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A Trusteeship for Palestine?

Martin Indyk

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ROAD MAP TO NOWHERE

THE SECOND Palestinian intifada will soon enter its fourth year. Both Israelis and Palestinians have become exhausted by the worst violence in the history of their bloody conflict, and yet it continues. Palestinian terror attacks and Israeli military responses are dragging both communities deeper and deeper into the abyss.

Still, as President George W. Bush has averred, the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq would create an opportunity for broader Middle East peacemaking. Iran and Syria, fearing that they might be the next targets, would feel pressure to reduce their support for Hamas, Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and Hezbollah—the terrorist organizations that have done so much to fuel the current conflict. With a new regime in Iraq emerging under American tutelage, the balance of power in the Arab world might shift decisively in favor of the more moderate states of Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, which are committed to Arab-Israeli peace. The elimination of one of the terrorists' patrons and the lowered profile of others might further lessen the appeal of terror for a Palestinian community already coming to the realization that violence has been nothing short of disastrous for its cause and circumstances. And Israelis suffering from

MARTIN INDYK is Director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. He served as U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs from 1997 to 2000, and as Ambassador to Israel in 1995–1997 and 2000–2001. The ideas presented here were developed in the Saban Center's Israeli-Palestinian Workshop with input from the Israeli, Palestinian, and American members of the workshop's Design Group in International Intervention.

an unprecedented number of civilian casualties, a worsening economic crisis, and a war-weary reserve army would welcome some *deus ex machina* from the war in Iraq to get their country out of its current rut.

Should President Bush decide to seize such a moment of diplomatic ripening and try his hand at Arab-Israeli peacemaking, he would find that a remarkable consensus has formed around his own vision of a two-state solution to the conflict. The president first articulated this vision in November 2001, when he called for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state living in peace beside a secure Israel, and he elaborated on the idea in June 2002, when he added that such a state had to be democratic. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has endorsed this vision, as have majorities of the Israeli and Palestinian publics, and the international community believes in it.

What Bush would also find, however, is that he lacks an effective mechanism for translating his vision into reality. Bush has announced his personal commitment to working on the implementation of a “road map” of reciprocal Palestinian and Israeli steps toward peace—beginning with Palestinian reform, an end to violence, and Israel Defense Forces (IDF) withdrawals, moving on to a freeze of settlement activity, and proceeding eventually to negotiations on an interim arrangement that would create a Palestinian state with provisional borders. The problem with this approach is that it is likely to meet the same fate as all previous failed attempts to get Israelis and Palestinians to take reciprocal steps, most notably the Tenet cease-fire plan and the Mitchell recommendations.

On the Palestinian side there is simply no credible institution capable of constraining the terrorist organizations and armed militias responsible for the violence—and without such an institution the IDF will not be willing to withdraw from and stay out of the Palestinian cities and towns they have reoccupied to try to stop the terrorists. Nor is there a credible Palestinian partner for any political initiative such as the one the road map envisages. Although the appointment of Mahmoud Abbas (known as Abu Mazen) as prime minister is a positive development, Arafat will do everything he can to undermine him in order to retain power. And with a new center-right government constraining Prime Minister Sharon’s every move forward on the political front, the

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Israeli leader will likely prefer a drawn-out negotiation over the road map's details to proceeding with its implementation.

Absent a credible Palestinian security apparatus willing and able to crack down on terrorism, a plausible Palestinian political partner to make a deal with Israel, and a flexible government in Israel willing to do its part, the road map's chances of success are slim. If it is tried and goes nowhere, the Bush administration's likely response will be to leave the parties to battle it out on their own once again. With American elections on the horizon, a domestic economy needing tending, and an already overcrowded diplomatic agenda, it would be easy for the administration to return to its default position of disengagement. But it would also be a mistake. The contrast between the administration's willingness to invest a huge effort in changing the regime in Iraq and its scant efforts to end the violence in the Israeli-Palestinian arena would fuel antagonism toward the United States throughout the Muslim world. Israel's economic recovery would be forestalled. The human carnage would continue to bind the lives of Israelis and Palestinians "in shadows and in miseries." And a fleeting opportunity for the United States to wield its regional influence on behalf of peace would have been lost.

There is another and possibly more promising way to parlay the bounce from a successful Iraq war into an effective effort to forge an Israeli-Palestinian peace, but the United States would have to use a different map and take a steeper but more direct road. The approach would have to be much more ambitious than the one President Bush seems to have in mind, more akin to the major effort his father undertook to create an effective machinery for Arab-Israeli peace negotiations after the last Persian Gulf War. The equivalent effort in today's circumstances would require the United States to lead an international push to create a trusteeship for Palestine. This would be a major undertaking, but unlike the road map process, it could actually lead to the creation of a responsible and accountable Palestinian political partner and an effective Palestinian security capability, thereby triggering the appropriate Israeli response.

For decades the United States has rightly preferred that the onus for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remain on the parties themselves. The appropriate role of the United States and other

external parties, officials believed, was to facilitate agreements arrived at through direct negotiations. But now things have changed. The Oslo accords, which were produced by direct negotiations, have collapsed and have been replaced by a violent interaction that the two sides cannot end by themselves. Without some form of effective international intervention, Israelis and Palestinians will continue to die and their circumstances will continue to deteriorate, fueling vast discontent and anger at the United States in the Muslim world and placing Israel's future well-being in jeopardy.

The concept of trusteeship has been used to good effect in other places—such as East Timor and Kosovo—where the collapse of order and the descent into chaos have necessitated outside action. The Bush administration is prepared to promote such a concept in Iraq, to ensure that the removal of Saddam Hussein is followed by a political and security framework that will enable the Iraqi people to establish new, more representative institutions of governance. If there were sufficient political will in the United States, it could be adapted effectively to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well.

DESIGN FOR LIVING

A WELL-DESIGNED trusteeship for Palestine would have an explicit mandate to build an independent, democratic Palestinian state. It would take formal control of Palestinian territories from Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority and hold them in trust for the Palestinian people. The trustees would then oversee the establishment by Palestinians of democratic political institutions, including the drafting of a new constitution, the creation of an independent judiciary, and the holding of free elections. At the same time, the trustees, with the assistance of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, would supervise the establishment of transparent and accountable economic institutions. This process would be accompanied by international funding for an effort akin to the Marshall Plan to rebuild the Palestinian economy.

Initially, the territories held in trust would include the parts of the West Bank and Gaza already ceded by Israel to the Palestinians (the “A and B areas” of the Oslo accords), with some additional land from the “C areas” that have remained under Israeli control included to provide

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territorial contiguity. The IDF would withdraw from these territories and the Israeli government would commit not to return as long as the trusteeship was fulfilling its mandate.

To enable the IDF to do this, U.S.-commanded special forces units and other troops would be put at the disposal of the U.S.-led trusteeship. These would not be peacekeepers or monitors; rather, they would be tasked with maintaining order, suppressing terrorism, and restructuring and retraining the Palestinian security services—roles similar to those currently being played by U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

Parallel to the establishment of the trusteeship, final-status negotiations would be launched between Israeli and Palestinian delegations to resolve, among other issues, the final borders of the Palestinian state. These negotiations would give Palestinians confidence that the trusteeship would not be a permanent outcome in itself, but a way station on the road to true independence and sovereignty. The gradual success of the trustees in building responsible and accountable Palestinian institutions, meanwhile, could give the Israelis enough confidence in their new Palestinian partners to enable them to make the painful concessions and take the calculated risks needed to reach a final agreement.

As the process of democratic nation-building progressed, the trustees would gradually devolve authority to the Palestinian institutions they had helped to create. In this way, a Palestinian government could emerge with which Israel could confidently negotiate, one in control of security services that would be able and willing to prevent terrorism and violence. To be minimally acceptable to both sides, however, all this would have to be packaged to accommodate the Israeli requirements of security and rigorous testing of Palestinian intentions and would have to meet the Palestinian requirement of a clear pathway and time line for achieving a viable, independent state. The mechanism for establishing the trusteeship would thus have to include the following elements.

A UN resolution. To be acceptable to Israel, the trusteeship would need to be a U.S. construct. From a legal standpoint, however, it would be preferable for the trusteeship to be legitimized by a UN Security Council resolution, which would vest it with authority to act as well

as sovereignty over the territory under its control.¹ Such international legitimacy would provide Palestinians with the cover needed to cooperate with the trusteeship. However, the Security Council would not have an ongoing role in supervising it. Instead, the UN resolution would vest the powers to run the trusteeship in a U.S.-led steering committee of participating states.

A time line for statehood. To give the Palestinians confidence that their independence would not be long delayed, the trusteeship should establish a three-year time line for carrying out the final-status negotiations and establishing a Palestinian state much like the time line President Bush has established for the road map. This must not become a deadline for the expiry of the trustees' mandate, however, since that would remove the incentive for Palestinians to carry out their part of the bargain. Instead, the trusteeship would have to be authorized to remain in force until it became possible to hand over complete authority and sovereignty to a democratically elected, accountable, and transparent Palestinian government with a proven ability to live up to its commitments, prevent attacks on Israelis, and promote the welfare of the Palestinian people. In other words, the Palestinians would be assured that if they fulfilled their commitments they would get their state in three years, but Israelis would be assured that if the Palestinians did not live up to their commitments the trusteeship would continue until they did. These guarantees would be made explicit both in the language of the UN resolution and, if necessary, in side letters provided by the United States.

Procedures for judging Palestinian performance. The trustees would be responsible for judging Palestinian fulfillment of their commitments. The Palestinians would much prefer this to having Israel judge them. However, Israelis would be wary of any indication that the trustees

¹ Legally, sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza remains in the hands of the United Nations, which inherited it from the United Kingdom, which inherited it from the League of Nations, which took it from the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. Jordan's claim to sovereignty over the West Bank after 1948 was never recognized, and although Israel administered the territories after the 1967 Six-Day War, it has never claimed sovereignty over them.

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were either biased in favor of the Palestinians or being hoodwinked by them. To deal with Israeli concerns, the trustees would need to establish a consultative mechanism that would enable Israel to offer its input. One of the central purposes of the trusteeship would be to overcome the deep suspicion that now pervades Israeli-Palestinian relations by providing a third-party mechanism that both sides could trust. As a final safeguard, Israel would still be in a position to hold back on withdrawal from additional territory if it were dissatisfied with Palestinian performance. But it would not be allowed to do this arbitrarily.

Maintenance of Palestinian self-government. Although a principal purpose of the trusteeship would be to rebuild Palestinian institutions along democratic lines, this would not require the abolition of all existing institutions of Palestinian governance. Some, such as the current nine separate Palestinian security services, would indeed need to be eliminated, but others could be reformed and restructured. The Palestinian Finance Ministry, for example, has already undertaken serious reform measures, starting a process that simply needs to be supported and facilitated. And at the local and municipal level and in the health and welfare sectors, many existing Palestinian institutions could continue to function.

A Palestinian consultative body. Since the trusteeship would replace the Palestinian Authority, a consultative body would need to be established to represent the Palestinian people to the trusteeship in the transitional period before a constitution is finalized and elections are held. The Palestinian Legislative Council could serve this purpose, or the trusteeship could oversee the creation of a Palestinian Transitional Council, perhaps elected by mayors of the towns and villages and other Palestinian representatives. The prime minister could head this consultative body.

SECURING THE REALM

AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS of the trusteeship would be the size, composition, and effectiveness of its security force. To be accepted by both sides, this force would need to be under U.S. command. Israel would not trust any other outside party with such a sensitive role, and the Palestinians would prefer U.S. leadership too

because they have come to appreciate the part the United States can play in influencing Israel and promoting their interests. It would make sense for the core of the force to be drawn from the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada and to be composed of small, experienced units capable of the kinds of operations that Israeli Special Forces now carry out in the Palestinian territories. The British Special Forces have a good deal of experience combating the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland; the Australians ran a successful multinational force in East Timor, where they were effective in confronting Indonesian-backed militias; and the Canadians have decades of experience in peacekeeping operations. Important actors within these governments are already beginning to look at the idea of committing troops to such a mission.

The operations of the trusteeship force could actually be more effective than current Israeli counterterrorism operations in Palestinian towns and refugee camps to the extent that they could rely on a reconstituted Palestinian security service that would have a greater ability to penetrate terrorist organizations than Israel does. The force would need to be large enough to impress Palestinians and Israelis with its seriousness, but given the small size of the West Bank and Gaza and the desirability of keeping the military footprint within reasonable bounds, it should be possible to keep the total number of troops involved under 10,000. If necessary, these could be backed up by additional “over the horizon” international forces stationed nearby in Jordan, Egypt, and Israel.

To provide reassurance to Israel that the job is being done effectively, the trustees would need to establish a trilateral consultative security mechanism to ensure a full and timely exchange of information between the international force and the Israeli and Palestinian security services. This mechanism would also serve to rebuild relations between the Israeli and Palestinian security services, a step vital to the ongoing battle against terror that will outlast the trusteeship.

It would be inadvisable to include troops from Arab countries in the international force since they would find it inherently difficult to deal sternly with Palestinian militants. Nevertheless, Egypt and Jordan should be encouraged to play an active role in training the restructured Palestinian security services. Egyptian and Jordanian officers could also serve as liaisons, bringing to bear their knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of existing Palestinian services.

The notion that a U.S.-led fighting force would take responsibility for combating Palestinian terrorism and rebuilding Palestinian security capabilities is perhaps the most controversial element in the trusteeship proposal. The Palestinian terrorist organizations would fully understand the danger this force posed to them and would try to portray it as part of a Western, imperialist occupation. Before long they might even launch a terror campaign to drive out the infidels—all in the name of “liberating Palestine.” Some other Palestinians might be glad to avoid the responsibility of confronting the renegades in their ranks and would view the force as the “international protection” from the Israelis that they have long sought, rather than as a means of assisting their own fight against terror.

Given the perceived zero-sum nature of the conflict, meanwhile, Israelis would tend to regard what is pleasing to the Palestinians as disagreeable to them. Israelis would be concerned that the international force would not have the IDF’s motivation to confront the terrorists, and would be deeply frustrated when the IDF were not permitted to engage in hot pursuit of terrorists on trusteeship territory. If the IDF went ahead anyway—after another suicide bombing, for example—this might well precipitate a crisis in U.S.-Israel relations. Israelis would also be concerned that if U.S. soldiers were killed in operations designed to protect Israelis, the American people would blame Israel. And acceptance of such a force would breach a fundamental tenet of Israel’s national security doctrine that requires Israel to defend its own citizens by itself.

Americans too have traditionally shied away from the idea of inserting American troops between warring Israelis and Arabs. They have bad memories of the 241 marines blown up in their barracks by a Hezbollah suicide bomber in Beirut in October 1983 and would be reluctant to expose their forces to the same danger again. Members of the American Jewish community would be particularly concerned about the potential domestic political fallout from American soldiers’ risking their lives in the defense of Israelis.

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All of these are legitimate concerns, but all can be addressed. On the Palestinian side, it would certainly be essential to the trusteeship's success that Palestinians saw the U.S.-led forces as liberators rather than occupiers. This perception, however, would be fostered from the outset of the trusteeship, with the withdrawal of the IDF from many areas they currently occupy and the disappearance of the hated IDF checkpoints and curfews. The trustees would benefit from being seen as having gotten the Israeli army out of the Palestinians' daily lives. Moreover, because the trusteeship would bear the stamp of international legitimacy and carry with it a (conditional) guarantee of Palestinian independence, it should be possible to maintain this image over time, especially as it became clear that the trustees were overseeing the establishment of the institutions of Palestinian statehood.

Confronting terrorists would need to be a joint operation between the international force and the reconstituted Palestinian security services, with the latter always taking the lead. This would make it clear that the primary responsibility for fighting terrorism remained on the shoulders of the Palestinians themselves. Given the structure of the trusteeship, Palestinian leaders would be able to make clear to their people that continued support for terrorist activity would only harm their chances for statehood, prolong the trusteeship, and, if it ultimately failed, bring the Israeli army back into occupation. This linkage is key: to gain the support of the Palestinian populace, the U.S.-led force would have to be presented as defenders of the Palestinian state aborning rather than as defenders of Israelis *per se*.

Assuaging Israeli concerns would be less easy. If the international force could demonstrate its effectiveness, the Israelis might find its presence preferable to the corrosive impact of keeping an overstretched regular and reserve army in indefinite occupation of the main Palestinian cities and towns. However, by putting its army back in control in the West Bank and Gaza, Israel has for the time being reduced terrorist incidents to a sustainable level, and may prefer the costs of staying there to the risks of withdrawing in favor of an international force. Yet the IDF's presence cannot succeed in thwarting every terror attack, and it does not want to rule over Palestinians forever. This is why it continuously seeks ways to get the Palestinians to assume greater security responsibilities so that the IDF can withdraw. On their own, the Israelis

have not been able to make this happen and thus might be amenable to the trusteeship idea if they believed it could deliver on the promise of creating a Palestinian capacity and will to fight terror.

What if the international force failed to stop terrorism and Israelis were killed as a result? This would be the principal question the Israeli government would want answered. The answer would require a detailed understanding between the United States and Israel—with the first element being an Israeli willingness to give the trusteeship force an opportunity to deal with the source of any new attack. Such agreement is not as unlikely as it might seem. Israel repeatedly gave Arafat the opportunity to act against terrorists during the first 18 months of the current intifada, often exercising extraordinary restraint in order to test his will to confront them.² Israel also depends on Jordan to prevent terrorist infiltration across its borders. And in the case of a U.S.-led force, Israel could be far more confident that there would be a 100 percent effort, even if at first it did not produce 100 percent results.

The notion that Israel cannot accept foreign forces defending its citizens is belied by the fact that in 1991 and again in 2003 Israel welcomed American Patriot antimissile teams to help defend it from an Iraqi attack. It is precisely because Israelis trust the United States and the United States alone to look out for their security interests that the international force and the trusteeship itself would have to be U.S.-led.

Would the United States, finally, be prepared to absorb casualties in such a confrontation and stay the course? It should be emphasized that even though an American would have to command the operation for it to be acceptable to Israel, the main work on the ground would be done by troops from countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. And after costly experiences in Beirut and Saudi Arabia, force protection has become a much higher priority for

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² The most notable example of this was in June 2001, after a PIJ suicide bombing outside the Dolphinarium Discotheque in Tel Aviv killed 21 Israeli teenagers and wounded 120 others. Prime Minister Sharon decided against any form of retaliation, hoping that Arafat would instead act against the terrorists. Sharon argued at the time that there was “wisdom in restraint.”

the United States, making its units less vulnerable than before. Nevertheless, some terrorist attacks might succeed, and some Americans might die. But this concern has not deterred the United States from fighting Islamic militants in some 50 countries across the globe, and today the American people are clearly prepared to pay a higher price than before because they now see a direct connection between threats to their own security and terrorist activities far afield.

President Bush in particular has singled out the organizations involved in the Palestinian intifada as terrorist enemies of the United States, and the Islamic militants themselves are busy blurring the boundaries between al Qaeda, Hezbollah, and Hamas. Put simply, the psychological and political context for committing American troops has changed dramatically. Whereas before September 11, 2001, it was unimaginable that American troops would be fighting Palestinian terrorists, it now seems quite thinkable. And, in the case of a trusteeship, U.S. forces would not only be helping to defend Israelis, they would also be working to build an independent Palestinian state free of the scourge of terrorism. The United States would thus benefit by playing a crucial role in helping to resolve the conflict that is at the heart of Muslim anti-Americanism.

LAND AND PEACE

TO START, the trusteeship would be established in some 50 to 60 percent of West Bank territory and most of Gaza, with the details to be worked out by the United States in consultation with the local parties. While the trusteeship was fulfilling its mandate, Israeli and Palestinian delegations would have to negotiate the final borders of the Palestinian state, completing the talks by the end of the third year. Implementation of those borders would be dependent on the completion of the trusteeship's other tasks, but along the way, as the Palestinians were seen to be assuming their responsibilities and aspects of the final territorial settlement came into view, further IDF redeployments from "C areas" could take place and the territorial ambit of the trusteeship could then be expanded.

Of course, Palestinians would fear that if they agreed to a trusteeship initially limited in size, it would never grow because Israel would not

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continue its withdrawal from the remaining parts of the West Bank and Gaza. Some of them would therefore insist that the trusteeship be established from the beginning in all of the pre-1967 territories, or accept the concept only if it were accompanied by an Israeli commitment to withdraw eventually to the June 4, 1967, lines.

Israelis, on the other hand, would consider a prior commitment to full withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza to be an unacceptable reward for the launching of the second intifada. And some of them would reject out of hand the idea of an eventual “full withdrawal,” since they view the borders of pre-1967 Israel as militarily indefensible. After more than two years of violence and terrorism, the gap between Palestinian expectations and Israeli flexibility is understandably wide.

One way to reconcile these competing concerns is for the United States to declare parameters for the final-status negotiations that would accompany the trusteeship. The parameters would make clear that the ultimate settlement would involve the end of the occupation (as President Bush has already declared), and would therefore require Israeli withdrawal from most of the West Bank and all of Gaza plus territorial swaps compensating the Palestinians for all the land Israel might be allowed to keep in consolidated settlement blocks. This would establish the principle of full Israeli withdrawal but avoid specifying the pre-1967 lines, leaving the parties to finalize the actual borders.

As for the settlements themselves, the trusteeship would have to have contiguous borders to maximize the ability of Palestinians to move freely within the territories under its control and to minimize points of friction with the Israeli army. As a consequence, some settlements—such as Netzarim and Kfar Drom in Gaza, and Ganim, Kadim, Sanur, and Beit Hagai in the West Bank—would have to be evacuated as the trusteeship was being established (otherwise the IDF would have to remain and protect them, creating new sources of friction for the trustees).

In addition, the Israeli government would have to agree to freeze all settlement activity in the large number of settlements in the “C areas” remaining under Israeli control in the interim period, in order to reassure Palestinians that the trusteeship was not just a way to facilitate Israel’s hold there. Such a freeze would be consistent with the position Bush articulated in February, when he noted that “as progress is made toward peace, settlement activity in the occupied

territories must end.” Ending settlement activity would make it easier for the Palestinians to accept a vague formulation for the territory that would eventually come under their jurisdiction. Indeed, evacuation of some settlements and freezing the expansion of others would be understood by both sides as setting precedents for the ultimate territorial solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Although the number of Israeli settlers that would have to move their families in the first phase would be relatively small (some 5,000 people compared to a total settler population of some 220,000), evacuating even one settlement would be politically costly for the Israeli government and would represent a traumatic setback for the settler movement. Nevertheless, Israeli public-opinion polls consistently show strong majorities in favor of a full settlement freeze and of evacuation of outlying settlements as part of a peace process that provides Israel with security. And Sharon has indicated privately that he would be prepared to evacuate some outlying settlements in the context of a peace process based on the prior cessation of Palestinian violence. In the context of a serious effort to stop terrorism, evacuation should not be an insurmountable obstacle. The evacuated settlers would, of course, have to be appropriately compensated and could be offered the option of relocating to other settlements in areas likely to be annexed to Israel once final boundaries had been determined.

Once the final-status negotiators achieved agreement on the Palestinian refugee issue, meanwhile, the trusteeship could begin the process of absorbing those refugees who chose to be resettled there, even before the emergence of a fully independent Palestinian state. As long as the negotiators had found a way to resolve the issue of “right of return,” such a resettlement could serve as a confidence-building measure for both sides. Resettlement would start relieving the plight of refugees even before the final-status agreement is implemented, signaling that their concerns would no longer be shelved, and it would mitigate the concerns of Israelis by showing them that those refugees were resettling in the emerging Palestinian state rather than waiting to return to areas inside Israel’s pre-1967 borders.

The trusteeship would have responsibility for supervising the elimination of incitement from the Palestinian media and the restructuring of the Palestinian school curriculum to promote coexistence. Israel would need to take reciprocal steps to deal with any incitement in its

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media. Depoliticizing this process through the trusteeship should work much better than previous efforts to deal with the incitement issue bilaterally, which quickly deteriorated into mutual recrimination.

And as for the surrounding Arab countries, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan would have an important role to play at every step of the trusteeship process. Their clear, consistent, and public support for it would do much to legitimize it in Arab eyes, and they could be brought into a U.S.-led steering committee to oversee the final-status negotiations. Their training of the Palestinian security services would ensure that Western methods were effectively adapted to Arab culture. And Egypt and Saudi Arabia would also need to influence the calculations of the terrorist organizations by cutting off their funding and pressuring their external leaderships to change course. As Israel withdrew from trusteeship territory and evacuated settlements there, Arab states would also need to initiate steps to normalize relations with Israel, beginning with those that did so during the Oslo years but that have pulled back more recently.

MORE FOR MORE

ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, sooner or later, the current Israeli-Palestinian stalemate will be broken. When it is, some form of international intervention in the conflict might well become inevitable, because left to their own devices the parties have shown themselves incapable of helping each other climb out of the morass. An international role is a feature even of President Bush's proposed road map for peace, which provides for international monitors, multilateral donor and reform committees, and a supervisory role for the "quartet" (the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the UN).

The trusteeship notion is based on the logic that a more radical outside intervention is required in order to make serious progress more likely. Used to good effect in East Timor and Kosovo in the face of humanitarian disasters and a total breakdown of order, trusteeship could be critically important in the event of a cataclysmic collapse in the West Bank and Gaza. But the concept is also flexible and adaptable to less drastic circumstances. If the Israelis do build a separation fence and undertake a unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank, for

example, a trusteeship designed to stave off disaster on the Palestinian side of the fence could serve the interests of all. Alternatively, if Abu Mazen, in his newly appointed role as Palestinian prime minister, is unable to put an end to the terrorism and violence (as is likely), a trusteeship could take power away from the Palestinian Authority and devolve certain functions to him while temporarily taking over responsibility for security and other critical tasks.

Trusteeship is by no means an ideal, or even an attractive, proposition. Neither Palestinians nor Israelis would be able to digest it easily; Americans would grumble about the burdens involved; implementation would be difficult; and numerous spoilers on both sides would lie in wait for opportunities to disrupt its efforts. But given the increasingly debilitating situation on the ground and the manifest inadequacy of reciprocal processes (such as the road map) for improving matters, some form of trusteeship might well be the least bad alternative available. No other mechanism seems capable of generating a responsible Palestinian negotiating partner, an effective Palestinian security apparatus, and credible Israeli responses—all of which are indispensable requirements for a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Only the United States can credibly sponsor such an initiative, because only it enjoys the essential trust of both parties, the necessary influence with each of them, and the ability to muster the requisite international support. Yet given the Bush administration's reluctance to become engaged in a sustained effort to put Israelis and Palestinians back on the path to a negotiated solution, it is hard to imagine that it would look kindly on this even more ambitious undertaking.

Still, these are days of awesome and unprecedented U.S. intervention in the Middle East. The administration has begun an enterprise in Iraq, for example, that could cost more than \$100 billion and result in more than 100,000 American troops staying there for years. Is it so inconceivable that the United States would be prepared, for a small fraction of that cost, to help resolve a festering problem that fuels Muslim anti-Americanism, generates terrorism, jeopardizes the future of Israel, and inflicts terrible hardship on Palestinians and Israelis alike? As the president himself noted recently, "the security of our nation and the hopes of millions depend on us, and Americans do not turn away from duties because they are hard." 🌐