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# THE PRICE OF MISCALCULATION

By Dr. Alon Ben-Meir

**The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) reaffirmed how misguided the joint US-Israeli attack on Iran on February 28 was. Iran, despite heavy losses, has come out on top.**

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was finally unveiled a few days ago only reaffirmed how misguided the joint US-Israeli attack on Iran on February 28 was, as by every account and careful analysis, despite Iran's heavy losses, it has come out on top. Should the US and Iran negotiate the various provisions of the MUO in good faith, the latter will likely gain considerably more at the negotiating table than it would have before the war.

Before we delve into the reasons why Iran has emerged victorious despite its massive losses, it is important to revisit the reasons why the US and Israel attacked Iran in the first place and why they failed to achieve any of the objectives that they set out to accomplish. The war's stated objectives—regime change, the dismantling of Iran's nuclear program, the curtailment of its ballistic missile arsenal, and the weakening of its regional proxy network—were not merely ambitious; they were fundamentally detached from what defines Iran as a state, a society, and a strategic actor. The US' and Israel's failure should not come as a surprise. It was, in fact, predictable.

Before any military confrontation or serious negotiation, a state must rigorously assess its adversary across several dimensions: political structure, ideological conviction, historical experience, cultural identity, geostrategic positioning, and national aspirations. In the case of Iran, the US and Israel ignored the implications of these dimensions that characterize the country and how they might manifest themselves in a time of national crisis.

Iran's psychological national mindset is anchored in a powerful sense of civilizational continuity and historical grievance, fusing Persian pride with an acute memory of foreign intervention and betrayal. This produces a deeply entrenched siege mentality—a conviction that Iran must rely on self reliance, strategic patience, and asymmetric power to withstand external threats—let alone

existential ones—and to preserve its revolutionary identity at home and across the region.

Politically, Iran is not a fragile state susceptible to rapid political internal breakdown. Its governing system, complex, layered, and deeply entrenched, has demonstrated remarkable durability. The regime's political cohesion, particularly among its security apparatus in support of the regime, has repeatedly proven resilient in the face of both domestic unrest and international sanctions and military threats.

Ideologically, Iran's leadership operates within a framework where religion and governance are inseparable. The Islamic Republic's worldview is not merely strategic but also ideological and theological. It perceives resistance to external pressure, particularly from the US and Israel, as both a political necessity and a religious duty. This ideological foundation reinforces, rather than weakens, the regime under attack. External aggression tends to consolidate internal support rather than ignite a popular uprising, as was hoped.

Historically, Iran's sense of identity is shaped by more than 2,500 years of history. This long civilizational memory has cultivated a deep-seated buoyancy and a capacity to absorb and outlast external threats. Unlike younger states, which lack that historical perspective, their endurance becomes far more brittle. Iran draws strength from its continuous survival and adaptation. This historical consciousness cannot be bombed out of existence, as Iran has proved.

Culturally, Iran is a nation of profound pride and sophistication. Iran's deep intellectual, artistic, and philosophical heritage contributes to a strong national identity that resists humiliation. Any strategy predicated on coercion or submission fundamentally misunderstands this cultural reality.

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Iranians, regardless of their views on the regime, will not accept externally imposed dictates that compromise national dignity.

Geostrategically, Iran occupies one of the world's most critical positions. Its proximity to the Strait of Hormuz—through which one-fifth of global energy supplies pass—grants it immense leverage, as demonstrated by Tehran's closure of the Strait. Combined with its natural resources and substantial human capital, Iran is not easily isolated or neutralized. The failure to account for this reality has triggered a global economic disruption, especially in the oil and gas sectors.

The US and Israel failed to accurately assess Iran's military capabilities, including its vast arsenal of missiles and drones, along with proxies capable of asymmetric warfare. Its armed forces and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps have for years been in combat readiness and deeply committed to regime preservation. This ensured that Iran would absorb the attacks and continue to retaliate unabatedly.

#### The Memorandum of Understanding

The extent of the US and Israel's miscalculation becomes clearer. The MOU ensures freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz—something that existed before the war—and reaffirmation that Iran will not pursue nuclear weapons, a position Tehran has publicly maintained for years. These provisions amount to a return to the status quo rather than a strategic breakthrough.

Instead, Iran has achieved unprecedented milestones: control over the Strait of Hormuz at will, uncontested power in the Gulf, bringing Lebanon into the MOU, and partially realizing its regional hegemonic ambition. It has also shown it can withstand both the US and Israel, the most powerful global and regional militaries. All of this was predictable, but Trump and Netanyahu conveniently chose to ignore it.

Moreover, Iran has secured the suspension of crippling economic sanctions, the ability to export oil freely, and access to approximately \$100 billion in previously frozen assets, and substantial international investment—potentially reaching \$300 billion—to support Iran's economic development.

The agreement defers critically crucial contentious issues, such as Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs and its regional proxy network, to future negotiations, effectively sidestepping Israel's primary security concerns.

Negotiating these unresolved issues will not be quick or straightforward. A comprehensive agreement addressing Iran's nuclear stockpile of uranium enriched to 60 percent—alongside its missile capabilities and regional proxies—will likely take many months, if not longer. The current 60-day timeline is unrealistic, albeit it may be mutually extended as stipulated in the MOU.

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#### The Adverse Implications for Trump and Netanyahu

Facing economic pressures and upcoming mid-term elections, Trump appears eager to declare a diplomatic victory and was compelled to make concessions, making a mockery of his earlier demand for unconditional surrender. Netanyahu, confronting an election in the fall, sought to demonstrate that a joint military action could achieve his long-standing strategic goals of regime change and permanently wiping out Iran's nuclear and ballistic missiles program, which has proven to be nothing but a mirage. Instead, both leaders now face the consequences of their arrogance toward and misreading of Iran.

The broader geopolitical fallout was equally troubling. The conflict has strained the US' relations with European allies, disrupted global trade, and driven up energy prices, contributing to inflationary pressures worldwide. Gulf states, long reliant on American security guarantees, are reassessing their strategic alignments with the US amid the rise of Iran as the undisputed leading power in the Gulf, which will have lasting repercussions for the US' strategic regional interests and influence.

Paradoxically, despite suffering significant military damage—including the destruction of naval assets, missile infrastructure, and key military installations—Iran has emerged with a strengthened strategic position. By failing to assess how Iran's national character and resolve have shaped its reaction to the war, the US and Israel have inadvertently strengthened Iran and forced the US to engage it on terms that preserve its core interests.

The central lesson is unmistakable: wars conceived on illusion and waged in defiance of a nation's historical identity do not transform that nation—they reaffirm it. In Iran's case, force did not weaken the regime or bend its ambitions; it consolidated both. What was meant to compel surrender instead elevated Iran's standing and leverage, leaving diplomacy to recover, at a higher cost, what military power failed to secure—and what, from the outset, it could never have achieved.

Dr. Alon Ben-Meir is President of the Institute for Humanitarian Conflict Resolution.

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# THE ILLUSIONS OF WESTERN VIRTUE

## Ursula von der Leyen and Europe's Moral Bankruptcy

by Ramzy Baroud

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has every right to condition European relations with any other country or bloc on respect for human rights. That, of course, would hold true if she genuinely cared about such values herself.

In response to the June 19 signing of the memorandum of understanding between the United States and Iran – intended to bring an end to a destructive war – von der Leyen declared that the European Union does not intend to lift its sanctions on Tehran.

Speaking on June 15, ahead of the G7 summit, she firmly conditioned any diplomatic thawing on domestic changes within the Islamic Republic.

“The principle of sanctions is that we need real change on the ground before we can think about lifting them,” she stated, adding: “As long as there is no behavioral change, you cannot lift the sanctions because of human rights violations.”

Viewed in isolation, the European position might appear principled, even commendable. In its broader geopolitical context, however, it exposes a staggering level of hypocrisy.

On that very same day, the European Union's duplicity was laid bare. During a Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg, Europe effectively refused to take a unified stand on imposing trade sanctions on Israel, despite its ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip and unchecked colonial violence and expansionist policies in the occupied West Bank.

The discussion itself would not have taken place had it not been for the persistent efforts of Spain and Ireland, which have repeatedly urged the bloc to suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement over Israel's flagrant violations of international law. The initiative failed because the EU remains deeply divided, constrained by the requirement of unanimity on foreign policy and repeatedly blocked by pro-Israel governments.

While Europe continues to engage Israel – providing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his extremist coalition with desperately needed political and economic lifelines – the European public has

increasingly moved in the opposite direction.

Recent polling across numerous countries has revealed growing opposition to Israel's war and genocide in Gaza and increasing support for Palestinian rights. Across Europe, mass demonstrations, consumer boycotts, campus mobilizations, and divestment campaigns have reflected a widening gap between public opinion and official policy.

This reality appears entirely irrelevant to von der Leyen, who remains preoccupied with the human rights records of states viewed as Western adversaries. Such concern is not motivated by solidarity with victims, but by the desire to maintain political leverage that can be invoked when convenient and ignored when necessary.

Lest we forget, von der Leyen was among the first Western leaders to visit Israel following the events of October 7, arriving in Tel Aviv on October 13, 2023. Standing alongside Israeli leaders, she offered unconditional backing, declaring that “Europe stands with Israel.” She did so as Palestinians in Gaza were already being subjected to a devastating military assault that would soon claim tens of thousands of lives.

Although her rhetoric became somewhat more cautious as international legal institutions began investigating Israel for genocide and pursuing war crimes cases against its leaders, her fundamental political alignment never truly changed.

For anyone to believe that von der Leyen has suddenly discovered that human rights should occupy center stage in any responsible foreign policy is simply delusional. This is especially true given how restrained she remained, both in language and action, as the US-Israeli war on Iran expanded into a regional catastrophe that should never have been allowed to unfold.

None of that matters to von der Leyen, of course, since such immense human suffering does not neatly fit within her geopolitical priorities.

It is tempting to conclude that, for von der Leyen and many Western leaders, some human rights matter more than others. Yet even that assessment grants too much

credibility to their position, because it assumes that human rights are the actual basis of policy. More often than not, they are merely invoked when politically convenient. Even the Catholic Church appears to be moving away from this selective moral framework. Since his election in May 2025, Pope Leo XIV has repeatedly emphasized a vision of “just peace” over the traditional doctrine of “just war,” warning against the use of moral and religious language to legitimize military aggression. During his Palm Sunday homily earlier this 2026, he stressed that “God rejects the prayers of those who wage war,” a direct challenge to the normalization of violence by political leaders.

But von der Leyen cannot help herself. The instrumentalization of human rights has long been a staple of Western foreign policy, despite mounting evidence that such commitments are rarely applied consistently. In that sense, Europe appears increasingly bankrupt – not only morally, but politically as well.

The war involving Iran, the subsequent US-Iran agreement, and the major geopolitical shifts surrounding both unfolded largely without meaningful European involvement. Reduced to the role of spectator – or occasional cheerleader – the EU exerted little influence over events, underscoring its diminishing relevance in Middle Eastern and global affairs.

This helps explain why von der Leyen resorted to familiar rhetoric about human rights in Iran while remaining largely silent on Israel's devastating actions in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and elsewhere in the region. With Europe's influence steadily shrinking, moral posturing has become a substitute for meaningful diplomacy.

Will the EU continue along this path of growing irrelevance, or will it finally heed the views of its own citizens, challenge Israel's impunity, and pursue a foreign policy genuinely independent of Washington? The answer may determine whether Europe can reclaim political relevance – or continue its slide into long-term decline.

*This article originally appeared on [antiwar.com](https://antiwar.com)*

# Albania: The Gentle Revolution

By Mauro Carlo Zanella



During the day in Tirana, life goes on as usual: people go to work, college students prepare for exams, children play in public parks, retirees have coffee at one of the many cafés and chat for hours... The first tourists, including a good number of Italians, visit the mosque and Skanderbeg Square. There are no posters, graffiti, or flyers... Everything is calm, in short, completely normal.

The only visible sign of what is happening are the booths collecting signatures for the two referendums to repeal the laws that allow environmental regulations to be circumvented, thereby facilitating real estate speculation even in Albania's most beautiful protected areas. This is all to the benefit of local oligarchs, who launder dirty money from mafias around the world and, above all, open the doors to Trump's Zionist son-in-law, who is said—though I cannot verify it—to be investing Israeli money... In short, the old, corrupt, and discredited political class of Edi Rama's so-called "Socialist" party and Sali Berisha's so-called "Democratic" opposition party is selling the country off to the most predatory form of capitalism.

At 6 p.m., everything changes: the people of Tirana gather in ever-greater numbers in Skanderbeg Square, and when Tirana's largest square fills up, they begin marching toward Prime Minister Rama's nearby office. Men and women, the elderly and children. So many children—from newborns who,

despite the din, manage to sleep in their strollers and in their mothers' baby carriers, to older children on their parents' shoulders or in their arms—who happily wave their little flags or signs written and drawn at home and chant the most popular slogans: "Rama and Berisha, it's over for you!", "Revolution! Revolution!"

The sign reads: "The future depends on us" Yesterday was a special day: the event was not merely a national one, as it brought together in Tirana all Albanians, including those living in Kosovo, North Macedonia, southern Montenegro, and northern Greece—in short, the entire territory of so-called "Greater Albania" and members of the diaspora from all over the world, who took advantage of the holiday to return to their homeland and contribute to the liberation of their land.

A flood, an ocean of people that gradually swelled as far as the eye could see. Red, the color of the flag, dominated, along with the black double-headed eagle. Visible were the silhouettes of the Pink Flamingos moving in a line through the crowd, led by a white stork.

Protesters' drones documented the event; one, to great applause, flew over the crowd waving the Albanian flag.

Speakers took turns on stage—intellectuals, artists, and representatives of civil society. Obviously, I didn't understand a word, but the crowd applauded enthusiastically.

In front of the stage, dozens of shoes symbolized the emigrants forced to leave their country to seek work abroad.

No flags were visible from the three currently minor parties in Parliament, nor from environmental groups.

The New Albania Democratic Socialists carried a banner, without a symbol or signature, but bearing the slogan: "Albania is not for sale."

Albanian patriotism has no supremacist sentiments and is free of xenophobic impulses: it is based on a bond with one's homeland (like the patriotism of the Palestinians and Kurds, to be clear) and with their culture, which believes in and practices hospitality.

The steps leading up to Prime Minister Rama's office were manned by about twenty police officers without helmets, shields, or batons, and without guns in their holsters. They politely asked people not to sit on the steps or climb the stairs. However, some "disobedient" children were playing tag in front of the ministry's entrance without the police having anything to say about it.

Today and in the days to come, we will keep this up until the people's victory, they tell me with peaceful determination.

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