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Article 1.	The National Interest <u>America's Middle East Mistakes Keep Multiplying</u> Robert W. Merry
Article 2.	Al-Ahram Weekly <u>Future US-Egyptian cooperation</u> Magda Shahin
Article 3.	The Washington Post <u>It's not too late to reengage with Iraq</u> Ryan Crocker
Article 4.	The National <u>After success in Iraq and Syria, ISIL will find it tougher to crack Jordan</u> Taylor Luck
Article 5.	Al Jazeera <u>Palestine's future: What are the options?</u> Richard Falk
Article 6.	New York Post <u>Inside the jealous feud between the Obamas and 'Hildebeest' Clintons</u> Edward Klein

[Article 1.](#)

[The National Interest](#)

America's Middle East Mistakes Keep

Multiplying

[Robert W. Merry](#)

June 20, 2014 -- There's an old saying that when you go to war it is imperative that you take pains to know your enemy, meaning to understand his motives, capabilities and likely actions. But, when the United States went to war after the startling 9/11 attacks on the homeland, it did so without even knowing who the enemy actually was. It went after the wrong targets—and thus generated the mess we now see in the Middle East. Was the enemy Iran? No. Iran actually helped the United States when we attacked the Afghan Taliban, a common enemy, in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The opportunity for ongoing cooperation was thwarted by Bush himself, with his remarkable (and remarkably incendiary) “[axis of evil](#)” characterization.

Was the enemy Saddam Hussein's Iraq? Certainly not. Saddam was a largely secular leader who ruled as a thug, based on the thuggish leverage of fear and greed. Thus, he considered cultural passion to be his enemy, a destabilizing element unlikely to respond to his fear-and-greed brand of leadership. Not only was he not the enemy, but he offered a rich opportunity for cooperative action of mutual benefit. He wanted the sanctions against his country lifted and markets for his oil; the United States wanted guaranteed flows of oil and sub rosa help in combating Al Qaeda. Therein lay a potential exchange.

Was the enemy Libya's Muammar Qaddafi? Again, no. Qaddafi was a brutal dictator who was well practiced in the tools of terrorism. But he had been domesticated by American diplomacy backed up by the threat of American force (particularly credible in the wake of Ronald Reagan's bombing attack in 1986). He offered stability in his country and a guarantee that it wouldn't be overrun by Islamist radicalism.

Was the enemy Syria's Assad or Egypt's Mubarak? Again, no.

The enemy was—and is—Islamist fundamentalism. Many people after 9/11, including George W. Bush at the time, sought to emphasize that Islamist fundamentalism isn't really a natural element of Islam but rather an aberrational phenomenon—the product of people who don't really understand their own culture. They had to press this point in order to protect their broader philosophical objective, which was to inject Western ways and thinking into the world of Mideast Islam. That was the underlying philosophical objective of Bush's 2003 Iraq invasion.

But this characterization of Islamist fundamentalism as a cultural aberration is false. It isn't that most Muslims embrace cultural radicalism; obviously, they don't. But Islamist sentiment, even radical sentiment, has a heritage and a history within the larger world of Islam. The desire for a restored Islamic Caliphate, the call to protect fundamentalist beliefs and practices from the forces of modernity, the assault on the notion that church and state should be separated, the defensive hostility towards the West—all of these emanate naturally from the broader Muslim religion and its history.

Particularly significant is the ongoing tension between Islam and the West, going back centuries and impervious to the fuzzy idealism of those who want to wish it away. “Some Westerners,” [wrote the late Harvard scholar Samuel P. Huntington](#), “...have argued that the West does not have problems with Islam but only with violent Islamist extremists. Fourteen hundred years of history demonstrate otherwise.” Huntington later elaborated on this theme when he wrote:

The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power. The problem for Islam is not the CIA or the U.S. Department of Defense. It is the West, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the universality of their culture and believe that their superior, if declining, power imposes on them the obligation to extend that culture throughout the world.

Where Bush and the American elite went wrong after 9/11 was in refusing to believe those attacks reflected a clash of civilizations between Islam and the West. In believing the problem was a dearth of democracy, they crafted a policy that destroyed those elements within Mideast Islam best-positioned to keep at bay the forces of Islamist fundamentalism. And, in interjecting American power into the Islamic heartland—planting the American flag in Islamic soil in a highly provocative manner—they fanned the flames of Islamist fundamentalism throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

We now see the result—radical Islam taking vast swaths of territory in Syria and Iraq, threatening to overrun Libya, positioning itself for far

greater power and protection than it had ever known before. And suddenly, America is seeing possible allies where it once saw only enemies.

[It appears now that Washington sees its interests in Iraq and Syria as coinciding with those of Iran](#), that once-reviled element of the axis of evil but now bent, like the United States, on thwarting the ongoing push into Iraq by vicious Sunni radicals. There's much talk in the American capital about this, and Secretary of State John Kerry has suggested the United States should "[see what Iran might or might not be willing to do](#)" to help save Iraq from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which has been capturing territory in Iraq at an alarming rate.

No doubt many in Washington will see this turn of events as reflecting a new state of things in the Mideast, raising new prospects for cooperation between two nations that had previously, in a different state of things, been enemies. But this will be entirely wrong-headed. For the United States, the strategic imperatives have not changed; they have been and remain the need to check the spread and the reach of Islamist fundamentalism.

The elements of the policy suggested by these strategic imperatives could have been:

- Work with Saddam Hussein on matters of mutual interest, as noted above. Leave him in place in exchange for help in tamping down Islamist fervor and activity.
- Use Saddam's Iraq as a strategic counterweight to Iran, but also foster better relations with the Islamic Republic whenever they could help in the effort against fundamentalist sentiment.
- Abandon the missionary effort to spread democracy in the lands of Islam and announce that Middle Eastern politics are recognized by the United States as the domain of the Middle Eastern people. Refrain from projecting U.S. military power into Islamic territories for fear of rendering anti-Western fervor in those lands, both more intense and more widespread. This would mean no war in Iraq, no military action against Gaddafi, no verbal shoving against Mubarak, no wringing of hands against Syria's Assad. (The initial Afghan operation, designed to push out the Taliban and destroy Al Qaeda's base of operation, would still have been undertaken, but with no subsequent effort to control the countryside or overhaul local governments. Any Taliban restoration would have unleashed warnings of

horrendous retaliation for any attacks on America or its direct interests launched from Afghan territory.)

- Stealthy and deft intelligence and clandestine operations against Islamist elements whenever and wherever they threatened America or its interests. Also, highly targeted and highly destructive retaliatory action against any Islamist groups that attacked American interests or citizens.

Think of how events could have unfolded differently if such an approach had been taken. But it would have required knowing our enemy, beginning with who the true enemy was.

Robert W. Merry is political editor of [The National Interest](#) and the author of books on American history and foreign policy. His most recent book is [Where They Stand: The American Presidents in the Eyes of Voters and Historians](#).

[Article 2](#)

Al-Ahram Weekly

Future US-Egyptian cooperation

Magda Shahin

18 June 2014 -- Unlike the apparent tendency last year to believe that the US was turning towards Asia out of fatigue from Middle East intricacies and President Barack Obama's desperate desire to carve his legacy, it seems that the US is here to stay. It is obvious that the US interest in the region, and hence in Egypt, continues to stand firm. The motives for such interest may have differed from before as we observe a clear switch towards terrorism, but by no means are such motives less important or the US is less attached. The continued relevance and attractiveness of Egypt to the US administration and US businesses remain intact and may eventually reach out to Congress as well.

Many would like to perceive that a weakening of Egypt's regional position and leadership role in the last few years have caused a regression in Egypt's importance to the US. Adding to this is the fluid situation pertaining nowadays to Egypt and the region as a whole, which do not bode well for future prospects in relations between the two countries. Such a view is, however, counterbalanced by the continued vital role of Egypt in

the region, between Libya, which is turning extremist Islamist and nurturing terrorism and the Gaza Strip, another highly troubled area. This should make Egypt's fight against terrorism and its search for a new trajectory highly relevant to the US.

It is noteworthy that Egyptian-American bilateral relations have never been smooth and direct. There has always been a third party involved. This was the Soviet Union in the 1950s and 60s, and Israel after the 1973 war. Some went as far to suggest that Egypt-US relations are a consequence of, and secondary to, the US-Israel relationship. This is not hard to grasp in the light of Camp David Accords. Of essence, however, is that Egypt's two uprisings have clearly brought to the fore the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as the new "third party", which is today highly influencing the relationship between Egypt and the US. Whether at the time of the Muslim Brotherhood, where Qatar was playing a highly damaging role, or nowadays with the go-between of the Saudis to mend the relationship. Are we ready for a direct relationship? Can the two countries sustain a genuine partnership based on mutual respect and trust? The geostrategic importance of Egypt has always attracted the attention of the leading powers, whether the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain, the US or the USSR and today's Russia. They have always acted to secure their interests, not letting a rival power have the upper hand or Egypt become too able to pursue its interests independently. Has Egypt matured after two uprisings to give true credit to its geostrategic importance?

To attain a solid relationship with the US, it is vital for both countries to understand that foreign policy today is no longer conducted solely by the highest authority in the country. Foreign policy is a blend of domestic policies. It is therefore absolutely necessary that Egyptians as well as Americans understand better the domestic dynamics behind the foreign policy in each country.

With high expectations of the US becoming self-sufficient in oil, and with a totally secured Israel in the region, US foreign policy priorities have shifted. Yet Egypt's role remains relevant to continue to guarantee stability in the region, which is of paramount importance to the US and the GCC countries. Washington's overriding interests in the Middle East depend on a stable Egypt. However, it seems that the US is not capable of doing much today to help Egypt stabilise and move out of its transitional phase, which

continues to drain its resources.

How to reach stability is seen differently from one country to the other, and priorities diverge vastly. Egypt's priorities for its stability are clearly to overcome security and economic challenges, which are becoming untenable, and where the US can be of great support and help by merely mobilising greater international support and tolerance towards Egypt. Though gradually convinced of the risky and precarious situation in Egypt — thanks to the new “third party” in the relationship — the US seems reluctant to back Egypt's recent developments. Democracy, human rights and inclusiveness continue to be pushed to the fore with hardly any consideration given to the war on hideous terror Egypt is conducting these days.

The US should not hasten to prejudge the next government. Egyptians see clearly a window of opportunity opening up. By restoring democratic rule, with presidential elections and parliamentary after two months, Egypt's next government may have a mandate to make politically difficult decisions with regard to economic reforms.

In spite of the aid injection from GCC countries (which was valued at over \$20 billion last year), intended to give Egypt a breathing space, it is clear that Egypt is in need of coming to terms with the IMF to fix its economy and restore its creditworthiness. Here the US Administration can help Egypt reach a good deal. However, Egypt itself, on the basis of the “ownership” principle, should design a credible home grown programme and begin its implementation and then call on the IMF and the international community to support it. Again, the US can encourage the IMF to agree on Egypt's programme. We have seen, however, that successive transitional governments were hesitant to negotiate a deal with the IMF or even to pave the way for a subsequent agreement, because of the precarious domestic situation. Transitional governments were more keen to address “social justice”, if undefined, with each government coming forward with its own, largely unsustainable, packages.

What the government is initiating today with raising fuel and electricity prices is a step in the right direction. Similar to the political roadmap, Egypt is in need of an economic roadmap, not ad hoc actions. The vision and roadmap will need to include clear and transparent public and corporate governance. Egypt's private sector will need to mature beyond

cronyism and heavy reliance on state connections. The roadmap will need also to factor in credible and economically rational equity considerations that foster the development of a strong educated middle class.

In spite of all this, Egypt remains an attractive destination for US businesses. US investment flows to Egypt have increased by over 15 per cent from 2012 to 2013, in contrast to the decline of the EU investment share by 20 per cent. At the regional level, it is important to look at the COMESA market and how US businesses can benefit through Egypt to enter a market with a total population of nearly 400 million with an increasing purchasing power duty free. Heinz, an American firm, currently exports ketchup from Egypt duty free to COMESA and to Europe. From the US, Heinz would have to pay import duties on ketchup, which could be up to 15 per cent. Hence, Heinz was able to expand its market access regionally, thereby increasing its revenues and global market share.

US businesses have specific interests and are already investing considerably in sectors such as engineering, where US investment is targeting the auto industry, electronics, household appliances, and where Egypt is hosting Ideal Standard factories and exporting to the EU duty free. Otherwise, the US would have to pay a 6.5 per cent duty.

Pharmaceuticals is another area of a win-win activity between Egypt and US businesses. The US is today by far the largest foreign investor in this sector, and investment in pharmaceuticals is already exceeding investment in textiles and clothing. Equally remunerative is agro-industry, which I believe could be an attractive industry to benefit from the QIZ (Qualified Industrial Zone) advantages on par with textiles and clothing. The food industry can also find attractive markets in COMESA and GAFTA regions. Another area of high interest to Egypt, and which is also profitable to US businesses, is logistics and trade facilitation. In line with World Trade Organisation agreements on trade facilitation, Egypt is determined to fulfill its commitments to enhance its trading environment and help its businesses integrate in the global value chain and access new export opportunities. US companies can enter into joint ventures and cooperate with Egyptian companies to increase storage capacity and port facilities. This will increase Egypt's efficiency in the import and distribution of raw commodities, which will be essential to pursuing value-added production and export.

A major area of a mega investment in Egypt is the Suez Canal, which will open new prospects outside the Nile Valley and the Delta. Known as the “Integrated Development at the Centre of the Suez Canal”, it contains major projects amounting to around LE200 billion of total investment, which should be profitable to US businesses as well.

In conclusion, if both countries care to extract the maximum benefit in their relations from one another, it is necessary to revisit the framework — if there is any such framework — that governs Egypt-US financial and economic relations. Unlike the EU, which places a high priority on establishing such a framework, which evolves in line with the changing situation and growing needs. Such a comprehensive framework is missing in Egypt-US relations and should be considered pertinent in developing our relations in the future with an enlarged “participatory approach” including civil society and the private sector in the dialogue to promote and institutionalise our relations.

It is important to say that although the present may not be so bright, as the situation remains very fluid in Egypt and in the region, hopes and expectations for the future are high, based on the continued interest and relevance of both countries to one another. Egypt has started and needs to continue to factor the heavy weight that other emerging countries are gaining on the international stage, without undercutting the relationship with the US.

Magda Shahin is professor and director of the Prince Alwaleed Center for American Studies and Research, School of Global Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP) at The American University in Cairo.

Professor Shahin has spent the majority of her career in diplomatic service, holding a number of distinguished posts with the Egyptian Foreign Ministry. She previously served as assistant minister of foreign affairs and as ambassador of Egypt to Greece.

[Article 3.](#)

The Washington Post

It's not too late to reengage with Iraq

Ryan Crocker

June 19 -- The news from Iraq is, quite frankly, terrifying. And it was utterly predictable.

I have been saying for months that we must do everything we can to support Syria's neighbors — Jordan, Lebanon and especially Iraq — to ensure that the al-Qaeda contagion in Syria does not spread. It has. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) now [occupies much of the area](#) between Kurdistan and Baghdad. Although the capital is unlikely to fall into its hands, ISIS has effectively established a radical Islamic state. We would be foolish to think that ISIS will not plan attacks against the West now that it has the space and security to do so. This is a more formidable force than Osama bin Laden's group that brought us 9/11. Its fighters are experienced, completely committed to their cause, well armed and well financed. As many as 2,000 of them hold Western passports, including U.S. ones, so there's no need for visas. This is global jihad, and it will be coming our way.

We would be similarly foolish to deny the role that the United States played in Iraq's unraveling. Like it or not, we are hard-wired into the Iraqi political system. [The surge in U.S. military forces](#) that began in 2007 succeeded in stabilizing the country in large part because it was accompanied by intensive, U.S.-led diplomatic activity that produced essential compromises among Iraq's Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish communities. Yet as we've disengaged, the divisions we once bridged have widened and given militants the room they need to maneuver.

The development of a strong democracy built on institutions is a slow and painful process, as our own history so clearly demonstrates. The inability of our founding fathers to come to terms with fundamental issues such as slavery and states' rights led to the bloody civil war that almost destroyed our country. The Iraqis came out of a far darker past. Decades of oppression by Saddam Hussein's Baath Party imprinted the idea that compromise means concession, and concession means defeat and very possibly death. It should surprise no one that in the absence of sustained U.S. engagement, Iraqi leaders have not been able to resolve core political problems.

Without question, the sectarian practices of the Maliki government have been very damaging, leaving Iraqi Sunnis with a sense of

disenfranchisement. Some course corrections are badly needed. But they will not come about just because we tell the prime minister that he needs to shape up [and form a national unity government](#) to deal with the militant threat. Yes, Nouri al-Maliki and his Sunni critics appeared together on television Tuesday [calling for national unity](#). But just hours earlier, Iraq's Shiite leaders announced a boycott of Sunni politicians and accused Saudi Arabia's Sunnis of promoting "genocide."

If a modicum of power-sharing can be achieved, it will require the kind of effort that we exerted when I was in Baghdad, from 2007 to 2009, and that we have not seen for too long. We learned then that what the Iraqis could not give to each other, they were sometimes willing to give to us, as long as they could trust that we would stand by agreements and that we would do so at the highest levels of our government. I had my role to play as ambassador, certainly. But the sustained engagement of the secretaries of state and defense and the president was critical to our bilateral [Strategic Framework Agreement](#) and [Security Agreement](#) in 2008, as well as to important compromises on the national budget, de-Baathification and electoral laws.

With that in mind, as a first step, Secretary of State John Kerry, who has been dispatched to the Middle East, should head to Iraq immediately and engage in intensive consultations with the leaders of all communities. The prospect of a permanently divided Iraq — with separate Shiite, Kurdish and Sunni enclaves — may impel them to meaningful compromise. But we are the indispensable catalyst.

It is not too late for diplomacy. Diplomacy worked at the height of the Iraqi civil war. It can work now. And it can work without boots on the ground. (Though the backing of the aircraft carrier George H.W. Bush in the northern Persian Gulf doesn't hurt.)

There are other steps we should take, such as expanding our intelligence assets and deploying Special Operations advisers, as President Obama initiated this week, as well as developing target sets that could be hit by Iraqi or U.S. air power. These are all important, but they will not be sufficient to drive ISIS from the field. The main force has to be political, and it has to be led by the United States at the highest levels.

My years in the Middle East taught me to be careful what you get into — military interventions can have far-reaching, unpredictable consequences.

You have to be even more careful with what you intend to get out of — disengagement can have consequences even graver than those of intervention. We failed to understand both lessons in Iraq.

The wisdom of the 2003 invasion will be debated endlessly. I certainly had doubts about it. But the point I made during my tenure there was that once you are in, you are in. You cannot undo an invasion. You can, by contrast, undo an unfortunate disengagement by reengaging forcefully before it's too late.

History will be unforgiving if we allow this exceptionally virulent manifestation of al-Qaeda to take root across northern Iraq and begin planning its next phase of operations. This is a determined enemy, and it will not stop where it is now.

Ryan Crocker was U.S. ambassador to Iraq from 2007 to 2009, serving under both President George W. Bush and President Obama. He is currently dean of the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas ██████ University.

[Article 4.](#)

The National

After success in Iraq and Syria, ISIL will find it tougher to crack Jordan

Taylor Luck

June 19, 2014 -- Lost in the flurry of rambling threats to Iraq's Shiite community during its surprise military blitz last week, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) issued an even bolder statement: a call to arms in Jordan. Emboldened by its impressive gains in Iraq and southern [Syria](#), the former Al Qaeda affiliate took to social media to announce that it would "soon bring the Islamic state" to "brothers in Jordan". According to senior ISIL-linked Jordanian jihadists, the former Al Qaeda affiliate has reportedly pumped \$3 million (Dh 11m) into [Jordan](#) in the past month for "recruitment purposes" and to fund the medical treatment of its fighters returning from Syria.

Sharing a 370-kilometre border with Syria to the north and 180 kilometres with Iraq to the east, ISIL has identified Jordan as a vital “linchpin” to uniting its young caliphate, whose position would allow the movement to open up new routes for fighters and arms between Iraq and Syria – a move that has been singled out by its leadership as key to widening its wars on Baghdad and Damascus.

Yet even more attractive to ISIL is the 220km stretch of Jordan Valley farmland separating Jordan from Israel and the Palestinian territories – with leaders eyeing a push into Palestine and possible “liberation of Jerusalem” as key to winning over ISIL’s doubters.

In recent months, Jordanian jihadists have served as ISIL’s most vocal critics, with Abu Mohammed Al Maqdisi, who once ranked third in [Al Qaeda](#)’s leadership chain, denouncing ISIL as “deviants”.

Key salafist theologian and theorist Omar Mahmoud Othman (better known as Abu Qatada) has taken an even harsher stance, using his continuing trial in Jordan as a stage to attack the movement’s massacres of minorities and referring to its leadership as “dogs”.

The Islamic State will likely find that repeating its successes in Jordan will not be easy, as most in the country still solidly backs the Hashemite monarchy. And, unlike the undertrained Iraqi government forces or the rapidly depleting Syrian security forces, ISIL would be up against the seasoned veterans of Jordanian intelligence and a well-trained military, who boast more than three decades of antiterror experience and have successfully infiltrated several Al Qaeda cells within Jordan and Iraq. Jordanian authorities have proven deft at applying their antiterror tools along the Syria border, arresting more than 200 suspected ISIL fighters since December last year and sentencing more than a quarter of that number. The vast majority of Jordanians also have little appetite for the instability brought by hardline Islamist groups, a sentiment tapped into by Hussein Majali, the interior minister, who called on citizens to join the national effort to curb extremism. Jordan has proven to be two steps ahead of the Islamic State, unleashing in April a new “pre-emptive strike” campaign along its border to prevent the movement from reaching Jordanian soil, engaging in a series of cross-border battles with suspected ISIL fighters that have reportedly left 20 dead and led to more than 100 arrests. With a missile strike of four suspected ISIL vehicles along the

Syria border last week, Jordanian officials returned the Islamic State's warning shots and a message that ISIL's path will face a roadblock in Jordan.

Taylor Luck is an Amman-based political analyst and journalist.

[Article 5.](#)

Al Jazeera

Palestine's future: What are the options?

Richard Falk

21 Jun 2014 -- For years, influential thought about Palestine has almost exclusively considered variations on the theme of a two-state solution. US Secretary of State John Kerry stampeded the Palestinian Authority and Israel into negotiations that "failed" before they even started a year ago. At least Kerry was prudent enough to warn both sides that this was their do or die moment for resolving the conflict on the basis of two states for two peoples.

The Israeli government having become virtually inseparable from the settler movement has long appreciated that the function of endorsing a Palestinian state was little more than a way of appeasing world public opinion, given its belief that a political solution was possible and necessary, and could only happen if the Palestinian got their state. The Palestinian Authority seems to sing the same lyrics, although with a certain solemnity. The Palestinians in recent years have lost even the ability to say "no", despite having nothing to gain, and quite a bit to lose.

With what seems like the end of this peace process, silence in high places about how the conflict might end has for the present replaced earlier false hopes invested in diplomatic negotiations. In retrospect, it is easy to conclude that political preconditions for conflict-resolving negotiations never existed on the Israeli side. This is mainly because the expansionist vision of the right-wing settlers had become official state policy in Tel Aviv, and there was no longer pressure mounted by Palestinian armed struggle.

On the Palestinian side, there was an eagerness to end the occupation and become a fully sovereign state, but confusion as to what this meant as a practical matter, and whether a deal like this could be sold to the Palestinian people if it left the several million Palestinians living in foreign refugee camps out in the cold.

Israel's security logic

The security logic of the Israeli right is that Israel will only be able to maintain its security over time if it continues to control all or most of the West Bank.

This reflects the view that real threat to Israel no longer comes from Palestinian armed resistance. It comes from the surrounding Arab world that is moving toward more advanced weaponry, and at some point is almost sure to again turn its guns and missiles in an Israeli direction. Peace through diplomacy and negotiations has long seemed bankrupt, but after the recent collapse of the talks, it seems totally discredited. This raises the question "What now?"

In situations of this sort, where differences seem irreconcilable, the common call is "to think outside the box". The old box was the consensus associated with the two-state mantra. Now there is no box at all, and future alternatives need to be imagined and appraised. Five seem worth pondering, and each has some plausibility.

Israeli one-state: This involves extending Israel's border to incorporate most of the West Bank, keeping the settlements except a few isolated outposts. This vision takes on heightened political relevance considering that Reuven Rivlin, the new Israeli president, is an open advocate of a supposedly humane version of an Israeli one-state outcome. This benevolent version, spelled out in some detail by an influential settler advocate, Dani Dayan, calls for a radical easing of Palestinian life in relation to day-to-day humiliations (numerous checkpoints, restrictions on mobility, etc) and even anticipates the dismantling of the separation wall. It promises to raise the Palestinian standard of living significantly, and admits that this type of "economic peace" will never satisfy Palestinian political/legal grievances relating to territory, independence and the right of return. It is essentially offering a Faustian bargain in which Palestinians give up their struggle for self-determination in exchange for the tangible

psychological and economic advantages of living in material comfort and some dignity within an Israeli structure of governance.

Binational one-state: The more idealistic version of the one-state solution presupposes a secular state that encompasses the whole of historic Palestine, establishes a unified government with democracy and human rights for all and creates semi-autonomous regions where Jews and Palestinians can exercise self-administration and separate national and ethnic identity. There are several obstacles: given the realities on the ground and the attachment of an overwhelming majority of Israelis to the Zionist Project of a Jewish State with an unlimited right of return for Jews, the proposal seems utopian, lacking political traction. Furthermore, the disparities in wealth and education would likely lead to Israeli dominance in any process that purported to unify the country on a non-Zionist basis.

Witness - When the Boys Return

Israeli withdrawal from occupation: In this proposal, there would be no explicit shift in the structures of governance. In a manner similar to the 2005 Sharon Disengagement Plan for Gaza, this new initiative would apply to those portions of Palestine that Israel seeks to incorporate within its final international borders. This arrangement would leave the Palestinian Authority in charge of the remnant of the West Bank, as well as Gaza. It would maintain the occupation regime and the separation wall, imposing rigid border controls and continue repression, effectively depriving Palestinians of the enjoyment of their most basic human rights. The main obstacle is that Palestinians would have no incentive to accept such an outcome, it would be denounced in most international settings, including the United Nations, and it would isolate Israel as a pariah state.

Palestinian self-determination: There is some new thinking in the Palestinian camp, most articulately formulated by Ali Abunimah in his important book, *The Battle for Justice in Palestine*. The emphasis is on civil society activism and nonviolent Palestinian resistance as building global support for a solution that is responsive to the Palestinian right of self-determination. What form self-determination eventually assumes is a matter, above all, for Palestinians to decide for themselves. The realisation of self-determination presupposes leadership that is accepted by authentic representatives of the whole of the Palestinian people. The contours of the territorial division or unity that emerges would be the outcome of

negotiations, but its embodiment would address the legitimate grievance of the Palestinian people and an acknowledgement by Israel of past injustices. The obstacle here is one of hard power disparities, and the Jewish worldwide engagement with the Zionist Project. The way around such an obstacle is to gain worldwide support that mounts such pressure on Israel, the US, and Europe as to induce a recalculation of interests based on a new realism associated with growing Palestinian soft power capabilities.

Peaceful co-existence: In recent years, Hamas, strangely seems to be the last holdout for a version of the two-state solution, although in its maximalist form. Israel would have to withdraw to the 1967 borders, end its blockade of Gaza, and give Palestine control over East Jerusalem. The main obstacle here is that Israel would have to give up its expansionist goals and dismantle the settlements, although it could retain the Zionist Project in its more limited form. The secondary obstacle is that the Hamas Charter calls for the total removal of the entire Jewish presence from historic Palestine, making the proposal seem tactical, and meant to be an interim arrangement and not a sustainable peace. It is impossible to imagine Israel accepting such a blurry outcome that rolled back the weighty facts on the ground. Besides, whatever its content the very fact that Hamas was the source of the proposal would by this alone produce an Israel rejection.

In conclusion, it seems obvious that none of these five approaches seems either attractive enough to challenge the status quo or politically persuasive enough to shift the balance of forces bearing on the conflict. Yet, signs exist that the Israelis are moving toward a unilaterally imposed option and the Palestinians are more and more inclined to combine non-violent resistance with support for militant global solidarity.

On the one side, the Israeli settler movement is on the front line, and on the other, the Palestinian BDS campaign. In both instances, at this time governments have been temporarily marginalised as political actors in relation to the struggle. This is itself a momentous development.

Richard Falk is Albert G Milbank Professor Emeritus of International Law at Princeton University and Research Fellow, Orfalea Center of Global Studies. He is also the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Palestinian human rights.

New York Post

[Inside the jealous feud between the Obamas and ‘Hildebeest’ Clintons](#)

[Edward Klein](#)

June 21, 2014 -- In his new book, “Blood Feud,” journalist Edward Klein gets inside the dysfunctional, jealous relationship between Bill and Hillary Clinton and Barack and Michelle Obama — and how it could explode in 2016.

Outwardly, they put on a show of unity — but privately, the Obamas and Clintons, the two power couples of the Democrat Party, loathe each other. “I hate that man Obama more than any man I’ve ever met, more than any man who ever lived,” Bill Clinton said to friends on one occasion, adding he would never forgive Obama for suggesting he was a racist during the 2008 campaign.

The feeling is mutual. Obama made excuses not to talk to Bill, while the first lady privately sniped about Hillary.

On most evenings, Michelle Obama and her trusted adviser, Valerie Jarrett, met in a quiet corner of the White House residence. █████ usually open a bottle of Chardonnay, catch up on news about Sasha and Malia, and gossip about people who gave them heartburn.

Their favorite bête noire was Hillary Clinton, whom they nicknamed “Hildebeest,” after the menacing and shaggy-maned gnu that roams the Serengeti.

‘Michelle could be president’

The animosity came to a head in the run-up to the 2012 election, when Obama’s inner circle insisted he needed the former president’s support to win. Obama finally telephoned Bill Clinton in September 2011 and invited him out for a round of golf.

“█████ not going to enjoy this,” Bill told Hillary when they gathered with a group of friends and political associates at Whitehaven, their neo-Georgian home on Embassy Row in Washington, DC.

“I’ve had two successors since I left the White House — Bush and Obama — and I’ve heard more from Bush, asking for my advice, than I’ve heard from Obama. I have no relationship with the president — none whatsoever,” Clinton said.

“I really can’t stand the way Obama always seems to be hectoring when he talks to me,” Clinton added, according to someone who was present at the gathering and spoke on the condition of anonymity. “Sometimes we just stare at each other. It’s pretty damn awkward. Now we both have favors to ask each other, and it’s going to be very unpleasant. But I’ve got to get this guy to owe me and to be on our side.”

During the golf game, Clinton didn’t waste any time reminding Obama that as president he had presided over eight years of prosperity, while Obama had been unable to dig the country out of the longest financial doldrums since the Great Depression.

“Bill got into it right away,” said a Clinton family friend. “He told Obama, ‘Hillary and I are gearing up for a run in 2016.’ He said Hillary would be ‘the most qualified, most experienced candidate, perhaps in history.’ His reference to Hillary’s experience made Obama wince, since it was clearly a shot at his lack of experience when he ran for president.

“And so Bill continued to talk about Hillary’s qualifications . . . and the coming campaign in 2016. But Barack didn’t bite. He changed the subject several times. Then suddenly, Barack said something that took Bill by complete surprise. He said, ‘You know, Michelle would make a great presidential candidate, too.’

“Bill was speechless. Was Barack comparing Michelle’s qualifications to Hillary’s? Bill said that if he hadn’t been on a mission to strike a deal with Barack, he might have stormed off the golf course then and there.”

Blackberry snub

Bill Clinton would go on to campaign for Obama in 2012, but he felt betrayed when the president seemed to waver when it came to a 2016 endorsement of Hillary. Obama attempted to smooth things over with a joint “60 Minutes” interview with Hillary, and later a private dinner for the two couples at the White House.

‘I hate that man Obama more than any man I’ve ever met, more than any man who ever lived.’

- Bill Clinton in 'Blood Feud'

And so, on March 1, 2013 — the very day that the \$85 billion in budget cuts known as the “sequester” went into effect — the Clintons slipped unnoticed into the White House and sat down for dinner with the Obamas in the Residence.

Typically, once Obama decided to do something (for example, the surge in Afghanistan), he immediately had second thoughts, and his behavior during dinner degenerated from moody to grumpy to bad-tempered. After the obligatory greetings and small talk about family, Obama asked Bill what he thought about the sequester: Would it turn out to be a political plus for him? Bill went into a long — and boring — lecture about the issue.

To change the subject, Hillary asked Michelle if it was true, as she had heard, that the first lady was thinking about running for the Senate from Illinois.

Michelle said that she was warming to the idea, though she had yet to make up her mind.

Bill shot Hillary a look of incredulity.

Bill then moved the conversation to Obama’s vaunted 2012 campaign - organization. He told Obama that it would be a good idea to fold the organization, along with all its digital and social-media bells and whistles, into the Democratic National Committee.

Obama’s only response was a disparaging smile.

President Barack Obama acts cordial with former President Clinton but it’s all for show, according to the new book “Blood Feud,” by journalist Edward Klein. Photo: White House

“You have to use your organization to aid the candidate in 2016,” Bill pressed Obama.

“Really?” Obama replied in a tone of undisguised sarcasm.

The two men went back and forth over the subject of where the money for Obama’s campaign organization had come from and how to allocate funds for the 2016 presidential election. Bill raised his voice. So did Obama.

As Bill Clinton went on about his managerial experience, Obama began playing with his Blackberry under the table, making it plain that he wasn’t paying attention to anything Clinton had to say. He was intentionally snubbing Clinton. Others around the table noticed Obama thumbing his Blackberry, and the atmosphere turned even colder than before.

Hillary changed the subject again.

“Are you glad you won’t have to campaign again?” she asked Obama.

“You don’t seem to enjoy it.”

“For a guy who doesn’t like it,” Obama replied tartly, “I’ve done pretty well.”

“Well,” Bill said, adding his two cents, “I was glad to pitch in and help get you re-elected.”

There was another long pause. Finally, Obama turned to Bill and said, sotto voce, “Thanks.”

After the dinner, and once the Clintons had been ushered out of the family quarters, Obama shook his head and said, “That’s why I never invite that guy over.”

Obama’s mini-me

Lately, Bill Clinton has become convinced that Obama won’t endorse Hillary in 2016. During a gathering at Whitehaven, guests overheard Bill talking to his daughter Chelsea about whether the president would back Joe Biden.

“Recently, I’ve been hearing a different scenario from state committeemen,” Clinton said. “They say he’s looking for a candidate who’s just like him. Someone relatively unknown. Someone with a fresh face.

“He’s convinced himself he’s been a brilliant president, and wants to clone himself — to find his Mini-Me.

“He’s hunting for someone to succeed him, and he believes the American people don’t want to vote for someone who’s been around for a long time. He thinks that your mother and I are what he calls ‘so 20th century.’ He’s looking for another Barack Obama.”