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Article 1.	NYT <u>Palestinian Statehood</u> Editorial
Article 2.	The American Interest <u>Israeli Embassy: The Egyptian Bastille?</u> Walter Russell Mead
Article 3.	The Daily Beast <u>The Erdogan Doctrine</u> Owen Matthews
Article 4.	Wall Street Journal <u>Congress's Power Play Over Jerusalem</u> David B. Rivkin Jr. and Lee A. Casey
Article 5.	The Washington Post <u>Ryan Crocker's 'strategic patience' in Afghanistan</u> Jackson Diehl
Article 6.	NYT <u>An Impeccable Disaster</u> Paul Krugman

Article 1.

NYT

Palestinian Statehood

Editorial

September 11, 2011 -- A United Nations vote on Palestinian membership would be ruinous. Yet with little time left before the U.N. General Assembly meets, the United States, Israel and Europe have shown insufficient urgency or boldness in trying to find a compromise solution. The need for action is even more acute after alarming tensions flared in recent days between Israel and two critical regional players — Egypt and Turkey.

Last week, the United States made a listless effort to get Palestinians to forgo the vote in favor of new peace talks. The pitch was unpersuasive. The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, said the Americans made no concrete proposal. “To be frank with you, they came too late,” he said. His frustration is understandable. Since President Obama took office, the only direct negotiations between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and Mr. Abbas lasted a mere two weeks in September 2010.

Both sides share the blame with Mr. Obama and Arab leaders (we put the greater onus on Mr. Netanyahu, who has used any excuse to thwart peace efforts). But the best path to statehood remains negotiations.

The United States and its Quartet partners (the European Union, the United Nations and Russia) should put a map and a deal on the table, with a timeline for concluding negotiations and a formal U.N. statehood vote. The core element: a Palestinian state based on pre-1967 borders with mutually agreed land swaps and guarantees for Israel’s security. The Security Council and the Arab League need to throw their full weight behind any plan.

To get full U.N. membership the Palestinians have to win Security Council approval. The administration has said it will veto any resolution — ensuring the further isolation of Israel and Washington. If they fail in the Security Council, the Palestinians have said they will ask the General Assembly for enhanced observer status as a nonmember state. Even the more modest General Assembly vote, which the Palestinians are sure to win, would pave the way for them to join dozens of U.N. bodies and conventions, and could strengthen their ability to pursue cases against Israel at the International Criminal Court. But Israel would still control Palestinian territory, leaving the Palestinians disaffected after the initial euphoria. Congress has threatened to cut millions of dollars in aid to the Palestinian Authority if it presses for a U.N. vote. Instead of just threatening the Palestinians, Congress should lean on Mr. Netanyahu to return to talks.

Israel has said it would cut millions of dollars in tax remittances to the authority. Such counterproductive moves could bring down the most moderate leadership the Palestinians have had, empower Hamas and shred vital security cooperation between Israel and the authority. It is astonishing that this late in the game, America and Europe remain divided over some aspects of a proposal for peace talks — like Israel's demand for recognition as a Jewish state.

Mr. Obama in particular needs to show firmer leadership in pressing Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Abbas to resume talks. If a U.N. vote takes place, Washington and its partners will have to limit the damage, including continuing to finance the Palestinian Authority.

Article 2.

The American Interest

Israeli Embassy: The Egyptian Bastille?

Walter Russell Mead

September 11, 2011 -- The attack on the Israeli embassy in Cairo yesterday was the most troubling sign yet that the Egyptian revolution could morph into something much less constructive and stable than many had hoped.

The baseline analysis about the Egyptian revolution that many foreign analysts have accepted runs something like this. The effort by President Mubarak to convert Egypt into a dynastic state angered and alarmed virtually everyone in the country. The military, which did not welcome the prospect of a hereditary presidency, made the crucial decision not to crush protests. Mubarak resigned, and the military was left in control of a weakened state. In the future, the military system will continue with a few reforms; there will be a greater degree of public participation in government, but the military will remain the arbiter of politics, playing Islamists and liberals off against each other.

This would make the Egyptian revolution a distinctly limited affair and would bitterly disappoint both liberals and Islamists, but might well provide a stable framework for the next stage of Egyptian development. The military's interests and needs would suggest a basic stability in Egypt's foreign policy. The military needs foreign aid; the economy needs tourism and foreign investment. A limited revolution would seek stability at home and abroad.

To fight the natural tendency of the revolution to stagnate, radicals must find a way to stage events that shift public opinion and the balance of forces in their direction. During the French revolution events like the storming of the Bastille, the September massacres and

the trial of Louis XVI moved the country onto a more radical path. The radicals took actions that divided moderates and aroused public sympathy even as they moved the revolutionary process to new heights.

The storming of the Israeli embassy may work like that in Egypt. Most Egyptians have never accepted the idea of diplomatic relations with Israel (even many of those who don't want more wars also don't want what they see as the shame and surrender of an Israeli embassy on Egyptian territory). Attacking the embassy sends a thrill through the masses — who are, by the way, increasingly unhappy with the failure of the revolution to deliver tangible economic benefits.

Attacking an embassy is a revolutionary act; it is a declaration that revolutionaries reject the international status quo and the current authorities who tamely agree to live within its limits. Like the Iranian seizure of the US embassy in 1979 it is an act that forces people to take sides. Parties and figures who condemn the attack on the Israeli embassy risk losing public support; those who accept it find themselves committed to an increasingly radical course.

If, on the other hand, public opinion recoils from an act that threatens to cut Egypt off from needed foreign support and to devastate the tourist industry (forget Israeli tourists: few western sun worshippers like to visit countries where embassies are torched), the effort to radicalize the Egyptian revolution will lose steam.

Either way, the embassy attack is more than a dramatic event. This is history on the march; keep your eyes on Egypt for the next few weeks.

Article 3.

The Daily Beast

The Erdogan Doctrine

Owen Matthews

September 12, 2011 -- When it comes to bashing Israel, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is an old hand. He was at it even before he took power in March 2003, castigating the Israeli Defense Force for breaking Palestinians' heads in the West Bank towns of Jenin and Nablus. He became a hero in the Arab world two years ago when he stormed out of a Davos panel discussion after snarling at Israeli President Shimon Peres: "You know very well how to kill."

But last week his vitriol reached a new level. In response to Israel's continued refusal to apologize for its deadly 2010 commando raid on a Turkish-owned aid vessel en route to Gaza, he broke off diplomatic and military relations in all but name, accused Israel of "running wild" and behaving "like a spoiled child," promised to take the case to the International Court of Justice, and swore that in the future all Turkish aid shipments to Gaza would have naval escorts. "We will not allow anyone to walk all over our honor," he fumed.

His talk of trampled honor and gunboats raises the question of who exactly is the spoiled child. Still, there's method to Erdogan's heated talk. It's about something more than justice for the nine activists who were killed aboard the Mavi Marmara as they challenged Israel's blockade of Gaza. The Iraq War and the Arab Spring have created a regional power vacuum, and Erdogan is determined to fill it.

In the past decade he has transformed Turkey, presiding over phenomenal economic growth and excluding the previously all-powerful Army from national politics. Now he's out to bring similarly sweeping change to the entire region. After winning a third

term in office this June by a larger-than-ever majority, Erdogan portrayed himself as a neo-Ottoman savior. “Believe me, Sarajevo won today as much as Istanbul, Beirut won as much as Izmir, Damascus won as much as Ankara!” he told cheering crowds at a victory speech in the capital. “The West Bank and Jerusalem won as much as [Turkish Kurdistan’s leading city] Diyarbakir!” In line with that expansive vision, Erdogan is championing the one issue that everyone in the Middle East—everyone other than Israel, that is—can agree on: the rights of blockaded Gaza. He has praised Hamas as “resistance fighters who are struggling to defend their land” and called the blockade “a crime against humanity.” Many Israelis view him as a mortal enemy of their country. The latest document spill from WikiLeaks includes an October 2009 U.S. Embassy cable quoting Israel’s ambassador to Turkey, Gabby Levy, on his assessment of Erdogan: “Levy dismissed political calculation as a motivator for Erdogan’s hostility, arguing the prime minister’s party had not gained a single point in the polls from his bashing of Israel. Instead, Levy attributed Erdogan’s harshness to deep-seated emotion: ‘He’s a fundamentalist. He hates us religiously’ and his hatred is spreading.”

Yet the notion of Erdogan as a Jew-hating jihadi doesn’t really fit. Just before the current standoff, Erdogan sat down to dinner with the leaders of Turkey’s religious minorities, including the Chief Rabbi of Istanbul, and promised to return thousands of properties the Turkish state had confiscated from Christians and Jews in the past century. He also made a point of praising the “vast diversity of the people that have peacefully coexisted” in Istanbul. “In this city the [Muslim] call to prayer and church bells sound together,” said Erdogan. “Mosques, churches, and synagogues have stood side by side on the same street for centuries.”

Skeptics might dismiss that attempt at ecumenicalism as just sweet-sounding bunkum. But what's very real—and a surer indicator of where his priorities really lie—is Erdogan's decision this month to let NATO deploy antimissile radars near the Turkish-Iranian border. Tehran is predictably furious. "We expect friendly countries and neighbors ... not to promote policies that create tension, which will definitely have complicated consequences," said Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast. In the past, Erdogan has often called President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad "my good friend," and he recently opposed new U.N. sanctions on Tehran's nuclear program. But when push came to shove, Erdogan sided with Turkey's friends in NATO, not in Iran.

His aim is no less than to rescue the entire Middle East from poverty and dictatorship. To those who know him well, that crusade—for want of a better term—is a direct extension of his personal religious conviction. "He's a very moral man, very serious about righting injustices," says one associate of the past 20 years. "If you ask if that is rooted in his personal view of Islam, the answer is yes."

Even so, Turkey's neighbors and allies worry that Erdogan's latest face-off with Israel could be the start of a new foreign policy, one that focuses on hard power instead of soft. Up to now, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has pursued a policy of "zero problems with neighbors," full of touchy-feely confidence-building measures like joint historical commissions with Armenia, visa-free travel with Syria, airport-building contracts with Georgia, cultural exchanges with Greece, and the like. But Ankara's stance seems to have suddenly turned tough. Turkish jets have bombed separatist Kurdish guerrillas in the mountains of northern Iraq, killing an estimated 160 people, according to the Turkish military. Davutoglu has begun publicly calling for Syria's embattled dictator, Bashar al-Assad, to step down. And during a planned visit to Egypt this week,

Erdogan says he intends to cross the border into Gaza—a move guaranteed to infuriate Israel.

Saner voices in Israel are trying to downplay the war of words. “The main thing is not to get confused, not to get into a tailspin,” Defense Minister Ehud Barak told Israel Radio last week. “Turkey is not about to become an enemy of Israel, and we have no cause to waste invective and energy over this.” The trouble is that Erdogan gets so much out of confronting Israel: not only does it raise his stature in the region, but it also dovetails with his self-image as a fighter for justice. That gives him little incentive to let the matter rest—especially since he’s been at it for so many years.

Article 4.

Wall Street Journal

Congress's Power Play Over Jerusalem

David B. Rivkin Jr. and lee A. Casey

SEPTEMBER 12, 2011 -- The city of Jerusalem has been fought over for nearly 3,000 years and remains one of the most contentious places on Earth. This fall, the battle will reach the U.S. Supreme Court. The case—Zivotofsky v. Clinton, brought by the parents of Menachem Binyamin Zivotofsky, a U.S. citizen born in Jerusalem on October 17, 2002—involves a 2002 effort by Congress to force U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. It sought to do so by, among other things, requiring the State Department to identify Israel as the place of birth on passports issued to U.S. citizens born in Jerusalem.

The high court must decide two things: whether the case presents a "political question," which would prevent the court from ruling on it; and, if the court can rule, whether the Constitution allows Congress to require the State Department to identify Jerusalem as part of Israel. The answer to the second question is clearly no. The president is the nation's "sole organ" (Chief Justice John Marshall's phrase) in foreign affairs. The Constitution gives him sole authority to "receive Ambassadors and other public ministers" and since George Washington's presidency this authority has been understood to include the right to grant or withhold U.S. recognition of a foreign state's existence, government and territorial extent. Neither Congress nor the courts can direct the president to exercise this authority in any particular manner.

The U.S. first recognized Israel on May 14, 1948, and American policy since has been that the status of Jerusalem can be determined only as part of a broader Middle East peace agreement. Congress

directly challenged this policy with the United States Policy with Respect to Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel Act of 2002. This law, enacted as part of a State Department appropriations bill, forbids the president to use federal funds to publish any listing of international capitals that doesn't identify Jerusalem as part of Israel, and it also requires that, upon request of the citizen's legal guardian, the place of birth of U.S. citizens born in Jerusalem be recorded as Israel.

Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama have both ignored this requirement because, as all judges who have so far considered this case agree, it exceeds Congress's constitutional authority. The critical question now before the Supreme Court, though, is whether judges can even decide the dispute.

Both the trial and appellate courts refused to rule on the law's constitutionality because they concluded that it presented a political question not appropriate for judicial resolution. However, one appellate judge, Senior Judge Harry T. Edwards of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, disagreed. He argued forcefully that the courts were perfectly capable of resolving this issue (he too would invalidate the law), just like any other challenge to a statute's constitutionality.

It is, in fact, a close call. The "political question doctrine," which has long been recognized by the Supreme Court, generally provides that federal courts cannot entertain certain questions involving matters that the Constitution commits to the president or Congress or both (the "political" branches). It is a critical check on judicial authority and, as such, an important aspect of our separation of powers as a whole. From that perspective, its reaffirmation in this case would be a positive development, making clear that there are limits to judicial authority that the Supreme Court is ready, willing and able to respect. However, as Judge Edwards argues—and as Chief Justice Marshall also wrote in our republic's infancy—it is "emphatically the province

and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is." For Judge Edwards, the courts would be doing their duty by striking down the Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel Act.

On balance, the Supreme Court should probably treat this case as a political question. The law at issue here differs in one important respect from the many federal statutes that courts consider and interpret on a daily basis: Here Congress has issued a direct command to the secretary of state, and in turn to the president, requiring action that would fundamentally change U.S. policy on Jerusalem. This is a direct congressional challenge to the president's authority, and it presents a clear and open clash between the political branches on a subject (U.S. foreign policy) constitutionally committed to the executive. That is no place for the courts.

Messrs. Rivkin and Casey served in the Justice Department during the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations.

Article 5.

The Washington Post

Ryan Crocker's 'strategic patience' in Afghanistan

Jackson Diehl

September 12 -- Ryan Crocker sounds very far from Washington — and not only because he is talking over an uncertain phone line from Kabul.

The U.S. ambassador is one of the great protagonists of the post-9/11 era, serving more than half of the last 10 years in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. Along with Gen. David Petraeus, he rescued the United States from catastrophe in Iraq four years ago; now he is trying to repeat the feat in Kabul. He finds himself repeating many of the same phrases: “It’s hard. It’s going to go on being hard. But it’s not hopeless,” he said in our conversation last week.

And: “The key is strategic patience, which is hard for us Americans. We need it here, we needed it in Iraq and we certainly need it with Pakistan.”

But is anyone still listening? As Sept. 11 approached in Washington, Republicans and Democrats were talking about the wars against al-Qaeda and the Taliban as an enterprise in need of rapid closure — if not a monumental folly. “Ten years later, we look at the situation, and we say, we have 100,000 troops in Afghanistan. This is not about nation-building in Afghanistan. This is about nation-building at home,” Jon Huntsman said in last week’s GOP presidential debate, echoing President Obama’s words in June, when he announced a faster troop withdrawal than Petraeus recommended.

“Our core is broken. We are weak,” Huntsman went on, sounding a lot like George McGovern in 1972. “I say we’ve got to bring those

troops home.” Remarkably, none of the other seven Republicans on the stage at the Ronald Reagan presidential library challenged that conclusion.

Crocker gets it. “I know Americans are tired of war. I’m kind of tired, too,” he said. In his years of service he has endured rocket fire; verbal barbecuing by congressional committees on national television; and endless, painstaking parleys with prickly, unpredictable characters such as Nouri al-Maliki and Hamid Karzai. He’s 62; he tried to retire once, after Iraq, but was coaxed back into service by Obama and Petraeus after U.S. relations with Karzai deteriorated to the breaking point.

But Crocker has two simple points to make. First: Wanting the war against al-Qaeda to be over doesn’t mean that it can be ended soon. “There are still a lot of nasty and brutally determined al-Qaeda figures out there,” he said. “I do not think that al-Qaeda is out of business because they lost Osama bin Laden. Not by a long shot.” The second hard truth is that al-Qaeda’s future is inextricably linked with that of Afghanistan and the Taliban. “Al-Qaeda is not [in Afghanistan] because we are,” Crocker said. “If we decide to go home before it is ready, you could see a Talibanization of this country and a return to the conditions that existed pre-9/11. You will see regenerated al-Qaeda getting back into the global jihad business.” So: “We have got to get it right,” he said. Can we? Despite the prevailing mood in Washington, Crocker thinks so. The situation he found in Kabul this summer, he said, is considerably better than what he saw in 2002, when he helped set up the first post-Taliban government.

“It’s better than I thought,” he said. “The biggest problem in Kabul is traffic. Out in the provinces, even in Kandahar, you see traffic jams there. Kabul is a more liveable city by far than the Baghdad I left in 2009.” And not only for Americans: Afghan school enrollment has

risen from 1 million to 8 million — and from 0 to 2.5 million girls. Life expectancy has increased by 20 years in the past decade.

The Taliban, says Crocker, is weary of war, too. “The Afghans and our own soldiers are picking up a lot of signals that the Taliban foot soldiers are tired of it all, and ready to put their guns down if they can be assured that they can be fully reintegrated” into society. The ambassador is dubious that the largest Taliban factions, whose leaders are in Pakistan, will be ready to seriously negotiate with Karzai’s government, or with the United States, anytime soon. But the enemy fighting force can be substantially reduced. The Afghan army, despite its own defections, is still growing. That leaves the biggest challenge — building workable Afghan political institutions by the time Karzai’s term in office, and the U.S.-NATO military mission, come to an end in 2014.

That is what Crocker is there to work on, along with a strategic partnership deal between Afghanistan and the United States that would extend beyond 2014. Yes, it is an uphill battle. But when this sober stalwart of American diplomacy says it can be done — and that it must be — he sounds a good deal more credible than Jon Huntsman, or Barack Obama.

Article 6.

NYT

An Impeccable Disaster

Paul Krugman

September 11, 2011 -- On Thursday Jean-Claude Trichet, the president of the European Central Bank or E.C.B. — Europe's equivalent to Ben Bernanke — lost his sang-froid. In response to a question about whether the E.C.B. is becoming a “bad bank” thanks to its purchases of troubled nations' debt, Mr. Trichet, his voice rising, insisted that his institution has performed “impeccably, impeccably!” as a guardian of price stability.

Indeed it has. And that's why the euro is now at risk of collapse. Financial turmoil in Europe is no longer a problem of small, peripheral economies like Greece. What's under way right now is a full-scale market run on the much larger economies of Spain and Italy. At this point countries in crisis account for about a third of the euro area's G.D.P., so the common European currency itself is under existential threat.

And all indications are that European leaders are unwilling even to acknowledge the nature of that threat, let alone deal with it effectively.

I've complained a lot about the “fiscalization” of economic discourse here in America, the way in which a premature focus on budget deficits turned Washington's attention away from the ongoing jobs disaster. But we're not unique in that respect, and in fact the Europeans have been much, much worse.

Listen to many European leaders — especially, but by no means only, the Germans — and you'd think that their continent's troubles are a simple morality tale of debt and punishment: Governments

borrowed too much, now they're paying the price, and fiscal austerity is the only answer.

Yet this story applies, if at all, to Greece and nobody else. Spain in particular had a budget surplus and low debt before the 2008 financial crisis; its fiscal record, one might say, was impeccable. And while it was hit hard by the collapse of its housing boom, it's still a relatively low-debt country, and it's hard to make the case that the underlying fiscal condition of Spain's government is worse than that of, say, Britain's government.

So why is Spain — along with Italy, which has higher debt but smaller deficits — in so much trouble? The answer is that these countries are facing something very much like a bank run, except that the run is on their governments rather than, or more accurately as well as, their financial institutions.

Here's how such a run works: Investors, for whatever reason, fear that a country will default on its debt. This makes them unwilling to buy the country's bonds, or at least not unless offered a very high interest rate. And the fact that the country must roll its debt over at high interest rates worsens its fiscal prospects, making default more likely, so that the crisis of confidence becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. And as it does, it becomes a banking crisis as well, since a country's banks are normally heavily invested in government debt. Now, a country with its own currency, like Britain, can short-circuit this process: if necessary, the Bank of England can step in to buy government debt with newly created money. This might lead to inflation (although even that is doubtful when the economy is depressed), but inflation poses a much smaller threat to investors than outright default. Spain and Italy, however, have adopted the euro and no longer have their own currencies. As a result, the threat of a self-fulfilling crisis is very real — and interest rates on Spanish and Italian debt are more than twice the rate on British debt.