Why is the Traditional Externally Focused Definition of National Security Inadequate in

Dealing with the National Security *Problematique* of Middle Eastern States?

A nation becomes secure when it manages to protect its core values, wants to avoid a war, and can win a victory in such a war when it is challenged. Martin (2001) asserts that the capability of a state to deter or counter threats includes three components; namely, territory, society and regime. Buzan (1985) describes national security as the security of a whole socio-political entity and contends that it "concerns the way of life of a self-governing people, including their social, cultural, political and economic modes of organization, and their right to develop themselves under their own rule." The definition itself, in its concluding part, evokes a much debated distinction between the national security of the western powers and the Middle Eastern states; -a right to develop oneself under his/her own rule-.

In order to understand the complex structure of the national security of the Middle Eastern states, one has to pay attention to the differences between the volatile security environment of those states and the stable western powers. To start off, there is a need to scan the realist principles, which arguably dominate the international affairs, that characterize international politics as a struggle for power by sovereign states in an anarchic world and which try to predict international behavior by taking relative power of the contestants into consideration. None the less, Martin (2001) argues that those principles are workable in industrialized global powers such as the United States and most European states where the political regime's legitimacy is not threatened by fragile economies. Maybe more important, the territorial integrity in such countries is not threatened by separatist groups. Third World countries, on the other hand, are infected by various internal and transnational threats including the ones against

the regime and, as a consequence, to their stability. Thus, the military factors should be combined with non-military ones for the Third-World, including the Middle East.

Second, realists attempt to analyze the defense policy merely in arms development, acquisition decisions and deployment strategies; yet, in order to comprehend the sophisticated mechanisms of Middle East, legitimacy, ethnic and religious tolerance, economic capabilities and availability of essential natural resources should be taken into account provided that the majority of security challenges in the Middle East are endogenous rather than exogenous.

Third, one has to make a distinction between regime security and national security, where the former tries to maintain the core values of the regime, especially maintenance of its basic rules and institutions. Middle Eastern states' regimes include many types of government, such as monarchical, autocratic, totalitarian, or republican; however, governmental changes might or might not end up with regime changes. The succession of al-Bakr with Saddam Hussein in 1979 was a governmental shift with no regime change (as a result of continuation of Ba'thist regime) whereas the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 ended up with the overthrow of Shah by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a major change from a monarchy to an Islamic republic.

Another reason why the externally focused definition of national security is inadequate in dealing with the Middle Eastern states is because, as Buzan (1985) points out, the Third World has a bigger emphasis on the state as a centralized governing organization and less on the individuals and social groups existing within the state; as a consequence, in the Third World there is more distance between the state organization, and society and citizens. According to the author, a distinction should be made between the security of the government and the security of the state or nation. He argues that major wars among the strong powers are the result of the attempts to protect the system of government whereas in weak states as in the Middle East -with

low degree of sociopolitical cohesion- the issue becomes doubtful since the government's political base is much thinner in relation to state and nation.

It would be deceiving to look at a state's overall security from the stand point of threat environment and, as Azar and Moon (1985) argue, the hardware side of security management; namely, the physical capabilities such as military and economic power. The authors contend that an assessment of security performance in the Third World -including the Middle East- should be based on the explanation of the dynamic interactions of security environment, hardware, and software, in which the latter refers to legitimacy, integration, and policy capacity. Accordingly, since the security environment is thin and the accumulation of hardware is difficult in the Third World, effective policy capacity is crucial to overall security performance.

One hastens to jump to the issue of legitimacy when the software side of security management is mentioned. Mainly because of decreasing legitimacy and diminishing political authority, political protests and revolts have become an internal threat to regimes, which try to resist such threats with an attribute to national security whereas the aforementioned threats can only be tagged as regime security. Al-Sayyid (2001) points out that the lack of legitimacy might not necessarily impact state security and a state, not a regime, can survive a crisis of legitimacy if those who challenge an incumbent regime aspire to seize the state itself. Azar and Moon (1985) argue that in many parts of the world where nation building has a long way to go, such as Middle East, regime security supersedes national security and all Arab states try to assure the former by provoking the latter. Similarly, Ayoob (1993) competently emphasizes that attempts to apply West-centric national security notion to the Third World will fail since not only does the Third World lack state infrastructural capacity one in which the state cannot provide services and extract resources to provide services -including but not limited to taxation-, but also faces a contested legitimacy as mentioned above. He argues that because of the scarcity of the most

vital element in the state-making process, namely 'time', the stateness of Third World states has been inadequate, which makes sense of the national security *problematique* of Middle Eastern states. Buzan (1985) attributes the weakness of the states mainly to the process of decolonization, which created states in the Western image, but did not create nations that fit within them.

In underlining the distinction of Middle Eastern national security, Ayoob (1993) draws attention to discontinuities and distortions introduced by colonialism into the process of state formation. Azar and Moon (1985) provide a different contribution to the discussion in claiming that dominant theme of Middle Eastern states' security environment is ecological determinism; thus, Third World national security problems are treated as an extension of system-level dynamics probably because of the perception that most developing countries are clients and proxies of big powers.

In concluding, I would like to address the remaining issues as given by Azar and Moon (1985) in laying out the differences of Middle Eastern states' national security.

- The disintegration of a nation-state into several communal groups creates a new challenge for the sophisticated Third World national security question. Many developing countries in the Middle East are unable to offer commonly shared national values and interests.

- Middle Eastern countries suffer from weak internal political institutions, deficiency of competent human power, and ineffective security infrastructures.

- Virtually all Middle Eastern countries have to live with more volatile and turbulent security environment compared to their Western counterparts. Coupled with unstable neighbors, such atmosphere brings about a vicious cycle of insecurity.

- Last but not least, West-centric import of a national security understanding does not take into account the resources and requirements specific to each national security environment.

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