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Article 1.	The Washington Post <u>U.S., Russia make pact on disarming Assad, but the war must end, too</u> Editorial
Article 2.	Los Angeles Times <u>In America, not isolationism but skepticism</u> Doyle McManus
Article 3.	Al-Monitor <u>How Did Turkey Lose Egypt?</u> Kadri Gursel
Article 4.	The New York Times <u>Two-State Illusion</u> Ian S. Lustick
Article 5.	Noref (Norwegian Peace-building Resource Center) <u>The 1993 Oslo Accords revisited</u> Yossi Beilin
Article 6.	Al Jazeera <u>What reconciliation? Hamas, Fatah trade blows</u> Khalid Amayreh

[Article 1.](#)

The Washington Post

U.S., Russia make pact on disarming Assad, but the war must end, too

Editorial

September 15 - The Chemical weapons disarmament plan for Syria hammered out in Geneva by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is unprecedented. Removing these dangerous weapons in a civil war would be a significant accomplishment. But the joint effort by Russia, the United States and United Nations must not distract from a larger strategy to end the battles of bullets and bombs that have cost 100,000 lives.

The most striking aspect of the agreement, announced Saturday, is its broad scope. Mr. Kerry and Mr. Lavrov committed to liquidating the entire Syrian chemical weapons arsenal and manufacturing complex: production, filling and mixing equipment; full and empty weapons and delivery systems; chemical agents not yet weaponized; precursor chemicals; and material and equipment for research and development. This would make it very difficult — if not impossible — for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to restart a chemical weapons program. Missing, but perhaps obtainable later, are the historical records and plans for the chemical weapons complex, which can be essential in verification. Syria has pledged to join the Chemical Weapons Convention this week. This normally starts a series of events, beginning with a declaration of weapons stockpiles within 30 days. However, Mr. Kerry and Mr. Lavrov seek extraordinarily fast action for extraordinary times. The agreement calls for the first declaration within a week, completion of on-site inspections and destruction of the production and filling equipment by November and complete elimination in the first half of next year. While the sense of urgency is laudable, the timetable may be unrealistic. Previous attempts to safely destroy chemical weapons have required years of effort.

The factories of death in Syria probably will have to be destroyed in place, which can be done by filling reactors with concrete, welding tight the plumbing and other methods. The chemicals inside the weapons — the sarin and VX nerve agents, for example — are extremely potent; destroying them will be difficult. The agreement wisely suggests removing these bombs and shells from Syria altogether. Both the United States and Russia have experience destroying them. The remaining agents and precursors that are not in weapons might be neutralized inside Syria by chemical processes that would render them less dangerous. The Kerry-Lavrov agreement includes a commitment to ensure stringent verification, backed up by possible United Nations action if there is cheating.

For all the horror of chemical weapons and the gruesome photographs and videos of the Aug. 21 attack near Damascus, we must not lose sight of the larger suffering in this two-year-old war. United Nations investigators reported Friday that Mr. Assad's forces are systematically attacking hospitals and denying treatment to the wounded in opposition-controlled areas, just another reminder of the brutality of this conflagration. The United States and Russia, at loggerheads so long over Syria, should put more muscle into ending it.

[Article 2.](#)

Los Angeles Times

In America, not isolationism but skepticism

Doyle McManus

September 15 - President Obama and his aides were surprised this month by the strength of public opposition to their call for military action against Syria. They shouldn't have been.

Americans have almost always been reluctant to go to war. In 1939, polls showed that most Americans not only wanted to stay out of war against Nazi Germany, they weren't even sure they wanted to send military aid to Britain — fearing, perhaps, a slippery slope.

Today, Americans have additional reasons to be skeptical. There's the toll of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. There's the fear that any war in the Middle East will inevitably become a quagmire. And there's also a fundamental change in American attitudes toward their leaders. The traditional center in American foreign policy — the rally-around-the-flag reflex presidents could once rely on — has eroded. One reason is partisan polarization: Many conservatives who might have supported military action under a Republican president are disinclined to help Obama in his hour of need. But it's not all partisan; public confidence in the federal government's ability to do anything right has reached an all-time low, according to a Gallup Poll released last week.

Does that mean Americans have become isolationists, turning their backs on the world in a way that hasn't been seen for a century? That's not so clear.

It's true that public skepticism about U.S. engagement overseas is up. The Pew Research Center reported recently that 46% of Americans endorsed the sentiment that "the United States should mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along the best they can on their own."

But that isn't an unprecedented phenomenon; Pew found anti-interventionist sentiment almost as high in 1974, at the end of the Vietnam War, and in 1992, at the end of the Cold War — and those bouts with isolationism didn't last forever.

Americans recoiled from Obama's proposal to attack Syria not only because they are skeptical about military adventures in general but because they weren't convinced that this particular venture was in the national interest.

"This was kind of a worst case," said Andrew Kohut, the Pew Center's founding director. "The public is very gun-shy about intervention, but especially in the Middle East, and especially in a case where the direct U.S. interest isn't clear. If there were a direct and major threat to the United States, you'd probably see a different picture."

Indeed, polls taken before earlier conflicts have shown that most Americans are willing to support military action when they are convinced that U.S. security is directly threatened — as they did, for example, when they were convinced (wrongly) by President George W. Bush that Iraq's Saddam Hussein was building nuclear weapons. On the flip side, most Americans will not support military intervention for purely humanitarian reasons — as Bill Clinton learned in Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo, operations that were all widely unpopular at the time.

That's a problem Obama hasn't solved when it comes to Syria. He asked Americans to watch videotapes of children choking on sarin gas in a Damascus suburb — but that was a humanitarian appeal, not an invocation of national security. He argued that Americans had an interest in bolstering international norms against chemical weapons — but that sounded like an abstract principle, not an immediate threat.

"International norms?" scoffed Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), who favors an attack on Syria. "For me to go to a town meeting in Arizona and say the U.S. wants to attack to reinforce international norms is not exactly a convincing argument."

Others said the president needed to strike Syria to preserve his credibility vis-a-vis Iran — a genuine problem but no closer to a direct threat.

Opposition in Congress to a presidential request to use force has a long history. James Madison ran into a roadblock on Capitol Hill in 1815, and Woodrow Wilson lost a vote in 1917. In 1999, the House of Representatives refused to back Clinton's air war over Kosovo; Clinton went ahead anyway after winning a vote in the Senate. And even more recently, in June 2011, the House voted against authorizing Obama's intervention in Libya — one justified mostly on humanitarian grounds — by a lopsided 295 to 123. (The vote came after U.S. strikes on Libya were already underway, and Obama ignored it.)

Americans are often tempted toward disengagement from the world, especially at the end of a long and costly war (in this case, two wars), and especially when the question involves military action. It happened after Vietnam, it happened after the Cold War, and it's happening again today. But after those earlier episodes, public opinion bounced back. Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and Clinton made the case for American intervention abroad, and in cases when intervention succeeded, public support grew.

With Syria, it became clear that Obama's request for authority to intervene would be rebuffed. One result is that Americans look and sound more isolationist than they really are. That heightens a challenge that Obama and his successors already faced: not only dealing with a crisis in Syria but rebuilding a national consensus in favor of engagement with the world.

[Article 3.](#)

Al-Monitor

How Did Turkey Lose Egypt?

Kadri Gursel

September 13 -- Some Egyptians have found the easy way out. To avoid arguing with contrarian interlocutors whether the removal of the Muslim Brotherhood from power was a coup, a military intervention or a revolution, they simply say "July 3" and leave it up to you to attribute whatever characteristics you wish to affix to it.

But there are times when the "July 3 formula" will not work — relations with the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) Turkey is just such a time, as the Islamist AKP government in Ankara has no compunction when assessing the relations between the two countries in the context of preserving significant mutual interests, and as such, avoid arguing with the new military rule.

AKP representatives, led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, are not content with labeling the July 3 change of power in Egypt a coup. AKP's Turkey feels that the coup was against its own principles and identifies fully with the Muslim Brotherhood. This is why the AKP's reactions to developments in Egypt turned out to be disproportionate and excessively harsh. AKP's indignation with the coup produced a counter-reaction from a large segment of the Egyptian population and new administration which are opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood.

As a result, we end up with a crisis in bilateral relations, best explained by finding out where the ambassadors to Ankara and Cairo actually are now. The Turkish government recalled its Cairo ambassador, Huseyin Avni Botsali, on Aug. 15 for "consultations" following the bloody suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood protests at Cairo's Rabia al-Adawiya Square. Obviously, this was a protest move by Ankara. A day later, Egypt, adhering to the custom of reciprocity, recalled its Ankara ambassador, Abdelrahman Salaheldin, for the same reason. But unlike Botsali who returned to Cairo on Sept. 5 after completing his "consultations in Ankara," Salaheldin was not sent back to Ankara as expected.

Egypt's Ankara ambassador was continuing his "consultations" in Cairo during the visit of the [Republican People's Party](#) (CHP) delegation to Egypt from Sept. 9 to 11.

I had the opportunity to observe this crisis from the Egyptian side when I was covering the visit of the main opposition CHP. The CHP delegation, made up of two former prominent Turkish diplomats — Faruk Lologlu, CHP vice chair, and Osman Koruturk, Istanbul deputy — came to Cairo to meet with Egyptian government representatives, as well as religious leaders, to explain that "Turkey is not only the AKP" and to contribute to a restoration of relations.

According to figures provided by Turkish diplomats, the volume of trade between Egypt and Turkey has boomed by an amazing 900% over the past

five and a half years, reaching \$5.9 billion. Around 480 Turkish companies have invested \$2 billion in Egypt. These figures alone are enough to indicate the importance of bilateral relations. It is beyond debate that bilateral relations cannot be sustained in a constant state of crisis as the the AKP makes a point of its objection to the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The CHP team's first meeting on Sept. 10 was with Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy, after which we had a chance to meet with Egypt's Ankara ambassador Salaheldin.

The ambassador responded to my questions regarding the reasons preventing his return to Ankara, published in a full [interview](#) in Milliyet. Al-Monitor: Turkey's Cairo ambassador Botsali is here. Why aren't you in Ankara?

Salaheldin: In diplomacy if an ambassador is recalled for consultations, that truly means he was called back for consultations. Second, it is signal of displeasure with the host country. I must emphasize how important are our relations with Turkey. But when you talk to Egyptians in the street you will notice a negative image of Turkey. Egyptians are unhappy with declarations they hear from Turkey. There are now calls to boycott Turkish products. The business world is under the pressure of a boycott. This is the first time I am seeing such a situation.

Al-Monitor: Are you hoping to return to Ankara soon?

Salaheldin: I am working on going back to Ankara. But ambassadors serve their governments. At the moment the government is under heavy pressure of the public against Turkey.

Al-Monitor: Are you awaiting a goodwill gesture from Turkey to return?

Salaheldin: Of course the government is waiting for a goodwill gesture from Ankara. It would have helped a lot.

The Egyptian ambassador to Ankara's response to a question on how and why the image of Turkey has become so negative crystallized the views of the anti-Brotherhood political actors the CHP delegation met in Cairo: "In 2013, Turkey did exactly the opposite of what it did in January 2011. In January 2011, Turkey was among the first countries to salute the Egyptian revolution. At that time, the Egyptian army sided with the revolution, but Turkey did not even discuss whether this was a coup. Erdogan visited Egypt in September 2011 and saluted the Egyptian army for its role in the

revolution. This time, Egyptians rose against Muslim Brotherhood. Today the Egyptian people think that Turkey has sided only with the Muslim Brotherhood."

I asked Salaheldin if there was no difference at all with the army playing the same role against a dictator in 2011 and against an elected president in 2013. His reply was:

"In 2011, people came out to streets and called for free elections. In 2013, people against went out, but this time asked the elected president to listen to the people, to change the government and to amend the constitution he crafted without the consent of the people. They all wanted the same thing: Not [Mohammed] Morsi's resignation, but early elections. Morsi did not react positively because he knew he had lost popularity and legitimacy and that he would lose in the elections. 2011 and 2013 were two similar events. The only difference is in 2013 you have the Muslim Brotherhood. Turkey has to show that it is the friend of the entire Egyptian people. The issue is about standards. Here we are talking of a country that is treating the similar situations of 2011 and 2013 differently."

The most important grievance the CHP team heard from their Cairo contacts was Prime Minister Erdogan's comments regarding the grand imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmad al-Tayyib, who is accepted as the highest ethical and religious authority of the country, because he had supported the coup.

In Cairo, we noted how the politicians and transition government officials who see July 3 not as a coup, but as "the army taking the side of growing popular movement against Muslim Brotherhood to prevent a civil war," and how they perceived Erdogan's remarks about the Al-Azhar sheikh as an insult that requires an apology.

In an Aug. 25 [speech](#) delivered in the eastern Black Sea town of Rize, Erdogan said: "Man of learning should not stand at attention and say, 'As you command, Sir.' I was saddened when I saw the sheikh of Al-Azhar, one of the most prominent universities of the world, standing with the coup and its makers. How is that you, as the sheikh of Al-Azhar, one who heads the Al-Azhar ulema, could applaud the coup? Can that be praised and accepted? This is where learning ends. That is the end of that man of learning."

The CHP team was received on Sept. 11 by Sheikh Tayyib of Al-Azhar. We learned that in the meeting, which was closed to the media, the sheikh reacted constructively and moderately to Erdogan's words, saying: "What happened in Egypt had the support and the will of the majority of Egyptian people. Al-Azhar is a suprapolitical institution that serves religion and humanity. If Al-Azhar adopts a position about an event, it does that because of its national identity, not because it is taking a political position. Turkey-Egypt relations have historical depth. Declarations made by some politicians because of a change in political atmosphere won't affect the relations between peoples."

The CHP team also met with Amr Darrag, former minister of planning and international cooperation under Morsi, and Mohammed Ali Beshr, former minister of local development. In the meeting, Darrag said he doesn't approve of the resulting crisis in bilateral relations and the reactions from Egypt to Erdogan's strong position against the military coup. He said, "Whatever the political situation may be in both countries, relations have to be good because they are important for the welfare and stability of the [entire region](#). Just as we are not happy with what has happened in Egypt, we are also not happy by the deterioration of relations between the two countries."

All Turks we spoke to in Cairo, whether journalists or official functionaries, confirmed that Turkey faces a serious image problem with the major segment of the population because of the Turkish government's position following July 3.

If you ask us, Erdogan's image is the most affected. The Turkish prime minister, who was assumed to have won over the "Egyptian street" with his anti-Israel policies during the Hosni Mubarak reign and his support of the January 25 Revolution, is now facing the same street with anti-Erdogan sentiments.

This only goes on to show how the ground gained by "street politics" in the Middle East can be become instantly slippery with changing conditions.

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The New York Times

Two-State Illusion

Ian S. Lustick

September 14 - The last three decades are littered with the carcasses of failed negotiating projects billed as the last chance for peace in Israel. All sides have been wedded to the notion that there must be two states, one Palestinian and one Israeli. For more than 30 years, experts and politicians have warned of a “point of no return.” Secretary of State John Kerry is merely the latest in a long line of well-meaning American diplomats wedded to an idea whose time is now past. True believers in the two-state solution see absolutely no hope elsewhere. With no alternative in mind, and unwilling or unable to rethink their basic assumptions, they are forced to defend a notion whose success they can no longer sincerely portray as plausible or even possible.

It’s like 1975 all over again, when the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco fell into a coma. The news media began a long death watch, announcing each night that Generalissimo Franco was still not dead. This desperate allegiance to the departed echoes in every speech, policy brief and op-ed about the two-state solution today.

True, some comas miraculously end. Great surprises sometimes happen. The problem is that the changes required to achieve the vision of robust Israeli and Palestinian states living side by side are now considerably less likely than other less familiar but more plausible outcomes that demand high-level attention but aren’t receiving it.

Strong Islamist trends make a fundamentalist Palestine more likely than a small state under a secular government. The disappearance of Israel as a Zionist project, through war, cultural exhaustion or demographic momentum, is at least as plausible as the evacuation of enough of the half-million Israelis living across the 1967 border, or Green Line, to allow a real Palestinian state to exist. While the vision of thriving Israeli and Palestinian states has slipped from the plausible to the barely possible, one mixed state emerging from prolonged and violent struggles over democratic rights is no longer inconceivable. Yet the fantasy that there is a

two-state solution keeps everyone from taking action toward something that might work.

All sides have reasons to cling to this illusion. The Palestinian Authority needs its people to believe that progress is being made toward a two-state solution so it can continue to get the economic aid and diplomatic support that subsidize the lifestyles of its leaders, the jobs of tens of thousands of soldiers, spies, police officers and civil servants, and the authority's prominence in a Palestinian society that views it as corrupt and incompetent.

Israeli governments cling to the two-state notion because it seems to reflect the sentiments of the Jewish Israeli majority and it shields the country from international opprobrium, even as it camouflages relentless efforts to expand Israel's territory into the West Bank.

American politicians need the two-state slogan to show they are working toward a diplomatic solution, to keep the pro-Israel lobby from turning against them and to disguise their humiliating inability to allow any daylight between Washington and the Israeli government.

Finally, the "peace process" industry — with its legions of consultants, pundits, academics and journalists — needs a steady supply of readers, listeners and funders who are either desperately worried that this latest round of talks will lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state, or that it will not.

Conceived as early as the 1930s, the idea of two states between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea all but disappeared from public consciousness between 1948 and 1967. Between 1967 and 1973 it re-emerged, advanced by a minority of "moderates" in each community. By the 1990s it was embraced by majorities on both sides as not only possible but, during the height of the Oslo peace process, probable. But failures of leadership in the face of tremendous pressures brought Oslo crashing down. These days no one suggests that a negotiated two-state "solution" is probable. The most optimistic insist that, for some brief period, it may still be conceivable.

But many Israelis see the demise of the country as not just possible, but probable. The State of Israel has been established, not its permanence. The most common phrase in Israeli political discourse is some variation of "If X happens (or doesn't), the state will not survive!" Those who assume that

Israel will always exist as a Zionist project should consider how quickly the Soviet, Pahlavi Iranian, apartheid South African, Baathist Iraqi and Yugoslavian states unraveled, and how little warning even sharp-eyed observers had that such transformations were imminent.

In all these cases, presumptions about what was “impossible” helped protect brittle institutions by limiting political imagination. And when objective realities began to diverge dramatically from official common sense, immense pressures accumulated.

JUST as a balloon filled gradually with air bursts when the limit of its tensile strength is passed, there are thresholds of radical, disruptive change in politics. When those thresholds are crossed, the impossible suddenly becomes probable, with revolutionary implications for governments and nations. As we see vividly across the Middle East, when forces for change and new ideas are stifled as completely and for as long as they have been in the Israel-Palestinian conflict, sudden and jagged change becomes increasingly likely.

History offers many such lessons. Britain ruled Ireland for centuries, annexing it in 1801. By the mid-19th century the entire British political class treated Ireland’s permanent incorporation as a fact of life. But bottled-up Irish fury produced repeated revolts. By the 1880s, the Irish question was the greatest issue facing the country; it led to mutiny in the army and near civil war before World War I. Once the war ended, it took only a few years until the establishment of an independent Ireland. What was inconceivable became a fact.

France ruled Algeria for 130 years and never questioned the future of Algeria as an integral part of France. But enormous pressures accumulated, exploding into a revolution that left hundreds of thousands dead. Despite France’s military victory over the rebels in 1959, Algeria soon became independent, and Europeans were evacuated from the country.

And when Mikhail S. Gorbachev sought to save Soviet Communism by reforming it with the policies of glasnost and perestroika, he relied on the people’s continuing belief in the permanence of the Soviet structure. But the forces for change that had already accumulated were overwhelming. Unable to separate freedom of expression and market reforms from the rest of the Soviet state project, Mr. Gorbachev’s policies pushed the system

beyond its breaking point. Within a few years, both the Soviet Union and the Communist regime were gone.

Obsessive focus on preserving the theoretical possibility of a two-state solution is as irrational as rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic rather than steering clear of icebergs. But neither ships in the night nor the State of Israel can avoid icebergs unless they are seen.

The two-state slogan now serves as a comforting blindfold of entirely contradictory fantasies. The current Israeli version of two states envisions Palestinian refugees abandoning their sacred “right of return,” an Israeli-controlled Jerusalem and an archipelago of huge Jewish settlements, crisscrossed by Jewish-only access roads. The Palestinian version imagines the return of refugees, evacuation of almost all settlements and East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital.

DIPLOMACY under the two-state banner is no longer a path to a solution but an obstacle itself. We are engaged in negotiations to nowhere. And this isn't the first time that American diplomats have obstructed political progress in the name of hopeless talks.

In 1980, I was a 30-year-old assistant professor, on leave from Dartmouth at the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. I was responsible for analyzing Israeli settlement and land expropriation policies in the West Bank and their implications for the “autonomy negotiations” under way at that time between Israel, Egypt and the United States. It was clear to me that Prime Minister Menachem Begin's government was systematically using tangled talks over how to conduct negotiations as camouflage for de facto annexation of the West Bank via intensive settlement construction, land expropriation and encouragement of “voluntary” Arab emigration.

To protect the peace process, the United States strictly limited its public criticism of Israeli government policies, making Washington an enabler for the very processes of de facto annexation that were destroying prospects for the full autonomy and realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people that were the official purpose of the negotiations. This view was endorsed and promoted by some leading voices within the administration. Unsurprisingly, it angered others. One day I was summoned to the office of a high-ranking diplomat, who was then one of the State Department's most powerful advocates for the negotiations. He

was a man I had always respected and admired. “Are you,” he asked me, “personally so sure of your analysis that you are willing to destroy the only available chance for peace between Israelis and Palestinians?” His question gave me pause, but only briefly. “Yes, sir,” I answered, “I am.”

I still am. Had America blown the whistle on destructive Israeli policies back then it might have greatly enhanced prospects for peace under a different leader. It could have prevented Mr. Begin’s narrow electoral victory in 1981 and brought a government to power that was ready to negotiate seriously with the Palestinians before the first or second intifada and before the construction of massive settlement complexes in the West Bank. We could have had an Oslo process a crucial decade earlier.

Now, as then, negotiations are phony; they suppress information that Israelis, Palestinians and Americans need to find noncatastrophic paths into the future. The issue is no longer where to draw political boundaries between Jews and Arabs on a map but how equality of political rights is to be achieved. The end of the 1967 Green Line as a demarcation of potential Israeli and Palestinian sovereignty means that Israeli occupation of the West Bank will stigmatize all of Israel.

For some, abandoning the two-state mirage may feel like the end of the world. But it is not. Israel may no longer exist as the Jewish and democratic vision of its Zionist founders. The Palestine Liberation Organization stalwarts in Ramallah may not strut on the stage of a real Palestinian state. But these lost futures can make others more likely.

THE assumptions necessary to preserve the two-state slogan have blinded us to more likely scenarios. With a status but no role, what remains of the Palestinian Authority will disappear. Israel will face the stark challenge of controlling economic and political activity and all land and water resources from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. The stage will be set for ruthless oppression, mass mobilization, riots, brutality, terror, Jewish and Arab emigration and rising tides of international condemnation of Israel. And faced with growing outrage, America will no longer be able to offer unconditional support for Israel. Once the illusion of a neat and palatable solution to the conflict disappears, Israeli leaders may then begin to see, as South Africa’s white leaders saw in the late 1980s, that their behavior is producing isolation, emigration and hopelessness.

Fresh thinking could then begin about Israel's place in a rapidly changing region. There could be generous compensation for lost property. Negotiating with Arabs and Palestinians based on satisfying their key political requirements, rather than on maximizing Israeli prerogatives, might yield more security and legitimacy. Perhaps publicly acknowledging Israeli mistakes and responsibility for the suffering of Palestinians would enable the Arab side to accept less than what it imagines as full justice. And perhaps Israel's potent but essentially unusable nuclear weapons arsenal could be sacrificed for a verified and strictly enforced [REDACTED]-free zone in the Middle East.

Such ideas cannot even be entertained as long as the chimera of a negotiated two-state solution monopolizes all attention. But once the two-state-fantasy blindfolds are off, politics could make strange bedfellows. In such a radically new environment, secular Palestinians in Israel and the West Bank could ally with Tel Aviv's post-Zionists, non-Jewish Russian-speaking immigrants, foreign workers and global-village Israeli entrepreneurs. Anti-nationalist ultra-Orthodox Jews might find common cause with Muslim traditionalists. Untethered to statist Zionism in a rapidly changing Middle East, Israelis whose families came from Arab countries might find new reasons to think of themselves not as "Eastern," but as Arab. Masses of downtrodden and exploited Muslim and Arab refugees, in Gaza, the West Bank and in Israel itself could see democracy, not Islam, as the solution for translating what they have (numbers) into what they want (rights and resources). Israeli Jews committed above all to settling throughout the greater Land of Israel may find arrangements based on a confederation, or a regional formula that is more attractive than narrow Israeli nationalism.

It remains possible that someday two real states may arise. But the pretense that negotiations under the slogan of "two states for two peoples" could lead to such a solution must be abandoned. Time can do things that politicians cannot.

Just as an independent Ireland emerged by seceding 120 years after it was formally incorporated into the United Kingdom, so, too, a single state might be the route to eventual Palestinian independence. But such outcomes develop organically; they are not implemented by diplomats

overnight and they do not arise without the painful stalemates that lead each party to conclude that time is not on their side.

Peacemaking and democratic state building require blood and magic. The question is not whether the future has conflict in store for Israel-Palestine. It does. Nor is the question whether conflict can be prevented. It cannot. But avoiding truly catastrophic change means ending the stifling reign of an outdated idea and allowing both sides to see and then adapt to the world as it is.

Ian S. Lustick is a professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania and the author of "Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza" and "Trapped in the War on Terror."

[Article 5.](#)

Noref (Norwegian Peace-building Resource Center)

The 1993 Oslo Accords revisited

[Yossi Beilin](#)

13 September 2013 -- The politics The Oslo talks began over lunch in Tel Aviv in April 1992 with then-Fafo Institute director Terje Rod-Larsen. At the time I was a member of the opposition Labour Party in the Knesset. An electoral campaign was in full swing, but I was feeling a bit uneasy, since I considered Yitzhak Rabin, the head of my party and a recent candidate for prime minister, a hawk who was unlikely to advance peace talks. I also knew that the process that had begun at the Madrid Conference in October 1991 was leading nowhere, and that the talks taking place between Israelis and Palestinians (a result of a settlement between U.S. secretary of state Jim Baker and Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Shamir with the very artificial Palestinian-Jordanian delegation) were an exercise in futility. Larsen suggested that, with the help of the Fafo Institute, I set up a covert channel between my friend Faisal Husseini, the prominent Palestinian leader in Jerusalem who had participated in the formal negotiations, and myself to try to resolve in Oslo the negotiations that had failed in Washington. I happily agreed. Of course, at the time I did not know who would win the election or what my role would be if the Labour Party came to power, especially given that I was strongly associated with the camp of

Shimon Peres, Rabin's nemesis. Neither of us at lunch that day could have imagined that we were setting up what was to become the most important channel ever for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and that 15 months later the world's eyes would be fixed on the image of a tall man embracing two short leaders – once sworn enemies – in the historic accord-signing ceremony between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) on the White House lawn. Rather, after my meal with Larsen, who was very keen on bringing an end to the long conflict, I introduced him to a friend of mine, Dr Yair Hirschfeld. He had for many years assisted me in meeting Palestinians in the occupied territories and in the attempt to hold indirect talks in the Netherlands with one of the most prominent members of the PLO. On the eve of the Israeli elections, Larsen, Faisal Husseini, Yair Hirschfeld and I met at the American Colony Hotel in East Jerusalem and agreed that, following the elections, we would establish a secret negotiation channel in Oslo. But the path was not a simple one. Rabin's victory and Likud's defeat on June 29th 1992 were significant, but the political right was still powerful and the coalition government Rabin was able to assemble on July 13th was only approved in the Knesset by a small margin. Rabin, who hated Peres, flirted with the idea of excluding him from or offering him a minor role in the new government, but eventually was persuaded to offer Peres a role with clipped wings. It was agreed that Peres would become minister of foreign affairs, but that dealings with the U.S. and all bilateral channels (with the Palestinians, Jordanians, Syrians and Lebanese) would fall under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister's Office. Peres would only take part in the multilateral talks established at the Madrid Conference (which dealt with minor negotiation details such as economic development, water, environmental protection, etc.). Peres was forced to accept these harsh terms and I was appointed his deputy. Given that the Madrid Conference had decided that the highest representatives on the upcoming delegation would be at the subministerial level, I was appointed head of the steering committee for multilateral talks. Everything that we had hoped would happen during our lunch weeks earlier had come true during those last days of June. The Labour Party had won the elections, Yitzhak Rabin – whose election slogan had been peace with the Palestinians within six to nine months – had become prime minister, and Peres had become minister of foreign affairs, with me as his deputy.

Seemingly, this was the moment to begin secret negotiations, but the arrangement between Rabin and Peres forced us to delay action. It had become clear that it would not be sufficient to hide the negotiations from the media, but that we would also have to keep them away from Peres, given that he could not proceed without Rabin's approval, which under no circumstance would have been granted. Ultimately, after much correspondence between Larsen and myself, and following the important visit of Norwegian deputy foreign minister Jan Egeland in September 1992 (who came with his head of office, Mona Juul, the wife of Terje Larsen, and with Larsen himself), it was decided that rather than my being directly involved, Yair Hirschfeld would represent me at the talks. As the interlocutor, Hirschfeld then brought the PLO's senior economist, Ahmed Qurei, known as Abu Alaa, to the table. We then waited for the Israeli law prohibiting all contact between Israelis and the PLO to be cancelled. This finally occurred on January 19th 1993. The very next day the first meeting was held in Oslo. It was a moment of grace for the PLO. Two years after the first Gulf War the organisation was at its all time political low. Its support of Saddam Hussein had led to the expulsion of Palestinians from Gulf states, the halting of funding from Saudi Arabia and the distancing of the West. In the occupied territories the new Palestinian organisation, Hamas, was being perceived as younger and more determined than the PLO. Yasir Arafat, the PLO leader, desperately needed a dramatic move to free the PLO from the corner into which it had been backed. He knew that negotiations with the new Israeli government – which could lead to an interim agreement, open doors to the U.S. and the West, and strengthen the PLO over Hamas – constituted a life raft. Rabin found that the deadline he had set for negotiations in Washington was rapidly approaching without any progress with the Palestinians or other partners having been made. Moreover, in December 1992 he had expelled 415 Hamas activists to Lebanon in a move that could not have gone more wrong. The Lebanese had refused entry to the deportees and Rabin was forced to take them back after a year; in the meantime he had been the target of worldwide criticism and the Palestinians – who refused to continue negotiations while their brothers (albeit their rivals) remained on the Israeli-Lebanese border – froze the peace talks. Palestinian and especially Hamas terrorism had increased considerably and Rabin, who had come to power on a promise to try to end

terrorism and bring peace, had disappointed his followers and needed an opportunity to change course. It is against this backdrop that he gave the green light to continue talks in Oslo when he learned of the matter from Peres. Peres was feeling almost completely demoralised. Without permission to be involved in bilateral talks or interact with the U.S., he felt that there was no real meaning to his position as foreign minister. Taking responsibility for the talks held in Oslo could save him from this situation and turn him into a key player in a field so important to him, an area from which he had been banned by Rabin. Thus, when after two rounds of talks I updated him on the existence of the Oslo channel and about a draft that had been agreed by the two parties, he quickly understood the political meaning of this move, went with it to Rabin and was very surprised to receive his support. While the former Norwegian foreign minister, Thorvald Stoltenberg, had understood the importance of the new channel and agreed to host the secret talks, his successor, Johan Jorgen Holst, saw the Oslo talks as a chance to prove the ability of the Labor Party in preparation for the upcoming Norwegian elections and as an opportunity to strengthen relations between Norway and the U.S. During his visit to Washington in June 1993 he called me to consult on what should be shared with then-U.S. secretary of state Warren Christopher. It was thus only after the secret signing of the agreement two months later that Holst and Peres flew to the west coast where Christopher was on vacation and revealed the full story. The young, new U.S. president, Bill Clinton, was happy to stage the grand event in Washington on September 13th. He was not offended by the fact that he had not been filled in on the process. Thus, nine months after beginning his term he was depicted as the central figure who had resolved one of the greatest conflicts since the Second World War. This moment of grace could have been leveraged for much more than the establishment of temporary autonomy for the Palestinians.

The mistakes

The Oslo Accords' biggest mistake was the decision to focus on an interim agreement based on principles stemming from the September 1978 Camp David Accords between Egyptian president Anwar Sadat and Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin, which had been ratified by the letter of invitation to the Madrid Conference. The preference for an interim solution stemmed from Begin's resistance to dividing the land, which prompted him

to come up with the idea of temporary – eventually to become permanent – autonomy for the Palestinians. However, Rabin’s administration was ripe for a permanent agreement. A change in direction should have been pronounced the moment Israel and the PLO unexpectedly declared mutual recognition in Oslo. A permanent solution – comprising a Palestinian state in the occupied territories, with minor land swaps, the division of East Jerusalem, and a symbolic and economic solution to the refugee problem – could have been brought about 20 years ago. However, when I suggested to Rabin that we press for a permanent agreement, he insisted that while we could always try to forge a new interim agreement, we could not afford a permanent accord to fail. It is impossible to deny the logic of his words, but looking back, this was a mistake that came with a very high price. Another error was not to address the issue of settlements in the agreement of principles signed 20 years ago. The Palestinians had sought to include a settlement freeze in the agreement. Rabin had objected, saying that he had no intention of building new settlements and that the government had taken a decision to stop the construction of public areas in settlements. Rabin warned that a specific reference to the freezing of settlements in the agreement could increase resistance on the Israeli right and perhaps even within the coalition. The Palestinians were forced to agree to Rabin’s request, but this was a mistake, because silence on the matter of settlements has allowed subsequent right-wing Israeli governments to argue that continued settlement construction is not a violation of the Oslo Accords. Intensive construction has deepened Palestinian frustration and created a widespread feeling that a solution to the conflict has become impossible. The Oslo Accords did not fail; they were thwarted, primarily by the murder of Rabin (who, had he not been killed, would have likely come to a permanent agreement with Arafat on the stipulated date of May 4th 1999), and over the intervening years by extremists on both sides who have taken any steps to prevent a permanent settlement.

And now?

The Oslo Accords changed the face of the region. They brought back Palestinian leadership to the West Bank and Gaza; established the Palestinian Authority, which was meant to form the foundation of a Palestinian state; led to wide acceptance of a two-state solution in Israel; and forged an ongoing dialogue between the Palestinian national

movement and Israel. But the Oslo Accords must be ended now. Instead of building a house, they left dangerous scaffolding. The current talks taking place under the auspices of U.S. secretary of state John Kerry should lead to an agreement by the end of the determined nine months (comprising a permanent agreement or an interim one that would include the immediate establishment of a Palestinian state with temporary borders as a transitional stage to peace). If not, the Oslo Accords must be declared void by having the Palestinian leadership dissolve the Palestinian Authority. Only such a drastic move – in the absence of an agreement – would force the right-wing Israeli government (which will then be tasked with the fiscal and other responsibilities of governing millions of Palestinians in the West Bank) to initiate a political move. Today the Oslo Accords are supported by the very people who opposed them for many years. They cling to the interim agreement as a way to uphold their ideological beliefs that “greater Israel” or “greater Palestine” must not be divided. This cannot continue. Never in our wildest imagination did we believe we would still fall back on the Oslo Accords 20 years later. If no agreement is reached in the coming months the Palestinians have an opportunity to break the status quo of occupation. Now more than ever, the Palestinians need a state to absorb their refugees who have been uprooted – yet again – from Syria. Israel needs a border with the Palestinians to avoid a situation in which, within only a few years, a Jewish minority will rule a Palestinian majority and in which Israel will continue to pay a heavy diplomatic and economic price for occupation. The solution to the conflict, etched in the 2000 Clinton Parameters and the 2003 Geneva Initiative, is just within reach.

Yossi Beilin taught political science at Tel Aviv University, was a member of the Knesset for 20 years and has held ministerial positions in several Israeli governments. He initiated the secret talks that resulted in the 1993 Oslo Accords and in 1995 concluded the guidelines for a permanent peace agreement with Palestinian leader Abu Mazen. He headed the Israeli delegation to the multilateral peace process working groups between 1992 and 1995, was a negotiator at the 2001 Taba talks, and is a promoter of the Geneva Accords.

[Article 6.](#)

Al Jazeera

What reconciliation? Hamas, Fatah trade blows

Khalid Amayreh

September 14 - Hamas has continued to accuse Fatah of inciting Egyptian military authorities against the Gaza-based group during Egypt's recent change in leadership. Hamas announced in an impromptu press conference held last month in Gaza that it had seized documents [Ar] purportedly showing that the Palestinian Authority (PA) embassy in Cairo was spreading "black lies" and "concocted intelligence reports" against Hamas. Some of the seized documents alleged that Hamas, supposedly in collusion with Egyptian groups, was smuggling weapons, including bombs, into Egypt to further destabilise the country and undermine security. But Sami Abu Zuhri, a Hamas spokesperson in Gaza, said the accusations were nothing new, as Fatah had "never given up on its conspiratorial designs against Hamas" following the internecine fighting in 2007 which saw Fatah routed from the Gaza Strip, and Hamas practically shut down in the West Bank.

"Fatah is colluding and conniving with the Sisi regime to spread chaos and insecurity in Gaza. They are trying to imitate the Tamarod ["rebellion"] group in Egypt," Abu Zuhri told Al Jazeera in a telephone interview. He also said that Hamas security authorities recently arrested several former Fatah-affiliated Preventive Security officers who had allegedly undergone military training in "a neighbouring country" for the apparent purpose of undermining security in the Gaza Strip. Fatah, which is the largest faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), has vehemently denied the accusations, saying that Hamas was interfering in internal Egyptian affairs and "pushing the Egyptian government, people and media" to harbour hostile attitudes towards Palestinians. The Ramallah-based group has also promised to carry out "a thorough investigation" into Hamas' allegations. However, given the history of mistrust between Fatah and Hamas, it seems unlikely that any inquiry would be satisfactory to both sides.

Contention point

Hamas and Fatah adopted starkly opposite stands vis-à-vis the military coup in Egypt, which saw the overthrow of President Mohamed Morsi.

Hamas, considered by many the ideological daughter of the Muslim Brotherhood, denounced the "bloody coup" in the strongest terms, calling it "an act of rape" and "a criminal usurpation of the Egyptian people's will". Hamas has also organised rallies and marches throughout the Gaza Strip and in some parts of the West Bank.

The Gaza Strip has been under Hamas' security control ever since 2007, when Hamas fighters defeated and expelled Fatah militia from the coastal enclave following a brief but bloody confrontation.

The meeting of Palestinian President and PLO Chairman Mahmoud Abbas with the Egyptian interim government coincided with widespread rumours that the PA leadership in Ramallah was considering declaring the Gaza Strip a rogue entity.

Hamas interpreted these reports as a tacit call for the new rulers in Egypt to invade the Gaza Strip, overthrow Hamas and enthrone Fatah in the besieged territory.

Responding to Fatah's accusations that Hamas was interfering in Egyptian affairs, Abu Zuhri said the allegations were "sheer lies". "The truth of the matter is that the sullen hostility displayed towards Hamas by the Egyptian coup-makers and their media outlets emanates from their deep hatred of the Islamist movement in Egypt," he said. "In the final analysis, the rumoured interference by Hamas in internal Egyptian affairs is no more than a red herring, reflecting the coup authorities' failure to bring things under control."

The Hamas spokesperson admitted though that "vengeful Egyptian measures" were hurting ordinary Gazans.

"They are harassing our people at the airports, they are destroying the tunnels, our ultimate lifeline, they are closing the Rafah border crossing," Zuhri said. "They are effectively trying to outmatch the Israelis in tormenting and starving our people."

Fatah reaction

For its part, Fatah does not deny that it is cooperating and coordinating with the authorities in Egypt.

Fatah, however, has been careful to avoid the term "coup" in reference to the present rulers of Egypt. Instead, it refers to the interim leadership as "the legitimate government reflecting the Egyptian people's will".

Fatah, a largely secular, nationalist, pro-business movement, insists that cooperation with Egypt is "paramount, indispensable and aimed at serving our people's interests and their just national cause". "No Palestinian government or group or party can alienate Egypt," Osama Qawasmi, a Fatah spokesman in the West Bank, told Al Jazeera. "Egypt is our ultimate insurance policy as a people and as a national authority."

He said Hamas was committing political suicide by standing against "the army of Egypt and the people of Egypt".

"Hamas ought to edge away from the Muslim Brotherhood and realign itself with the Palestinian people and its legitimate leadership," Qawasmi said.

He denied accusations that Fatah was trying to manipulate the new government in Cairo in order to weaken Hamas.

"We had good ties with the Morsi regime," Qawasmi said. "We are seeking Palestinian national interests."

Qawasmi said he hoped stability would return to Egypt - which would help the largest Arab country play a more active role in Arab affairs.

Reconciliation unlikely

Hani al-Masri, a prominent political analyst who is affiliated with neither Fatah nor Hamas, said the recent coup in Egypt dealt a sharp blow to the prospects of national reconciliation between the rival groups. "Before the coup, reconciliation prospects were very bad," he said. "Now, they are much worse." Al-Masri said that Egypt was unlikely to invade Gaza and overthrow Hamas on Fatah's behalf.

He added, however, that Hamas ought to refrain from "provoking and alienating the edgy Egyptian authorities". "No-one is asking Hamas to abandon its Islamist ideology. Hamas doesn't have to cast off its skin," al-Masri said. "But Hamas must edge away a little from the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas must also refrain from provoking the nervous Egyptian authorities these days. Even in Islamic jurisprudence 'necessities make certain prohibitions permissible'."

Al-Masri said he did not think that Fatah was in a position to reclaim Gaza by use of military force. "Fatah is undergoing a period of political bankruptcy, as the moribund peace process with Israel is going nowhere," he said. "But Hamas' fears have increased, and so have Fatah's ambitions - especially in the aftermath of the coup in Cairo."

Khalid Amayreh is a Palestinian journalist based in Dura, near Hebron. Amayreh is a practicing Muslim who believes in applying the Islamic Sharia, but not through compulsion.