Test of History

Martin Sherman
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Rethinking Palestine

Martin Sherman offers a paradigm shift from the political to the humanitarian

Martin Sherman
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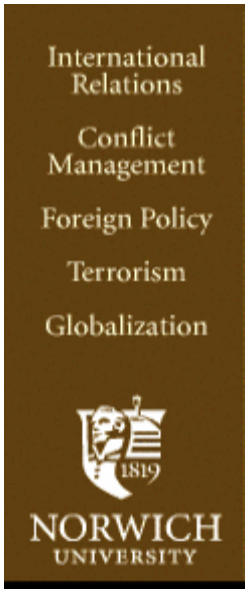
It is time for the proponents of the two-state solution to admit that the Palestinians have failed the test of history in staking their claim for statehood.

A dispassionate evaluation of the events of the past two decades inexorably compels one towards an increasing evident conclusion: The Palestinians seem far more focused on annulling Jewish political independence than on attaining Palestinian political independence; far more committed to deconstruction of the Jewish state than to construction of a Palestinian one.

Accordingly, further pursuit of a Palestinian state is likely to prove both futile and detrimental. For as past precedents strongly suggest, it will advance neither peace nor prosperity, but only serve as a platform for further violence against Israel.

Thus, both political prudence and intellectual integrity inevitably militate towards the distinctly politically-incorrect conclusion that establishment of a Palestinian state must be removed from the international agenda as an objective that is either desirable or feasible – and certainly as an objective that can be reconciled with long-term survival of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people.
However, even if the Palestinians spurious political demands for statehood are removed from the discourse, this will not obviate the grim realities of the Palestinians humanitarian predicament. This is the issue that Israel and the international community should focus on.

This op-ed piece aims to sketch the outlines of the proposal, in the hopes that this will spark a wider, more detailed debate of its feasibility, economic costs, international acceptability and relative merits compared to other currently espoused



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alternatives.

To be comprehensive, this alternative paradigm would need to entail three constituent elements, all of an eminently libertarian nature. Two involve the elimination of discriminatory practices against the Palestinians as (a) refugees and (b) as residents in Arab countries. The third involves facilitating free choice for individual Palestinian breadwinners to determine their future and that of their families.

Time to shut down UNRWA

A brutally condensed tour-de-raison of the substantive elements of the proposal begins with refugee issue and the body responsible for dealing with it, UNRWA (UN Relief & Works Agency), a highly anomalous organization that perpetuates a culture of Palestinian dependency and the unrealistic narrative of "return."

All the refugees on the face of the globe are under the auspices of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) - except for the Palestinians. For them, a separate special institution exists - UNRWA. Yet if the universally accepted UNHCR criteria for refugees were applied to the Palestinian case, the number of "refugees" would shrink from close to 5 million to around 200,000!

These figures starkly illustrate that both the scale and the durability of the Palestinian refugee problem is fueled by the anomalous and distorted parameters of it definition. There is growing consensus that without the abolition of URWA and folding its operations into those of UNHCR, no way-out of the Palestinian-Israeli impasse is possible.

The issue of citizenship

Folding UNRWA into the framework of UNHCR would of course have significant ramifications for large Palestinian populations resident in the Arab countries, who would no longer receive the anomalous handouts paid to them. This leads to the second element of the proposal: the grave ethnic discrimination against the Palestinians resident in the Arab world, where Palestinians have severe restrictions imposed on their freedom of movement, employment opportunities, and property ownership. But most significantly, they are denied citizenship of the countries in which they have lived for decades.

The acquisition of citizenship of the countries of their long-standing residency is something overwhelming desired by the Palestinians - as numerous opinion surveys indicate. Accordingly, with the abolition of UNWRA and the accompanying changes in scope of the population eligible for refugee aid, a diplomatic drive must be mounted to pressure Arab governments to end their ethnic discrimination against the Palestinians; to desist from perpetuating their stateless status and allow them to acquire the citizenship of countries in which they have resided for decades.

Offering compensation

This brings us to the third and final element of the proposal: Allowing individual Palestinians under Israeli administration the exercise of free will in determining their destiny.

While the first two elements of the proposed solution are directed toward easing the plight of the Palestinians in the Arab world, this measure is aimed at those inside Israeli administered areas.

In essence it involves enabling individual Palestinians free choice as to how to chart their future and that of their families. The thrust of these efforts should focus on two major elements:

(a) Generous monetary compensation to effect the relocation and rehabilitation of the Palestinian residents in territories across the 1967 "Green Line", elsewhere in world, presumably predominantly - but not necessarily exclusively - in the Arab/Muslim countries.

(b) "Atomization" of the implementation by making the offer of compensation and relocation directly to the heads of families and not through any Palestinian organizational entity that may well have a vested interest in foiling the scheme.

Time for imaginative new initiatives

Although some may raise a skeptical eyebrow as to the acceptability of the proposal to the Palestinians and its economic feasibility, two points should be underscored.

Firstly, substantial statistical data exist indicating that such a measure would be enthusiastically embraced by a large portion of the Palestinian population. According to one poll only 15% would refuse any financial offer that allows them to seek a better life elsewhere, while over 70% would accept it. Indeed, given the choices of a life either under the rigors of Israeli control or worse, under the regressive regime that the Palestinians have hitherto provided, who could blame them?

As for that overall economic cost, it is easy to show that the cost of the proposed plan would be comparable than any alternative under discussion, involving the establishment of a new state, developing its infrastructures and presumably absorbing a large portion of the Palestinian diaspora within its constricted frontiers.

Finally, it should be remembered that for the prospective host nations, the scheme has distinct economic upside. Given the scale of

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the envisioned compensation, the Palestinian immigrants would not be arriving as destitute refugees, but, as relatively wealthy families in terms of average world GNP per capita. Their absorption would entail significant capital inflows into the host economies - typically around half a billion dollars for the absorption of every 2,000-3,000 family units.

The time has come for imaginative new initiatives to defuse one of the world's most volatile problems, one for which remedies hitherto attempted have proved sadly inappropriate. Accordingly, there seems ample reason to seriously address an alternative proposal, which at least, prima facia, will:

- Defuse the Palestinian humanitarian predicament
- Inject billions of dollars of funds into the economies of host nations
- Ensure the continued survival of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people

Israel, the Palestinians and the international community can ill afford to dismiss it without a serious debate of its potential payoffs as well as its possible pitfalls.

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12. To eliminate UNRWA would change nothing.
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23. Join the West Bank to Jordan and Gaza to Egypt.

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29. This is the same kind of
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31. :: More Dumb Ideas
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32. 13 to 18
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33. wow just realized that mandat note was printed in Tel Aviv.
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34. Tos Salma 11. Finally you recognized ,,,,
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35. This article is hilarious (End)
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36. creative's "imaginative new initiative" is anything but
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37. Sherman I cannot believe you said that (End)
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38. Interesting but....
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39. DEAR MR. SHERMAN
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40. #30 you have 22 Arab states plus Hamastan and Hezbollastan
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41. Salma, You Can't Win...Here's Why
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42. #30 Said, your claim that Jews are erasing "Arab identity"..
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43. Those who caused the mess should pay! (End)
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44. Arrogant idiot and his 40 racist talkbalkers (End)
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45. Bottom line: Pay Arabs to leave at a much faster rate.
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46. Final Solution: Force/Pay All Jews to Move to Israel
    Steve Benassi, Silver Bay, MN USA (03.18.10)
47. living in a fantasy world
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49. Sherman plagiarizing/parroting the Jerusalem Summit
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51. i think
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52. to #30 not by choic, and just to make my point clear
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53. to #44 Beith Lechem is jewish name
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54. To#41 Jason
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55. to #51 you r mambling my dear
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56. What will Israel be like in 10, 20 years?
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57. TO# 34 Ari,Read when you are awake..OK
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58. "more committed to the destruction
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60. To #2, We dememanded independance in 1919
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61. to #60 am at that time the Brits use to rank
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62. Bethlehemite #60
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63. i got it the stronger wins
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67. #63 Islam. You cause so much pain by fostering this delusion
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69. to Salma 57 I am awake you are sleeping
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