Rationality, Pragmatism, and Palestine

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Emotions have long played a central role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, yet recent events provide an opportune moment to overturn this precedent. The long-term well-being and best interests of Israel, as a democratic and accountable state, must be supported *rationally*. It is inescapably evident that Israel must find more rational ways to maintain and further its security and survival through increased support for justice, equality, dignity and respect for the national aspirations of the Palestinians.

When Benjamin Netanyahu explicitly condemned a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he may have ultimately done the best thing for both Israeli and United States security. While many people knew this to be his position, this was the first time he stated it unequivocally. Although Netanyahu quickly recanted his statement, the international community cannot un-hear his remarks. His insistence that the Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state might, in fact, mean that he is expressing his view of future Israel as a non-democratic apartheid state that alienates Palestinian residents living within the 1948 border, who account for 20 percent of the population.

If Israel's government cannot even voice their desire to seek a peaceful solution, how can the U.S. government still defend Israel's actions? If the U.S. wants to prioritize its own national security, as well as Israel's, it must favor an approach that is *rational and pragmatic, rather than emotional*.

Right now, domestic electoral politics and pressure for re-election are less likely to influence Obama's rationale about national and global security. As such, the administration has an opportunity to help Israel and push for what is best for regional and global stability.

Acting *rationally* is key, even for the most hard-core Zionists. As such, the Israeli government cannot continue to turn inward. As Thomas Friedman argued, "the one-state solution means

that Israel will become, in time, either a non-Jewish democracy or Jewish non-democracy". If Israel doesn't implement a two state solution, it will compromise its national security indefinitely.

The best way for a state to create persistent insecurity is to marginalize large groups of people. People raised in oppression and humiliation are predisposed to radicalization. Israel's supporters may dismiss the idea that the Palestinian issue is central to Middle Eastern stability, but no rational and informed observer can deny that this festering issue is a significant source of difficulties in the region and a very enticing platform for recruitment of violent extremists now and in the future.

One way to deflate extremism in the Middle East is for Israel to begin behaving rationally and as a legitimate power. If governments do not respect the basic cultural identities of their constituents, governments will be unjust and ultimately unsustainable. However, if Israel begins to act in its own *rational self-interest* rather than its *emotionally perceived self-interest*: radical opposition will decrease significantly. Re-evaluating the U.S. relationship with Israel is politically risky and will inevitably alienate a good percentage of democratic constituents, however the potential gains are enormous. In a globalized world, it is time to put emotional decision-making aside and think rationally of what is in the best interest of everyone.

The way forward is clear; for the sake of its future and its sustainable national interest, Israel needs to negotiate a final settlement for a "*sovereign and viable*" Palestinian state within the 1967 borders with mutually agreed upon land swaps, mutual security arrangements and a solution to the refugee problem. The Arab League proposed such a comprehensive plan in 2002. It is time for the U.S. to bravely push for the birth of a Palestinian state through the UN, as it did in the creation of Israel in 1948. The legacy of President Obama, the sustainability of the U.S.' and Israel's national security interests, and the stability of the greater Middle East rely on the United States' support.

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