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Security Arrangements: A 4-Level Game

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In recent weeks, efforts by US Secretary of State Kerry to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian framework agreement have focused on an attempt to have the parties agree on security arrangements in the Jordan Valley. The major issues at hand pertain to the scope of the Israeli military force in the region, the duration of its stay, and the nature of its activity. Secretary Kerry apparently presumes that Israel's concerns about security issues are the main obstacle to progress, and that once Israel's concerns are met, further progress on the political process toward an agreement will be possible. What is troubling about this attitude is its rather one-dimensional view of the security question. The US paradigm is military in substance, and does not address other aspects, certainly not adequately. In fact, it is important to achieve security for Israel through a combination of four elements: the military element; the element of Palestinian governance and the statehood (political) logic guiding the future Palestinian state; the element of regional cooperation; and the element of international legitimacy.

Taken together, these four components represent a whole of sorts, with the relative weight of each element necessarily derived from the prevailing circumstances. The weight of each element can therefore change according to the circumstances. Moreover, a system of reciprocal relations exists between the elements: strengthening and enhancing one element makes it possible to change/weaken the importance of another element. Approaching the security question as a dynamic combination of elements that interface and exert mutual influence creates room for maneuver and flexibility in formulating an agreement between the parties and an understanding of the possible changes over time. Necessary, then, is an analysis of the issue on four levels. It appears that particularly the discussion of Palestinian governance and its political theory vis-à-vis the adoption of statehood rationale is neglected in the context of security.

From the perspective of Israel's interests, a viable Palestinian state that takes governmental responsibility and exercises a monopoly on the use of force is an essential condition for ensuring stability and security. A Palestinian state that falls into the pattern of a failed state is liable to become a subversive and hostile entity and develop into a

grave security threat to Israel. The transition from a sub-state entity with a questionable performance level to a viable, vital, and functioning state can take place through a gradual and responsible state building process with the support of the international community and Israel.

A viable state is one that exercises effective sovereignty through an effective central government free of (violent) subversion and has the capacity to:

- a. Exercise its authority/impose its sovereignty over the population in its area of responsibility – including a monopoly on the use of force – while complying with the principles of law and order;
- b. Supply the needs of the population for which it is responsible, along with the population's human security;
- c. Be acknowledged by the population as the responsible element;
- d. Recognize the right of the neighboring countries to exist, respect their right to self-determination, and fulfill its responsibility to these countries and the international community in a manner that serves and supports regional stability and security.

It therefore follows that a viable state is one that effectively and consistently exercises sovereignty over its citizens and conducts reciprocal relations with its neighbors, the region, and the international community with responsibility and accountability. An important condition for ensuring that a country is viable is its ability to exist independently, which is linked to its ability to survive and adapt to a complex and dynamic reality as a function of its degree of (in)dependence on external parties – the less dependence, the more viability.

The more the Palestinian Authority (PA) resembles a viable state that behaves according to political reasoning, the easier it will be for Israel to show more flexibility on security arrangements and increase the Palestinian areas of responsibility in place of the physical presence of Israeli forces. On the other hand, any evidence that the PA is acting in a divided and chaotic environment without political reasoning, which first and foremost means a monopoly on the use of organized force, or evidence that the Palestinian institutional system continues to demonstrate functional weakness and that the Palestinian state is unable to act as a viable state, means that Israel will be less willing to forego some of its security demands or to show more flexibility.

The international community, especially the US, the moderate Arab countries, and Israel, have an important role in increasing the chances that a viable Palestinian state will arise. To this end, the international community cannot continue adhering to its familiar format for activity and support for the PA. Rather, targets, milestones, and especially benchmarks for performance and success should be defined in a controlled process that accompanies and guides the Palestinians.

In addition, it seems that to enable the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, additional consideration should be given to the limitations of the bilateral track and the logic and reconsideration of a multilateral regional track, in which especially Jordan and Egypt will become full and responsible partners in the process, or alternatively a unilateral Israeli measure with the support of the international community. Both alternatives require the greatest possible international legitimacy for Israel, which is precisely the incentive for Israel to cooperate with the international community in order to achieve one of two goals: either a responsible Palestinian entity acting in accordance with political logic, or a unilateral Israeli convergence measure that will make it possible to withdraw from territory while maintaining Israel's ability to take security action in the evacuated territories if necessary with broad international support.

The distress of the moderate Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt, and their concern about deterioration in the regional theater resulting from domestic unrest, the spread of radical Islamic terrorism, the escalation of the Sunni-Shiite conflict, and Iran's growth as a regional power, combined with the perceived weakness of the US as a leading power, heightens the common interests of Israel and important countries in the region. This time, however, Israel must take advantage of the concern of the moderate countries in the Arab world, and taking the initiative, demand responsibility from the Arab world in exchange for Israel's consent to the establishment of a viable Palestinian state. In a certain sense, this is a case of historic justice, because the Arab world bears real responsibility for the creation of the refugee problem and hence also for solving it.

It appears that Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt can lead the Arab axis and take upon themselves the necessary obligations once an agreement is achieved. The Arab world will presumably have a more significant and restraining influence on the Palestinians, due to their clear interest in ensuring regional stability. The main incentive for the success of the negotiations should be the strengthening of the regional standing of the three leading Arab states and the entire moderate axis, and the weakening of Iran's regional influence.

Israel's willingness to make concessions for an overall regional agreement should be given as a deposit not to the Palestinians, but to the Arab world, led by the three regional leaders, with guarantees from the international community. In exchange, the Arab world and the international community will be responsible for implementation of the agreement and the Palestinian responsibility to meet its obligations.

Assuming that a new paradigm is adopted that includes the four elements, and assuming that the paradigm will also be based on the agreement that a Palestinian state must be built gradually and responsibly, based on milestones and measures of success as well as a meticulous process of support and guidance led by the international community and the moderate Arab countries, it may be possible to devise an alternative to the deadlock.