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Article 1.	The Washington Post <u>Palestinians, worried that peace talks will fail, plan for 'day after'</u> William Booth
Article 2.	The Washington Post <u>John Kerry's departure from reality</u> Jackson Diehl
Article 3.	Al Jazeera <u>Israel's water miracle that wasn't</u> Charlotte Silver
Article 4.	World Press <u>Israel and Palestine: A Bi-National Solution</u> Laurelle Atkinson
Article 5.	The National Interest <u>Failed Religious Diplomacy at the Birth of Israel</u> Asaf Romirowsky , Alexander Joffe
Article 6.	NYT <u>The Ottoman Revival Is Over</u> Elmira Bayrasli

[Article 1.](#)

The Washington Post

Palestinians, worried that peace talks will fail, plan for 'day after'

[William Booth](#)

March 31, 2014 -- Ramallah , West Bank — Worried that U.S.-brokered peace talks might collapse in coming days, Palestinians are weighing their options, which they say range from urging international boycotts against

Israel to holding mass protests to unilaterally seeking more recognition at the United Nations.

Among the most explosive possibilities — or threats, as Israelis see it — would be for the Palestinians to try to take a case against Israel to the International Criminal Court, alleging that the Israeli military has committed war crimes in the West Bank.

Even if talks continue for a few months, many Palestinian activists assume that the negotiations will ultimately fail.

They say now is the time for a Palestinian Plan B.

Going to The Hague would be a desperate gambit, and it is far from certain that the Palestinians would even be awarded jurisdiction in the international forum, let alone see their claims heard.

Still, the threat of going to The Hague has rattled the Israeli government, which would almost surely retaliate. Such a move is also likely to anger Israel's closest ally, the United States.

The Palestinian Authority relies on billions of dollars in budgetary support and humanitarian aid provided by the United States and the [European Union for its survival](#).

“It would be the atomic bomb,” conceded Hanan Ashrawi, a senior member of the Palestine Liberation Organization executive committee tasked with assembling options for Palestinian leaders to pursue if the peace negotiations fail.

“It is a huge bluff,” said Alan Baker, an expert on international law and a former Israeli ambassador to Canada, adding that it was doubtful that the Palestinians could persuade the International Criminal Court to hear their case.

Even so, Baker said the threat has gotten the attention of the United States and has frightened Israelis, who do not want to be blamed for a breakdown in talks.

Troubled negotiations

As U.S. diplomats shuttle between Ramallah and Jerusalem in an effort to extend the negotiations, which are scheduled to end April 29, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas is insisting that he will [not agree to continue talks](#) until a last round of 26 Palestinian prisoners is released as promised.

“Either this is going to be settled or it’s going to fall apart,” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a ministerial meeting of his Likud party members on Sunday, saying the picture could become clear in “a few days.”

According to a U.S.-brokered timetable agreed upon last summer, the last of a total of 104 Palestinian prisoners should have been freed this weekend. But Netanyahu wants a promise from Abbas that the peace talks will continue before he frees the inmates, all of whom are serving long sentences after being convicted of murdering Israelis.

The 79-year-old Abbas is telling diplomats that if the talks end, Israel and the United States will have to deal with his successor.

Meanwhile, Palestinian officials say they have prepared documents for Abbas to sign that would seek Palestinian membership in a half-dozen U.N. organizations and make Palestinians a party to international conventions and treaties, moves that would represent another step toward legitimacy for a future state of Palestine.

While the two sides are negotiating, Abbas has promised not to seek greater recognition at the United Nations, where the Palestinians won “non-member observer state” status in 2012.

Full membership to the United Nations was blocked in 2011. U.S. diplomats have warned Israel that the United States cannot stop further Palestinian moves at the United Nations, especially if the current negotiations collapse.

‘Day After’ scenarios

A group of academic experts recently completed a six-month study looking at what would happen if the Palestinian Authority, which has provided for limited self-rule and security in the West Bank since 1994, either dissolves or collapses in the wake of failed talks.

The analysis released by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, titled [“The Day After,”](#) predicts that a dissolution of the Palestinian Authority would throw the economy of the West Bank into turmoil — with salaries unpaid and banks failing — and bring a rise in lawlessness and a return to the days when militias wreaked havoc on both Palestinians and Israelis.

Palestinian leaders have threatened in the past to dissolve the Palestinian Authority, established two decades ago in the wake of the Oslo Accords,

and let the Israelis try to directly govern the territory.

The Palestinian Authority could also collapse if the Palestinians go to The Hague and the United States and Israel retaliate by withholding money and other support.

The question that many Palestinians are asking, Ashrawi said, is whether the peace talks will “end with a bang or a whimper.”

“If we are blamed, if there are external actions against us, and the Palestinian Authority collapses, it could lead to either Hamas taking over or to warlordism,” the PLO official said. “The people here do have weapons.” The militant Islamist movement Hamas, which the United States has labeled a terrorist organization, controls the Gaza Strip.

This Friday, Palestinian activists and scholars plan to hold a two-day session to discuss renewed “strategies of resistance.”

“If the current round of talks, or diktats, hits a wall, Palestinians will be more united — and vigorous — than ever in waging diplomatic, legal, economic, popular and rights-based pressure campaigns against Israel, particularly in the form of the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement,” said Omar Barghouti, one of the founders of the campaign seeking such sanctions.

Some Palestinians say it is time to abandon the idea of an independent Palestinian state and insist on equal rights for Palestinians in one state combining Israel and the West Bank. In such a state, these Palestinians say, they would press for “one citizen, one vote,” in which case Palestinians and Arab Israelis would make up about 40 percent of the population.

“Palestinians have many options ahead of them if the peace talks fail. In fact, they have even more options than are available for the Israelis,” said Antwan Shulhut, lead researcher at the Ramallah-based Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies.

Shulhut said that in addition to seeking redress in international forums and at the United Nations, there are calls from Palestinians for more action on the street.

“The second option is to bring about a popular uprising or nonviolent, peaceful intifada, which a lot of people are now calling for,” Shulhut said.

William Booth is bureau chief for Jerusalem. His recent work has focused on the violence and instability created by drug trafficking and the fight

against it.

[Article 2.](#)

The Washington Post

John Kerry's departure from reality

[Jackson Diehl](#)

During a tour of the Middle East in November, Secretary of State John F. Kerry portrayed the region as on its way to a stunning series of breakthroughs, thanks to U.S. diplomacy. In Egypt, he said, “the roadmap” to democracy “[is being carried out, to the best of our perception.](#)” In Syria, a peace conference would soon replace the Assad regime with a transitional government, because “[the Russians and the Iranians . . . will make certain that the Syrian regime will live up to its obligation.](#)”

Last but hardly least, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was on its way to a final settlement — by April. “This is not mission impossible,” insisted the secretary of state. “[This can happen.](#)”

Some people heaped praise on Kerry for his bold ambitions, saying he was injecting vision and energy into the Obama administration’s inert foreign policy. Others, including me, [said he was delusional.](#)

Four months have passed, and, sadly for Kerry and U.S. interests, the verdict is in: delusional. Egypt is under the thumb of an authoritarian general. The Syrian peace talks imploded soon after they began. Kerry is now frantically trying to prevent the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, which are hanging by a thread — and all sides agree there will be no deal in April.

It might be argued that none of this is Kerry’s fault. It was Gen. Abdel Fatah al-Sissi who hijacked Egypt’s promised political transition. It was the [Assad regime that refused](#) to negotiate its departure. It was Benjamin Netanyahu who kept building Jewish settlements in the West Bank. It was Mahmoud Abbas who refused to recognize Israel as a Jewish state.

All true; and yet all along the way, Kerry — thanks to a profound misreading of the realities on the ground — was enabling the bad guys. Start with Egypt. Since last summer the State Department and its chief have been publicly endorsing the fiction that the military coup against the

elected government of Mohamed Morsi was aimed at “[restoring democracy](#),” as Kerry put it. As late as March 12, Kerry — spun by his friend Nabil Fahmy, the regime’s slick foreign minister — declared that “[I’m very, very hopeful](#) that, in very short order, we’ll be able to move forward” in certifying that Egypt was eligible for a full resumption of U.S. aid.

Twelve days later, an Egyptian court handed [death sentences to 529 members of the Muslim Brotherhood](#) after a two-day trial. Two days after that, Sissi appeared on television, in uniform, to [announce that he would “run” for president](#).

Kerry was no less credulous of Vladimir Putin. Having taken office with the intention of boosting support for Syrian rebels as a way of “changing Assad’s calculations,” Kerry [abruptly changed course last May](#) after a visit to the Kremlin. Russia and the United States, he announced, would henceforth “[cooperate in trying to implement](#)” a transition from the Assad regime. “Our understanding,” Mr. Kerry said of himself and Putin, “is very similar.”

Only it wasn’t. Putin, who loathes nothing more than U.S.-engineered regime change, spent the next nine months pouring weapons into Damascus, even as Kerry continued to insist that Moscow would force Assad to hand over power in Geneva. When the Geneva conference finally convened, Russia — to the surprise of virtually no one, other than Kerry — backed Assad’s contention that the negotiations should be about combating “terrorism,” not a transitional government.

That brings us to the Israeli-Palestinian quagmire, which Kerry made his personal cause even though the Obama administration already had tried and abjectly failed to broker a deal between Netanyahu and Abbas and Israel and the Palestinian territories are currently an island of tranquility in a blood-drenched Middle East. Ignoring the counsel of numerous [experts](#) who [warned](#) neither side was ready for a deal, Kerry lavished time on the two men, convinced that his political skills would bring them around. Predictably, that didn’t happen. The leaders have not budged a millimeter from the positions they occupied on Palestinian statehood a year ago, and [Abbas has been strident](#) in publicly rejecting terms Kerry tried to include in a proposed peace “framework.”

Kerry offered an answer to my first critique of him in an interview with Susan Glasser of Politico: "I would ask" anyone "who was critical of our engagement: [What is the alternative?](#)" Well, the alternative is to address the Middle East as it really is. Recognize that Egypt's generals are reinstalling a dictatorship and that U.S. aid therefore cannot be resumed; refocus on resuscitating and defending [Egypt's real democrats](#). Admit that the Assad regime won't quit unless it is defeated on the battlefield and adopt a strategy to bring about that defeat. Concede that a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace isn't possible now and look for more modest ways to build the groundwork for a future Palestinian state.

In short, drop the delusions.

[Article 3.](#)

Al Jazeera

Israel's water miracle that wasn't

Charlotte Silver

It was impressive at first: Long stretches of seemingly barren, beige hills punctuated by abundantly fertile farms growing oranges, dates and watermelons, first appearing in southern Israel in the middle of the 20th century. Unlike the gaudy, fake lakes and gushing fountains of Las Vegas plopped in the middle of the Mojave desert, this prodigious agricultural production was not meant to signal decadence; rather, it was a testament to Israel's prudent husbandry of the land, an intelligence and expertise that not only enriched the region but legitimised the presence of Israel and the expulsion of Palestinians.

Israel credits its use of desalination plants and drip-irrigation with enabling the desert to bloom - the iconic image reinforcing the still-lingering notion that the land of historic Palestine was a dry one, while further impressing Israel's world audience with the young country's wizardry with water.

Less attention is given to the Knesset report commissioned in 2002, nearly four decades after Israel's national water carrier began diverting the Jordan river to Israeli citrus orchards in the Negev region. The report concluded that the region's ongoing water crisis - a desiccated Jordan river and shrinking Dead Sea - was "[primarily man-made](#)".

Less attention is given to the Knesset report commissioned in 2002, nearly four decades after Israel's national water carrier began diverting the Jordan river to Israeli citrus orchards in the Negev. The report concluded that the region's ongoing water crisis - a desiccated Jordan river and shrinking Dead Sea - was 'primarily man-made'.

In December 2011, Ben Ehrenreich [reported](#) the unrecuperated cost of such agricultural opulence: It required half of Israel's water while providing only three percent of the country's GDP. Nevertheless, the extravagance was deemed necessary by the commission, which [determined](#) it held a "Zionist-strategic-political value, which goes beyond its economic contribution". But there is another motive behind [peddling](#) the myth of eternal water scarcity in Palestine: If you argue that you're creating potable water out of what was nothing, you've already successfully obscured your theft of something.

In fact, Palestinians have not historically wanted for water. But the characterisation of Palestine as a desperately arid land has, as Clemens Messerschmid [wrote in 2011](#), "naturalised" the water crisis that Palestinians experience every day. Gaza, which is currently subsisting off of a water source that is [95 percent non-potable](#), long served as an oasis for travellers crossing from Cairo to Damascus. This history - and more - is important to consider amid the recent enthusiastic clamour over Israel's miraculous [water surplus](#) that promises to provide a glimmer of hope for peace and cooperation, but is, in truth, a helpful cover-up for its ongoing theft and exploitation.

The mythology is currently in a [renaissance](#).

At the beginning of this month, Netanyahu paid a [visit to California](#) - which has experienced record-low rainfall this year - to create a pact with Governor Jerry Brown that vaguely promised a collaboration on future projects, especially those concerning water conservation and production. To nervous Californians, Netanyahu crowed, "Israel doesn't have a water problem!" - no doubt expecting to dazzle his audience with this miracle before trotting out the virtues of his country's innovation and industry. The statement was a stunning show of hubris and mendacity in light of the fact that Netanyahu's country has long deprived Palestinians of their own water.

The visit - and the message it carried - are just the latest in the PR ploys aptly called "bluwashing". Israel doesn't have a "water problem" because it steals water from Palestinians.

The theft

The Israeli military has governed all sources of water in the West Bank and Gaza since 1967 and 1974, respectively. Originally gained by military conquest, its control has subsequently been affirmed through the Oslo Accords and, increasingly, the work of the Palestinian Authority and international NGOs.

A brief review of the state's dominion over water resources shows that Israel diverts the Jordan river into Lake Tiberias, as do Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon to their respective territories, leaving the Dead Sea with a declining sea-level. Flaunting international laws against the pillage of occupied lands, Israel controls the mountain aquifer - 80 percent of which lies beneath the West Bank - and over-extracts it for agriculture, as well as settlers' pools and verdant lawns. In 2009, the Mountain Aquifer supplied 40 percent of Israel's agricultural needs and 50 percent of its population's drinking water.

Israel also takes more than its share from the coastal aquifer that lies beneath Gaza, and diverts the [Wadi Gaza](#) into Israel's Negev desert, just before it reaches Gaza. Lastly, Israel's wall conveniently envelops wells and springs that lie east of the Green Line.

With all these sources of water, it's no miracle that Israelis can comfortably consume about [five times](#) as much water as Palestinians.

In 1982, the Ministry of Defence - then led by Ariel Sharon - sold the entirety of the West Bank's water infrastructure to semi-private Mekorot for one symbolic shekel. What was once a military acquisition became the property of a state-owned company; today the Palestinians in the West Bank buy [over half](#) of their water from Mekorot, often at a [higher price](#) than nearby settlers.

Founded in 1937, Israel's water company, Mekorot, has been crucial to the Zionist state-building project, and to that end has aided in Israel's erasure of its original boundaries. Israeli occupation watchdog group, Who Profits, [notes](#) that on Mekorot's map of its National Water System, there is no Green Line.

Mekorot's governance of water ensures Palestinians remain on their knees of dependence on Israel - prohibited from using the water flowing beneath their feet or develop their own water infrastructure.

Mekorot's governance of water ensures Palestinians remain on their knees of dependence on Israel - prohibited from using the water flowing beneath their feet or develop their own water infrastructure. The years immediately following Israel's usurpation of Palestine's water resources saw a sharp 20 percent decline in Palestine's agricultural production. Nearly 200,000 Palestinians in the West Bank have [no access](#) to running water, nor do Palestinians have the ability to collect water themselves without explicit permission, which is [rarely granted](#).

Mekorot executes this crime of theft all the while Israel maintains that it has the solutions to scant rainfall and scarcity of water, and that Mekorot provides [humanitarian assistance](#) to parched and needy Palestinians.

March 22 marked World Water Day, a day commemorated globally every year since 1993. This year, the day was intentionally chosen to kick off a week-long protest against Mekorot - dubbed International Week Against Mekorot - that will end on March 30, Palestine's Land Day. The campaign is crucial amid the current amplification of Israel's trumpeting its water tech prowess.

Mekorot began expanding internationally in 2005; a year that also saw the launch of [Brand Israel Group](#), a multimillion-dollar initiative to improve the country's image abroad, in which the exporting of commodities plays a useful role. Israel is presented as the country that provides an answer to one of the globe's most ominous threats - global warming, drought, and water scarcity.

"Israel has taken the challenge of water scarcity and built an export industry in water tech," Will Sarni of Deloitte Consulting, recently [wrote](#), noting that the industry saw [a 170 percent](#) increase in exports in six years. [McKinsey](#) has estimated that the global water market is the [third or fourth largest commodity market](#) in the world.

And, while the Palestinian Authority long resisted desalination projects as a substitute for restoring water rights to Palestinians, today it has embraced these technical solutions - yet another indication of its impotence as a political entity.

Yet in spite of all this, not everyone is buying Israel's campaign of bluster and braggadocio. Proponents of BDS, a movement calling for boycotts and sanctions against Israel, have already scored significant victories against Mekorot: [The Netherlands](#) and [Argentina](#) recently cancelled contracts with Mekorot, citing Mekorot's violation of international law.

The significance of these successes cannot be overstated: A clear indication that the call for BDS is reaching the ears of government leaders and, perhaps more important, that Zionists are failing in their ceaseless quest to make the world forget their crimes against Palestinians.

Charlotte Silver is an independent journalist in San Francisco. She was formerly based in the Occupied West Bank, Palestine.

[Article 4.](#)

World Press

Israel and Palestine: A Bi-National Solution

Laurelle Atkinson

March 25, 2014 -- "For all that we've seen over the last several decades, all the mistrust that's been built up, the Palestinians would still prefer peace. They would still prefer a country of their own that allows them to find a job, send their kids to school, travel overseas, go back and forth to work without feeling as if they are restricted or constrained as a people. And they recognize that Israel is not going anywhere," U.S. President Barack Obama said recently. There also seems to be a dawning awareness by Israelis that Palestinians are not going anywhere either.

Instead, some Israelis, like historian Joshua Teitelbaum of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies in Ramat Gan, are now referring to their country's presence in the Palestinian West Bank after so long as "making things harder for Israel." Many political analysts foresee risks attributed to the occupation now becoming permanent, raising questions about the nature of Israel's democracy. The loss of human rights of people living in Israel devoid of a state for decades is affecting how Israel is viewed abroad, most notably in the West. Making matters worse seems to be Israel's constant demands for theocratic recognition. Demanding this from

people who have been in refugee camps for decades is raising questions over Israel's democratic legitimacy as a member of the international state system in the 21st century. UNHRC rapporteur on human rights Richard Falk, for example, requested that the United Nations call upon The Hague over Israel's presence in Palestinian territories, saying that Israeli policies can be classified as "colonialism, apartheid and ethnic cleansing."

It seems that Israel has no intention of realizing the "two-state solution." After two decades of intermittent negotiations, the situation still suffers from conflict and intransigence. Yoaz Hendel, an ex-communications director for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, recently summed it up. "He's not talking about a peace agreement," he said of Netanyahu. In Hendel's opinion, Netanyahu will delay all tough decisions for as long as possible, in the hope of keeping "maximum land and minimum Palestinians" under Israeli control.

All of which begs the question, why can't the Israeli government realize the two-state solution with the Palestinians? Security is inevitably Netanyahu's response. "There's one thing I will never compromise on, and that's Israel security," he said yet again earlier this month.

Theocratic insecurities

History is rife with the religious rivalries of Jews, Christians and Muslims, reference to which has never prevented territorial disputes in contemporary times, especially in the Middle East. Indeed, root causes of Middle Eastern conflicts, most notably this one, resides in these ancient rivalries, which in this case dates back to the 10th century BC when the Israeli King David captured the hill upon which the Jebusite city of Jerusalem stood and renamed this hill Zion. And so justified claims to Jerusalem, which raged on through one bloody battle into the next for centuries. Until here we are today with the Middle East still in turmoil, with the Palestinian/Israeli conflict and Jerusalem still at the crux.

Even today, maintaining Israel's rightful security is the given reason Netanyahu wants Palestinian recognition of the State of Israel. Demanding recognition of a Jewish state specifically could be the heart of why the two-state solution has failed to materialize. Once again the spotlight is cast on ancient religious rivalries of blood long since shed. No matter that it's also long since evaporated. "It's time the Palestinians stop denying history. Just as Israel is prepared to recognize a Palestinian state, the Palestinians must

be prepared to recognize a Jewish state," Netanyahu said. But is it really the same? The Palestinians are not necessarily demanding Israel recognize an Islamic state of Palestine.

Rather, Palestinians along with 20 percent of Israelis balk at this demand. For them, recognizing Israel as a Jewish state is tantamount to being stripped of their citizenship, classified as second-class citizens and denied democratic rights. Not to mention stirring up religious rivalries further afield emanating from what some writers term a "xenophobic theocracy." Neri Livneh, for instance, reflects in Haaretz on what a failure the Israeli reality has become. She writes of how young people are leaving Israel because of Israel's constitution as a Jewish state, which is construed as a Jewish superiority over others. Meanwhile, writers such as Yair Lapid suggest there is nowhere else in the world for Jews but Israel. Interestingly, early Zionist thinkers avoided the "Jewish state" term, preferring "Jewish homeland," the upside being that "Jewish homeland" can be aligned with a democratic bi-national state. This could well warrant greater consideration. For many, Israel's theocratic demands are seen to institutionalize policies of discrimination rather than uphold civil, democratic, and pluralistic principles. For Palestinians the issue involves the fate of their refugees, namely those forced out in 1948 when Israel became a state and who now, along with their descendants, amount to 5 million.

Demographic insecurities

Little wonder Israelis are putting up settlements left, right and center and demanding formal theocratic recognition.

"We do not seek either to flood Israel with millions [of refugees] or to change its social composition," Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas told Israeli students recently in Ramallah. He can't guarantee this, but his comments are taken as his clearest indication yet for acceding to Israel's requests on refugees returning only to a future Palestinian state. "Otherwise what we are being asked to do is allow the establishment of a Palestinian state ... which will try to flood us with refugees undermining Israel's own existence," Netanyahu said. Even so, what sort of life would it be for 5 million displaced citizens, for the second or third time round in an already overcrowded space? Putting aside the politics behind the demographics, a nightmare scenario could unfold for both Israelis and Palestinians: more

demolitions, roiling resentment, revenge, psychological problems, economic upheavals—the list is endless.

At present, Israeli and Arab populations are almost on par. According to a U.S. government report, the Palestinian population in Israel and the occupied territories now exceeds 5.3 million, with the Jewish population around 5.2 million, making Israel an apartheid state as an empowered minority ruling over a disenfranchised majority. And that's without any returning refugees.

Centuries of displacement underlie the interminable nature of warfare in Israel, with its manifestation of suffering and terrorism. How can this be resolved while both sides are locked into past grievances? Invalidating Israel's demographic insecurities could take an across-the-board immigration policy. That means tough decisions indeed, because it fundamentally comes down to Palestinians foregoing an automatic "right of return" and Israel accepting its secular position within the state system once and for all.

Realistically, for Palestinians to recognize Israel and vice versa should involve essential actions of statehood. Actually forging trade and economic ties, addressing common energy concerns, and collaborating on scientific and technological innovation would go well beyond lip service. Countless promises have come and gone, along with ceasefires, declarations, peace agreements and U.N. resolutions, to no avail.

"In any solution, whether it involves two states or one, the only way to defuse this 'demographic bomb' is for Israel to abandon the racist doctrines according to which an entire group of human beings—women, men, the elderly and babies—are viewed, merely by the fact of their existence, to be a 'threat,' to be walled in, ghettoized and treated as an alien presence in the land they have lived on and nurtured for generations," said former Ambassador Hasan Abu Nimah of Jordan at the U.N. Israeli journalist Gideon Levy recently wrote in Haaretz, "With the exception of a few anti-Semites ... no one thinks about 'eradicating Israel.' It's only we Israelis who cling to the concept: caution, annihilation ahead."

Meanwhile, Israel keeps constructing settlements on sensitive ground, the latest proposed by Netanyahu for 5,000 units in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, after releasing 26 Palestinian prisoners. East Jerusalem portfolio head Dr. Meir Margalit said the announcement was "little more

than a thinly veiled attempt by the government to derail the peace talks." He added, "To make such a declaration on the same day the municipality demolished four homes in East Jerusalem—it's a message to the United States and the world that we're not interested in a peace agreement with the Palestinians." The feeling is apparently mutual with Palestinians demanding that any peace agreement be ripped up and renewed violence be cast on the agenda instead. Same old, same old.

Military insecurities

With every political upheaval in the Palestinian ranks comes further conflict throughout. This month alone has seen schisms in the Palestinian Authority allowing for the firing of rockets from Gaza into Israel; denial by Hamas of cross-border violence; another 60 rockets landing in Israel from Gaza with retaliatory air strikes by Israel; a crashed Israeli drone and both Palestinians and Israelis bracing for more conflict. None of this augurs well for a two-state solution. Instead, the configuration represents a security nightmare, especially with infighting between Hamas and Fattah. The only gain seems to be had by military industries rather than progressive stability, of which Israel seems the epitome: a military industrial complex.

Netanyahu is increasing troops along the Jordan Valley, which borders the eastern side of the West Bank. "Experience has shown that foreign peacekeeping forces keep the peace only when there is peace, but when subjected to repeated attacks, those forces eventually go home," he said. "The only force that can be relied on to defend the peace is the Israeli army."

Alternative to a two-state solution

"If he does not believe that a peace deal with the Palestinians is the right thing to do for Israel, then he needs to articulate an alternative approach," Obama said of Netanyahu.

Increasingly, a bi-national solution to the conflict involving the state of Israel, the West Bank and possibly the Gaza Strip, with citizenship and equal rights in the combined entity for all inhabitants regardless of ethnicity or religion is gaining recognition. Many see a one-person-one-vote arrangement as the obvious solution to all the outstanding issues between Israel and the Palestinians, especially security.

"The window for a two-state solution is closing," British Foreign Secretary William Hague said last December. Support for a one-state solution is

increasing instead as frustrated Palestinians see the one-state solution as an alternative way forward. Even some on Israel's right, such as former Knesset speaker Reuven Rivlin, say they would prefer this to a division of the land. Is the Israeli prime minister strong enough to make such a decision?

"Peace with the Palestinians would turn our relations with them and with many Arab countries into open and thriving relationships," Netanyahu said earlier this month. "The combination of Israeli innovation and entrepreneurship could catapult the entire region forward. I believe together we could solve the region's water and energy problems."

Laurelle Russell-Atkinson is an independent political analyst specializing in geopolitics and the Middle East, with degrees in the field from the Australian National University. She is currently writing her second book, "Middle Eastern Conflicts: Root Causes and Causal Resolve," subsequent to attending the Esfahan University in Iran, where she presented two papers on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Australian Foreign Policy and Iran. She has applied causal analysis to Middle Eastern conflicts for 25 years, providing policy advice for government and foreign diplomats.

[Article 5.](#)

The National Interest

Failed Religious Diplomacy at the Birth of Israel

[Asaf Romirowsky](#), [Alexander Joffe](#)

Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from [Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief](#) (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), by Asaf Romirowsky and Alexander H. Joffe.

March 31, 2014 -- Before the UN launched its seemingly permanent relief effort for Palestinian refugees in 1950, UNRWA, it oversaw another, smaller program called United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees (UNRPR). In 1948 and 1949 aid was administered for the UN by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the League of Red Cross Societies.

AFSC and its leaders represented their participation in UNRPR as an outgrowth of relief work they had done in Europe and elsewhere during and after World War II. This work had, with some lobbying, earned a Nobel Peace Prize for the AFSC and its British counterpart in 1947. But the real origins of the AFSC's participation were quite different, namely the failure of three unsuccessful efforts at "religious diplomacy" in the months prior to being asked to participate in Palestine relief work. This was the real prompt for the AFSC going to Gaza, which conflicted with its unprecedented and little-documented bid to lead the American Protestant community in the name of pacifism and nuclear disarmament.

In this excerpt we describe some of the failed religious diplomacy, another point where American religious history intersected with diplomacy and foreign policy:

THE INITIAL INVOLVEMENT of the AFSC in the Middle East was a matter of religious diplomacy, not refugee relief. Jerusalem had posed a central problem for the United Nations as it contemplated the Palestine question in 1947 and 1948. In August 1947 the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) had recommended partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states with an international zone consisting of Jerusalem and its environs. In contrast, the minority report proposed a federal state with Arab and Jewish components and recommended that Jerusalem be divided into two separate municipalities. Jerusalem's holy places, however, had long been subject to separate legal regimes that complicated further relations between Jews, Muslims and Christians, and the potential division of the city.

Throughout the fall of 1947 the United Nations focused additional attention on the problem of Jerusalem, which culminated in complex recommendations for a corpus separatum to place it under a United Nations Trusteeship Council that would appoint a Governor. These were part of United Nations Resolution 181, adopted by the General Assembly on November 29, 1947. Working out the details of this plan would prove difficult, particularly as civil war broke out between the Arab and Jewish communities. Despite intensive diplomatic efforts, the appointment of a governor could not be scheduled until April 1948, at which point the political and strategic situations had changed dramatically. Most Protestant denominations with representatives and institutions in Jerusalem had

strongly opposed partition but the AFSC had publicly endorsed the November 29th Partition resolution, a stance that had caused deep shock and alienation among Palestine Arab Quakers, in particular Khalil Totah. Though Pickett later implied that he was the first choice for the position of Governor, by then entitled Special Municipal Commissioner, in fact the United Nations first asked Percy Clarke, general manager of the Barclays Bank in Jerusalem, to take the post. When Clarke declined, Pickett and his biographers state that the position was offered to him. When he too declined, well-known Philadelphia lawyer and AFSC member Harold Evans accepted. Curiously, Pablo de Azcárate, secretary of the United Nations Consular Truce Commission in Jerusalem, and deputy Municipal Commissioner, mentioned only Evans in his account of the affair, suggesting that neither Clarke's nor Pickett's nominations were of much significance. Evans' appointment lasted all of six weeks before the escalating conflict made it impossible for him to exercise any authority. He returned to the United States in June and the position of Special Municipal Commissioner lapsed.

Quaker religious diplomacy was also proceeding on several different tracks. Early in 1948 the elderly Rufus Jones [founder of the AFSC] had been approached by Francis B. Sayre, then president of the United Nations Trusteeship Council, and was asked to organize an appeal to religious leaders in the West to be addressed to religious leaders in Palestine. Jones and AFSC Executive Director Clarence Pickett then initiated a petition addressed to both Arabs and Jews and calling for an immediate "Truce of God" that would halt the fighting and preserve the sanctity of Jerusalem. In March 1948 the appeal was signed by a number of American churchmen and sent to Rabbi Isaac Herzog, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the British Mandate of Palestine, and Amin Bey Abdul Hadi, head of the Supreme Muslim Council. No response was received. At the same time, a small mission was dispatched by the AFSC and the British Religious Society of Friends to further investigate the possibility of Quaker facilitation of direct negotiations and toward a truce that would preserve Jerusalem from destruction. James Vail, an American chemical engineer, and Edgar B. Castle undertook the assignment.

While Castle had been to the Middle East before World War II, and had expressed hostility toward Zionism in the years since, neither he nor Vail

had any particular familiarity with the region nor experience with diplomacy, religious or otherwise. Nevertheless, they traveled to Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, Amman and Jerusalem for an intensive series of meetings with representatives of various organizations. Their reports indicate a diffuse series of discussions.

In Beirut Vail and Castle were told that rich Jews had fled Aleppo due to anti-Jewish and anti-American rioting but they noted that they were awaiting another "objective report" on the situation. In Jerusalem, which was under siege, they met a variety of Jews, including Abraham Bergman, Assistant to the Mandatory District Commissioner, whose view they characterized as seeming "less extreme than those of other more prominent Jews we were soon to meet." Regarding their meeting with Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog, they noted, "being obliged to report that we found little understanding of the feeling of the Arabs that Jews are invaders from the West." Their naiveté was unintentionally revealed in the report on their discussions with Leo Cohen of the Jewish Agency. Cohen indicated that Jews would support a truce but he sought clarification whether this meant the two sides would refrain from shooting into or out of the city, and how the 2,000 Jews in the Old City would receive food.

Vail and Castle had no answers for Cohen. But their report from Cairo was more effusive, particularly regarding their meeting with Abdul Rahman Azzam Pasha, Secretary General of the Arab League. They judged that Azzam receiving them at his home was a sign of the "serious concern and respect with which he viewed our mission." Azzam was also able to "appreciate the ultimate spiritual objectives of our concern because of his own wide comprehension of the spiritual values involved in the Palestinian conflict for the whole world and for the Middle East in particular." Azzam welcomed Quaker services and assured Vail and Castle that the Holy Places could be secured, were it not for the Irgun and Haganah, the Jewish paramilitary forces. He also assured them that in a binational Palestine, Jews would have "full cultural autonomy and full civic rights on a democratic basis of proportional representation." He even agreed to accept Jewish immigration "if there was also full freedom of emigration."

A variety of other meetings impressed Vail and Castle with the direness of the situation and the need for Quaker action, particularly on the issues of refugee relief and the internationalization of Jerusalem. But a small and

revealing comment noted that, when addressing other Quakers in Beirut and Ramallah, “some apprehension was felt regarding the possible misinterpretation of our impartial distribution of relief between Arab and Jew. Any help given to the Jews would be interpreted by Arabs as a pro-Jewish action and might react adversely on local Quaker social and education activity.” Vail and Castle recommended that the Quakers dispatch a small contingent to help the International Committee of the Red Cross, and proposed to Azzam that he support a truce, which would help bring about “a new understanding of the moral qualities of Islam” and help it achieve “a strong position of moral leadership.”

The Vail/Castle mission was as doomed as it was naïve. Writing in *The Spectator* in mid-May, Castle bravely pushed truces and internationalization, and touted Azzam’s proposal of April 28th regarding a truce. He noted, however, that “If, at this juncture, the Jews were to demand access to the Wailing Wall, it would be a pity, much as one has to sympathise with their desire, for this would introduce avoidable complications.” But at the same time that Azzam had been reassuring Vail and Castle, he was negotiating with Arab leaders and attempting to overcome disputes prior to a united invasion of Palestine. Preparations for war were accelerating in all Arab states. Azzam had also issued his threat to the Jews regarding a “war of extermination and momentous massacre” a full six months before meeting the Quakers. Like Rufus Jones’ wartime meeting with Reinhard Heydrich’s associates, Vail and Castle appear to have heard what they came to hear.

Events on the ground fast outstripped the ability of any party, much less the Quakers, to control them. The second wave of Palestine Arab flight was well underway in advance of the British withdrawal and the creation of Israel. Israel declared independence on May 14th and was invaded by Arab armies the next day. A truce that had been arranged on May 2nd collapsed on May 15th, and it would not be until June 11th that United Nations Mediator Folke Bernadotte was able to arrange another. Quaker intervention had failed utterly. But in June 1948 Rufus Jones died, leaving Clarence Pickett as the most famous American Quaker and fully in charge of the AFSC. This was to be a fateful turn.

THE AFSC’S RELIGIOUS DIPLOMACY IN 1948 and decision to participate in refugee relief must also be placed in the larger context of

interdenominational Protestant politics in the aftermath of the Holocaust, and the broader influence of Protestant clergy, especially missionaries, on the course of American foreign policy. A few mainstream American Protestant leaders like Reinhold Niebuhr were favorable toward Zionism and the creation of Israel, in contrast to Roman Catholics who were vigorously opposed. But as noted earlier, those liberal American Protestant denominations with connections and institutions in the Holy Land and Jerusalem were also opposed to Israel.

For the Anglicans, the partition of Palestine was a theological and practical calamity. Their theology was firmly based on the idea that Judaism had been superseded and that Christians, particularly Anglicans and Episcopalians, comprised the “true Israelites” who would lead the redemption of the Holy Land in the name of Christianity. Anglican theology was rife with anti-Semitism, and regarded Judaism as a barbaric, antiquated, and inferior faith, while Zionism was seen as materialistic, hyper-nationalist, and vaguely Bolshevik. The Holy Land in general, and Jerusalem specifically, were regarded as unique spaces imbued with sanctity which should be dominated by no faith or denomination, although Anglicans, by virtue of their higher creed and universalist calling, were in the position to lead and guide others. Any division of Palestine was fundamentally unnatural, particularly if it benefited the Jews. This was a view shared by Western oil companies, the U.S. State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency, many of whose personnel came from Protestant missionary backgrounds.

Having been at the forefront of relief efforts for Armenian Christians before World War I and during the 1915 genocide and thereafter, Anglicans, as well as Congregationalists, who had built many of the American Protestant institutions in the Middle East, saw ominous parallels with the fate of Palestine Arab refugees. Anglicans also saw the church institutions and congregations they had carefully built in Palestine under British imperial control, and their nominal leadership of Palestinian Christianity, threatened by the political upheaval being forced on them, in their view, by the Jews.

As an historic peace church, however, the Quakers and by extension the AFSC, were placed in a difficult situation by events in the Middle East. Quakers were fundamentally different than Anglicans, Episcopalians and

Congregationalists with respect to elements of Christian theology, such as the inerrant nature of Scripture, sacraments, and the need for clergy. But they shared theological assumptions regarding Jews and Judaism with other Protestant denominations, such as supersessionism and millenarianism. The fundamental Quaker notion of the “inner light,” where the individual’s conscience was guided by the presence of God within, also held collectivist and exclusionary ideologies such as nationalism in disdain.

At the same time, the AFSC’s wartime experiences had indeed given them a unique relationship with American and, and in a different way, European Jews and Jewish institutions. The organization had also endorsed the 1947 Partition of Palestine, a move that was well-received by most American Jewish organizations but which put them at odds with other Protestants and with Quakers in Palestine. Squaring this circle would not be easy.

The AFSC had begun to assume a prominent voice in the American Protestant community, thanks both to their long work at refugee relief and rehabilitation and specific efforts during and after World War II to shape public and Protestant opinion. Among other things, the necessity to participate in the debate over the Middle East that was raging in American Protestant circles, and a quiet need for the leadership to try and compensate for the multiple failures of early 1948, appear to have driven the AFSC towards deeper involvement in Palestine Arab refugee relief.

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[Article 6.](#)

NYT

The Ottoman Revival Is Over

Elmira Bayrasli

March 30, 2014 -- For [Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#), [Turkey](#)'s embattled prime minister, a win in Sunday's local elections will be a Pyrrhic victory. While his Justice and Development Party, or A.K.P., will likely retain a majority of municipalities, Turkey as a whole, particularly as an international player, has lost.

Mr. Erdogan's decade-plus grip on power has been weakened by anti-government protests, corruption allegations, and an ugly confrontation with the powerful and admired Muslim religious leader Fethullah Gulen. In a desperate effort to prevent any further hemorrhaging of his power, Mr. Erdogan has abandoned the ambitious foreign policy that was the basis for Turkey's regional resurgence in recent years and has resorted to attacking his enemies. The prime minister is now so fixated on his own political survival that he recently attempted, in vain, to shut down Twitter across the country.

It's a far cry from 2003, when Mr. Erdogan ascended to the premiership and announced a determined and democratic agenda to strengthen Turkey's economic and global standing.

I visited him soon afterward in Turkey's capital, Ankara. He told me then, "There are approximately 72 million people in this country — and I represent each and every one." To represent everyone, he pushed for the passage of laws that granted increased freedoms to Turkey's minorities, particularly the Kurds. He implemented economic policies to increase foreign investment. He reached out to far-flung capitals in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, opening more than a dozen embassies and many new markets. He even secured a rotating seat for Turkey on the United Nations Security Council in 2009 and made contributions to Washington's "war on terror."

Nearly every road that has been fixed, public transportation project approved, school built and reform passed has been done so with an eye to extending Turkey's regional and global influence.

In 2009, Mr. Erdogan began to advance a "zero problems" foreign policy. The brainchild of his foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, the policy was predicated on the idea that Turkey isn't merely a "bridge" or "crossroads" between East and West, but an integral player in international diplomacy, security and trade. Turkey sought closer relations with neighbors in the

Balkans, Russia, and especially the Middle East. “Zero problems,” guided Mr. Erdogan to deepen ties with Turkey’s southern and eastern neighbors, including Iran and Syria. Both became major trading partners and, in Iran’s case, a vital source for Turkish energy.

Some have called it “neo-Ottomanism” — an attempt to restore the former Ottoman Empire and its vanished regional glory. Whatever the label, Turkey managed to become a key foreign policy player in the eyes of American and European leaders.

President Obama traveled to Turkey in 2009 and spoke about the country’s strategic importance and increasing global role. During the Arab Spring, Western leaders held Turkey up as a progressive and prosperous democratic model for other Muslim-majority nations. Mr. Erdogan even took Turkey further toward European Union accession than any leader before him.

That model has now crumbled and the bold foreign policy agenda that made Turkey the world’s 16th-largest economy has disappeared. The once dynamic economy has weakened, consumer confidence has declined and the Turkish lira has depreciated nearly 20 percent since May 2013.

Beset by domestic crises, Mr. Erdogan has turned his focus toward his core constituency, a largely conservative, anti-Western population in the heartland. In doing so he has reverted to a tactic that has resonated with them: aggression.

Frantic to recreate the enthusiasm he garnered after storming off a panel with Israel’s president, Shimon Peres, in Davos in 2009 and his decision to cut ties with Israel after Israel attacked a Turkish flotilla in 2010, Mr. Erdogan has ramped up hostile rhetoric against his opponents — abroad and at home. He has attacked what he calls the “interest rate lobby,” called last summer’s protests a “dirty plot by foreign-backed elements,” and blamed the “provocative actions” of “foreign diplomats” for concocting corruption allegations. Recently, he slammed Mr. Gulen and his followers as a “spy ring” seeking to overthrow the government.

Moreover, Mr. Erdogan’s current governance strategy has gutted the country’s foreign policy. Nearby Crimea, a former Ottoman stronghold and the native land of the Tatars, an ethnic Turkic people, is a case in point. When Russia invaded and annexed the Black Sea peninsula, Mr. Erdogan failed to come to the defense of his cultural and religious brethren, as he

did in Egypt. Indeed, after the Egyptian military ousted Mohamed Morsi in July, Mr. Erdogan dismissed their actions as “illegal,” refused to recognize the new government and recalled Turkey’s ambassador to Cairo. On Crimea, the Turkish prime minister has restricted himself to grunts of disapproval despite the fears of the Tatars who will now fall under Russian control just 70 years after Stalin deported hundreds of thousands of Tatars to Siberia.

Mr. Erdogan may believe that his tactics have worked. But in the long run, he’ll have to accept that his increased belligerence has isolated his country. When it comes to regional issues like Egypt, Iran and Iraq, the United States has now largely marginalized Turkey.

Not too long ago, the common question posed in Western capitals was “Who lost Turkey?” Many fingers pointed at Brussels and Washington. But today, as the prime minister steers Turkey away from its path of prosperity and international relevance toward antagonism and repression, the answer seems to be Mr. Erdogan himself.

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