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## Joe Biden's moral hypocrisy

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The adage "Truth is the first casualty of war," often credited to Senator Hiram Johnson, underscores the intricate dance of deception in conflict. From the timeless lessons of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* to contemporary analyses, communication serves as a potent weapon. War isn't merely a physical confrontation but a psychological contest. Propaganda often distorts reality, amplifying victories while minimising defeat. These emotional tugs can obfuscate truths, underscoring the need for discernment in wartime narratives, where perceptions can flip.

In Middle Eastern geopolitics, President Joe Biden's approach raises eyebrows. He leans heavily on Israeli narratives, inadvertently placing Israelis and Palestinians on uneven grounds. While his rhetoric champions moral high ground, certain actions suggest otherwise.

After the October 7 Hamas attacks on Israeli targets, Biden announced to the world a harrowing tale, that he had seen "confirmed images of Hamas' terrorists beheading children." The story stemmed from an Israeli journalist who said she heard that Hamas had beheaded

Global protests erupted after Israeli strikes reduced Gaza to rubble and escalated after the blast at Al-Ahli Hospital, which caused the cancellation of a summit in Amman with key Middle Eastern leaders. Israel's military claimed that the hospital's destruction was the result of an errant rocket from Islamic Jihad, a Hamas affiliate, rather than their own airstrike. Without a proper investigation, President Biden announced he favours the Israeli version of this story.

Mohamed Elmasry of the Doha Institute identifies a pattern: Israel often denies involvement in controversial actions, places blame on Palestinians, and only admits fault when undeniable evidence surfaces, and global focus has shifted. Cases involving Shireen Abu Akleh, Rachel Corrie, and Mohammad Al-Durrah illustrate how Israel's side of events is frequently upheld by Western media, sidelining Palestinian perspectives.

This behaviour aligns with the US' historical dependence on flawed or dubious intelligence to justify foreign interventions. Historic instances include the Bay of Pigs Invasion's failure, the Cuban Missile Crisis' misinterpretations, the questionable Gulf of Tonkin Incident, the covert Iran-Contra affair, relying on fabricated testimony for congressional approval for the 1990-91 Iraq War, initiating the "war on terror" before completing

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40 babies during their operations. Figures like JK Rowling and major news outlets in the UK and US propagated the story, sparking global outrage. However, later findings contested these initial reports. On October 12, CNN's Sara Sidner retracted her prior report, stating Israel could not verify the beheadings. Despite these clarifications, Biden staunchly supported Israel, endorsing its aggressive military campaigns in Gaza.

### Historical perspective

Sir Gerald Kaufman, a Jewish British politician, emphasised the importance of understanding the Israel-Palestine conflict's origins. He highlighted the differing values placed on lives within the conflict and mentioned Israeli acts of violence against Palestinians. Speaking about Israel's formation, Kaufman stated that Jewish terrorism gave birth to Israel. He cited the 1948 Deir Yassin massacre, where the Irgun and Stern gang took the lives of 254 civilians.

The US closely aligns with Israel's stance, labelling Hamas as a terrorist organisation. However, Israel once backed Hamas to counter the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that sought independence. Successive US administrations have primarily supported Israel because of power dynamics, frequently overlooking the historical background.

In response to Palestinian protesting Israeli actions, US officials often declare, "Israel has the right to defend itself," implying Palestinians do not have this right. On the issue of democracy in Palestine, the US' stance appears inconsistent. When Hamas won the Palestinian elections, the US' commitment to fostering democracy in the region decreased.

With strong US backing, Israel intensified its military operations for the nth time, resulting in 3,500 civilian casualties.

Kaufman poignantly pointed out the differentiation the US makes between Jewish and Palestinian lives, stating, "The implication is that Jewish lives are precious, but the lives of Palestinians do not count." Such distinctions have ramifications in real-world policy decisions and their subsequent effects on the ground.

Pattern in media manipulation

the 9/11 investigation, and leveraging fabricated intelligence to justify the 2003 Iraq invasion.

### Imperative for dialogue and policy amnesia

Kaufman's views on peace negotiations were clear: "You make peace by talking to your enemies." He acknowledged, "Hamas is a deeply nasty organisation, but it was democratically elected, and it is the only game in town." Emphasising this perspective, world leaders, including President Biden, should understand that dialogue, not military dominance, paves the path to peace. Columbia University professor and eminent historian Rashid Khalidi also underscored the importance of peaceful dialogue, resolution, and justice in addressing the Israel-Palestine conflict.

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The recent US policy reveals a concerning moral inconsistency. President Biden's comments have damaged the country's reputation on the Palestinian issue and alienated the Muslim community. He should embrace Washington's advice and treat both Israelis and Palestinians with genuine empathy and fairness.

Biden's approach to the Palestinian issue will significantly sway the Muslim/Arab voters, particularly in crucial states like Michigan. At the same time, numerous Jewish Americans, evident in recent protests, push for peace and challenge Israel's actions. Both Muslim and Jewish communities are urging America to maintain a balanced position.

## Breaking the chains of obligation at 50-something



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For the sake of social niceties, I have a forced smile stuck on my face. But my life is predictable and claustrophobic. I feel trapped by responsibilities towards my ageing parents and in-laws, my family, and my daily routine.

I don't want to be accountable for the bad fish curry, the pending electric bill, or the understocked pantry anymore. I don't want the onus of why my mother's cataract has not been taken care of or why my father-in-law is not going to his physio sessions. I just want to be left alone.

But I cannot and will not escape my obligations as a daughter, wife, mother, sister, friend, office executive, and employer to my household help. Yet, the burden of responsibilities overwhelms me.

These are the thoughts of us women, irrespective of age. However, after 50, attending to such family duties without stop or pause becomes rather a bore. We are always working; keeping our home is a 24/7 job, and answering the fishmonger's call while doing office assignments is second nature. Taking children/grandchildren to the doctor, topping up the electric card, and calling a handyman to fix the tap are our everyday odd jobs.

Our role in family life is taken for granted. But, God forbid, if we ever slack, there is always the dining room—the family court for interventions.

On a more philosophical note, we women intentionally want to play the slain martyr's role. We want to be the perfect daughter, the disciplining mother, the obliging wife, the efficient employee.

The word "martyrdom" reminds me of my own struggle, many years ago, with how I balanced my work and home to get my act together as a young, married, and working mother.

When I got married, my mother's wise words to me were: "You can continue your job, if it's important to you, but not at the expense of your new family. I never want to see a messy home and an unruly grandchild. You have to be a Perfect 10. I need to see that I raised you right."

Oh, the moral weight of those words. If only she knew how she had ruined my early years and how I am still suffocating in my 50s.

No one asked me to sacrifice my mental well-being and emotional needs for the family. I did it as a daughter, wife, and mother, of my own accord. I did it from my sense of responsibility, ingrained in me as a girl child. I was tutored to be obedient, giving, and surrendering. It is the case for us all; we do it subconsciously as if we were raised with this obliging trait.

At 50, the fact that no one is appreciating or taking into cognisance our "martyrdom" has become too much to handle. The pressure of it all is of a different magnitude altogether. Dealing with menopause, ageing, and still keeping house for others becomes bothersome. Yet, we women do not attempt to address any concerns.

Strangely, when you become old, your family's perspective of you and your continuance changes because, at that age, you are somehow deemed not smart enough, bold enough, and inspiring enough. You cannot be a role model for your family anymore, not even for your spouse.

At this point, you look back on your life to audit what you have achieved so far and after all the addition, subtraction, hard multiplication, and long divisions, the mathematics of your life boils down to half regrets, failed attempts, missed opportunities, a label of an ignorant parent, and indifferent spouse.

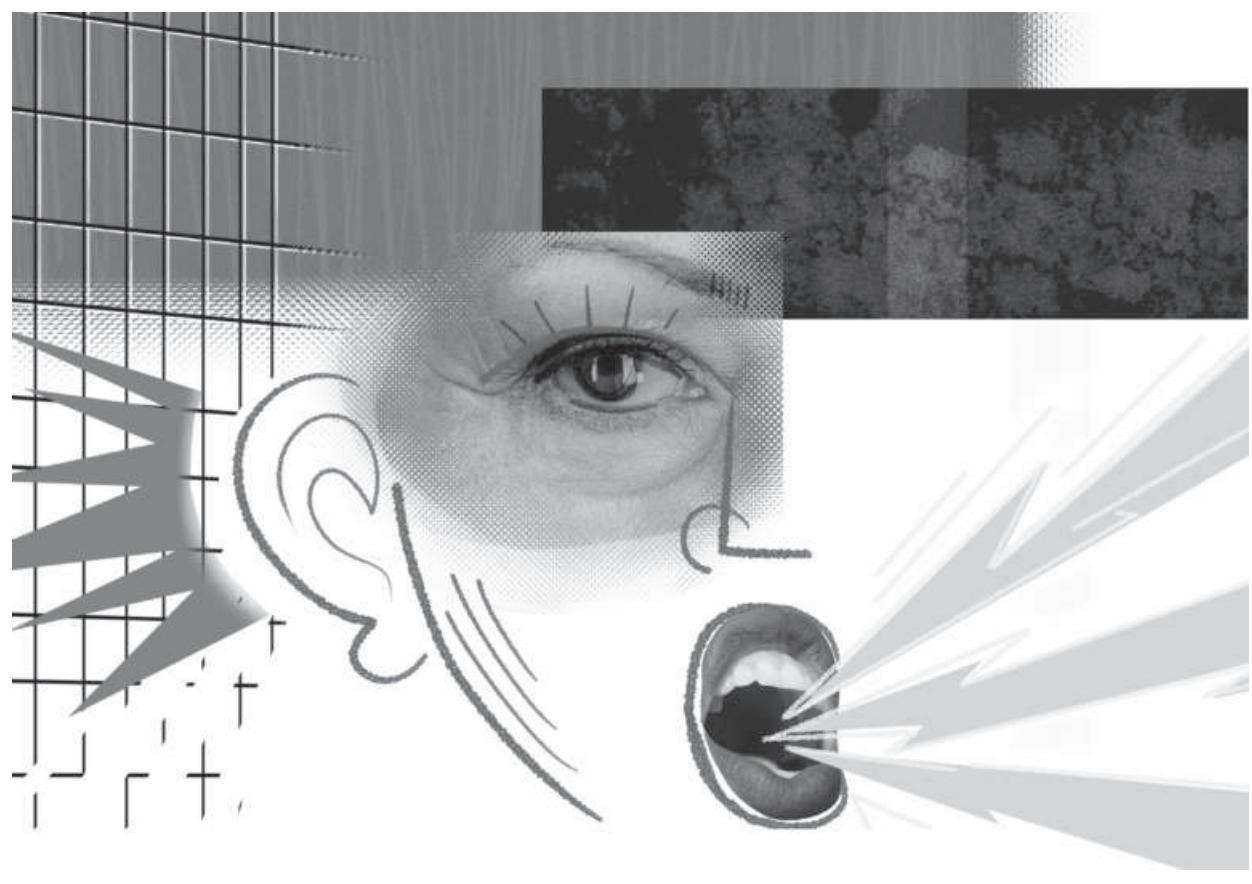
The sickness of the old mind is a cruel thing, it gnaws at all your relationships and the life you thought you had, slips away from you. You are on no one's priority list, its time you find a new world, where you are neither a queen nor princess, not even a doormat but just a dewy-eyed, carefree woman.

I kept asking around and women particularly suffer from this forlorn feeling in their advanced age. Sadness and loneliness in an old person are disappointing in a way that you have all your loved ones near you, yet, you know that you have lived your course and cannot be a burden to them. What you gave to your family is theirs to keep; do not expect a reward for it. Not even a hug.

I was talking to a representative of Moner Bondhu, a mental well-being platform, and they too agreed that we cannot justify our life choices. Whatever we did for our family was because we wanted to see them be happy and prosperous. They are not obliged to reciprocate those actions of goodwill.

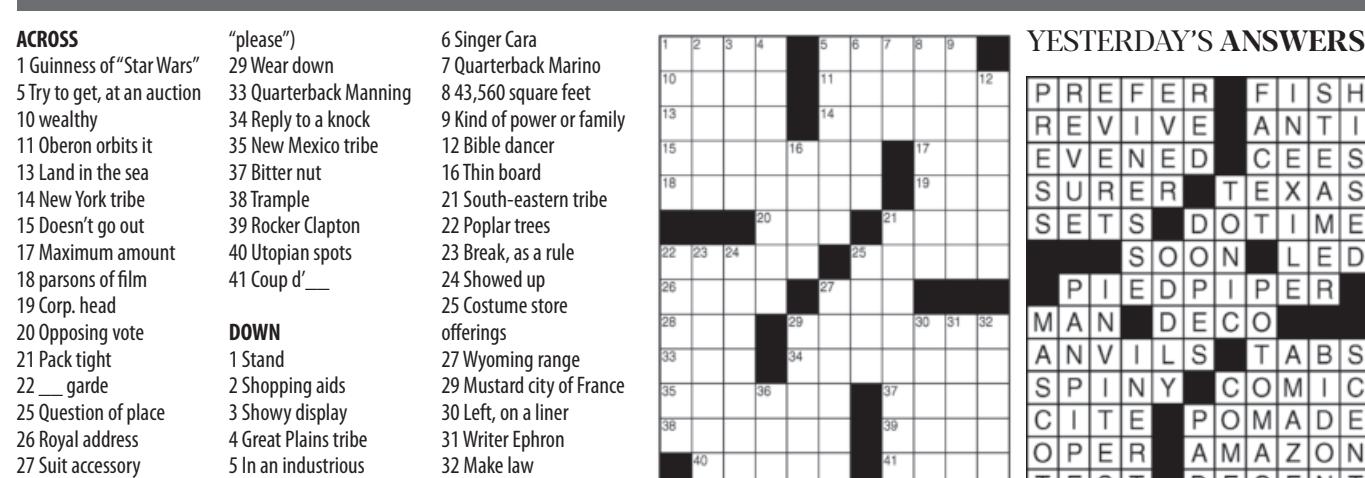
However, it is important to share these feelings with someone you trust—be it a friend, family member, or therapist. Confronting these feelings is part of a process and seeking professional help is okay. One only needs to step out of their comfort zone and explore a new world; prioritise and love oneself the most, no matter what others say.

I think it is okay to be selfish when you're 50-something. So, to all the bored, unappreciated women out there: pack a bag and go on a girls' trip or play a game of Housie, because no one can be more empathetic towards you than your ya ya sisters.



VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHON

### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH



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