

Strategies and Pattern Analysis of the Returning Refugees and Displaced Palestinians

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Abstract

Studies prepared about the right of the Displaced Palestinians to return to their home in Palestine are many. Few of them analyzed the optimal return pattern of those people to their home. However, analysis of the most logical patterns of return has shown that some periods would be critical in terms of absorption load that require special attention. With leaving the huge national incentive for the displaced Palestinian to return quickly is constant, both demographic and socioeconomic conditions affect the possible return quantity and timeline. The discussion of push and pull forces strategies helps identify the possible size of return in the future to be managed. This paper discusses the Palestinian population growth challenges regarding the return sizes and scenarios of displaced Palestinians. It discusses also three possible return patterns of displaced Palestinians examining push and pull strategy. Firstly, the "sudden-return" pattern strategy where, absorption process could be accelerated and come to an end within few years. Secondly, the managed return-pattern strategy, in which, the return activity should be managed to get rid of, associated drawbacks and to make use of expected advantages. Little demand on return at the beginning until the uncertainties are reduced and people are ready to move gradually. Thirdly, the natural-return pattern strategy, it is so called "free-market" behavior. Where, the nominees will compare between their present and expected living conditions. The predicted impacts of this return have been discussed from different aspects as human, natural, environmental, financial resources and job opportunities. The pointed challenges of this return in addition to the high natural growth may be helpful to the Palestinian authority and international community to be prepared. This research hence concludes that the return is not only just a matter of right and hope, but also it becomes feasible and applicable for all Displaced Palestinians.

Keywords: *Demographic Challenges, Displaced Palestinian, Push and Pull Strategies, Return Pattern.*

Introduction

The Palestinian population is growing while Palestinian land is shrinking, this is the fact on the ground that can be noted. Currently, the Palestinian State, is part of historic Palestine i.e. an area in the Middle East situated between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. However, the land shrank from approximately 27,000 square kilometers, which was the area of historic Palestine in 1947, to almost 6,150 square kilometers in 1967 bound by a ceasefire line recognized by the United Nations (Trueman, 2015).

The Palestinian Territories are densely populated and face great challenges within a limited resources environment. One of the main challenges is population growth within the context of limited land resources and improper planning under highly uncertain conditions related to major planning elements: space and people through the time horizon.

The Palestinian state, will accommodate the Palestinian population, they are many categories: firstly, the current population, including that part of refugees who decided on their own to continue living in the West Bank instead of returning to their original places. Secondly, displaced population i.e. originally from the West Bank and Gaza Strip regions who were displaced during 1967 war. Thirdly, Diaspora refugees who decide by their own to settle in the West Bank. Fourthly, relocated people from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank. And finally, the consideration of natural growth of all above categories.

Population plays a big part on many levels, including the economic, the political, and the social status in the country. Therefore, the study of trends in demographics means better predictions in future population rates and allows planners to prepare for such challenge in advance to avoid many negative impacts that would be a result of a sudden or an unmanaged population growth. Population growth will be a huge challenge especially to a newly born state with limited resources. (Sherbinin, Carr, Cassels, & Jiang, 2007) Hence, it is essential to the Palestinian authorities and international community to be prepared for the causes and consequences of population changes.

The population of the Palestinian Territories is unevenly distributed. The Gaza Strip gross population density is almost ten times that of the West Bank. The West Bank population distribution is heavily concentrated in a small region. Uneven distribution of population on the regional level may need reshaping of urban structure in favor of balanced development. Besides that, the natural growth is high and it's unexpected to decline sharply on the medium-term due to the young population structure. Moreover, a large-scale migration to the Palestinian Territories is expected following a political settlement. This event should follow a prepared plan to undergo a managed return process. Formal expectations predict a total of 700,000 returnees within the first ten years following a peace agreement (Ministry of Planning & International Cooperation, 1998). This number may be considered a minimum expectation since it is less than 12% of diaspora Palestinians and less than 20% of all Palestinian diaspora refugees. Informal predictions are about twice the formal estimations; they are largely dependent on push and pull forces and gaps between both current living conditions, and future living environments within the Palestinian state. No matter how accurate the demographic estimations are, the return size and pattern are a great challenge for future development of the Palestinian Territories.

Within a context of limited resources and uncertainties, this research examines push and pulls strategies that will play a role in the return of the displaced Palestinians. Furthermore, the study will examine the different scenarios of the return size and pattern. Finally, it will draw upon the negative and positive predicted impacts of their return, so removing the obstacles and be prepared. The examined issues in this study are designed to allow for a better understanding of the components of population change. Planning for this matter is very important to develop the best strategies and regulations for the state to be able to meet the present and future needs of the different segments of the population by determining the demand of services, the spatial distribution, and the composition of the future population, all within the context of right of displaced Palestinian to return to their original home in Palestine.

Scenarios of Return Size and Pattern

Since the late 1940s, Palestinians have been scattered across many countries in the world thus creating particular challenges relating to many the core processes would be added value. Palestinians in those

diaspora countries are refugees or displaced (Shat and Abbott 2016). The displaced populations are originally from the Palestinian Territories' regions and their last destination could be there if they decide to return as per their right. The size of this category is around 700,000 inhabitants. Expressed in different way, the total number of displaced population at that time was around 350,000 persons. Rough extrapolating this number will result of about 1.2 million persons in today's numbers. This means that part of those displaced are originally refugees with their roots back to 1948 part of Palestine. On the other hand, part of the "registered" refugees are displaced persons and have been register themselves due to poverty conditions to get the refugees aid offered by United Nations Relief and Works Agency. The other category is the Palestinian refugees from historic Palestine of 1948. The United Nations Resolution 194 dealt with this category of Palestinian refugees. The right of return, according to United Nations Resolution 194, refers to original homes in Historic Palestine. In addition of their original locations, some of those refugees may select by their own to have another location and settle in the Palestinian Territories. Both, *size* and *pattern* of return are essential for planning purposes.

For planning purposes, extreme cases could be discussed but not to the limit of "over-design". The discussion could help in overcoming an unexpected overload on related institutions and resources. The over-design case could lead to improper use of limited resources. This is related to size and pattern. However, the size could be dealt with through a planning unit. For calculation purposes, an assumed number of inhabitants could be considered as a planning unit. This number could be as big as 100 thousand or as small as 10 thousand. Costs and needs could be based on such unit where multiples or fragments of it may be the actual number of returnees or naturally increased population. This assumption may by-pass the size dilemma. Still the pattern (number of people returned versus time) could not be predicted due to the uncertainty and the sensitivity of the case. This pattern is essential for planning purposes. The Palestinian point of view is based on both capability and rationality. Experiences of low-trusted agreements would shape the pattern from the "client" side incrementally. It is also a need for the new state to be prepared for such an overload.

There are several expectations related to the size of return with huge varieties. The differences could be a result of uncertainties and other push and pull forces affecting the return. (Roderick Parkes,2015) The political sensitivity of the issue could add more difficulties to predicting reliable numbers. A surveying sample may indicate some sort of estimations if done neutrally and independently. The term freely is used as all matters related to refugee issues in most of the hosting countries in the region are dealt with as a taboo or even it could be criminalized as the Lebanon case. Even scientific researchers are highly restricted in the Palestinian refugee camps.

Formal forecasts at the Palestinian Ministry of Planning in 1998 predicted about 780,000 returnees in 1998 numbers within a ten-year period following a targeted peace agreement. Keeping the same expectations scale and shifting to another period; 2010-2020, this is naturally increased to about one million. Looking back at forces influencing diaspora Palestinians to return besides the dramatic changes storming the region, numbers expected to be even more. One could add the total number of Palestinian refugees still living in extremely harmful environment in diaspora camps (about 640,000) to displaced population people from the Palestinian Territories regions (about 700,000) to come up with a minimum of 1,340,000. For the refugees' part, this could be an intermediate interval toward return to original homes. It could be necessary in the case of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon where they might be enforced to leave at any moment even before full implementation of a peace treaty due to highly political and social pressure there. Other categories of refugees and non-refugees may not also wait until a full peace agreement due to political changes in the region like the cases of Palestinians in Iraq (2005), Palestinians in Libya (1995) and the Palestinians in the Gulf States after the first Gulf war in (1991) persons that are most likely to return to any Palestinian land.

Adding to this "part" of other refugees from outside camps (about 4,700,000), the result will simply exceed the 2,000,000 limit. Even though, the scenario of one million returnees could be selected as a base number within a ten years' period starting in 2010 as an assumed year for a Palestinian state. This number will be selected in this study for two reasons; first, to cope up with other expectations from other sources like the regional plans and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Secondly, as possible returnees other than the 700,000 originally from the Palestinian Territories are supposed mainly to return to their original places according to the United Nations resolutions and rights.

Table 1: Estimates of potential return migration by area of current residence. Source:(Adams, et al., 2005)

	Potential Immigrants (thousands)				Total
	Jordan	Lebanon	Syria	Others	
Total population	2,720	400	400	1,830	5,350
Registered	1,700	390	400	0	2,490
In camps	300	220	120	0	640
Low 1	75	70	40	0	185
Low 2	425	120	110	0	655
Medium	460	75	90	5	630
High 1	630	160	160	5	955
High 2	715	250	210	10	1,185

Despite the size, return-pattern is crucial. The pattern will directly affect the absorption capacity and efficiency. Distributing the same size of returned population over a wide period will create less pressure on resources. Distributing the quota of returnees is some sort of wise management. In fact, there are three main scenarios for return pattern: the first scenario is the "sudden-return" pattern: in this scenario, the absorption process could be accelerated and come to an end within few years. This could be theoretically "optimal" for humanitarian reasons, but difficult in practice. The sudden-return scenario is resource-consuming and needs great efforts and resources to be managed; mainly in financial and institutional capacities terms. It could also lead to sprawl development where irreversible changes could take place to urban structure and environment. On the social level, the activity could not be digested within a short time. On the other hand, this scenario, if succeeded, could result in an economic boom and give the opportunity for the new state to take care of other tasks afterwards rather than the absorption issue. Figure 1 shows such theoretical scenarios where most of the returnees will return within the first few years after a political agreement is achieved. This period could be as short as three to four years and the process will come to an end by reaching a year where the targeted number of returnees is reached.

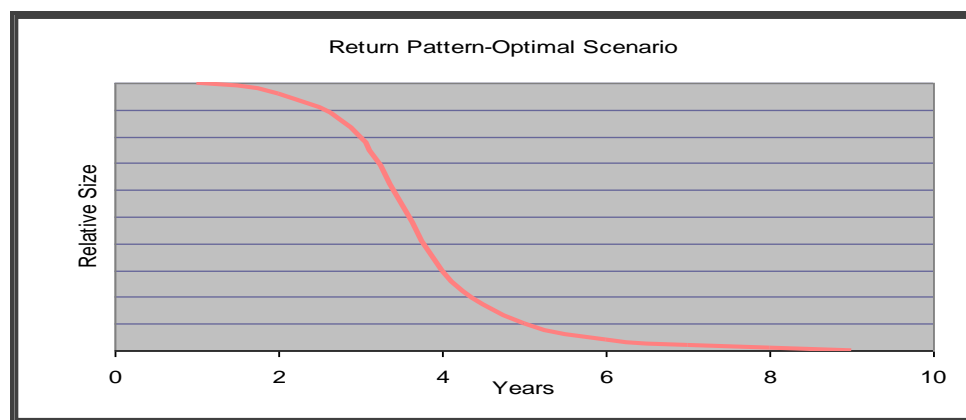


Figure 1: The sudden return-pattern scenario

The second scenario is the managed return-pattern, in this case, the return activity should be managed to get rid of, or at least reduce, associated drawbacks and to make use of expected advantages i.e. refugees often face substantial difficulties (Okeke, Aniche Si, 2012) The management is basically done to coordinate between resources and needs. The result is an annual absorption capacity i.e. spatial issue. Rationally, the first period may have little demand on return until the uncertainties are reduced and people are ready to move. This period is more or less based on the type of the political agreement, the guarantees offered for returnees, and living conditions to be provided for them. Later on, the return process will be accelerated based on expanded trust of the returnees in the political and economic conditions in the Palestinian Territories. It is expected that resources and institutions will have a limited capacity for absorption in the beginning. For this, the Palestinian Territories could distribute the “candidates” on a period of time to meet capacity limitations. Even if the demand will approach minimal numbers after a long period; theoretically, there is no specific limit to such pattern. Schematically, this pattern is shown in Figure 2. The pattern could be modified periodically based on changes in capacity and demand. Still to mention that the management of return was the choice of two-thirds of the Palestinians currently living in the Palestinian Territories and Jordan, while 60% of Lebanon refugees prefer immediate return (Institute for Applied International Studies, 2002).

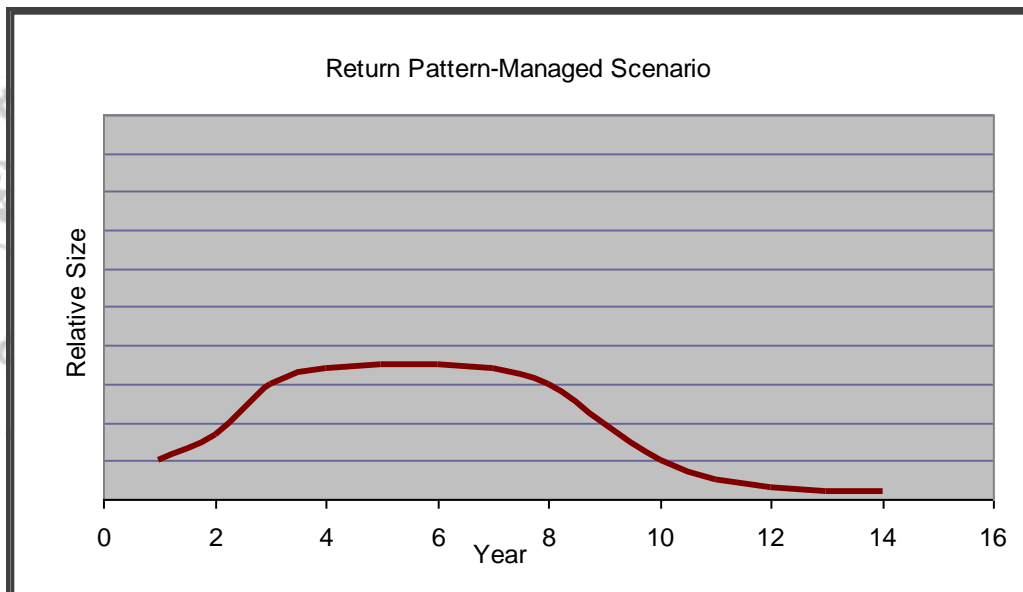


Figure 2: The managed return-pattern scenario

The third scenario is the natural-return pattern, it is called ‘natural’ due to the so called “free-market” behavior. The natural attempt of possible returnees will be based more on their own “SWOT analysis” of their case. Nominees will compare between their present and expected living conditions. (Naohiko Omata, 2013) Because of this, poor people will be the first-comers. Social and political discrimination against Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon is expected to produce about 400,000 of immediate returnees even before final status agreement if they are allowed to. All political signs from Lebanon indicate an immediate action after any a political agreement. Other marginalized and poverty stricken people will behave similarly and demand immediate return. Another category of returnees could be the one related to investment and business. Figure 3 shows expected pattern based on demand rather than on capacity. Moving out of the peak period, the curve will behave in a similar way to the managed one.

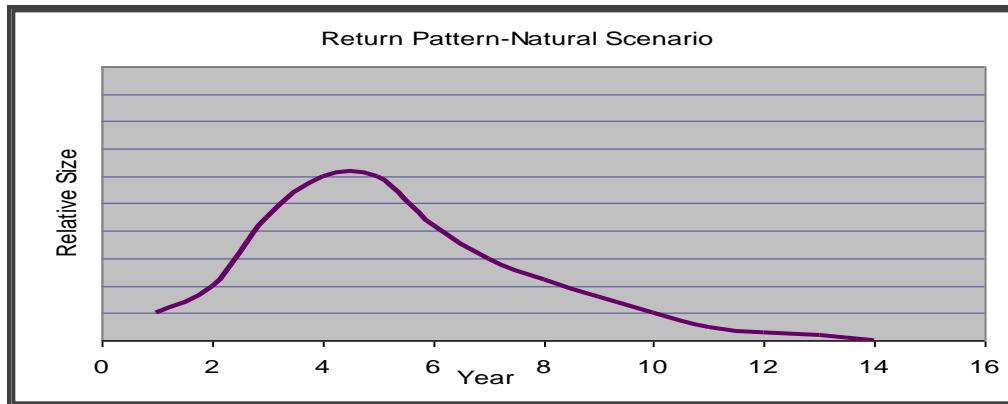


Figure 3: The natural return-pattern scenario

The three patterns are overlapped in Figure 4. All three patterns show that the period between the third and sixth year after the starting of the process’s heavy demand. This short period will not be enough to plan and prepare for such an activity. Undoubtedly, the planning process is to start in advance. Up to the first ten years, there will be a high demand from Diaspora Palestinians to return. Hence, Planners should mark the period between the third and the tenth year as an “emergency” period.

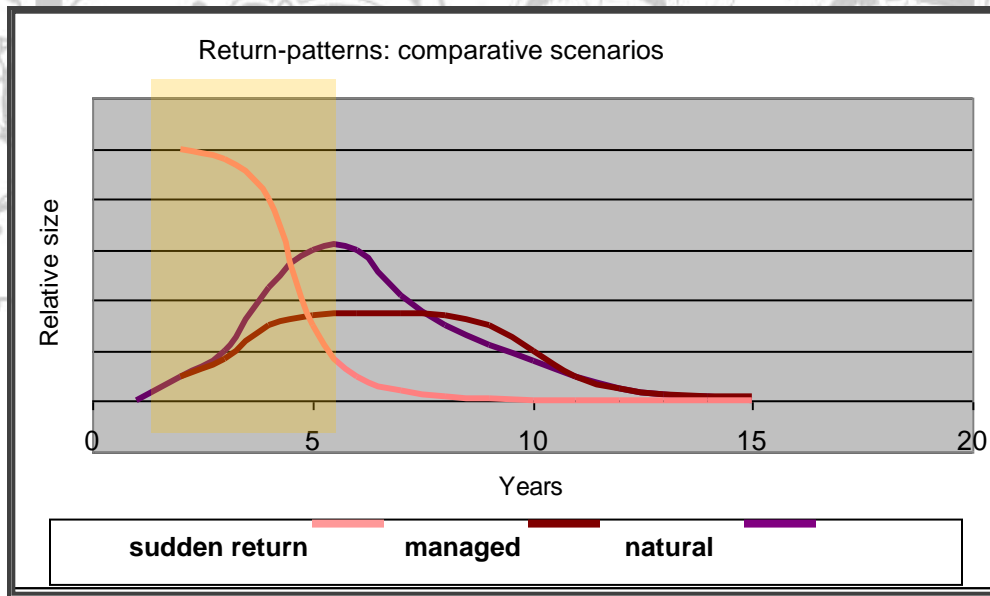


Figure 4: Main possible return-patterns scenarios, comparative scenarios.

The actual pattern will occur somewhere in between the above return scenarios. Considering the most likely scenarios are to occur, the managed and the natural scenarios, one could estimate possible distribution of returnees over time. Table 2 is a trial to predict the assumed one million returnees over the first ten years of the activity. Table 2 is based on assumptions related to size and pattern. Thus, the results within the average’s rows could be of a less margin-of-error.

Predicted distribution of Table 2 could be combined with similar predictions of natural population size within the same time horizon to produce the total population growth. With considering the growing rate for the Palestinian refugees which in all cases shall not violate their right to return to their home. This however could be a base to check further the capacity for people relocation from Gaza to the West Bank based on resources and absorption capacity (Nora Barrows-Friedman, 2013).

Table 2: Possible distribution of returnees over a time period (in thousands population)

Return pattern/ Base year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A: Sudden return	250	200	200	150	100	70	30	0	0	0
B: Managed return	50	70	90	120	120	120	120	120	120	100
C: Natural return	50	70	100	120	140	120	110	90	80	70
Average A, B and C	118	113	130	130	120	103	80	70	67	57
Average B and C	50	70	95	120	130	120	115	105	100	85

Push and Pull Forces Influencing Return

There is a high need for an estimated size and pattern of possible return as a major component of future population for planning purposes. Only few studies have explored this field due to the high uncertainty and multi-players, and also due to its political sensitivity. Some of them went to specific obvious factors that may influence the decision of the people living in the diaspora. For instance, the Arc proposal where the RAND team limited their point of view in this regard to economic and political forces, neglecting any humanitarian or social issues. *RAND Corporation is an American company that sent a team of professionals in planning to visit Palestine and present their idea of a national plan for Palestine.* They state in their plan that, ‘the economic considerations will also significantly influence the decision of Palestinians refugees to return to Palestine. Given this assumption, the least likely returnees will be those from countries where incomes are highest and political stability the greatest. The most likely will be those who live in refugee camps in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon’ (Suisman, Simon, Robinson, Anthony, & Schoenbaum, 2005).

The main push and pull forces are briefly discussed below. Push forces could vary greatly from one place to another based on hosting countries’ conditions, while pull forces are related to place of attraction. The outcome decision of a single person or a family will, at the end, depend on some sort of gap analysis when dealing with physical issues, but senses may count when cultural and human behaviors are taken into consideration (Al Nator, 2006).

The discussed push and pull forces are toward of return to the Palestinian Territories. However, there are also other push and pull forces that works against the return of displaced Palestinians because of political and regional constraints which are considered to be marginal as the process will start based on the political arrangements.

Push Forces

Push forces strategy works on driving the displaced out of the place they are located in, while pull forces strategy attracts them to an exact direction; in this case, to Palestine. Push forces are related to general displaced Palestinians and refugees’ and conditions within their living environment. Main push forces are the followings (Susan F. Martin, 2001).

Political Factors

There is a common political attitude within the hosting countries for not offering Palestinian refugees citizenship. Reasons behind this attitude vary from one country to another. In Lebanon, for example, the main reason is to keep the sensitive religious classification balance unaffected. It is a fatal issue to give more weight to one religious party. All local governments, due to ideological and political constraints, have strong objections to Palestinian refugees' settlement in Lebanon (Batrokh & Anbtawi, 2006).

Syria is also against Palestinian refugees' repatriation in their country but for different reasons. The main reason for Syrian politicians and public for not permanently accommodating the Palestinians is the strong belief in the right of return for refugees. It is a form of support to 'the right of return' concept.

In Jordan, where the largest agglomeration of Palestinian refugees and the closest socially and geographically to the homeland, the political opinion has two faces: formally and for the public it is announced that Palestinian refugees' right of return is a "sacred" issue and refugees should return to their homeland. But informally, politicians have a strong belief that "evacuating" Palestinians from Jordan is an economic "disaster". In the past, Jordanians used to strengthen the "one family" relation between Jordanians and Palestinians ending with appointing a Palestinian Prime Minister several times in addition to major part of the Jordanian parliament members are originally Palestinians. That attitude strongly affects the belief that Jordan could be the second country for Palestinians, but still there is a strong willingness among Palestinian refugees in Jordan, like elsewhere, to return.

Social Factors

In general terms, refugees are not warmly-welcomed in Arab hosting countries. There are some places where Palestinian refugees can hardly live or have access to basic services and employment. This is obvious in the case of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon where they are more like prisoners (Radhika Chaudhri, 2010). There is a growing list of more than 70 prohibited jobs to Palestinians refugees in Lebanon. Not any type of personal document is given to Palestinians born and living in Lebanon for more than 60 years. Restrictions on ownership are almost related to everything. (University of Oxford, 2010).

The case in Syria is different. Palestinians have all civil rights except the political rights. Some restrictions on ownership are still there; Palestinian refugee can for example own only one living place but Syrians can have a non-limited number of living places. Political positions are not restricted formally for Syrian but practically it is hard for a Palestinian refugee to reach high political position and more difficult into military classification. (Asem Khalil, 2010).

In Jordan, there are almost no formal or practical differences between Palestinians and Jordanians in occupying different positions either politically or military except for senior positions in the army. Ownership is allowed for Palestinians like Jordanians when they have permanent residency in Jordan. (Rex Brynen, 1997)

Economic Factors

Economy is a push force for those who have bad or good economic conditions. If we expect that the average annual income per capita within the new Palestinian state to be €x, then all refugees with an income below €x living abroad will have an additional economic reason for return back. On a side note, people with better chances in life and have more income than €x may find in the new situation an

opportunity for investing their money. In short, the “virgin” economy in Palestine-after peace may be attractive for different economic layers on a different basis.

Table 3: Main social indicators of Palestinian refugees in main hosting Arab countries compared with permanent residence (Institute for Applied International Studies, FAFO, 2002)

Social indicators	Main hosting countries		
	Lebanon	Syria	Jordan
access to basic services	very low	Similar	Similar
access to jobs	highly restricted	low restrictions	Similar
ownership rights	Prohibited	some restrictions	no restrictions
right of permanent citizenship	Prohibited	Prohibited	Allowed
civil rights	Prohibited	limited rights	no differences

The majority of Palestinian refugees in hosting Arab countries are facing economic problems. In Lebanon for example, they are not allowed to have a job in the governmental or the public sectors. They are also extremely limited for selection by the private businesses. where limitations on basic civil rights provide an additional dimension to the common hardships of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (Leila Zakharia, 1997). Another major indicator is the elective immigration of Palestinian refugees from the hosting countries. Statistics in this regard are both not welcomed by hosting countries and not accurate if available by NGO's. Still, there are many indications showing active immigration from those countries at different levels. This is obvious in Lebanon.

Cultural Factors

There are many differences between local cultures within Arabic countries. The long period spent by Palestinians living in any of the Arab countries was able to reduce those differences but not to the zero level. In all places where Palestinian refugees live, there are some differences. This can be found where strong social relations exist. When it comes to social activities, different cultures may show-up. One of the main factors defining this gap is the economic factor where the bulk of refugees remain within the low layers of the socioeconomic classification.

Pull Forces

Palestinian immigrants may be attracted to the Palestinian Territories for different reasons. The main attractive factors are:

Economic Factors

Economic conditions are the major factors that could decide the place one might settle. Continuously, one is searching to improve his or her life through improving his or her economic conditions. Expected economic improvements associated with building a Palestinian state will basically attract diaspora Palestinians with low income and diaspora Palestinian investors.

When the new Palestinian state is established, new job opportunities openings are expected on a large scale. Having an influx population increase within a short period of time could create hundreds of thousands of direct and indirect jobs. The economic cycle may become one of the most active ones within the region. Starting from construction of living and working places, passing through the related physical and financial services and ending with the secondary services will activate all parts of economic activities. These active economic conditions will create pull forces for unemployed Diaspora-Palestinians.

Regarding the level of income; the existing average income in the territories compared with other countries in the region is enough to attract many of the Palestinians in diaspora. Moreover, the expected average income attached to the establishing of the new Palestinian state could provide more attraction points to the diaspora Palestinians thinking to return. This may be a result of the expected developmental achievements that will follow the establishment of the Palestinian state.

On the provided services level indicators show that levels of services are very low in most places accommodating Palestinian refugees. Living environment in diaspora refugee camps are much below acceptable levels. Although services offered in the Palestinian Territories are still under the international standards, they are higher in most cases than that offered in most countries for the Palestinian refugees.

As for the Infrastructure, the basic infrastructure in the territories may not be an attractive element in current situation. However, infrastructure will have major development in parallel and in preparation to the independent process. For Palestinians living in refugee camps in diaspora, the existing infrastructure in the Palestinian Territories still to be more developed. Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon's camps have almost no access to basic infrastructure while those living in Jordanian and Syrian refugee camps have limited access.

Social Factors

Kinship Relations may be one of the strongest factors attracting Palestinian refugees to return back to their society. Almost all Palestinians in diaspora have close relatives in the Palestinian Territories. Within a culture with strong social ties, this factor could overcome many other obstacles to unify families again (Hassan & Hindo, 2005). Another social factor rather than the kinship relations is the social relation in general where people in eastern culture prefer to live in more homogenous agglomerations. This may appear more among the rural and Bedouins families. Extended families are common phenomena in Palestine where people would like to gather for social and cultural reasons.

Historical Factors

Historically, all Palestinians have their roots in Palestine. Palestinians became more and more tied to their origin in a surrounding environment of strong national behavior. In all the Arab countries, Palestinians need to pass a long and complicated process to enter any of those countries in a sort of discrimination. This became clear when compared to people from other countries where they pass nearly all Arab borders with no visas needed. Such treatment increases Palestinians' feelings toward their independent nation and state where they may liberate from injustice feelings.

Political Factors

It is known that Palestinian politicians from all parties, supported by a wide base of the public, are strongly with the right of return for the Palestinian refugees. Politically, the right of return was and still is one of the most popular slogans. The term return refers to the return of Palestinian refugees to their original homes in historic Palestine, and the displaced to their original homes in the Palestinian Territories.

The political factor is very important as a pull force attracting displaced Palestinians to Palestine. For Instance, people seek more stable places for living. For a stable political situation, one needs to minimize conflict issues. Refugees; as they are the majority of the Palestinians should touch relatively fair results in order to support any political solution. Almost all Palestinians look at the existing situation as temporary and unfair (Hassan & Hindo, 2005).

Furthermore, the type of governance that might rule in the Palestinian Territories may be a positive or a negative force affecting Palestinian refugees' decision to return. They may compare between the type of political governance they live and the one they are going to have in Palestine. Where relatively most of the Palestinian refugees within the hosting countries around lacking the very basic rights of democracy; one can expect big effects of a new type of democratic governance attracting the diaspora Palestinians to resettle within the domain of the new democracy.

Predicted Impacts

Absorption could be a double-face activity. Resettlement in the Palestinian Territories could have bad implications as it could have advantages. On the other hand, keeping the present status of diaspora Palestinians as-is, is by all means, unacceptable. A brief discussion of what implications could the absorption activity has:

Human Side

The refugees and displaced Palestinians in diaspora suffer harsh humanitarian conditions. This is more obvious in camps in general and diaspora camps in particular. Camps in Lebanon could be an example of the phenomenon. Solving the refugee issue will be positively recognized locally, regionally and internationally.

Socioeconomic Implications

Comparative analyses conducted by Institute for Applied International Studies (FAFO) have shown that bad economic conditions of refugees have social implications. Most of social aspects are affected by such conditions. Housing environment and basic services are much below acceptable standards. United Nations Relief and Works Agency, as a sole provider of services to camp population, has continuous shortage of funding which forces the agency to reduce its aid continuously.

Political Pressure

Politically, there is a common interest to solve the refugee problem fairly. There is pressure to end the long tragedy of displaced refugees and their bad living conditions. Several United Nations resolutions could be the base for any scenario. The proposed plans will be of direct impact on the different parties involved either as hosting countries or as creators of the problem.

Natural Resources and Environment

Some natural resources are limited. Utilizing such resources in sustainable manner is necessary to ensure basic needs for future generations. The water shortage problem, for example, doubles when combined with unfair distribution between Palestinians and Israeli occupation sharing the same region and the aquifers. Environmentally, random development needs to be minimized. Absorption of a considerable number of people over a short time will have impact on resources and environment. Allocation of natural resources between different groups of users – industry, agriculture, and domestic - shall be socially, environmentally and economically optimized to match the demands both quantitatively and qualitatively (Ministry of Planning, 2002). On the converse, there are resources of great economic potential where absorption could be enhanced by utilizing of such resources. Examples of those resources are minerals and agricultural resources. The agricultural sector for example is partially utilized and could be developed efficiently if more labor and technology are to be utilized. Theoretically, obstacles related to some resources like water and agricultural products could be by-passed by import while obstacles related to land capacity could be a

limiting-reactant. Such an obstacle will be discussed deeply as the static challenge for future urban structure of the Palestinian state.

Human Resources

Absorption will add more population to all categories. Those will form potentials for development each in its area. At the same time, those people will need added job opportunities while generating jobs. For some categories, added labor or expertise will be an advantage. Larger societies -to some extent- could be more sustainable by relatively approaching some sort of economic integrity.

Job Opportunities

A rapid population increase in a young population structure produce a flux of working age generations (Aiyar, et al 2016). According to the Arc; the phenomenon has several directions: the first issue is the number of people in working age will be seven times the number of people reaching retirement age. The other issue is as female labor force participation rates rise and these young people enter the labor market, downward pressure on wages and heightening competition for jobs will exacerbate tension in the current social and political environment. The third issue is "A large influx of returnees of working age, many of whom will be relatively unskilled, would exacerbate the problem" (Suisman, Simon, Robinson, Anthony, & Schoenbaum, 2005).

What the Arc did not mention is that the absorption activity may create job opportunities more than it would consume. This is due to the type of intensive process to offer services, infrastructure, and constructions developments for those returnees. A simple example of accommodating a single family would involve more than 10 types of jobs at the same time while this family may add an average of 2 workers to the market. As the absorption process continues, this fact will repeat itself. In the long run, the process will continue to be sustainable due to demand on services and infrastructure.

Financial Resources

Absorption is a money-consuming process. Nijem has estimated based on empirical cases and the public land usage the needs of each immigrant of about \$8,000 USD for shelter only. Financial recourses will be heavily used due to the absorption activity. The process demands international intervention and support. Similar to other places, compensation from occupier for the years of occupying the West Bank and Gaza Strip may be utilized in addition to other donations to this building process. For that part of the returnees who decide to resettle in the Palestinian Territories, they may also use their compensations guaranteed by the United Nations 194 resolution for development.

Institutional Involvement

Institutions will be heavily involved at all levels as well. Public institutions will be expanded and modified to cope with the process. Legislative and executive institutions will be involved. It is extremely important to do the pre-absorption task. There should be advanced plans and may be budgeting work to ensure smooth implementation or at least reduce hardship.

Regulations

Existing regulations may need to be updated to meet a major absorption process. In some cases, new regulations may be enacted to translate national policies into actions. In other cases, separation of regulations dealing with local residence from those dealing with returnees could be done if necessary to

ensure a managed process. An example of this is the bylaws related to the taxation system where tax exemptions could be offered for special categories of returnees for social reasons or to attract special categories of them. The same tool may be utilized to redirect resettlement; and hence development, to specific regions. Table 4 sums-up the main indicators related to possible strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities.

Table 4: SWOT analysis of possible absorption activity

<i>Strength</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected economic development • Enhancing economic cycle • A flux of working age generation, more jobs to be offered • Additional experiences • Expected development to neglected agricultural areas • Young population structure • Institutional development and creation of new relevant institutions • Less social conflicts related to fair solution of refugees' problem • Relatively more control on land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-drafting of natural resources • Social implications and possible segregation • Possible environmental impacts • Expected random planning and development due to rapid urbanization • Extra demand on infrastructure • Possible damages to landscape and cultural heritage in some places • Loss of cultivated and valuable agricultural lands due to urban sprawl • More jobs will be needed • Regulations need to be updated and developed
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less humanitarian commitment from regional countries • More sustainable region • Regional peace environment and less conflicts • More social stability to some regions like Lebanon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • political constraints on regional and international levels • insufficient financial commitments from regional countries • socio-economic disturbance to the refugees hosting countries • political instability

Table 5: Existing and predicted population densities in the Palestinian Territories including an assumed 1 million returnees.

Population	Population at base year 2015	Average natural growth	Forecasted population 2025	Expected gross density in 2025 pers/ km ²
West Bank	3,110,489	2.6	4,020,706	652
Gaza	1,980,825	3.0	2,662,063	7,293
Total Palestinian Territories	5,091,314	2.8	6,682,769	1,023
Returnees	1,000,000	2.2	1,243,108	NA
Total West Bank and Returnees	4,110,489	2.5	5,263,814	854
Total Palestinian Territories and Returnees	6,091,314	2.7	7,925,877	1,214

Conclusion

The size of the returnee's wave is estimated at 1 million; this number equals the size of the biggest city currently in the West Bank. This means that the challenge is big and needs planning in advance to determine the feasibility for new programs that suits future needs.

With regards to the limited capacities of the state authority, there is a big challenge in providing housing, services, and job opportunities. According to the return analysis, in each of the predicted scenarios of the pattern of return there is a peak period between the third and the sixth year after the start of the return where most of the returnees are received at the country. Therefore, there are two main issues that planners on the national level must take into consideration:

First, there is a high need to manage the return and its potential impact on the absorption capacity of the state by defining the number of returnees for each year according to the economic situation and the absorption capabilities of the local and central authorities and the private sector for each year.

Secondly, the third year, which is the start of the peak period challenge, is relatively very soon in planning and practical terms when thinking about such numbers of returning people. Therefore, planning for the return and preparing for it must start several years before the actual return.

Unmanaged return for a large numbers of people can quickly overwhelm fragile economic and social fabrics. Planning will help reserve the links between stability, security, sustainability, and the respect for the rights and needs of the whole population and guarantee a sustainable development environment for planning and implementation processes. The challenge of the population growth has a huge impact on the ability to implement existing plans and the formation of new ones. The change in the size and the spatial distribution and composition of the population affect how national plans are designed when it comes to housing, social services, infrastructure, and resources management. The study of the return size and the factors affecting it helps to determine the demand of services among different segments of the population.

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