn't prevent the onslaught, nor could it expect to survive it. He insisted that the Cubans and Russians on the island would resist "to the last day and the last man, woman or child capable of holding a weapon."

Around noon on Oct. 26, Mr. Castro summoned the Soviet ambassador, Aleksandr Alekseev, to his command post. Mr. Castro couldn't understand why Soviet troops in Cuba were sitting on their hands while American planes were flying over the island with impunity. He urged them to start shooting at U-2 spy planes with surface-to-air missiles and suggested that Cuban troops should begin firing on low-flying planes with antiaircraft guns, contrary to Soviet wishes. Alekseev promised to relay Mr. Castro's complaints to the Kremlin. Alekseev later told us he felt "almost schizophrenic" when he sent the cables to Moscow, because it was his duty to represent the

cautious Soviet position, yet he himself, like Mr. Castro, expected an American onslaught. At that moment, “I was almost 100 percent Cuban,” he recalled.

While Cuba was preparing for nuclear war, Khrushchev and Kennedy were, unbeknown to Mr. Castro, moving toward a peaceful resolution of the crisis. Terrified that a catastrophic war might break out, Khrushchev took the initiative even as Kennedy was preparing an offer of his own. He wrote to Kennedy on Oct. 26: “Let us then display statesmenlike wisdom. I propose: we, for our part, will declare that our ships bound for Cuba are not carrying any armaments. You will declare that the United States will not invade Cuba with its troops and will not support any other forces which might intend to invade Cuba. Then the necessity for the presence of our military specialists in Cuba will be obviated.” It would take another three agonizing weeks to work out the details, but Kennedy and Khrushchev had finally locked onto a common wavelength.

All these letters (except those delivered over the radio at the peak of the crisis) were methodically dictated, translated, encrypted and then transmitted. Such slow communication in a time of crisis seems inconceivable today, but at the heart of the cold war absolute secrecy was the objective, not speed. (It was only after the missile crisis that the “red phone” hot line between the White House and the Kremlin was installed.)

Unaware of Kennedy’s and Khrushchev’s progress toward a deal, at 2 a.m. on Oct. 27, Mr. Castro

decided to write to Khrushchev, encouraging him to use his nuclear weapons to destroy the United States in the event of an invasion. At 3 a.m., he arrived at the Soviet Embassy and told Alekseev that they should go into the bunker beneath the embassy because an attack was imminent. According to declassified Soviet cables, a groggy but sympathetic Alekseev agreed, and soon they were set up underground with Castro dictating and aides transcribing and translating a letter. Mr. Castro became frustrated, uncertain about what to say. After nine drafts, with the sun rising, Alekseev finally confronted Mr. Castro: are you asking Comrade Khrushchev to deliver a nuclear strike on the United States? Mr. Castro told him, “If they attack Cuba, we should wipe them off the face of the earth!” Alekseev was shocked, but he dutifully assisted Mr. Castro in fine-tuning the 10th and final draft of the letter.

From his bunker, Mr. Castro wrote that, in the event of an American invasion, “the danger that that aggressive policy poses for humanity is so great that following that event the Soviet Union must never allow the circumstances in which the imperialists could launch the first nuclear strike against it.” An invasion, he added, “would be the moment to eliminate such danger forever through an act of clear, legitimate defense however harsh and terrible the solution would be, for there is no other.” Mr. Castro was calm as he composed this last will and testament for the 6.5 million citizens of Cuba, and the 43,000 Russians on the island who would be incinerated

alongside them.

According to his son and biographer, Sergei Khrushchev, the Soviet premier received that letter in the midst of a tense leadership meeting and shouted, "This is insane; Fidel wants to drag us into the grave with him!" Khrushchev hadn't understood that Mr. Castro believed that Cuba was doomed, that war was inevitable, and that the Soviets should transform Cuba from a mere victim into a martyr.

By ignoring Mr. Castro's messianic martyrdom, both Kennedy and Khrushchev inadvertently pushed the world close to Armageddon.

The parallels between the Cuban missile crisis and today's nuclear standoff with Iran are inexact, but eerie. Cuba then and Iran now share a revolutionary mind-set, a belief that Washington's goal is regime change, and a conviction that nuclear weapons might guarantee their survival in the face of unrelenting American hostility. The third player in today's crisis is not a superpower but Israel, which views a nuclear Iran as an unacceptable threat to its existence. Israel shares with Iran (and 1960s Cuba) a national narrative that is steeped in the glorification of military heroism in the face of potential defeat.

Whoever wins the presidential election must persuade the Israelis to restrain themselves. Iran's leaders are rational, and Israel's overwhelming nuclear superiority means that Israel need not fear Iran. America must convince Iran that it doesn't need nuclear weapons, because it has nothing to fear from Israel or the United States. The American president must do what even

Kennedy and Khrushchev could not: treat a lesser power as an equal and pay attention to its fears. Ignoring Cuba's insecurities 50 years ago pushed the world to the brink of catastrophe. Today we must be wary of backing the Iranians into a corner so that they feel they must choose between capitulation and martyrdom. In 1962, the Soviets just barely stopped the Cubans; this time, there is no Khrushchev.

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Article 7.

The Economist

Xi Jinping: The man who must change China

Oct 27th 2012 -- JUST after the 18th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, which starts in Beijing on November 8th, a short line of dark-suited men, and perhaps one woman, will step onto a red carpet in a room in the Great Hall of the People and meet the world's press. At their head will be Xi Jinping, the newly anointed party chief, who in March will also take over as president of China. Behind him will file the new members of the Politburo Standing Committee, China's supreme body. The smiles will be

wooden, the backs ramrod straight. Yet the stage-management could hardly be more different from the tempestuous uncertainties of actually governing.

As ruler of the world's new economic powerhouse, Mr Xi will follow his recent predecessors in trying to combine economic growth with political stability. Yet this task is proving increasingly difficult. A slowing economy, corruption and myriad social problems are causing growing frustration among China's people and worry among its officials.

In coping with these tensions, Mr Xi can continue to clamp down on discontent, or he can start to loosen the party's control. China's future will be determined by the answer to this question: does Mr Xi have the courage and vision to see that assuring his country's prosperity and stability in the future requires him to break with the past?

Who's Xi?

To the rich world, labouring under debt and political dysfunction, Chinese self-doubt might seem incongruous. Deng Xiaoping's relaunch of economic reforms in 1992 has resulted in two decades of extraordinary growth. In the past ten years under the current leader, Hu Jintao, the economy has quadrupled in size in dollar terms. A new (though rudimentary) social safety net provides 95% of all Chinese with some kind of health coverage, up from just 15% in 2000. Across the world, China is seen as second in status and influence only to America.

Until recently, the Chinese were getting richer so fast that most of them had better things to worry about

than how they were governed. But today China faces a set of threats that an official journal describes as "interlocked like dog's teeth" (see article). The poor chafe at inequality, corruption, environmental ruin and land-grabs by officials. The middle class fret about contaminated food and many protect their savings by sending money abroad and signing up for foreign passports (see article). The rich and powerful fight over the economy's vast wealth. Scholars at a recent government conference summed it up well: China is "unstable at the grass roots, dejected at the middle strata and out of control at the top".

Once, the party could bottle up dissent. But ordinary people today protest in public. They write books on previously taboo subjects (see article) and comment on everything in real time through China's vibrant new social media. Complaints that would once have remained local are now debated nationwide. If China's leaders mishandle the discontent, one senior economist warned in a secret report, it could cause "a chain reaction that results in social turmoil or violent revolution". But, you don't need to think that China is on the brink of revolution to believe that it must use the next decade to change. The departing prime minister, Wen Jiabao, has more than once called China's development "unbalanced, unco-ordinated and unsustainable". Last week Qiushi , the party's main theoretical journal, called on the government to "press ahead with restructuring of the political system". Mr Xi portrays himself as a man of the people and the party still says it represents the masses,

but it is not the meritocracy that some Western observers claim (see article). Those without connections, are often stuck at the bottom of the pile. Having long since lost ideological legitimacy, and with slower growth sapping its economic legitimacy, the party needs a new claim on the loyalty of China's citizens.

Take a deep breath

Mr Xi could start by giving a little more power to China's people. Rural land, now collectively owned, should be privatised and given to the peasants; the judicial system should offer people an answer to their grievances; the household-registration, or hukou, system should be phased out to allow families of rural migrants access to properly funded health care and education in cities. At the same time, he should start to loosen the party's grip. China's cosseted state-owned banks should be exposed to the rigours of competition; financial markets should respond to economic signals, not official controls; a free press would be a vital ally in the battle against corruption.

Such a path would be too much for those on the Chinese "left", who look scornfully at the West and insist on the Communist Party's claim—its duty, even—to keep the monopoly of power. Even many on the liberal "right", who call for change, would contemplate nothing more radical than Singapore-style one-party dominance. But Mr Xi should go much further. To restore his citizens' faith in government, he also needs to venture deep into political reform.

That might sound implausible, but in the 1980s no less

a man than Deng spoke of China having a directly elected central leadership after 2050—and he cannot have imagined the transformation that his country would go on to enjoy. Zhu Rongji, Mr Wen's predecessor, said that competitive elections should be extended to higher levels, "the sooner the better". Although the party has since made political change harder by restricting the growth of civil society, those who think it is impossible could look to Taiwan, which went through something similar, albeit under the anti-Communist Kuomintang.

Ultimately, this newspaper hopes, political reform would make the party answerable to the courts and, as the purest expression of this, free political prisoners. It would scrap party-membership requirements for official positions and abolish party committees in ministries. It would curb the power of the propaganda department to impose censorship and scrap the central military commission, which commits the People's Liberation Army to defend the party, not just the country. No doubt Mr Xi would balk at that. Even so, a great man would be bold. Independent candidates should be encouraged to stand for people's congresses, the local parliaments that operate at all levels of government, and they should have the freedom to let voters know what they think. A timetable should also be set for directly electing government leaders, starting with townships in the countryside and districts in the cities, perhaps allowing five years for those experiments to settle in, before taking direct elections up to the county level in

rural areas, then prefectures and later provinces, leading all the way to competitive elections for national leaders.

The Chinese Communist Party has a powerful story to tell. Despite its many faults, it has created wealth and hope that an older generation would have found unimaginable. Bold reform would create a surge of popular goodwill towards the party from ordinary Chinese people.

Mr Xi comes at a crucial moment for China, when hardliners still deny the need for political change and insist that the state can put down dissent with force. For everyone else, too, Mr Xi's choice will weigh heavily. The world has much more to fear from a weak, unstable China than from a strong one.