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Article 1.

The Weekly Standard

Standing Alone

William Kristol and Michael Makovsky

October 8 - In the midst of media coverage of the government shutdown (it's the Republicans' fault!) and the glitch-filled rollout of Obamacare (it's not Obama's fault!), Americans may not have noticed the October 1 speech by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the United Nations General Assembly. But Netanyahu's declaration that Israel was prepared to act alone to prevent the Iranian regime from acquiring nuclear weapons may well prove of more lasting significance than the developments in Washington that overshadowed it. Netanyahu tried to puncture the wishful thinking that has made the Obama administration so eager to succumb to the charm offensive of Hassan Rouhani, the new Iranian president. Netanyahu pointed out that Rouhani has done nothing, and almost certainly will do nothing, that warrants trusting that the Iranian regime will yield

in its pursuit of nuclear weapons (a pursuit Rouhani still denies in the face of mountains of incontrovertible evidence). Netanyahu warned against a relaxation of pressure on that regime and against being dragged into endless negotiations or, even worse, a bad deal with it. As Netanyahu said, Rouhani "definitely wants to get the sanctions lifted; I guarantee you that. But he doesn't want to give up Iran's nuclear weapons program in return." Netanyahu laid out the terms for an acceptable agreement: "The only diplomatic solution that would work is the one that fully dismantles Iran's nuclear weapons program and prevents it from having one in the future." And he explained the dangers of a "partial deal" that would permit Iran "a residual capability to enrich uranium" in exchange for lifting international sanctions that took years to put in place and likely wouldn't be reestablished. But this is, unfortunately, the kind of deal toward which the Obama administration is heading — that, or endless negotiations while the Iranian nuclear program moves toward a successful conclusion.

The most dramatic part of his speech was Netanyahu's declaration: "I want there to be no confusion on this point. Israel will not allow Iran to get nuclear weapons. If Israel is forced to stand alone, Israel will stand alone." Netanyahu, who has a photo of Winston Churchill on his office wall behind his desk, was echoing Churchill's remark on July 14, 1940, during the Battle of Britain: "And now it has come to us to stand alone in the breach."

Will Israel in fact be forced to stand alone? Many informed Israelis, including those who are by no means supporters of Netanyahu or on the right side of the political spectrum, are now convinced he will have to, after witnessing last month's

appalling spectacle of President Obama squirming out of his pledge to retaliate against the regime of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad if Assad crossed a "red line" by using chemical weapons. We were each in Israel recently, and it's clear that the confidence of some current and former senior security officials that Obama would strike Iran has evaporated. We've also spoken with Arab government officials, and none believes any longer in the credibility of a U.S. military threat. In fact, it's hard to find any serious person in allied capitals — or in enemy capitals — who takes Obama at his word when he talks about keeping "all options on the table" to prevent a nuclear Iran. Everyone assumes that President Obama will find any excuse the Iranians give him to leave the military option right there, on the table — and that if the Iranian regime doesn't give him a plausible excuse, President Obama will find one anyway.

No one likes the truth-telling skunk at the appeasement party. The New York Times clucked editorially that Netanyahu was "sabotaging diplomacy" before "Iran is tested" by angering the Iranians, making the use of force more likely — which "would be the worst result of all." But he knows that an Iran with nuclear weapons is the worst result of all — that bombing Iran is better than Iran with a bomb. He sees that behind the Obama administration's façade of hard-headed diplomacy is a soft-headed, even desperate, desire for some sort of deal, any deal, and that such a deal will be rationalized by foreign policy elites who know it's a bad deal but who have talked themselves into accepting the case for containment rather than prevention of a nuclear Iran. And Netanyahu understands that behind all of this lies a failure of nerve and a collapse of will in much of the West that deserves to be compared to what Churchill faced in the

1930s.

There are those who believe Netanyahu was being overly dramatic and indeed was blustering when he made his unequivocal statements at the United Nations about the Iranian regime and nuclear weapons. It's true that the U.N. is a place of much drama and bluster. But we believe Netanyahu meant what he said.

Of course, an Israeli prime minister can't decide to launch a strike alone. Netanyahu will require the approval of his security cabinet, and he will also likely need the support of the top ranks of the Israeli military establishment. The Israeli national security apparatus has been cautious about a strike against Iran, believing there was time and hoping that sanctions or the United States would take care of this issue. The Syrian fiasco has virtually eliminated the last option in the minds of many military leaders. And now there's a consensus that time is growing short. Almost no Israeli security expert believes Israel should resign itself to live with a nuclear-armed Iranian regime dedicated to the destruction of Israel. Furthermore, current and former senior military officials consistently claim they have a viable military option, even though they have less military capacity than the United States. So an Israeli strike is likely.

Netanyahu said at the U.N. that "in standing alone, Israel will know that we will be defending many, many others." This too echoes Churchill in his July 1940 speech: "We are fighting by ourselves alone; but we are not fighting for ourselves alone." Churchill asserted that London, "which enshrines the title deeds of human progress," was defending civilization itself. So today, if Israel — an outpost of human progress in the Middle East —

decides that she has no choice but to attack Iran's nuclear facilities, Israel will not be fighting for herself alone.

William Kristol is editor of The Weekly Standard, as well as chairman and co-founder of the Project for the New American Century. Michael Makovsky is A U.S. national security expert, he has worked extensively on Iran's nuclear program, the Middle East, and the intersection of international energy markets and politics with U.S. national security.

Article 2.

The Wall Street Journal

How Not to Negotiate With Iran

Bret Stephens

October 7 - 'We know that deception is part of [Iran's] DNA." So said Undersecretary of State Wendy Sherman last week, testifying to Congress about the next round of negotiations with Tehran over its nuclear programs. So why is Ms. Sherman pleading with Congress to delay imposing additional sanctions for the sake of what she called "confidence building"? How depressingly predictable: Iran lies and prevaricates—about the breadth of its nuclear programs; about their purpose; about the quality of its cooperation with U.N. nuclear watchdogs; about its record of sponsoring terrorism from Argentina to Bulgaria to

Washington, D.C.; about its efforts to topple Arab governments (Bahrain) or colonize them (Lebanon); about its role in the butchery of Syria; about its official attitude toward the Holocaust—and the administration thinks priority No. 1 is proving its own good faith. Last month, the administration returned to Iran a 2,700-year-old silver cup shaped like a mythological griffin, which had been stolen from a cave in Iran a decade ago before it was seized by U.S. customs. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei must have been moved to tears. At least the griffin beat the key-shaped cake National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane brought with him in the 1980s in what would become the Iran-Contra debacle. That episode provides a useful lesson in how not to negotiate with Iran, and from the most unexpected source: Hasan Rouhani, now Iran's president, then deputy chairman of the Majlis, the Islamic Republic's parliament. In August 1986, an Israeli agent named Amiram Nir, posing as a U.S. official, met Mr. Rouhani in Paris at a meeting orchestrated by an Iranian-born arms dealer named Manucher Ghorbanifar. Nir wore a recording device, and details of the talk eventually came into the possession of Israeli military reporter Ron Ben-Yishai. The episode has since been reprised in the Israeli press, most recently by reporter Mitch Ginsburg for the Times of Israel. Iran was then trying to obtain missiles from the U.S. (with Israel acting as an intermediary) in exchange for the release of Americans held hostage by Iranian-backed proxies in Lebanon. The missiles were provided but the hostages were not—a victim, by some accounts, of hard-line opposition within Iran to the more pliable course advocated by Mr. Rouhani. So it goes with Western outreach to Iranian moderates: It always fails, though whether it's on account of the moderates being duplicitous or powerless is a matter of debate. Maybe Mr.

Rouhani isn't "a wolf in sheep's clothing," as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says. Maybe he's a sheep among wolves. If so, he's a very canny sheep. "If you don't bare sharp teeth before [Ayatollah] Khomeini," he advised Nir, "you're going to have troubles all over the world. If you threaten him with military force, he'll kiss your hand and run."

Elsewhere in the conversation, Mr. Rouhani suggested a strategy for getting the hostages released. "If for instance, you said to [Khomeini], 'You must release all of the hostages in Lebanon within five days. If not—we'll deal you a military blow and you will be responsible for the results,' do it, show that you are strong, and you will see results." And there was this: "If we analyze Khomeini's character, we will see that if someone strong stands opposite him, he will retreat 100 steps; and if he is strong and someone weak faces him, he will advance 100 steps. Unfortunately, you have taken a mistaken approach. You have been soft to him. Had you been tougher, your hand would be on top." Mr. Rouhani's analysis of Khomeini's mind-set would soon find tragic confirmation. On July 3, 1988, the USS Vincennes mistook an Iranian jetliner for a fighter jet and shot it down, killing nearly 300 people. Khomeini, who was sure the incident was no accident, thought Washington intended to enter the Iran-Iraq war on Saddam Hussein's side. Just 17 days later, on July 20, Khomeini accepted a humiliating cease-fire with Iraq: "Unhappy am I that I still survive and have drunk the poisoned chalice," he said in a radio address.

Khomeini is long dead, but the regime's mentality of yielding only to intense pressure and credible threats of force remains the same. So how should the U.S. negotiate? Mark Dubowitz, who helped design some of the most effective sanctions against Iran

from his perch at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, offered this:

"Effective on October 16, any financial institution providing Iran with access to, or use of, its overseas financial reserves for any purpose with the exception of permissible humanitarian trade will be cut off from the U.S. financial system." The idea is to push forward what Mr. Dubowitz calls Iran's "economic cripple date"—the moment when it runs out of foreign reserves—ahead of its "undetectable breakout date"—the moment when the regime can build a bomb in secret before the West can stop it.

I have my doubts about the use of sanctions as the main tool to change Iran's behavior. But if the administration means to use them as the weapon of choice, they should at least use them aggressively. Negotiations with Iran resume Oct. 15. Mr. Dubowitz's Oct. 16 deadline will do more to get their attention than griffins, cakes or other pathetic diplomatic sweeteners.

Mr. Stephens is the deputy editorial page editor responsible for the international opinion pages of The Wall Street Journal.

Article 3.

Foreign Policy

Does the U.S. stand a chance against Tehran, the nimble, canny free agent

of nuclear negotiations?

Aaron David Miller, Mitchel Hochberg

October 8, 2013 -- Nobody knows how the Iranian nuclear dilemma is going to end. A good deal, a bad deal, no deal, a U.S. or Israeli military strike -- or none of the above? But amid all the uncertainty, at least one thing seems pretty certain: The mullahs are playing three-dimensional chess while the United States is playing checkers.

This is not to say that the Iranians are diplomatic and strategic geniuses. After all, if they were that clever, they wouldn't be reeling under the impact of nation-crushing sanctions that are destroying their economy. Nor would everyone's favorite mullah -- President Hasan Rouhani -- be sending Rosh Hashanah tweets to all his would-be Jewish friends.

The checkers reference is also not meant to suggest that the Obama administration is clueless about how to deal with Iran. While the president's handling of the Syrian chemical weapons issue did at times resemble a Marx Brothers movie, the administration knows the stakes on Iran are higher -- and that, precisely because of Syria, it must be more disciplined, focused, and deliberate.

Yet Iran has certain natural advantages that the United States lacks. This doesn't invariably mean the United States will lose and Iran will win at nuclear roulette. But it does mean that Tehran can be far more agile, devious, and strategic in its quest for a nuclear weapons capacity than Washington can be in its

effort to stop it.

Here are brief explanations of these important advantages.

Great Powers Versus Small Tribes

Big doesn't always translate into smart and effective, and small doesn't necessarily mean weak. The Middle East is littered with the remains of great powers that wrongly believed they could impose their will on small tribes.

Compelling and coercing nations not to do something they deem vital is no easy matter. The record, as my Foreign Policy colleague Micah Zenko points out, isn't all that great. Big global powers like the United States have many things to do, and they are distracted and tire easily. Smaller ones like Iran that live in a dangerous neighborhood can't afford to do the same. They're focused intensely on just a few things: physical security, survival of the regime, maintaining religious and national identity, historical grievances, wounding and trauma, and fear of bigger powers. They become quite adept at manipulating and maneuvering around these larger powers to achieve their goals, both because of their will and because of their knowledge of the real estate: They know their region's back alleys, sand traps, and complicated ways.

In recent years, the United States has come to Iran's neighborhood all too often and with too little knowledge of the landscape. With our overwhelming military power and technological superiority, we can remove leaders and weaken groups hostile to our interests. But the locals can and do make us pay big time. (See: Lebanon, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq.) A decade after we've left, all our schemes and dreams won't have

changed much on the ground. Two decades later, if locals remember we were there, it usually isn't fondly.

Iran has been particularly deft in capitalizing on these sorts of U.S. mistakes. The invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan weakened the Taliban and eliminated Saddam Hussein -- two of Iran's adversaries -- and bolstered its regional standing. Iran has also maneuvered deftly, and thus played well, in regional developments like the Syrian crisis. It has backed President Bashar al-Assad, exploited his regime's Hezbollah connection, and managed along with the Russians to keep the regime afloat. The U.S.-Russian agreement on chemical weapons has also furthered the Iranian goal of legitimizing the Syrian leader and has raised questions in the minds of the mullahs about whether we are prepared to use military force in the Middle East.

Finally, thanks largely to its smaller, nimbler status, Iran has withstood sanctions, political isolation, cyberwar, and the efforts of three successive U.S. administrations to prevent it from acquiring a nuclear weapon. Indeed, in 2013, Tehran is closer than ever to attaining the capacity to weaponize within a relatively short period of time. And who knows? They may be even nearer than we and the Israelis realize to crossing that threshold.

Iran Knows Its Own Mind. Do We Know Ours?

We really don't know what the Iranian game is. Are we on the cusp of a new era in the U.S.-Iranian relationship with a deal on the nuclear issue that will lead to a broader regional modus vivendi? Or is the Rouhani diplomatic offensive designed to buy time, probe for weakness and division in allied ranks, neutralize

the Israeli military option, and reinforce through charm and sweet talk an American president's already strong preference for diplomacy over war?

Nor does the United States fully grasp its own game. There is tremendous uncertainty about what, in the end, to do about Iran's quest for a nuclear weapon. Do we bomb if diplomacy fails? Do we contain? What do we do if/when Israel decides it must use force? Our policy oozes indecision. And it shows.

The mullahs are indeed smart and canny, and unlike U.S. leaders, they probably know their own mind on the nuclear issue. No matter how real Rouhani may be as a reformer and as a legitimate expression of a popular Iranian desire for change, he's still not the guy in charge. And the guy who is fashions himself the supreme leader of a truly great and historic nation confronted by an America and an Israel that seek to keep Iran down and to deny the country its rightful place in the region and the world. Iran is a country driven by a profound sense of insecurity and entitlement -- a very bad combination of personality traits in an individual, let alone in a nation.

Indeed, Ali Khamenei and his conservative-cum-revolutionary, security-minded cronies may well regard the quest for a nuclear weapons capacity as a basic right, part of their country's identity as a power, designed to bolster Iran's status -- and as a hedge against regime change and as cover to wield regional influence.

The pursuit of Iran's nuclear ambitions has been a national goal for quite some time. Indeed, had the Shah not been overthrown, Iran might already have been a nuclear state. For Iran to completely abandon that goal or to allow the United States to

impose restrictions that would make it impossible to pursue it again in the future seems hard to imagine.

The Rouhani Phenomenon

The emergence of Rouhani is the perfect play against the United States, because his election as president really does reflect reformist tendencies within the Iranian public and polity. Sanctions are ruining the economy and hold the potential to create serious popular discontent. Why not send abroad a smiling, attractive, and forthcoming president who can tone down the anti-Israeli rhetoric, accept the Holocaust, and deny Iran has a nuclear weapons program, even while Tehran continues to pursue said program?

The Iranian leadership can lie, dissemble, and pursue this two-track strategy without blinking an eye and without fear of any domestic backlash, all in an effort to see what kind of sanctions relief it can achieve and what it has to pay for it. If the price isn't right, it can recalibrate, turn on a dime, and effortlessly return to the hard-line rhetoric of Rouhani's predecessor.

For Obama, investing in Rouhani thus means risking being made to look the fool should the process reach the point where the mullahs determine that what we're offering isn't sufficient to meet their needs. And, while this budding relationship congeals, the U.S. president is in the uncomfortable position of having to explain every negative Iranian statement or action. Yet Iran has positioned Rouhani as a risk the United States feels it must take.

Negotiating for Whom?

Iran is a free agent in negotiating with the United States. We

aren't in as enviable position. Whatever political constraints Khamenei faces, they aren't nearly as narrowing as ours. Between Congress and U.S. allies -- Israel but also Saudi Arabia -- the U.S. position must take into account an array of suspicions and fears, some of them at times competing with each other.

Congress is critical for sanctions relief and for the domestic consensus required for any foreign-policy initiative, particularly one as big as this. And the notion that the Obama administration will somehow have a free hand to ignore Israeli needs strains the bounds of credulity to the breaking point. As Undersecretary of State Wendy Sherman conceded the other day, no deal is better than a bad deal. A bad deal would be one that leaves Israel angry, suspicious, and aggrieved and Iran able to quickly re-create a nuclear breakout option should Tehran suspend or abrogate the agreement.

These realities will not only reduce U.S. flexibility; they also afford Iran a powerful political and propaganda point to argue that the United States isn't negotiating on the merits of the nuclear issue but is allowing politics to shape its positions. It also takes Iran off the hook for responding seriously to what the United States offers. Indeed, the Iranians have undoubtedly figured out that Obama will be quite risk-averse when it comes to offering major concessions. That frees the mullahs from their need to be forthcoming as well.

Let's hope that the mullahs haven't concluded, too, that Obama will be risk-averse when it comes to a military option, should diplomacy fail.

Time: Ally or Adversary?

U.S. presidents and government negotiators measure their lives in four- and eight-year increments -- that is, the terms of administrations. Iran, by contrast, plays the long game, the generational game. Sure, Iran wants sanctions relief. But it can wait if it doesn't get exactly what it wants.

In addition to the limited time frame of his second term, Obama is up against two clocks that are ticking down to a place he'd rather not be: a military option. First, there's the clock showing that Iran is nearing the point of no return -- the much-feared breakout capacity. That, in turn, influences the second clock: Israel's own timeline for making the agonizing decision about its military options.

In a way, too, the Rouhani charm offensive may have accelerated matters for Washington. By elevating the level of negotiations -- opening new channels to both the U.S. president and the secretary of state -- it will be harder, not easier, for the United States to drag things out. Before, in the P5+1 talks in Almaty, Istanbul, and Moscow, we were on mullah time; now, we're on fast-tracked Washington time. After all, once the president at the U.N. General Assembly, in front of the whole world, directs his secretary of state to manage negotiations, it's hard to go back to business as usual.

Maybe the moment of decision is coming. Maybe not. If negotiations really are serious and a deal, however imperfect, is in sight, time will be less of a U.S. concern going forward than it is now. If things don't go well at the table, however, then at some point it will be time to stop pretending that negotiations can answer the mail -- and to acknowledge how Iran's generational game could play out.

Iran doesn't want an Israeli strike, let alone a U.S. one. But it may well calculate that, if it doesn't stick a nuclear weapons program in President Obama's eye, the United States won't strike. As for the Israelis, the mullahs may well take their chances and wager that the temporary setback to their nuclear program would be outweighed by the political benefits they might gain from an Israeli strike.

It's a roll of the dice. But Iran, with all its advantages over the United States and its allies, just might take the risk. Indeed, the message from Tehran might be: Come and get us. And, by the way, welcome to the neighborhood.

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Article 4.

Time

There Are Two Egypts and They Hate Each Other

Ashraf Khalil

October 8 - Egypt's latest spasm of violence over the weekend—which led to at least 57 deaths and 400 injured—confirmed the troubled nation's new reality: The emergence of two distinct, opposed Egypts that hate each other.

One Egypt is in the ascendant—that of a nationalist, pro-military populace that has nothing but contempt for the country's Islamists, represented chiefly by the Muslim Brotherhood. The Egypt of the Brotherhood is reeling and embittered: it has seen its democratically-elected President ousted by the military this July and its supporters gunned down in the streets. But it's showing no sign of backing down.

The enmity existed well before senior Muslim Brotherhood official Mohamed Morsi won the presidency in June 2012. But the chasm between these two sides widened dramatically over the course of Morsi's chaotic and divisive year in power, which culminated in Morsi's July 3 ousting, cheered on by millions of citizens.

Both sides covet the deeply symbolic real estate that is Tahrir Square—epicenter of the original February 2011 revolution that ousted long-ruling President Hosni Mubarak and the launchpad for Egypt's faltering revolutionary moment. Tahrir's fortunes, and who controls it, have shifted multiple times since the initial uprising. But an unprecedented spectacle of division took place on Oct. 6: one side celebrated inside of Tahrir Square, while the other side desperately fought—and died—to reach it and confront its rivals. Inside of Tahrir Square, supporters of the military rallied in the thousands with flags, fireworks, patriotic

songs and vuvuzelas. Oct. 6 is a national holiday—a militaristic one that celebrates the launching of a successful surprise attack on Israel in the 1973 war. So the current national mood, characterized by nationalist and anti-Islamist fervor, dovetailed neatly with the holiday. Posters of Defense Minister Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi (notably not civilian Interim President Adly Mansour) dominated the day—many of them directly comparing Al-Sisi with Col. Gamal Abdel Nasser, the beloved and iconic force behind the 1952 coup that ended the monarchy and ushered in almost 60 years of military rule.

Outside of Tahrir Square, the losers of the country's political shakeup continued their Sisyphaean campaign for their voices to be heard and heeded. "Our target is to go back to Tahrir to bring the revolution back to the square," said Diaa El-Sawy, spokesman of the Youth Against the Coup group, ahead of their protest. But the Brotherhood—which marched in the thousands from multiple directions on Sunday—never managed to get near Tahrir Square. The entire downtown area was heavily secured with riot police, Army APCs, barbed wire and ID checkpoints at the entrances to Tahrir. The subway station underneath Tahrir had already been closed for months to prevent unauthorized infiltration.

Three separate Brotherhood marches were violently repelled. In Ramses Square, about a 20 minute walk from Tahrir, the two sides battled into the night with the Brotherhood marchers confronting a combined force of army soldiers, riot police and local youth gangs hurling rocks, Molotovs and fireworks and apparently working in coordination with the security forces. The final death toll from the day reached 57—the vast majority of the dead from the Brotherhood side.

In the aftermath, there is no sign of either side backing away from the chasm that threatens to swallow post-revolutionary Egypt. The Brotherhood—which has managed to retain a high level of coordination and planning despite most of its senior decision-makers being arrested—has announced plans to launch a fresh push to occupy Tahrir Square this coming Friday, Oct. 11. The Square, according to a statement released late Sunday night, "belongs to all Egyptians and no one will prevent us from demonstrating in it, no matter the sacrifices." In apparent retaliation for Sunday's crackdown, militants—whose direct links to the Brotherhood are unproven, but who interpreted Morsi's ouster as a disguised war on Islam—launched a trio of brazen strikes on Monday. The attacks killed nine people, including six soldiers in a single ambush in the Sinai Peninsula; other assailants launched a failed RPG attack on a satellite transmission facility in Cairo.

Meanwhile the government continues its purge of the Brotherhood and its affiliated organizations. On Tuesday, the government annulled the Muslim Brotherhood's status as a registered non-governmental organization and the cabinet ordered the seizure of the organization's funds and assets. A court ruling last month ordered a similar asset seizure, but the ruling has yet to be properly implemented. Tuesday's cabinet ruling now tightens the squeeze.

As the death toll mounts, the prospects for any sort of short-term reconciliation in Egypt seem bleak—largely because neither side seems particularly interested in forging a peace.

Many trying to resist the current polarization or find some sort of middle ground are punished by both sides. One of the clearest

examples of this dynamic came in mid-September when senior Brotherhood official Salah Soltan published a unilateral apology to the nation on behalf of the Brotherhood. Soltan's US-citizen son Mohamed was shot in the Aug. 14 siege on a Brotherhood sit-in site and later arrested after two weeks on the run. Nevertheless, Salah Soltan wrote a month later that the Brotherhood should "apologize to the nation for our political mistakes…we are not against Egypt. We are part of Egypt."

Among the mistakes he mentioned was a failure to better include the non-Islamist and revolutionary youth into their decision-making processes—spawning divisions and a national paranoia over the Islamist agenda that eventually turned much of the country against the Brotherhood.

But rather than becoming some sort of rallying point for the start of a push for reconciliation, Salah Soltan immediately became a man without a country. The Brotherhood distanced itself from his comments, saying Soltan did not speak for the organization. And, within days Soltan was arrested at Cairo airport by the very government with whom he was trying to reconcile.

Khalil is a Cairo-based journalist and author of Liberation Square: Inside the Egyptian Revolution and the Rebirth of a Nation.

Article 5.

Bloomberg

Asia's Crisis of Leadership

William Pesek

Oct 7, 2013 -- The day Asian leaders have long dreaded is here: The era of rapid growth is over.

It has taken five years, but the fallout from what Asians call the "Lehman shock" is finally hitting gross domestic product and living standards. These risks are the talk of Bali, where Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation nations are mulling what to do about a world where "risks remain tilted to the downside." There, Michael Taylor, chief credit officer for Asia at Moody's Investors Service, said chaotic markets and a slow recovery in advanced nations is driving a "change in the economic cycle" that makes sustaining growth in the region "more challenging."

But a messy international scene isn't the biggest problem facing Asia. The problem is weak leadership in a region that desperately needs bold and visionary solutions to a fast-growing list of challenges.

Asia failed to use 5 percent, 7 percent or even 10 percent growth rates to recalibrate economies away from a hyperdependence on exports and toward domestic-demand-led growth. After Asia's meltdown in 1997, policy makers strengthened financial systems, built more transparent and international business environments, and attacked cronyism. Then, at the first sight of recovery, reform efforts were shelved. Until recently, Asian leaders even thought they had decoupled from the West as U.S. and European recessions failed to damp local growth rates.

Coming Storm

The costs of that complacency are now rising: The Asian Development Bank estimates 2013 growth will be the slowest in four years, at best. As Asia's export machine sputters and markets brace for an end to the Federal Reserve's stimulus, governments need to act nimbly and creatively to protect growth. They also must prepare for the next financial storm (a default in the U.S., perhaps?). Yet considering the state of Asian leadership, it's hard not to be gloomy about the region's chances. Here's a quick rundown.

INDONESIA: For all his success in bringing stability to a nation that 15 years ago seemed destined for failed statehood, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono looks like a spent force. His team needs to act forcefully to erase a current-account deficit that's turning off investors and has pushed the rupiah down 14 percent this year. Yudhoyono should be intensifying his anti-corruption drive, accelerating infrastructure-project plans, and restraining the nationalistic vibe that now permeates the resource sector. Most important, he needs to institutionalize the reforms that reduced poverty ahead of next year's election, which term limits preclude him from contesting.

INDIA: There was a certain irony to Manmohan Singh visiting the White House last week as the U.S. government was shutting down: The Indian prime minister's own government stopped working some time ago. His team faces the possibility of a full-blown debt crisis and the prospect of becoming the first BRIC -- Brazil, Russia, India and China -- nation downgraded to junk. When Congress Party heir Rahul Gandhi's criticism of something as obvious as letting criminals serve in Parliament passes for bold leadership, you know India's economy is in trouble.

MALAYSIA: Hopes that Prime Minister Najib Razak would scrap 42-year-old race-based policies that favor ethnic Malays and irk foreign investors were all for naught. Instead, Najib is doubling down on economic apartheid, expanding perks at the expense of Chinese and Indian minorities. Rating companies are calling Malaysia out for its rising debt, generous subsidies and a lack of budgetary reform. It's not clear Najib can stop a public backlash from derailing Malaysia's entry into a Trans-Pacific Partnership, which would make the economy more vibrant.

THAILAND: Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra is also failing the subsidies test, displaying a lack of political will to stand up to rice and rubber farmers and to gasoline consumers. She's been too distracted with tweaking the constitution to implement a $64 billion infrastructure plan to boost growth. After two years in office, Yingluck must work harder to put to rest speculation she's a mere placeholder for her fugitive brother, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Leadership Deficits

And then there are the smaller, less globalized nations. Vietnam's leaders, for example, are making little headway reducing the role of state-owned enterprises, which are holding back the economic opening many seek. Cambodia's recent election raised so many charges of fraud that it's hard to envision Prime Minister Hun Sen having any spare time to modernize his financial system. Ethnic conflicts and worries about a restive military reasserting itself are darkening Myanmar's coming-out party.

Even Asia's bright spots face worrisome leadership deficits.

China's new bosses are too preoccupied with consolidating power to restructure their rickety economy and limit fresh debt bubbles. In Japan, Shinzo Abe's pledges to deregulate the economy are running afoul of his own party. In South Korea, Park Geun Hye is watering down plans to craft a "creative economy" for fear of alienating the country's giant, oxygen-sucking conglomerates. In the Philippines, Benigno Aquino has gotten high marks on the economy but low ones for his handling of a separatist movement that is costing his economy investment and tourism dollars.

Asia avoided the worst of recent crises, but its luck may be running out. Unless the region's leaders are harboring some latent plan to rise to the occasion, Asia's next five years could be quite turbulent indeed.

William Pesek is a Bloomberg View columnist.

Article 6.

Bloomberg

Remembering Ovadia Yosef, the Israeli Ayatollah

Jeffrey Goldberg

October 8 - More than 700,000 people gathered in Jerusalem yesterday to mourn the death of a great sage, Ovadia Yosef, a former chief rabbi of Israel and the supreme guide of the Shas political party.

The country had never before seen a funeral of this size. The mass of mourners was a testament to Yosef's magnetism and scholarship, as well as to the work he did to lift up his community, the once-aggrieved (and still occasionally put-upon) Mizrachim, or Jews from Arab countries. (Yosef was himself born in Baghdad and served as a rabbi in Cairo.) The party Yosef created made him a kingmaker in Israeli politics (read Noah Feldman's incisive look at Yosef's revolutionary role in transforming Israeli political culture), and he was perhaps best known, beyond the walls of ultra-Orthodoxy, for his ruling that it would be permissible under Jewish law to cede biblical land to Palestinians if lives would be saved by doing so.

Much of the coverage of Yosef's death has focused on the transformative role he played in the lives of Mizrachim. But much of it has neglected to mention the unfortunate fact that Yosef was a mean-spirited fundamentalist who created a corrupt party that coarsened Israeli politics, held a medieval belief in a vindictive God, and made abominable pronouncements on the moral and personal qualities of those of different races, religions and political views.

I spend a lot of time in this space highlighting the corrosive anti-Semitism of such figures as Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Iranian leader, and Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the extremist Al Jazeera televangelist. It's unpleasant but necessary to note that Israel, too, has its share of religious fanatics. Yosef was his country's

most eminent. It's true that he endorsed (as a theoretical matter) the idea of Israeli withdrawal from territories captured in the 1967 Six-Day War. But when former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon argued for a withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, Yosef said, "God will strike him with one blow and he will die. He will sleep and not awake." (Some of Yosef's followers were ecstatic -- I saw their ecstasy with my own eyes -- when Sharon later suffered a stroke.)

In the manner of the crudest fundamentalists everywhere, Yosef blamed misfortune and death on apostasy, irreligiosity and homosexuality (gay people, in his eyes, were "completely evil"). About Israeli soldiers who fell in battle, Yosef once said, "Is it any wonder if, heaven forbid, soldiers are killed in a war? They don't observe the Sabbath, they don't observe the Torah, they don't pray, they don't put on phylacteries every day. Is it any wonder that they're killed? It's no wonder." Even more famously, he blamed the deaths of Jews during the Holocaust on the spiritual deficiencies of their ancestors.

In 2005, he argued that Hurricane Katrina was God's punishment for the Gaza withdrawal and for the alleged godlessness of the black residents of New Orleans. "There was a tsunami and there are terrible natural disasters, because there isn't enough Torah study," he said. "Tens of thousands have been killed. All of this because they have no God." He went on to argue -- if that's the word for it -- that the deaths were also punishment directed at President George W. Bush for pressuring Sharon to remove Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip. "It was God's retribution," he said. "God does not short-change anyone."

Yosef's excoriations of Israeli politicians were legendary. In the

last election, Yosef said this about the leadership of the right-wing Jewish Home party: "Those are religious people? They come to uproot the Torah. Those who elect them deny the Torah, this is the Jewish Home? This is the Jewish Home of the gentiles."

The most devastating insult Yosef could muster against a Jew was to label him a gentile. He held gentiles in general contempt. "Goyim were born only to serve us," he said in a 2010 sermon. "Without that, they have no place in the world -- only to serve the people of Israel."

Of Muslims, he said, "They're stupid. Their religion is as ugly as they are." His hatred of Palestinians was obvious. Speaking of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and his aides, Yosef said, "All these evil people should perish from this world. God should strike them with a plague, them and these Palestinians."

Yosef's defenders will note that Abbas was one of the many dignitaries who expressed his condolences on learning of Yosef's death. Abbas did so for the same reason Israeli President Shimon Peres and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did: because Yosef represented a vast and powerful political constituency.

Defenders of Yosef will also argue that his outbursts and prejudices came late in life (though not all of them did) or that they were the product of his upbringing, as a Jew who was both discriminated against by Muslims and who led an ethnic group that suffered at their hands. Yosef's apologists also argue that the good work he did -- on behalf of war widows, for instance -- mitigates the damage of his egregious words.

Sorry, no: Prejudice is prejudice, whether it comes from an imam in Qatar or from the man whose Jewish critics labeled him, correctly, the "Israeli ayatollah."