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Middle East News & Views

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A weekly sample of news and opinions on current events from around the Middle East collected and brought to you by the Dayan Center.
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[Palestine Between Religion and Secularism / Aziz Abu Sarah](#)

In the last three decades, Palestinian identity has undergone tremendous changes. According to a UNDP poll published last April, 47 percent of residents of Gaza and the West Bank identify themselves first and foremost as Muslims. This is surprising, considering that the Palestinian community was once regarded as one of the most secular in the Arab world, and that three decades ago political Islam had a very limited role in the Palestinian national movement.

Source: **Common Ground News Service (Washington), February 4, 2010**

[Salam Fayyad: A Brave Man / Tariq Alhomayed](#)



Hamas, Fatah and the Palestinian factions — and even Israelis themselves— did not spare the Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad criticism following his participation in the annual Herzliya Conference held in Israel. But Fayyad's participation in the conference was no photo-op; he went to the Israelis in their own setting to make them listen to what they had to hear.

Source: **Al-Sharq Al-Awsat (London), February 6, 2010**

[Back in the Saddle / “New Opinion”](#)

Syria is back in the Lebanese saddle. The feeling must be good after all these years, because already its politicians are talking about Lebanon as if it were a local province. Damascus has also been indulging in a bit of saber rattling with its old enemy in Tel Aviv. This would be of less concern to the Lebanese if the threat to open a new front in South Lebanon had not been part of the message.

Source: **Now Lebanon (Beirut), February 8, 2010**

[Peacemaking Requires Applying the Law / Rami G. Khouri](#)

Are the Israelis ready to apply the same principles to the Palestinian refugees that they demand for their own people? Similarly, are Israelis prepared to allow an impartial international investigation of their conduct in the Gaza war, alongside a similar investigation in Gaza? We cannot escape the principle that adjudicating conflicts through the equal application of the law to both sides is the inescapable bottom line of any successful negotiation.

Source: **The Daily Star (Beirut), February 6, 2010**

[Israel's Superpower Credentials / Editorial](#)

When Binyamin Netanyahu talks about Israel being a regional and international power, he means it. And when he talks about bringing in one million more Jews, he's not bluffing. But what kind of a regional power can Israel be when isolated and cut off from the rest of the region? Perhaps Israel can transcend its surroundings to become a world power. But in this region, Israel keeps waging wars that cause much instability, which is bad news for any economy.

Source: **Al-Ahram Weekly (Cairo), Issue No 984, 4 - 10 February 2010**

[Too Much Ado About a Handshake / Editorial](#)

The handshake between Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal and Israeli official Danny Ayalon has sparked a commotion in the Arab world, similar to such occasions in the past. Such “scandals” are a dreary waste of time and effort, and a telling signal of the poor political state of our Arab lands. Without delving into the details of the “normalization versus anti-normalization” debate, the Turki-Ayalon affair is after all about a mere handshake.

Source: **The Daily Star (Beirut), February 9, 2010**

[Let Atatürk Rest in Peace / Orhan Kemal Cengiz](#)

A senior diplomat friend said to me: “Orhan, I found your criticism about Atatürk in your articles in *Today's Zaman* a little bit exaggerated.” He also mentioned how great a leader Atatürk was, his military genius and so on. His remarks made me think a lot. We may really be going little bit too far in our criticism of Atatürk and Kemalism. Atatürk is a historic figure, the founding father of the Turkish Republic; we should be more balanced in our criticism toward him.

Source: **Today's Zaman (Istanbul), February 5, 2010**