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Article 1.

NYT  
If Not Now, When?  
Roger Cohen<<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/columns/rogerc=hen/>>

October 17, 2013 -- It is possible to imagine a scenario more favorable to Israel than the current one, but it is not easy. Syria is giving up its chemical weapons. In the civil war there, Hezbollah and Iran are bleeding. The Egyptian Army has ousted the Muslim Brotherhood, restored a trusted interactor for Israel, and embarked on a squeeze of Hamas in Gaza. In Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the prime minister, has overstretched; the glow is off his aggressive stand for Palestine.

Saudi Arabia is furious with President Obama over his policies toward Egypt, Syria and Iran. It has scant anger left for Israel. Sunni-Shiite enmity, played out in a Syrian conflict that could make the 30-year religious war in Europe seem short, feels more venomous today than the old story of Arabs and Jews. The power and prosperity of Israel have seldom, if ever, looked more sustainable in its 65-year history.

Of course things can change in the Middle East — of late very fast — but if Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, is inclined to take risks from strength, the present looks propitious. As he wrote in an open letter to Israelis in July, “We have built a wonderful country and turned it into one of the world’s most prosperous, advanced and powerful countries.”

This is true. Israel is a miracle of innovation and development. Tel Aviv, not once sensual and vibrant, is a boom town. Go there and smile.

For almost three months now Israelis and Palestinians have been negotiating peace in U.S.-brokered talks. They have been doing so in such quiet that the previous sentence may seem startling. Nobody is leaking. Because expectations are low, spoilers are quiescent. There is a feeling nobody opposed to a resolution need lift a finger because the talks will fail all on their own. This is good. Absent discretion, diplomacy dies.

Ample cause exists for skepticism. The Palestinian leader, Mahmoud Abbas, insists that not one Israeli soldier will be allowed in Palestine; Netanyahu wants Israeli troops in the Jordan Valley for decades. There are hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers in the West Bank with no plans to go anywhere. Several members of the Israeli government scoff at the notion of Palestine; Netanyahu has become a liberal Likudnik, of all things. The Palestinian national movement is split, incitement against Israel continues, and the idea of a two-state outcome is losing favor. All this before Jerusalem and the Palestinian right of return are even broached.

Still, with scarcely a murmur, the talks continue. They are almost a third of the way into the allotted nine months. Well before that time is up, the two sides’ final positions will have become clear. There will be gaps. That will be the moment for the United States to step forward with its take-it-or-leave-it bridging proposal. That will be the time of the leaders — Netanyahu, Abbas and Obama — and the test of their readiness for risk in the name of a peace that can only come with painful concessions.

Israel is strong today for many reasons. A core one is the resilience and stability of its democratic institutions. There is, however, a risk to this: No democracy can be immune to running an undemocratic system of oppression in territory under its control.

To have citizens on one side of an invisible line and disenfranchised subjects without rights on the other side does not work. It is corrosive. A democracy needs borders. It cannot slither into military rule for Palestinians in occupied West Bank areas where state-subsidized settler Jews have the right to vote as if within Israel. If Israel is to remain a Jewish and democratic state — and it must — something has to give. Netanyahu knows this.

Palestinians must also make painful choices. They are weak, Israel is strong — and getting stronger. The world is never going back to 1948.

In Jerusalem’s Old City I was walking this year down from the Damascus Gate. Crowds of Palestinians were pouring out of a Friday service at the Al Aqsa Mosque. A large group of Orthodox Jews was moving in the opposite direction, toward the Western Wall. Into this Muslim-Jewish melee, out of the Via Dolorosa, a cluster of Christians emerged carrying a large wooden cross they tried to navigate through the crowd. It was a scene of despair for anyone convinced faiths and peoples can be disentangled in the Holy Land. Looked at another way it was a scene of hope, even mirth.

Netanyahu has recently taken to quoting Hillel: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me?” Of course it was Hillel who said: “That which is hateful to yourself, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah, the rest is just commentary.” And Netanyahu’s chosen quote, in this time of strength, ends with four words he has omitted: “If not now, when?”

Article 2.

Foreign Policy

Why the Middle East is less and less important for the United States Aaron David Miller

October 17, 2013 -- Does the Middle East really matter anymore?

I'm just kidding. Of course the Middle East matters. Just look at the headlines: Not a day goes by without a new crisis in Syria, Iraq, or Egypt or a statement by an Israeli politician or Iranian mullah predicting that we're headed either to war or peace. This week, world leaders met in Geneva to discuss Iran's nuclear capability. Last month, President Barack Obama gave a speech to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) devoted entirely to the Middle East. Then there are the petroleum reserves, the iconic Suez Canal and the all too narrow Straits of Hormuz. There's also the never-ending saga of the Arab-Israeli conflict and, of course, September 11. That terrible event -- the second bloodiest day in U.S. history, exceeded only by a day during the Battle of Antietam -- came from the angry, grievance-producing, broken Middle East.

But, with all that said, the Middle East is not nearly as important as it used to be. The traditional reasons for U.S. involvement are changing. Once upon a time, it was all about containing the Russians, our dangerous dependence on Arab oil, and a very vulnerable Israel. Then it was all about the threat of Islamic extremism and terrorism, and the desire to nation-build in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Much of that is now gone. Some of what remains has gotten more complex and limited the role the United States can and should play in the Middle East. In other matters, the fact that some situations have gotten simpler may actually be further limiting what America wants and needs to accomplish there.

Could it be that, in coming years, we're going to draw back even more from the place? Perhaps. And here's why.

(1) There's no new cold war or bogeyman.

It was the famous trio of Russians, oil, and Israel against the backdrop of a declining British empire that brought the United States to the Middle East in the first place, and some would like to believe there's still a cold war on. After all, Putin loves to stick it to America every chance he gets, and he's seen the United States remove Russian clients one by one (Saddam Hussein, Muammar Qaddafi) and even threaten unilateral action against Bashar al-Assad, Moscow's last man standing in the Middle East.

But Putin is not interested in an expanded proxy war with Washington in a region he knows is rife with Islamic extremism and a messy trap for Russia to boot. He would like to preserve the influence and assets he has, some of which involve billions in unpaid Syrian debt and contracts with Assad's name on them, as well as the naval base at Tartus. Putin also opposes a Pax America. However, as the recent U.S.-Russian framework agreement on Syrian chemical weapons reveals, Putin's aims can involve cooperation as much as competition. As part of the P5 +1, I also suspect Putin would sign on to a deal on the Iranian nuclear issue, rather than risk Israeli or U.S. military action.

In other words, the Russians and the Americans are hardly allies in the Middle East -- but they're not quite enemies either.

So, if the Russians aren't the principal threat to draw the United States into the region anymore, who or what is? In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, a lot of smart people had questions about what new organizing paradigm for U.S. foreign policy would replace the Cold War. After a decade, the answer came literally out of the blue on a beautiful but deadly fall day in September 2001.

The attacks on the Pentagon and the Twin Towers generated a frenzy of activity, much of it focused on the Middle East. This would come to include two of the longest and among the most profitless wars in U.S. history, a global war on terrorism, an industrial-size homeland security complex, and a continuing struggle to find the right balance between America's security and the rights, privacy, and civil liberties of its citizenry.

But, another decade later, the signs of retrenchment and withdrawal from the hot wars that replaced the cold one are pretty clear. We're out of Iraq, and, by 2014, we'll be heading for the exits in Afghanistan, too. As for the so-called war on terrorism, we are getting smarter and more economical. The United States has been quite effective in dismantling al Qaeda's central operations and keeping the homeland safe from another sensational attack. We've been lucky for sure, but effective, too. The danger now appears to be more from extremist-inspired, lone wolf episodes like we saw at Fort Hood and in Boston. In any event, Americans dying in terrorist attacks remains an unlikely situation: Last year, only 10 Americans died in terrorist attacks. You're more likely to die in a car accident.

Meanwhile, drones are hardly an ideal counter-terrorism strategy from a legal, moral, or political point of view, but, along with the use of U.S. Special Forces, they do reflect a much lower-profile approach to dealing with terrorists than invading nations and trying to rebuild them. Ideal or not, these kinds of tactics reflect the sort of retail approach to terrorism that the United States is likely to continue pursuing in the future.

To be sure, the threat from Islamic extremism has not gone away. But the notion that the Islamists and their Sunni or Shiite arcs are poised to take over the Middle East and require some new grand interventionist strategy is another example of threat inflation. Osama bin Laden is dead. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is a shadow of its former self. Hamas is contained in its tiny Gaza enclave. Nasrallah and Hezbollah have been weakened by Assad's ravages. And the prospect that a small al Qaeda offshoot is going to take over and govern large parts of Syria is fanciful at best. Indeed, the problem for many of the lands visited by the Arab Spring isn't that some new ayatollah or mullah is going to create a modern day Caliphate but that there will continue to be weak and ineffective governance in the region, with those in charge incapable of coming up with truly national visions for their countries or leading in a way that addresses the basic political and economic needs of their people.

#### (2) Nobody wants America to play Mr. Fix-It.

One thing is clear: We've likely seen the last of the big transformative-interventionist schemes to change the Middle East from the outside in the name of U.S. security, a freedom agenda, or anything else. I say this knowing that there's little historical memory here, that the military gives a willing president all kinds of options, and that the world is an unpredictable place. But watching the public, congressional, and even expert reaction to the prospects of a limited U.S. strike against Syria, there's clearly zero support for intervening militarily in somebody else's civil war.

The alliance of the liberal interventionists and neocons who bemoan the Obama administration's lack of will, vision, and leadership and its abject spinelessness in the face of 100,000 dead (a full half of whom are combatants belonging to one side or the other) is simply no match for a frustrated public promised a reasonable return on two wars who instead got more than 6,000 American dead, thousands more with devastating wounds, trillions of dollars expended, a loss of American prestige and credibility, and outcomes more about leaving than winning.

To believe anyone in the United States is ready to invest additional resources in tilting at windmills in the Middle East is utterly fantastical. Who should blame them? Last week in Libya, the one successful example of U.S. intervention in the Arab Spring, militias kidnapped the prime minister. Car bombs kill scores weekly in Iraq. And, in Afghanistan, one can only despair about the gap between the price we have paid there and what we can expect in terms of security and good governance in the years ahead.

#### (3) An energy revolution is coming.

Energy independence isn't around the corner. But there's a revolution brewing in North America that will over time reduce U.S. dependence on Arab oil. U.S. oil production is increasing sharply for the first time in almost a quarter century. And natural gas output is rising, too. Some people even predict that, within a decade, America will become the world's largest producer of oil and gas. Indeed, Saudi Arabia currently produces 10 million barrels a day, while the United States churns out six million. If you add another two million in natural gas liquids, you can -- without straining the bounds of credulity -- see the potential. According to Council on Foreign Relations oil guru Michael Levi, even the cautious U.S. Energy Information Administration predicts that, by 2020, U.S. production could get close to 10 million barrels a day.

The point is not that the United States is becoming the new Saudi

Arabia<ht=[p://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/10/16/the\\_end\\_of\\_opeac\\_america\\_energ\\_y\\_oil](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/10/16/the_end_of_opeac_america_energ_y_oil)>. As Levi points out, we're not in a position to manipulate and play politics with our oil production to affect supply and price. But we are going to become less reliant on Middle East energy. In 2011, we imported 45 percent of our energy needs, down from 60 percent six years earlier, and the share of our imports from Western Hemisphere sources is increasing. Between new oil in Brazil, oil sands production in Canada, and shale gas technology at home, by 2020, we could cut our dependence on non-Western Hemisphere oil by half. Combine that with the rise in national oil production and greater focus on fuel efficiency and conservation, and the trend lines are at last running in the right direction.

As long as oil trades in a single market, we're still vulnerable to disruptions, and the security of the Middle East's vast oil reserves will continue to be a key U.S. interest. But our own independence and thus freedom of action as it relates to the Saudis and other Arab producers will only increase. Given the fact that this month is the fortieth anniversary of the 1973 oil embargo, that's a good thing to contemplate.

#### (4) Arab Allies are estranged.

Part of the reason the United States is losing interest and influence in the Middle East is that we're sort of running out of friends -- or, perhaps more to the point and to quote Franklin Delano Roosevelt's reported description of a Nicaraguan president, our own SOBs. America is watching a region in profound transformation. The old authoritarians with whom we fought (Saddam, Qaddafi, Assad the elder) and those on whom we relied (Yasser Arafat, Hosni Mubarak, Ben Ali, Abdullah Saleh) are all gone. It's true the kings remain. But the most important ones -- the Saudis -- have serious

problems with our policies. They can't abide the fact that, as a result of our doing, = Shiite prime minister rules in Baghdad; they loathe our policy on acquiescing to Mubarak's ouster; they resent our interest in reform in Bahrain; and they can't stand our refusal to get tough with Israel on the Palestinians= We've just suspended a chunk of military aid to Egypt, another of our other=Arab friends, and managed to alienate just about every part of the Egyptian political spectrum, from the military to the Islamists to the liberals to=the business community. The Jordanians still want to be our friend largely=because King Abdullah's vulnerabilities require it. Likewise for Mahmoud A=bas, who has no chance of getting a Palestinian state without U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's peace process lifeline.

The fact is, for the first time in half a century, Washington lacks a truly consequential Arab partner with whom to cooperate on matters relating to peace or war. Part of the reason is surely because our own street cred is much diminished. But most of our predicament derives from regional deficits -- the weakness of the Arab leaders and states themselves, and the turbulent changes loosed in the region in the past several years.

You might even go so far as to suggest that, today, the three most consequential powers in the region are the non-Arabs: Iran, Turkey, and Israel. All are serious, stable countries, with strong economies and militaries. Too bad we can't forge a partnership among that triad. The Middle East possibility of an U.S.-Iranian rapprochement on the horizon, China's expansion in the Middle East ultimately poses the greatest threat to Iran over the long term. The U.S. will undoubtedly share Iran's concern with Beijing's more assertive Middle East policy, and this could be an additional impetus for them to put aside their bitter rivalry.

Regardless if that occurs or not, it is clear that as China seeks to deepen its presence in the Middle East, it will increasingly have to contend with Iran.

Zachary Keck is Associate Editor of The Diplomat.

Article 6.

The National Interest

**Is Antisemitism Back in Europe?**

[John Allen Gay](http://nationalinterest.org/profile/john-allen-gay)

October 18, 2013 -- The status of Jews in Europe remains a delicate one. At least that is what a new survey by the EU's Agency for Fundamental Rights suggests. The survey, to be released in full in November, found that nearly one quarter of European Jews

[avoid](http://www.timesofisrael.com/fearful-of-anti-semitism-22-of-european-jews-hide-identity/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter)

doing things or wearing symbols that could allow others to identify them as Jewish. And the numbers are worse in some places: Forty-nine percent of the Swedish utopia's Jews avoid recognizably Jewish clothing and symbols in public. Eighty-eight percent of French Jews said antisemitism has become worse in the last five years. Thirty percent of Hungarian Jews have experienced an antisemitic incident in the past twelve months. And around Europe, two-thirds said reporting assault and other antisemitic incidents to the police wasn't worth it, or wouldn't make a difference.

Surveys like this cast doubt on the belief that the history of the West has been one of steady progress.

Sure, the Europeans seem to have finally been civilized, with their bloody, multicentury stream of wars and revolutions supplanted by social democracy and multinational union. But in 2012, reports Tel Aviv University's Kantor Center, France

[led the world](http://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/sites/default/files/doch-al-final-2012.pdf) in violent antisemitic incidents.

Who is to blame? The media would have you believe it's the far right—Greece swarming with olden Dawn blackshirts and cryptofascists flexing their muscles almost everywhere east of the Elbe. And the Kantor Center documents plenty of far-right violence. But participants in the EU survey, many drawn from Western Europe, saw it differently—just 19 percent pinned it on the extreme right.

Twenty-two percent faulted the extreme left. But Europe's Muslims are cited by 27 percent.

This brand of antisemitism has imported the hatred of Jews to

countries where it was historically less severe, such as Denmark. Tablet, a Jewish online magazine, relates the tale of Martin Krasnik, a journalist and a liberal Jewish Dane who decided to take a long walk through the immigrant neighborhood of Nørrebro with a yarmulke perched atop his head. He's quickly harassed—flipped off, told to “go to hell, Jew,” told to remove his cap, and so forth. There were plenty of threats—men tell him that “we have a right to kick your ass,” that his religion may tell him to wear the yarmulke but that it doesn't tell him to get killed, that “my cousin killed a guy for wearing a ‘Jewish hat.’” Krasnik was extremely uncomfortable, telling Tablet's Michael Moynihan that he thought, “If I keep doing this for an hour or two, something will happen. And if I did this everyday, I would get my ass kicked around.”

The rise of Muslim antisemitism in Europe is well documented—and widely ignored. Krasnik told Moynihan that the press and other elites give the phenomenon little attention and little energy—“The mayor of Copenhagen says ‘we will not accept antisemitism, but that we shouldn't overdramatize the situation. We should breathe calmly, he said.” Moynihan noted that some school principals in heavily immigrant areas have begun warning Jewish parents away. Europe's multiculturalists prefer to apologize for their more troublesome charges—and to bend native society to accommodate foreigners' prejudices. Moynihan, again:

At a recent government-sponsored “multicultural festival” in Nørrebro, intended to promote cultural “diversity,” a Jewish group was barred from displaying the Israeli flag. TaskForce Inclusion, one of the Orwellian-named organizers of the event, claimed that the measure was taken as a “safety precaution” (a precaution that applied, it seems, only to Jewish groups and a tacit admission that the mere sight of a Star of David would drive certain other attendees into spasms of violence). One government official later said that, initially, the Jewish group was to be completely excluded for fear of offending Muslim participants.

Modern liberalism veils Europe's history—and it's the same veil behind which some of Europe's less pleasant impulses lurk. There is a fatal flaw, after all, in European claims of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism really can enrich societies. And there is no better testament to this than the history of the Jews in Europe. They gave Europe Einstein and Kafka, Freud and Arendt. They made Europe the world's intellectual center of gravity—until the Europeans killed them and drove them out. So why would Europe's self-proclaimed multiculturalists sweep their shining example under the rug, unless something more unsavory were at play?

John Allen Gay is an assistant managing editor at The National Interest. His book (co-authored with Geoffrey Kemp) *War with Iran: Political, Military, and Economic Consequences* was released by Rowman and Littlefield in early 2013.