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[Article 1.](#)

NYT

Iran Nuclear Talks: Unfinished, but Alive
[The Editorial Board](#)

November 11, 2013 -- The [inconclusive negotiations](#) over the weekend on [Iran's nuclear program](#) were disappointing, but two critical points have mostly been ignored. First, diplomacy takes work, and agreements rarely flow seamlessly from beginning to end. Second, if all those inveighing against any deal — namely members of Congress, Israel and Saudi Arabia — see the weekend results as a new opportunity to sabotage it, what is the alternative?

No one has proposed a better path than negotiations, and getting the best deal possible should remain the goal for [Iran](#) and the major powers — the United States, Britain, France, China, Russia and Germany — as they look to another round of talks later this month.

American, European and Iranian negotiators had raised expectations that an interim agreement — one that would temporarily freeze Iran's nuclear program, while a longer-term agreement was worked on — could be reached. The 11th-hour arrival of Secretary of State [John Kerry](#) and other foreign ministers at the talks in Geneva added to a sense of a potential breakthrough.

On Monday, [what prevented the deal was still in dispute](#). After Mr. Kerry placed responsibility on Iran for being unprepared to accept a proposed draft agreement, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif of Iran said Mr. Kerry's "conflicting statements" had damaged confidence in a process that all sides had agreed would be conducted in secret. One primary obstacle involves Iran's insistence that it has a right to enrich uranium (which can be used for nuclear power plants or weapons), something Washington is not ready to concede.

Meanwhile, other reports blamed France for the failure to reach a deal after Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius complained that the proposed agreement was a "fool's game" just as negotiations were at a critical point. American and French diplomats have since said that France's area of concern — reportedly involving a heavy water reactor, which can produce plutonium — was easily resolved. Israelis and American lawmakers, however, have happily embraced Mr. Fabius's outburst in pushing the United States and its allies to take a tougher line against Iran. It would be alarming if his comments seriously impair chances of a deal.

Unfortunately, the inconclusive negotiations have given an opening to the Israeli prime minister, [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), who excoriated the proposed

agreement as the “deal of the century” for Iran before it is made public, to generate more hysterical opposition. It would be nice if Iran could be persuaded to completely dismantle its nuclear program, as Mr. Netanyahu has demanded, but that is unlikely to ever happen. The administration of President George W. Bush made similar demands and refused to negotiate seriously and the result was an Iranian program that is more advanced than ever.

The best way to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon is through a negotiated deal that limits uranium enrichment, curbs the plutonium program and allows for maximum international monitoring. Iran took a useful, if insufficient, step [on Monday when it agreed](#) to allow the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#) access to certain nuclear sites. The opponents of a deal are energized and determined. The United States and its allies have to be united and smart.

[Article 2.](#)

The Wall Street Journal

Axis of Fantasy vs. Axis of Reality

Bret Stephens

Nov. 11, 2013 -- When the history of the Obama administration's foreign policy is written 20 or so years from now, the career of Wendy Sherman, our chief nuclear negotiator with Iran, will be instructive.

In 1988, the former social worker ran the Washington office of the Dukakis campaign and worked at the Democratic National Committee. That was the year the Massachusetts governor carried 111 electoral votes to George H.W. Bush's 426. In the mid-1990s, Ms. Sherman was briefly the CEO of something called the Fannie Mae Foundation, supposedly a charity that was shut down a decade later for what the [Washington Post](#) called "using tax-exempt contributions to advance corporate interests."

From there it was on to the State Department, where she served as a point person in nuclear negotiations with North Korea and met with Kim Jong Il himself. The late dictator, she testified, was "witty and humorous," "a conceptual thinker," "a quick problem-solver," "smart, engaged,

knowledgeable, self-confident." Also a movie buff who loved Michael Jordan highlight videos. A regular guy!

Later Ms. Sherman was to be found working for her former boss as the No. 2 at the Albright-Stonebridge Group before taking the No. 3 spot at the State Department. Ethics scolds might describe the arc of her career as a revolving door between misspending taxpayer dollars in government and mooching off them in the private sector. But it's mainly an example of failing up—the Washingtonian phenomenon of promotion to ever-higher positions of authority and prestige irrespective of past performance.

This administration in particular is stuffed with fail-uppers—the president, the vice president, the secretary of state and the national security adviser, to name a few—and every now and then it shows. Like, for instance, when people for whom the test of real-world results has never meant very much meet people for whom that test means everything.

That's my read on last weekend's scuttled effort in Geneva to strike a nuclear bargain with Iran. The talks unexpectedly fell apart at the last minute when French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius publicly objected to what he called a "sucker's deal," meaning the U.S. was prepared to begin lifting sanctions on Iran in exchange for tentative Iranian promises that they would slow their multiple nuclear programs.

Not stop or suspend them, mind you, much less dismantle them, but merely reduce their pace from run to jog when they're on Mile 23 of their nuclear marathon. It says something about the administration that they so wanted a deal that they would have been prepared to take this one. This is how people for whom consequences are abstractions operate. It's what happens when the line between politics as a game of perception and policy as the pursuit of national objectives dissolves.

The French are not such people, believe it or not, at least when it comes to foreign policy. Speculation about why Mr. Fabius torpedoed the deal has focused on the pique French President François Hollande felt at getting stiffed by the U.S. on his Mali intervention and later in the aborted attack on Syria. (Foreign ministry officials in Paris are still infuriated by a [Susan Rice](#) tirade in December, when she called a French proposal to intervene in Mali "crap.")

But the French also understand that the sole reason Iran has a nuclear program is to build a nuclear weapon. They are not nonchalant about it.

The secular republic has always been realistic about the threat posed by theocratic Iran. And they have come to care about nonproliferation too, in part because they belong to what is still a small club of nuclear states. Membership has its privileges.

This now puts the French at the head of a de facto Axis of Reality, the other prominent members of which are Saudi Arabia and Israel. In this Axis, strategy is not a game of World of Warcraft conducted via avatars in a virtual reality. "We are not blind, and I don't think we're stupid," a defensive [John Kerry](#) said over the weekend on "Meet the Press," sounding uncomfortably like Otto West (Kevin Kline) from "A Fish Called Wanda." When you've reached the "[don't call me stupid](#)" stage of diplomacy, it means the rest of the world has your number.

Now the question is whether the French were staking out a position at Geneva or simply demanding to be heard. If it's the latter, the episode will be forgotten and Jerusalem and Riyadh will have to reach their own conclusions about how to operate in a post-American Middle East. If it's the former, Paris has a chance to fulfill two cherished roles at once: as the de facto shaper of European policy on the global stage, and as an obstacle to Washington's presumptions to speak for the West.

A decade ago, Robert Kagan argued that the U.S. operated in a Hobbesian world of power politics while Europe inhabited the Kantian (and somewhat make-believe) world of right. That was after 9/11, when fecklessness was not an option for the U.S.

Under Mr. Obama, there's been a role reversal. The tragedy for France and its fellow members of its Axis is that they may lack the power to master a reality they perceive so much more clearly than the Wendy Shermans of the world, still failing up.

[Article 3.](#)

[Los Angeles Times](#)

A different Israeli take on Iran

Dalia Dassa Kaye

November 12, 2013 -- Even as the Geneva talks on Iran's nuclear program were underway, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu publicly

rejected the deal diplomats were working to achieve. It would be, he said, the "deal of the century" for Iran but "a very bad deal" for other countries. An agreement did not come out of last week's talks. But when the participants resume negotiations later this month, they should keep one thing in mind: Not all Israelis are as alarmed about a potential deal as Netanyahu. Indeed, some see potential for a final nuclear deal that would protect Israeli security while allowing for limited enrichment activity in Iran.

Israel's security elite nearly unanimously agrees that an Iranian nuclear weapon would be detrimental to Israeli and regional stability. Despite some fissures within the security establishment about whether Iran poses an existential threat (and disagreements about the merits of a unilateral Israeli military strike), Israeli experts across the spectrum believe a nuclear-armed Iran could lead to dangerous military escalations, embolden Hezbollah and other Iranian allies, and potentially set off further nuclear proliferation in the region.

It is thus not surprising that Israelis would reject any deal that would allow Iran to continue nuclear activities that would enable it to quickly weaponize its program under the cover of an agreement.

But from Netanyahu's perspective, the only acceptable deal with Iran is one that completely dismantles all of Iran's nuclear enrichment capabilities. Most Western analysts view that goal as unrealistic, and a number of prominent security voices in Israel have taken views that differ from Netanyahu's maximalist stance.

Take, for instance, Amos Yadlin, a former chief of Israel's military intelligence agency who now heads of one of Israel's top strategic think tanks. He and others would prefer a deal that leaves Iran with no remaining enrichment capabilities. But they also see as "reasonable" a deal that might allow for some limited enrichment capabilities at reduced levels, accompanied by intrusive inspections that would make it harder and costlier for Iran to cheat. These basic requirements are likely to be key to any final negotiated deal that the Americans and their European partners would accept before lifting significant sanctions, particularly those multilaterally imposed on Iran's oil and banking sectors.

Israelis no doubt expect the United States to bargain hard and to live up to President Obama's commitment to prevent the emergence of a nuclear-

armed Iran. Yet not all Israelis are as distrustful of Obama as Netanyahu appears to be. David Menashri, one of Israel's leading Iran experts, [argued recently](#) that if the United States and Iran come to a deal, "it's not going to be against the interests of the state of Israel, and I know many people in Israel understand that." Dan Meridor, a longtime Likud Party leader and former Cabinet member in Netanyahu's government, [has cautioned against immediately rejecting](#) the new openings with Iran and denying the United States time to explore a deal. Efraim Halevy, former chief of Israel's Mossad spy agency, [has also argued](#) for giving diplomacy a chance, even if he and many others in Israel remain doubtful that a deal is likely.

Netanyahu's stridency has also faced criticism at home because of concerns that his positions might isolate Israel and undermine its legitimate concerns about Iran's nuclear program. Dan Gillerman, a former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, [warned](#) that it was very dangerous for Netanyahu to be viewed as "the only naysayer and warmonger." It did not go unnoticed that Israel was the only one of 193 member states to walk out on Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's recent United Nations' speech, an act that Netanyahu's finance minister [criticized](#) as "reminiscent of the way Arab states behave toward Israel."

Finally, while many in Israel's security establishment are critical of Obama's regional policies, few would favor a rupture in U.S.-Israeli relations over an Iran deal. With all of the challenges facing Israel today, maintaining strong relations with the United States is still a key pillar of Israeli security, and the Israeli public will have a low tolerance for any leader who threatens that.

Unfortunately, Netanyahu's persistent criticism of Rouhani and hostile stance toward diplomacy with Iran are overshadowing the voices of many in Israel who have the stature and security credentials to present a different narrative to the Israeli and American people.

The alternative narrative is not dovish, and it includes a hard-nosed assessment of Israeli security needs and a strong degree of skepticism over Iranian intentions. But it also recognizes that Israel may be doing itself harm by rejecting diplomacy so categorically.

The most strident voices in Israel may be the loudest at the moment, but it's important to remember that many Israelis believe they should give the Americans a chance to strike a deal that would benefit Israel and

effectively put a halt to Iran's ability to build a nuclear weapon. And they believe such a deal would be far preferable to the alternatives: a military strike or the acceptance of Iran as a nuclear weapons state. As these difficult negotiations continue, Americans need to hear more from such Israeli voices to better understand the complex landscape in Israel when it comes to Iran.

Dalia Dassa Kaye is director of the Center for Middle East Public Policy at Rand Corp.

[Article 4.](#)

The Financial Times

France has played its cards right on Iran

Gideon Rachman

November 11, 2013 -- By [blocking a deal on Iran's nuclear programme](#), France has achieved the unusual feat of annoying the American and Iranian governments simultaneously. If the French had genuinely scuppered the chance of an agreement – making war much more likely – they would deserve all the anger directed at them. But by playing “bad cop” to the Obama administration’s good cop, the French have actually made it more likely that an eventual deal will achieve its goal of preventing an Iranian bomb. French toughness has also increased the chances that a highly sceptical US Congress will buy any accord that emerges, when talks resume in a few days time. That is crucial because there is no point in [President Barack Obama](#) striking a deal with Iran if he cannot deliver on his side of the bargain – which is to ease western sanctions. The foreign powers negotiating with [Iran](#) are now scrambling to restore their image of unity. Both the French and the Americans are stressing that they have a common position. It is also true that any deal agreed in Geneva would have been an “interim accord” only, with further details to be agreed later. Nonetheless, the weekend’s discussions revealed an important division. Those who were keenest to get a deal argue that it is crucial that Iranian reformers be given some rewards now, to bolster their position. The hardliners, led by the French, caution against easing sanctions too soon.

The history of the west's failed efforts to block a [North Korean bomb](#), along with its various unsuccessful rapprochements with Iran over the years, suggest the sceptics may have a point. In 2005, the powers negotiating with North Korea reached a deal that promised a package of economic and diplomatic incentives in return for the North Koreans abandoning their nuclear weapons programme. But the deal was a dud; in 2006 North Korea staged its first successful nuclear test. The weapon first tested by the North Koreans was a plutonium-based nuclear bomb, rather than one based on enriched uranium. France's insistence that an early Iran accord should deal not just with uranium enrichment but also with the plutonium plant being developed at Arak is therefore particularly important. There are already signs that this tougher approach is bearing fruit, with Iran suggesting that it might ease its position on international inspections of Arak.

It can be argued that Iran would be more likely to stick to a nuclear deal than the endlessly duplicitous North Koreans, whose totalitarian system is probably better adapted to accept the extreme poverty and isolation that flows from being a nuclear pariah. But no outside power can pronounce with confidence on the balance of power between hardliners and moderates in Iran. And even conservative western leaders have been seduced by the illusory hope of a breakthrough with Iran before. Remember Ronald Reagan's emissaries showing up in Tehran, carrying a key-shaped cake, that was meant to open the door to better relations with the sweet-toothed mullahs?

The transformation of France's diplomatic profile in the Middle East over the past years is striking. Just a decade ago, France's opposition to the Iraq war led to its denunciation by American rightwingers, who famously labelled the [French "cheese-eating surrender monkeys"](#). Now France is, temporarily, the toast of neoconservative Washington, while it is the Iranians who come out with the colourful insults. The Fars news agency denounced the French as "gun-slinging frogs". (Perhaps there is room for compromise, in which the French assume a settled identity as cheese-eating frogs?)

The Americans who have laboured long and hard to get this deal done might also wonder why France, a less important player in the bloc negotiating with Iran, should take it upon itself to slow the momentum

towards an agreement when, if it comes to war, it will be the US that does the bulk of the fighting. For anyone following the “Iran dossier” (to use diplo-speak), it has been noticeable for some years that France is the most hardline of the western powers. Quite why this should be the case puzzles even French diplomats. Some point to France’s anger at Iran’s role in the killing of French troops in Lebanon in the 1980s, others mention the links to Iran created by the large expatriate Iranian community in France (which once included, Ayatollah Khomeini himself). It is also true that France has a group of experienced diplomats who have been following Iran for many years and have strong feelings about it. The French also have more short-term motivations, having recently concluded a large arms sale to Saudi Arabia, whose government detests Iran. And the administration of François Hollande felt badly let down by the Americans over Syria. The diplomatic chatter is that French planes were actually on the Tarmac – ready to launch strikes against the Assad regime – when Mr Obama decided to call the whole thing off while he consulted Congress. It is said that the French did not get so much as a warning phone call to alert them to this change of course before it was publicly announced. The French – like the other players in the Iranian drama – are doubtless acting from a mixture of motives, some good, some bad. But, even after this weekend’s “so near and yet so far” talks, the chances of a war-averting deal over Iran’s nuclear programme are better than for many years. That deal is much more likely to achieve its aims if the outside powers, prodded by France, temper their eagerness to get the deal done with some healthy caution.

[Article 5.](#)

NYT

A Doable Iran Deal

[Roger Cohen](#)

November 11, 2013 -- The spin masters are out trying to portray the failure of Iran talks in Geneva this way or that. It was the French who abruptly got tough. No, it was Iran’s insistence that its right to enrich uranium be acknowledged. No, it was just the formidable difficulty of a negotiation between mistrustful adversaries.

In this mess, with its bitter aftertaste, it is worth returning to basics. First, President Hassan Rouhani, the Iranian president, and Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's foreign minister, represent the most serious, credible, moderate and capable negotiators the Islamic Republic is ever likely to produce. There will not be a better opportunity with any other conceivable team within a useful time frame.

Second, according to people who have spent many hours with them, Rouhani and Zarif are prepared to limit enrichment to 3.5 percent (well short of weapons grade); curtail the number of centrifuges and facilities and place them under enhanced international monitoring; deal with Iran's 20 percent enriched stockpile by converting it under international supervision into fuel pads for the Tehran research reactor; and find a solution on the heavy-water plant it is building at Arak that could produce plutonium. In return, as these steps are progressively taken, they want sanctions relief and recognition of the right to enrichment.

Third, although Western intelligence agencies believe the Islamic Republic has not taken the decision to make a bomb, Iran's nuclear program has advanced far enough for the country to have the relevant knowledge. Destroying this know-how is near impossible. Iran knows how to produce weapons-grade fissile material; it may not yet be able to make a deliverable weapon. So, as Stephen Heintz, the president of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, put it to me, "The key for the international community is to put all that capability in a box where it is verifiable, contained and controlled. That is what the deal is about."

Fourth, Iranian sanctions weariness on the one hand and U.S. Middle Eastern war weariness on the other have produced a rare moment of mutual interest in exploring openings that might overcome or mitigate decades of hostility that now serve the interests of neither power. Given the powerful forces arrayed against a deal — from Israel to Congress by way of Saudi Arabia and Iranian hard-liners — such readiness is likely to be fleeting. Fifth, Israel has denounced a possible interim deal with Iran. Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, warned American Jewish leaders Sunday that an Iranian nuclear weapon is "coming to a theater near you." But all this hyperbole — Secretary of State John Kerry has referred to "fear tactics" — cannot mask the fact that, absent an agreement, Israel faces the scenario least in its strategic interest: Iranian centrifuges still spinning, the

United States still war averse, with the possibility of having to go it alone in a military strike that might dent but would not stop Iran's nuclear ambitions and would without doubt ignite regional turmoil.

All this speaks for the critical importance of seizing the moment and clinching an exacting interim deal that gets all that Iranian nuclear capacity in a verifiable box and builds the confidence needed for a broader accord.

A word on France: Its position reflects strong views on nonproliferation, its defense agreement with the United Arab Emirates, and a mistrust of the Islamic Republic that runs deep. There are good reasons for this mistrust. Laurent Fabius, now the foreign minister, was prime minister in the mid-1980s during a wave of Paris bombings that were linked to pro-Palestinian groups but are also believed by French authorities to have had Iranian backing in several instances. Fabius is not about to forget this or cut Rouhani any slack. This is not a bad thing. A deal has to be watertight in blocking Iran's path to nuclear weapons while acknowledging its right to nuclear energy.

Which brings me to Iran's right to enrich. Iran is a signatory of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This refers to "the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes." Many non-nuclear countries, including Germany and Japan and Brazil, have interpreted this as a right to enrich uranium — and they have done so with the agreement of the international community. The United States does not see in the treaty language an inherent "right to enrich," but President Obama has said, "We respect the right of the Iranian people to access peaceful nuclear energy in the context of Iran meeting its obligations."

For a country like Iran that has threatened Israel with destruction and engaged in international terrorism, the bar must be much higher on the right to low-level, highly monitored, peaceful enrichment. But it is an inescapable and legitimate component of any conceivable deal that would usher Iran into the family of nations — which is where the United States and Israel have common interest in seeing it.

[Article 6.](#)

The Financial Times

Accord with Iran would help drain the poison of sectarian strife

David Gardner

November 10, 2013 -- Tantalising hopes of a breakthrough in Geneva on Iran's nuclear programme were [raised and then dashed](#) – though all sides agree real progress was made.

The 10-day pause before talks resume offers negotiators the chance to clarify and regroup. It also gives hardliners in Tehran and hawks in the US Congress the opportunity to build up momentum against any agreement. Time is precious. So is focus.

The focus now is bound to be on the mechanics of any interim deal. That is obviously of the essence. Iran's neighbours need to know that Tehran will be going no further in acquiring the capability to make an atomic bomb. The US and five other world powers (France, Germany and the UK, plus Russia and China) need to offer Iranians some sanctions relief; Tehran got nothing 10 years ago in return for a nearly two-year freeze on uranium enrichment – the ambiguous activity at the heart of its widely mistrusted nuclear ambitions.

Yet, all the countries negotiating with Iran on behalf of the international community [believed a breakthrough was within reach](#). John Kerry, US secretary of state, spent nearly 10 hours in conversations with [Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's foreign minister](#) – the closest high-level contact between the two sides since the 1979 Islamic Revolution that replaced the Shah's autocracy with an Islamist theocracy. Nobody went to Geneva for a photo opportunity. "With good work and good faith," Mr Kerry said afterwards, "we can in fact secure our goal."

Focusing intensely on the goal is vital, and not just on how an interim deal can lead to a definitive agreement to constrain Iran's nuclear programme in a verifiable way. The two other prizes such a deal could unlock are: enlisting Iran's help in addressing the most unmanageable conflicts of the Middle East; and starting to turn back the tide of sectarian poison coursing through the region.

[Syria's civil war](#), for example, is the front line of the increasingly bitter Sunni-Shia conflict within Islam, in which Persian and predominantly Shia

Iran – which with allies such as Lebanon’s Hizbollah, is propping up Bashar al-Assad’s regime – is ranged against Sunni Arab rulers and Turkey, backing an assortment of rebels, including jihadis who espouse the most uncompromising version of Saudi Wahhabism.

Detente with Iran could eventually persuade Tehran to elbow aside the Assads – now almost totally dependent for their survival on the Islamic Republic – and unlock a transition out of Syria’s misery. But getting Iran inside the diplomatic tent could also make it easier to manage, if not resolve, a host of other regional problems. These include: Lebanon, where Hizbollah’s overt involvement in the fighting in Syria at Iran’s behest has forced it to tighten its grip at home, intensifying sectarian tensions; and Iraq, where the Shia Islamist government of Nouri al-Maliki has alienated the Sunni and Kurdish minorities, leading to a devastating resurgence of Sunni bombings at home while he acquiesces in sending Shia militia into Syria.

Lebanon and Iraq are in practice becoming part of the Syrian battlefield. First Lebanon, then Iraq and now Syria have all been convulsed by sectarian civil war. But what had been a Sunni-Shia subplot in the region’s drama burst on to centre stage after the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. That put the Shia minority within Islam (a majority in Iraq) in power in a major Arab country for the first time in nearly a millennium, tilting the regional balance of power towards Iran, and igniting a sectarian bloodbath. Some analysts argue this is merely an interstate struggle for regional power between Saudi Arabia and Iran. That is obviously part of the story but cannot be the whole explanation, given the intensity of the bloodletting. This is a primordial struggle within the Muslim world. Any attempt to stabilise the Middle East and its myriad conflicts needs to search for the taps of sectarian poison and turn them off.

A deal with Iran would be a start. It would have to be followed by a sit-down with Saudi Arabia, to discuss the extremist and sectarian ideology it exports along with the oil it sends to the world.

[Article 7.](#)

The Washington Post

The future of Egypt’s intelligence service

[David Ignatius](#)

November 11 -- Cairo — The U.S.-Egyptian relationship has been through some rocky months since the June 30 military coup that toppled President Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. But the strain doesn't seem to have diminished cooperation between the two countries' intelligence services.

Gen. Mohammed Farid el-Tohamy, the director of Egypt's General Intelligence Service, said had been "no change" in his organization's relationship with U.S. spy agencies, despite delay of some U.S. weapons deliveries to the Egyptian military and talk of new Egyptian military contacts with Russia.

"Cooperation between friendly services is in a completely different channel than the political channel," Tohamy said. "█ in constant contact with [Director] John Brennan at the CIA and the local station chief, more than with any other service worldwide."

This fraternal U.S.-Egyptian intelligence relationship is a throwback to the bonds that existed under President Hosni Mubarak. At that time, the charismatic Omar Suleiman was intelligence chief here, and there was a mutual focus on counter-terrorism issues that arguably contributed to Mubarak's isolation from his people—and to the United States being blindsided by the uprising that topped him in February 2011.

Tohamy is a gaunt, balding man with deep-set eyes and the intense, reserved manner shaped by a lifetime in the shadows. Thin-faced, wearing rimless glasses and chain-smoking through much of the interview, he spoke through a translator in a low bass voice. Tohamy used what he said was his first press interview ever to make some basic points about how intelligence is working in Egypt under [Gen. Abdel Fatah al-Sissi](#), the defense minister who toppled Morsi in June. Tohamy is said to have been one of Sissi's mentors when the two served in military intelligence; one of Sissi's first moves after the coup [was to bring Tohamy out of retirement into the intelligence post, replacing Morsi's nominee](#). This "back to the future" aspect of the new Egypt was also clear in Tohamy's comment that the Interior Ministry's domestic security force had "restored some of its former professional capability" by rehiring former officials who had been sacked by Morsi.

Under Mubarak, Tohamy had the delicate job of running the Administrative Oversight Authority, an anti-corruption body, which gave him access to the regime's most sensitive secrets. Critics have argued that in that role, he helped bury financial improprieties involving Mubarak's inner circle, a charge Tohamy's supporters have denied.

I asked Tohamy about the danger that the bloody crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood will drive its members underground into new versions of the terror organizations that spawned al-Qaeda a generation ago. He answered that some cells loosely affiliated with al-Qaeda were, in fact, trying to take root now in the Sinai Peninsula. Tohamy cited a group called the "Beit el-Maqdis Battalion," as one of the organizations that claims affiliation with al-Qaeda. But he said there was no evidence the group had "direct communication" with core al-Qaeda or its Egyptian-born leader, Ayman Zawahiri. Instead, communication is through Internet sites and social media. Today, "al-Qaeda represents ideology more than organization," he said.

Despite the loose structure of these would-be al-Qaeda affiliates, Tohamy continued, "eradicating their cells in Sinai could take some time." He said the army, which conducts the Sinai operations, had recently had "good results," but he wouldn't offer details. He added that some of the jihadist cells had infiltrated Cairo, the Nile Delta and upper Egypt — but said they were being tracked the Interior Ministry.

Tohamy said that terrorist attacks will likely target Egypt's main sources of foreign income: tourism, the Suez Canal and foreign investment. For that reason, he said, the military and security services must provide special protection for these sectors.

I asked Tohamy whether he would allow Muslim Brotherhood supporters to participate in politics through their "Freedom and Justice Party," so that they have an alternative to violence. He answered that under Egypt's "roadmap" for restoring civilian democracy, "no power will be excluded from the political process." When I pressed about the Freedom and Justice Party, he responded: "Whoever wants to engage in the political process, he is most welcome."

Whether Egypt is really willing to allow a political voice for the Islamists will be one of the key tests for the new government. So it was notable that

the intelligence chief, perhaps the toughest face of the new regime, was willing to support the idea.

Looking outside of Egypt's borders, Tohamy expressed deep concern about instability in two of the country's Arab neighbors, Libya and Syria. He said there was a "major security vacuum in Libya," with tribal militias and radical groups holding power. The collapse of central authority there was "similar to Iraq, exactly," and stability won't return unless outside powers help "rebuild the Libyan army and central government." He warned that "the biggest danger is division of the country," with Libya splitting in two or more pieces.

As for Syria, Tohamy said efforts to assist the moderate opposition with weapons and money have backfired by instead strengthening the al-Nusra Front, an al-Qaeda affiliate. "Because al-Nusra was more powerful, they captured the weapons." He argued that the only solution in Syria was a negotiated settlement that would create a new government strong and broad-based enough to go after the al-Qaeda fighters.

"The longer it takes to confront this issue [in Syria], the longer the aftershocks," he warned.

[Article 8.](#)

NYT

Saving Kerry's Peace Plan

Yossi Beilin

November 10, 2013 -- I've witnessed decades of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and can attest that the current round of talks is at grave risk of failure. Secretary of State [John Kerry](#)'s eighth visit to the region last week was his worst. He found himself in an open confrontation with [Israel](#)'s prime minister, [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), and in a TV interview he showed his disappointment.

Two relatively new issues are now being raised, which were not central to discussions when we signed the Oslo Accords 20 years ago. One is the Israeli government's demand that the [Palestinians](#) recognize Israel as the "home of the Jewish people," and the other is the challenge of evacuating settlers, given the expansion of the settler population, and the fear that

evictions will lead to violent confrontations between settlers and Israeli security forces.

If these problems are resolved, there is a much greater chance of reaching an agreement, mainly due the American government's newfound interest in ending this longstanding conflict.

Until recently, I was among those trying to convince Israeli decision makers to give up on the demand that Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state, both because Israel has been and will continue to be a Jewish state without Palestinian recognition, and because Israel never made such demands when signing peace treaties with other neighbors, like Egypt and Jordan.

I've changed my mind. I believe Israeli leaders will be willing to pay a high price in exchange for such recognition and therefore a deal is possible that solves both the settler evacuation problem and Israel's desire to be recognized as a "Jewish State."

Israeli leaders worry that if Palestinians refuse to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, they will continue to claim entitlement to the "right of return," for refugees, which could flood Israel with non-Jews, making Jews a minority in their state. The Palestinians insist on a resolution to the refugee problem before granting any such recognition.

Both sides should embrace the formula proposed 10 years ago by the Geneva Initiative, which recognized the right of both parties to statehood and "Palestine and Israel as the homelands of their respective peoples."

If Palestinians accept this formulation, then Israel would have to agree to absorb a limited number of Palestinians and allow those Israeli settlers who wish to stay in the West Bank to live under a sovereign Palestinian state — provided that they agree to live as Israeli citizens with permanent residency in Palestine and accept that settlements cannot be exclusively for Israelis.

But first the Israeli government needs an incentive to convince as many settlers as possible to leave the future Palestinian state, and will allow some Palestinians to live in Israel.

Here's how it could be achieved. Five years after the signing of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, all settlers remaining in the newly established Palestinian state would be counted, and the resulting number would set the quota for the number of Palestinian citizens admitted for permanent residency in Israel.

This solution would create an incentive for the Israeli government to minimize the number of settlers who remain outside of Israeli sovereignty because fewer settlers in Palestine would mean fewer new Palestinians allowed to live in Israel. For the Palestinians, it would be a step toward solving the refugee problem.

It won't be easy for Mr. Netanyahu, but it's less difficult for him than confronting and evacuating settlers. The [Palestinian Authority](#) leader, Mahmoud Abbas, could clarify that allowing Palestinians to live in Israel as permanent residents doesn't in any way equate them with the Israeli settlers; it's a way to let some Palestinians live where their ancestors did. Hard-liners on both sides will oppose this move, as will those who hope America will allow them to continue wading through the swamp of conflict for many bloody years to come. But vastly reducing the population of settlers and letting the resulting number determine how many Palestinians are allowed to "return" to Israel would be a major step toward resolving two thorny issues preventing a peace deal.

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