

# Briefing Memo

## Historical Views on the Discussions of Israel's "Defensible Borders"

International Conflict Division, Center for Military History  
Masahiro Mochii

### Preface

It is most likely that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's fourth government will be formed after the election for Israel's Knesset held on March 17, 2015. Israel has an electoral system based on nation-wide proportional representation, and with a maximum of six weeks being spent on the negotiation on the formation of a coalition and the selection of the members of the Cabinet, it takes a considerable time till the administration policies, including foreign policies and security policies, can be identified. The procepect of peace process, one of the topics that is the attention of international community is especially unclear, , as during the election time statements was delivered by Prime Minister Netanyahu at the Har Homa settlement. Although they can be interpreted as rejection the two-state solution with Palestine, there were signs of emphasis on repairing relations with the United States in the Presidents' request of a Cabinet, and also the suspension of construction of new buildings in the Har Homa settlement, which has been continuously challenged by the United States since the Bush Administration.

Looking back in history, it has always been difficult to obtain a clear understanding on each contemporary situation and depict future prospects about positions of the parties involved in the peace process of the Middle East. These issues become further complicated by increasingly unstable situations in the Middle East. The aim of this memorandum is to contribute to the understanding of the present situation by addressing and examining specific discourses regarding Israel's security policies from a historical perspective. Although some issues relating to peace processes in the Middle East are apparently specified as security issues, it is sometimes suitable to see the subject as a complex issue where various elements are intertwined for analytical purposes. In other words, it is not possible to discuss the elements of security and defense completely separately. Taking this into consideration, the purpose of this memorandum is not to handle the various disputed points that have been shaped by efforts made by the international community as regards to Middle East peace and the agreements between Israel and the Palestine Authority in a comprehensive manner, but to encourage the understanding of the underlying problem by focusing the argument on the concept of "defensible borders" that has been dealt with in terms of Israel's security issues. Rather than seeking a conclusive point of view, the following analysis suggests the importance of the continuous fostering of an economic environment through financial assistance that will facilitate the agreement which enables sustainable peacebuilding to be reached between the relevant

parties.

### **The Concept of the “Defensible Borders”**

While the concept “Defensible Borders” does not have any official definition, any, it is still the central topic as regards to discussions on Israel’s security issues by former military personnel, as can be seen in the thesis of Yigal Allon, the inventor of term “Defensible Borders.” Allon was born in the area of Israel before the country was founded. He was an Israeli politician and the commander of the elite unit of the Palmach during the time of founding of the state of Israel, and joined Prime Minister Rabin’s (the Chief Operations Officer in the Palmach for Allon) cabinet as minister. It is understood that the article Allon wrote in Foreign Affairs meant that “Israel must have sufficient potential for self-defense to deter the Arab states from any additional military adventure; and should they nonetheless be so drawn to such an adventure, Israel’s strength must be adequate to repel them with the minimum of damage to itself.” This concept points to the fact that the Green Line set out on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949 after the 1948 Arab–Israeli War is defenceless particularly against land invasion as regards to matters of national security. The views on what this implies may vary according to the reviewer but this leads to the issue at hand which is whether this Green Line is agreed to be the borders among the relevant parties of Israel and Palestine.

In relation to the future of the West Bank of Palestine, it can be summarised as follows. That is, in the event of an invasion it takes 48 hours for Israel to mobilize reserve forces. In the past wars that were fought against the regular army, there were invasions by the armies via the River Jordan. In terms of dealing with any incidents that threatens Tel Aviv and areas where the population and industry are densely situated along the Mediterranean coastline, for example, the 417th Jordan Valley Territorial Brigade, in connection with the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories Unit (COGAT) and the Palestinian Authority, have training exercises for disaster relief and such. The training is being held in the Jordan Valley, with steep gradients that run alongside River Jordan, which constitutes the border between Jordan and the West Bank (in Israel often referred to as Judea and Samaria).

On the other hand, some specialists are of the opinion that “Defensible Borders” can be established through the adjustment of the Green Line such as territorial exchanges. There are many specialists on the Palestinian side who continue to investigate ways to optimize the scope of the autonomous region, and in a way this information leads to the borders that have gained international attention. This type of information enhancement brings hope in that solution for continuous peace is possible through negotiations between the parties based on the confidence building involving financial assistance. What becomes important here is the confidence building that enables security cooperation with the Palestinian National Security Forces, through the capacity building efforts that has been achieved up to now via international cooperation.

### **Peacekeeping Capacity Building of the Palestinian Authority and Security Cooperation with Israel**

Since the signing of the Oslo Accords, a wide range of support has been given led by the United States, and security cooperation has been continuously conducted with the intention of capacity-building of the Palestinian Authority that is responsible of maintaining public order in specific areas. Between 2007 and 2010, the

Palestine Authority Security Force Training Program by the United States was conducted under Lieutenant General Keith Dayton, and a function similar to a Gendarmerie to enable the rules of law by the United States and the top police officials of Jordan was developed. Furthermore, in 2014, collaboration has been made with the Italian Carabinieri, with a view to enhance the public order management capacity. Technical cooperations have been also active with the United States and Great Britain to assist the capacity building with a humanitarian perspectives. .

It is hoped that these efforts will contribute to the capacity building of the Palestinian Authority and the establishment of a cooperative system for public peace, to maintain the “Defensible Borders”, subsequent to Israel’s withdrawal after the Third Arab–Israeli War 1967. At the same time, there are those who question whether the issue of the coexistence of Israel’s “Defensible Borders” and the end of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, can be dealt solely with the ability to preserve peace before political solution. While “demilitarization” has been proposed by Israel, the United States has proposed “non-militarization”. However, the Palestinian Authority has not reached an agreement at the conceptual level as to what the state of “removing any military presence or function” means. Moreover, as has been shown in the development so far, the process of “removing any military presence or function” is often accompanied by a violent power struggle between the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority and Hamas, the extremist Islamic group. In any case, continuous efforts must be made to avoid the consequence to permit expansion of the extremists who support violence on the grounds that there is no political solution, by promoting deeper dialogue with the various stakeholders who have an interest in peace-building.

### **Conclusion – Continuous Confidence Building and the Need for Such an Environment**

It is important to objectively understand what type of framework is necessary in order to encourage the international community to help prevent the recurrence of violence. For the relevant parties who are involved in peace processes, the meaning of “Defensible Borders” depends on the nature of the threat. Even among the experts, the views are divided as to whether the public order management capacity of the Jordan Valley, which is considered as the important part of “Defensible Borders” in many discussions, should involve the presence of some force or solely the presence of the demilitarized Palestinian Authority with adequate public order management capacity and the willingness to carry out security cooperation. Any agreement between the relevant parties are concluded in an environment where mutual trust is established. To this end, a continuous commitment by the international community to build a framework that sets the external environment, in order to achieve the regional stability, is essential. From this standpoint, the importance of contributing to the formulation of a stable regional order in the non-military area such as the economic field should be stressed with a view to enabling peacebuilding. In light of these factors, it is important to ensure the continuity of “Japan’s Concept for Creating the Corridor for Peace and Prosperity (Background Paper)” proposal by the Japanese government in July 2006, as a way to achieve peace and stability that is the goal of all the stakeholders. Ever since the initiative led by the United States Secretary of State David Kerry fared poorly in 2014, the negotiations between the relevant parties have become stalled and the future continuity of the framework for economic prosperity is in danger. With the absence of an agreement regarding the borders that should be left to the negotiation between the relevant parties, the continuous support by the international community for the realization of an economic environment that enables the coexistence of the “two states” is

crucial to defining a friendly parameter for putting a stop to violence. It is anticipated that “Japan's Concept for Creating the Corridor for Peace and Prosperity” in regards to the Jordan Valley, which is a conception unique to Japan, is an example of an intrinsic value of a strategy that aims to achieve peace by non-military contribution being put to the test, and that it will also set the parameter for peace through its emphasis on continuity.

(Completed on March 30, 2015)

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