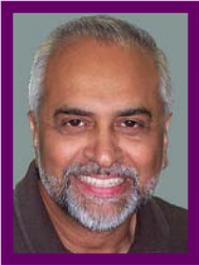


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## Netanyahu's Win – Everyone's Loss



A few days ago, Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu won a hard fought election for his fourth term as Prime Minister of Israel. Bibi's win was a classic case of what desperate politicians do when fighting to gain, or as in this case, retain power at all cost. They divide and fracture society for personal gain, at great and sometimes tragic cost to the country. Instead of unifying its citizenry under a progressive plan of hope and required change, which would address chronic weaknesses and problems that have held the country back and its people hostage, such leaders (*and they are present in every race and nationality*) emphasize division, and foster suspicion and fear, as a desperate Netanyahu just did. They win their victory, but the country and its people are left to deal with the legacy of suspicion, hatred and violence for decades, if not for generations. In this election Netanyahu divided and conquered, first the United States, and then Israel.

Netanyahu's victory was a blow for the much needed change that is so desperately required in the relationship between Jews and Arabs, and in particular between Israel and the Palestinians. Facing a possible defeat and the loss of personal power, Bibi pulled out all the stops, raised the scepter of imminent threat from Iran, and its own neighbours; discriminated against Israeli Arabs and stoked suspicion and fear in the minds of Israeli Jews of their fellow citizens, and thus widened the divide internally; reneged on his previous stand for a 'Two State Solution' for which reigning regimes in Israel, the United States and the Palestinian Authority, have negotiated literally for decades; and promised continuing Israeli settlements on Palestinian land thereby catering to the far-right elements in his political spectrum and killing any chance of a political resolution with the Palestinians. Bibi fear and war-mongered and held Israel back in its perpetual state of conflict and insecurity. The chance to move Israel forward towards the resolution of decades of conflict with its neighbours, through negotiated peace, settlement into a homeland of an essentially subjugated and disenfranchised people, and the fostering of understanding and peaceful co-existence, evaporated as

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Bibi did what Bibi does best, loudly and insistently blow the horn of alarm, fear and mistrust.



The security of a people is paramount, and every government's prime responsibility to its citizens. The Israelis deserve the right to live in peace and security just as much as any other people. An Israeli government can provide that with all its security apparatus already in place. Now, to go beyond that and to mitigate the additional threats, Israel needs to address age old problems that are the basis of the additional threats, the key ones being, the continuing and systematic encroachment of Palestinian land under Netanyahu's leadership, and the decades of insincere attempts to negotiate an acceptable resolution for the formation of a Palestinian State, for a long suffering people. His last minute hardening and acknowledgement of his true intentions, as to not give an inch on any issue favouring the Palestinians, we are sure, riled old enemies and possibly created new ones. How that is supposed to provide additional security to Israelites, is obviously not a question that the voters who flocked to his panicked pleas asked themselves. And in doing what they did (*as so many others in other countries have done*), they are prey to a dangerous self serving political leader, who has used fear to keep his own power.

The insincerity of Netanyahu over his past three terms has alienated most of Israel's supporters in Europe, and is now alienating increasing numbers in the United States, its staunchest supporter by far. In the past decades, Israel has gone from being a genuinely threatened country to one that is routinely threatening, and at times carrying out preemptive strikes against its neighbours. Its bellicosity and political swagger has been increasing and is losing global support. In that way it is mirroring America of the past with the same results, but then the Americans voted for change with Obama, and he delivered with a more diplomatic America, without any compromise in overall

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security. This election had provided the opportunity for an Israeli government that could have curtailed some of Israel's overly aggressive stance, rolled back the ongoing internationally condemned settlement program, and genuinely negotiated a resolution towards a Palestinian State, all of which would have lessened the threats without compromising security. But it was not to be. Bibi scared Israel voters into hiding behind him, and thereby ensured the maintenance of the decades old conflict ridden status-quo. Bibi is the wrong leader for Israel at this time. Israel needed a unifier and not a divider; it needed a leader that believed in negotiated peace and not in the threat of preeminent striking power; and one that respected International and American views, and not one that openly defied them and reveled in the opportunity to shame a sitting American President in the midst of delicate multi-country led negotiations on a nuclear program agreement.



Netanyahu won his historic and therefore greatly coveted fourth term, and Israel shall remain in a state-of-war, with all its requisite benefits and dangers. The long-term cost of both those 'accomplishments' will be borne by the people of Israel, the Palestinians, and a war-weary United States. But, by just keeping the threat of retaliation alive by an incensed Arab population, as Israelis continue to encroach upon Palestinian land, keep the arms and Billions in aid from a captive America rolling in. Not to mention his twenty year tirade against the imminent acquiring of a nuclear bomb by Iran that never comes close to materializing (*his rudimentary bomb pictures notwithstanding*), sure feeds the war prone hawks in the Republican Party who are always ready to go to war. And it also keeps all the ill informed Israelis and Americans suspicious and fearful, which suits Bibi's purposes very well. But it does not move Israel any closer to peace and security that it

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says it wants. Nor does it foster any resolution to the endless stalemate; instead, in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century, his tirade keeps conflict and war and the threat of war imminent and real. As with his speech to the United States Congress, through which he did his utmost to embarrass the current Administration, and scuttle the negotiations underway between the United States led 5+1 and Iran. That kind of chutzpah and sheer aggression Israel and the World do not need. After decades of unjust and irresponsible wars, endless regional conflicts, blind religious and political terrorism, and acute human suffering, Israel and the World need leadership that has the courage and intelligence to negotiate peaceful settlements through diplomacy and dialogue, and not through schoolyard bully bravado. It takes greater strength (*especially if one is superior physically*) to withhold force and talk down a threat, than to lash out violently. Violence is the prevue of the underdeveloped, morally ambiguous beast - pity so many humans still choose to remain as such.

### Israeli PM invited to speak before Congress...



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The people of Israel and the rest of humanity need to categorically reject self serving leadership, political or otherwise; leadership that is elected and rules through fear and the fostering of division and hatred. While there are powerful, selfish and grossly stupid elements in all nations who profit through division and conflict, the majority of people do not - and in fact suffer grievously. The majority always suffers because they do not have the courage to reject fear, and fear mongering leadership, or the energy and the open mindedness to seek common ground and understanding with other people, but have the small mindedness and the laziness to accept without question, the age old prejudices preached by the self centered leaders such as Bibi. The people in Israel and outside of it need to see such leadership for what it is – self serving, all claims to public good notwithstanding.

Besides what has Israel to fear but fear itself? It is the only nuclear armed Nation in the Middle East, with the most powerful military and one of the most

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effective intelligence agencies. Additionally, it has the most powerful Nation on Earth, the United States, almost slavishly covering its back. Plus it has the European Nations, Canada and Australia in its corner, if ever push came to shove. Netanyahu isn't fooling most of the World, but then he didn't have to, he just needed to stoke enough panic and fear to get re-elected, which he masterfully did, to the detriment of Israel and the already overly conflicted World.



Terrorism, which is really Israel's problem now, is also the World's problem, and many countries are suffering from it. But that problem is one that can only be defeated by coordinated global co-operation and a cessation of wars and conflicts in the Middle East, and not by saber rattling and by scare-mongering by power hungry leaders in Israel, or elsewhere.



(Source: Global Terrorism Database)