Introduction

Solutions to refugee problems have traditionally been divided into three categories: voluntary repatriation, local integration in the country of asylum, and resettlement from the country of asylum to a third country. The first option might be perceived as the most ‘natural’ option but it is also the most complicated. I prefer to call it “return migration” to emphasize the fact that it is a migration like any other migratory movement. It involves a complex legal framework, institutional arrangements as well as favorable political, economic and social conditions, and, in addition, the international environment is very important to enable such movement. Since the optimism that surrounded the end of the Cold War, a number of large repatriation operations have taken place and there was hope that lasting solutions might be found for many of the world’s refugee problems.

This article has as its objective to look at the lessons for Palestinian return migration that can be drawn from experience elsewhere in the world. It will start by examining the paradigmatic development in the international environment and the historical role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), what will be called the “international refugee regime”. Then I will discuss specific cases of return migration and draw some conclusions regarding eventual Palestinian return.

The International Refugee Regime

The international refugee regime is a generic regime that was initiated by the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees, and amplified by the 1967 protocol to

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1 - Although, Sari Hanafi is the director of Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Center, Shaml, this work reflects only his views.
deal with refugees around the world. Today, 145 states have signed one of these two UN refugee treaties and undertaken to provide protection (in its different forms: permanent, temporary, preventive) and assistance for individuals who have left their home countries, and who meet the treaty definition of the term “refugee.”

The implementing institution under the generic regime is UNHCR. When UNHCR began operations in January 1951, it had a staff of 34 people based mainly in Geneva with a budget of about USD 300,000. Over the course of the next five decades, the agency grew into a global institution with 268 offices in 114 countries, a staff of more than 5,500 people and a budget of just over USD 1 billion. UNHCR currently helps approximately 20 million people around the world. (Helton, 2002) This international refugee regime developed and passed through different trends. It should be remembered that the international refugee regime is not only a regime of international law, but one that has also been instrumental in the recent emergence of “refugee studies” as an academic or “applied academic” specialization. Much social scientific research – whether resulting in policy recommendations, development reports, or academic articles - has been conducted in formal connection with (and often funded by) these international organizations (Malkki, 1995: 506).

The major historical development of the refugee regime was the emergence of a new paradigm of rights for refugees elaborated against the legacy of World Wars I and II. In the past, Russian, Armenian and Hungarian refugees were promptly disenfranchised (by having their legal papers revoked) by the new Soviet or Turkish governments, etc. It is important to note that starting with World War I, many European states began to introduce laws that made it possible for their own citizens to be denaturalized. The first was France, in 1915, with regard to naturalized citizens of "enemy" origins. In 1922, the example was followed by Belgium, which revoked the naturalization of citizens who had committed "anti-national" acts during the war. In 1926, the Fascist regime in Italy passed a similar law concerning citizens who had shown themselves to be "unworthy of Italian citizenship", and in 1933 it was Austria's turn, and so forth, until in 1935 the Nuremberg Laws divided German citizens into full citizens and citizens without political rights.

The second major development is related to globalization as it has affected possibilities for asylum seekers or the choices open to refugees for permanent solutions after the end of conflicts. Refugee movement and mobility should thus be understood in the larger context of globalization and international migration. There are currently some 170 million international migrants who reside outside their countries of birth. This migration trend will continue so long as population growth continues to decline in the more developed regions. As for forced migrants, throughout history most refugee movements have tended to result in permanent exile of a major part of the displaced populations. (Rogge, 1994: 21) During the Cold War, the international community viewed resettlement as the preferred option; repatriation was incompatible with foreign policy objectives and refugees were often pawns in the

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2 A refugee was defined as a person who, “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

3 Rogge refer to Norwood who demonstrated this argument with his exhaustive treatise on religious refugees in history. He refer also to Simpson with his review of Europe’s refugees during the inter-war years, and Proudfoot and Vernant with their examinations of the population displacements brought about by the Second World War. (Rogge, 1994: 21)
superpowers’ proxy wars, as in the case of the Afghani refugees used by the United States against the former Soviet Union. Now, however, resettlement is less possible not only because of the rise of anti-immigration sentiments in Europe, Australia, and elsewhere but also as the resettlement procedures have become enmeshed in national security considerations. Apart from special bilateral resettlement initiatives, UNHCR often serves as a gatekeeper in terms of referring individual vulnerable cases to resettling countries (Helton, 2002: 185). The 1990s thus became the decade of repatriation. In the few years between the refugee returns to Namibia in 1989 and the returns to Mozambique in 1993–94, UNHCR’s role in repatriation operations changed profoundly. In previous decades, UNHCR’s involvement in repatriation operations was generally short-term and small-scale and the organization focused primarily on ensuring that refugees returned safely. The repatriation operations in Central America, Cambodia and Mozambique involved a new and broader approach. In each case, UNHCR played a major role in UN peace-building operations, and humanitarian repatriation and peace-building activities became integrated into a wider strategic and political framework aimed at ensuring reconciliation, reintegration and reconstruction (UNHCR, 2000).

**Lesson learnt from the Refugee return experiences**

On return migration I will draw some lessons from the generic regime and the different refugee experiences. The political, sociological and institutional dimensions of return migration will also be discussed.

**Political Dimension**

What is the relationship between repatriation and conflict? The repatriation process (or at least the possibility of repatriation) in many cases is a central issue to resolve conflicts, including when the conflict is an ethnic one, like in Namibia, Cambodia, Western Sahara, Bosnia and Rwanda. The non-return of refugees in the Rwanda case has led to a genocide. Barakan (2004) argues that in ethnic conflicts the return of refugees provokes a revival of the conflict and he thus draws the conclusion concerning the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that there should be no return of refugees. He made extensive use of the Bosnian case. I disagree with his argumentation for two reasons: First, the reason refugees did not return in the Bosnia case was not due to any danger to a resolution of the conflict but because Bosnian refugees did not see a future in their destroyed cities and preferred to stay in other European countries. If Europe decides to implement a Marshall plan for this post-conflict country, then return will become more significant. Secondly, the nature of the conflict in Palestine/Israel is more colonial than ethnic. By this I mean that one group of people replaced the indigenous population. This remembered legacy is very important and in itself constitutes a cause for the revival of the conflict. Resolving this conflict is to render justice to the indigenous population by allowing them to exercise their right of return and there can be no resolution, even territorially, if the Israeli responsibility for the

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4 The contemporary discourse on immigration, which makes of the asylum seeker an ‘outsider inside’, is based on the sovereign myth and its body politic that conceives of the state as a container, as a ‘body endangered by migrants’ who ‘penetrate’ its borders (Bigo, 2002, pp. 68-9)

5 In other cases repatriation did not become central, e.g. Nicaragua, Mozambique, Lebanon and Guatemala.
birth of the Palestinian refugee problem is not addressed. The ethnic argumentation could certainly influence Israeli policies in term of regulating return migration (places where Palestinian returnees can live; land restitution or not, etc.) but it cannot be the raison d’être of the return.

The return option cannot be exercised without addressing the question of compensation and land restitution. International experience shows the importance of finding a mechanism that can be quickly launched and which includes provisions for return, integration, land restitution and compensation. For those desiring to return to long-lost lands and houses, confirmation of title may be crucial, particularly if currently occupied by others. For this purpose, a restitution mechanism could be used to award possession to returning refugees, like the Bosnian Commission for Real Property Claims of Displaced Persons and Refugees (CRPC) established under Annex 7 of the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. The Bosnian property commission is a mixed body of international and national commissioners, with three international members appointed by the president of the European Court of Human Rights and six national members, of which four are appointed by the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and two by the Republika Srpska. The commissioners have been supported by some 400 local staff and 12 regional field offices. As of March 2003, CRPC had resolved 81 percent of the 318,780 claims submitted for consideration. This has required a deep investigation into the complicated amalgam of historical legal traditions relating to the registration of property ownership, ranging from methods used under the Austro-Hungarian system to more recent socialist law enactments, in order to confirm title (Helton, 2002).

The experience in Bosnia also shows, however, that, while land restitution was partially successful, compensation was very difficult. The Bosnian government did not have the financial resources to contribute to the fund and international donors were not interested in financing individual compensation. Donors were much more interested in reconstructing homes, rebuilding roads, hospitals, schools and other public infrastructure (Badil, 2003).

When it comes to the Palestinian case two problems must be acknowledged. The first is the fact that the large majority of Palestinian property claims seem to concern less than five dunums of land. This means that the cost of a claim could be more expensive than the amount of compensation (Tamari, forthcoming). This could be resolved with lump sum agreements, as some international experience suggests. In fact, there is a long history of using international claims tribunals to settle disputes, many dealing with alien property. From the Jay Treaty of 1794 between the United States and Britain, until World War II, claims tribunals were often used to effect war reparations. Such tribunals, however, came to be considered too slow and overly expensive, leading increasingly to the use of lump sum agreements. These involved state-to-state payments, with the claimant state expected to distribute funds to

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6 The CRPC completed its work in 2004.
7 In fact, land restitution is important even if the refugees and displaced persons did not wish to return to their homes of origin. In this case they “were able to repossess their property and then place the property on the open market for sale or exchange. In the end this procedure provided refugees and displaced persons with more money than they might have received from a state or international compensation process and it proved to be a less complicated and more efficient process. With dividends from the sale of their properties, refugees and displaced were able to build or purchase a new home and start a business elsewhere.” (Badil, 2003)
individuals and the paying state obtaining a categorical release from its obligations (Helton, 2002).

The second problem concerns practical complications regarding the investigation of title relating to Palestinian property, due to the loss of such titles. Oral history may thus play an important evidentiary role in any claims program. Claimants often face great difficulties in proving their claim due to the length of time that has passed, the destruction or loss of documentary evidence during a war or because the claimant was a peasant who worked the land without owning it. The use of oral history would not be unprecedented. All claims programs addressing injustices from the Nazi era and World War II take these difficulties into account and apply relaxed standards of proof in their proceedings. Three programs were established with the help of the International Organization of Migration (IOM) to deal with such claims. The first is the Claims Resolution Tribunal for Dormant Accounts (CRT I) that was established in 1997 to resolve claims to dormant accounts (accounts opened in Swiss banks by non-Swiss nationals or residents that have been dormant since May 9, 1945) that were made public by the Swiss Bankers Association in July and October 1997. The second program is the Claims Resolution Tribunal - Deposited Assets Claims (CRT II). After completion of all claims filed to accounts published by the Swiss Bankers Association, the Claims Resolution Tribunal in a different process undertook to process another 32,000 claims from Nazi victims or their heirs to assets deposited in Swiss banks in the period before and during World War II. These claims were filed following the settlement of the Holocaust Victim Assets class action litigation in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York. The relevant provision in the rules of procedure applies a relaxed standard of proof, as in article 17. The last

8 In September 2001, the Tribunal completed the resolution of all 9,918 claims it had received. Information about the Tribunal, including some sample decisions can be found at www.crt-ii.org/_crt-i/.
9 Regarding the relaxed standard of proof, Article 22 of the Tribunal's Rules of Procedure: “The claimant must show that it is plausible in light of all the circumstances that he or she is entitled, in whole or in part, to the dormant account. The Sole Arbitrators or the Claims Panels shall assess all information submitted by the parties or otherwise available to them. They shall at all times bear in mind the difficulties of proving a claim after the destruction of the Second World War and the Holocaust and the long time that has lapsed since the opening of these dormant accounts.

A finding of plausibility requires, inter alia, that all documents and other information have been submitted by the claimant regarding the relationship between the claimant and the published account holder that can reasonably be expected to be produced in view of the particular circumstances, including, without limitation, the history of the claimant's family and whether or not the published account holder was a victim of Nazi persecution; and that no reasonable basis exists to conclude that fraud or forgery affect the claim or evidence submitted; or that other persons may have an identical or better claim to the dormant account.”
10 The claims resolution process is still ongoing and further information can be found at www.crt-ii.org. Source: interview with IOM officers.
11 Article 17 elaborates on the standard of plausibility and the source of information: “1. Standard of Plausibility Each Claimant shall demonstrate that it is plausible in light of all the circumstances that he or she is entitled, in whole or in part, to the claimed Account.

2. Sources of Information for Determinations
program is the Property Claims Commission at the German Forced Labor Compensation Program. This commission was established to determine property claims filed as part of the German Forced Labor Compensation Program and applies a similarly relaxed standard of proof.

While all these three programs operate on the basis of written proceedings and there are usually no oral proceedings, written statements by claimants providing information about family history based on oral narratives that claimants heard from family members have been considered sufficient to render a claim plausible. This is so in particular, if the information provided by the claimant matches other information available, such as archival information or, as in the case of the claims processes before the Claims Resolution Tribunal, undisclosed information contained in bank records.

Furthermore, oral history together with other historic research may also provide important reference material for decision makers as to what happened at certain times and in certain areas. In the above-mentioned claims programs, such reference material has led to the development of certain assumptions, for example regarding the treatment of particular claimant groups in a certain area at a certain time or regarding the causal connection between the loss suffered by the claimant and the actions by the relevant authorities, thus relieving claimants of the burden of having to show it in each individual case.

These three programs set up a precedent in the history of compensation for victims of conflict and it should provide a very interesting case study to prepare land restitution and compensation for Palestinians. But while the precedent allows the use of oral history, oral history and oral narration should be always linked to some kinds of documentary evidence. The objective of the use of oral history is to fill the gaps and also help decision makers understand the extent of some problems and their psychological dimension.\(^\text{12}\)

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In making determinations on Admissibility and Awards, the CRT shall use, to the maximum extent possible, the records and files available under Articles 3-6, the information submitted by the Claimant, and, to the extent that the CRT deems relevant, other sources of information. Other sources of information may include, but are not limited to, records of the Austrian State Archives and archives of other government records of the New York State Holocaust Claims Processing Office, reports of the Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland - Second World War (the "Bergier Commission"), and any other historical and factual material available to the CRT. The CRT shall at all times bear in mind the difficulties of proving a claim after the destruction of the Second World War and the Holocaust and the long period of time that has elapsed since the opening of the Accounts." Source: IOM.

\(^{12}\) As an example the fund for compensation of Jewish property in East Europe has a list of account holder from Jewish organizations. In the case of a doctor, residing in Vienna, someone claimed that this doctor was his uncle attempting to prove that by the some of information he knew about him but he did not have any evidence. IOM actually accepted this narration as it was linked to documentary evidence (the list of account holders). In the same vein, when someone tells IOM that his uncle was not be able to practice his profession as doctor in the Nazi German era, IOM can crosscheck this claim with the law in the area where he used to live.
The sociological dimension of return concerns the nature of the modes and forms of the repatriation process, but before I get there, I will deal with the question of numbers repatriated in post-conflict areas as they raise some methodological problems.

Working with UNHCR’s data on refugee movements, one quickly sees that the number of refugees returning to their countries of origin (once return is possible) is far less than the number who chooses resettlement in the host country or in a third-party state. According to UNHCR statistics for 2002, only 21 percent of refugees exercised their right of return (2,252,804 returnees), and that year was exceptional as Afghans constituted more than 80 percent of the returnees: of the 3,828,852 Afghan registered refugees, 47 percent returned, mainly from Pakistan, Iran, and Tajikistan. In many places, statistics on return hide a lot of problems. For instance, the statistics are based on border crossings while anthropological verification shows that refugees often become internally displaced, as in the case of PLO returnees to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In addition, sometimes refugees do not stay long after returning.

There are several reasons behind the rather small percentage of return, chiefly the structure of the global labor market and insecurity in the post conflict area. The Bosnian case provides some insights: even before the ink was dry on the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement a vigorous debate was underway about return. Eight-and-a-half years after the signing of the agreement, it is uncontestable that real and tangible progress on the return of Bosnian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) has been made. Close to one million former refugees and IDPs have returned to their pre-war homes and municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H), out of an estimated 2.2 million persons forcibly displaced during the war. As of May 2004 (UNHCR, 2004), these returns significantly include some 411,970 so-called minority returns (to places where another ethnic group [Serbs] is dominant) constituting 18.7 percent of the total number of refugees, in addition to the 543,000 so-called majority returns of persons who returned to municipalities where their own constituent people of Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) are in a numeric majority. However, this general progress has made more apparent the plight of those for whom return in safety and dignity remains problematic. A large number of people remain displaced within the region and are in need of a durable solution. These include some 125,000 refugees from B&H who are in neighboring Serbia and Montenegro and Croatia and some 45,000 refugees outside the region, as well as some 350,000 IDPs (UNHCR, 2003). Thus 18.7 percent of the total number of B&H refugees and IDPs really constitutes a small number of return to a place of a different majority ethnic group, while the return to areas of the same ethnic groups is much more significant.

The partial return of refugees can be explained both by the context shaping international relations between states and to the social change refugees underwent in

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13 Bosnia-Herzegovina, with a population of 4.3 million, was one of six republics of the former Federal State of Yugoslavia. Following the collapse of the communist system in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia disintegrated and war broke out between the ethnically mixed populations of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serbian support for minority Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina led to the expulsion of Muslim and Croat Bosnians from those areas. There was also conflict between Muslim and Croat forces. By 1992, 95 per cent of Muslim and Croats in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina had fled their homes and over 2.2 million people became displaced or refugees.
exile. In recent debates inside the UNHCR, the question has been raised whether the return option is indeed the most popular option for refugees. While repatriation was played down during the ideological confrontation of the Cold War, it emerged with renewed vigor in the 1990s. UNHCR even declared the 1990s as the decade of repatriation. However, somehow repatriation was romanticized and the nature of refugees in the world changed. Many cases of refugees (like the Burmese Muslims) show resistance to return, while others who were technically not stateless preferred to become so rather than to return to their homeland, as in the case of Polish and Romanian Jews who stayed in France or Germany at the end of World War II, or the case today of victims of political persecution and those for whom returning to their homeland would endanger their survival. (Agamben, 1997: 2)

In this context, many specialists in forced migration studies have criticized UNHCR’s tendency to favor repatriation and force refugees to go home. While UNHCR has always recognized as part of its mandate the need to ensure that refugees are not forced back against their will to their countries of origin, this has not always been the implied practice, see for example the UNHCR rations denied Mozambicans in South Africa or Eritreans in Sudan. "Voluntary" repatriation sometimes is a “cover for forced return, or to impede return” (Barkan, 2004: 7) and repatriation from western countries is a general failure. Even when Iraqi or Afghani refugees were offered financial incentives by governments to return very few were willing to do so. While it is clear that refugees were closely involved in the preparation and planning stages of the repatriation process, some research also show that the concept of voluntary repatriation has been applied too broadly and loosely. In many cases, the lack of suitable alternatives obliges refugees to cooperate in their repatriation (Dumper, 2004). Thus, repatriation is mostly involuntary.

Social change in exile also plays a major role in any decision to return. Protracted refugee statuses create new ties in host countries. Rural people become urban and in many receiving countries women are empowered more than their sisters who stay in southern countries. The lesson to be learned for the Palestinian case is that one should disconnect partially the question of the right of return from the sociology of return. Rosemary Sayigh noted that the return of Palestinians has been subject not only to push factors from the host country, but also to a collective desire for return on the part of the refugees (Sayigh, 1977). Daniel Warner (1994: 160), however, disputes the latter interpretation, challenging the “idealized” and “nostalgic” image of voluntary repatriation. Over time, he argues, dispersal distorts the meaning of community and with it the memory of the homeland (Zureik, 1997: 80). The “making strange” of the asylum country often corresponds to the assumption that the homeland or country of

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14 UNHCR was criticized for acquiescing in the coerced return of refugees to Rwanda in 1996, a violation of the duty under international law not to return a refugee to go a place where s/he might experience persecution (Helton, 2002: 22).

15 In late 1978, some 200,000 Burmese Muslims, who had earlier fled to Bangladesh claiming persecution by Burmese authorities, began to return to Burma. This repatriation took place a little over a year following the refugees’ arrival. Only after protracted negotiations between the two governments (Bangladesh and Burma) did Burma finally concede to a repatriation plan. However, when the plan was implemented there was near total resistance among the refugees to return (Rogge, 1994: 23).

origin is not only the normal but the ideal habitat, the place where one fits in, lives in peace and has an unproblematic culture and identity. But one should be careful not to romanticize and idealize the exile and the diaspora as some authors have done.

Up to now, I have talked about repatriation as if people are permanently on the move from place to place. In fact, repatriation takes different forms including an ephemeral form like that of many African refugees and which was labeled “periodic repatriation”. There are many parts of Africa where refugees have crossed a border but stay close to it in anticipation of a speedy return. In many cases, they remain in the same ethnic region or in areas into which they may have traditionally migrated on a seasonal basis. (Rogge, 1994: 31) This form of repatriation could eventually be relevant to Palestinians who prefer to reside in Palestinian territories, or close to Jordan or Egypt, rather than Israel for fear of ethnic friction with the Jewish majority. Any deadline for refugees to choose their place of permanent settlement will fail if the peace process does not create a flexible time-space framework.

Institutional Arrangement

The international community has in the past set up both institutional arrangements and legal regulations to deal with refugees and asylum seekers. However, while alleviating the humanitarian aspect of the problem of refugees these do not sufficiently address refugees’ political identity and thus the question of return. Many experiences show that investment by the international community to support return is very limited17, and thus the large majority of refugees return without any significant help from international organizations. Significant repatriation efforts over the recent past have included Cambodia where between March 1992 and April 1993 UNHCR repatriated an estimated 370,000 refugees at the cost of some USD 128 million. In Mozambique, some 1.7 million refugees (from six neighboring countries) returned home from 1992 to 1996, an effort upon which around USD 150 million was spent. In the case of Namibia, over 40,000 refugees were repatriated by UNHCR at a cost of USD 36 million (Helton, 2002).

In terms of specific institutional arrangements for return migration, the international community shows an inclination toward regional conferences to collect the country in conflict generating the refugees and its neighbors in order to prepare the region to allow refugees the choice between resettlement and repatriation.

The different experiences of the international regime suggests that Palestinians should avoid depending on one organization alone. I propose here that UNHCR and IOM be responsible for the return of refugees or their resettlement in third countries, as they have the most experience in such work, while the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), UNDP and the World Bank should be in charge of integration of Palestinian refugees who want to stay in their host countries. UNRWA should also extend its mandate to include temporary protection (Akram and Rempl, 2003). The PLO, the PNA and UNRWA could create an overarching institution with three functions: 1- a support and advice unit for refugees to guide them to the best solution on a case-by-case basis; 2- coordinating the work between these organizations; 3- be responsible for fundraising for the whole process. For especially the first function, this

17 In 2001, Afghani refugees were given around $50 per family for repatriation (Helton, 2002: 182).
umbrella should work closely with the popular committees in the camps and the different NGOs dealing with the refugee populations.

For *resettlement in third countries*, what is needed is legislation rather than institutional arrangements. A more serious impediment to a significant resettlement effort concerns the difference between the Palestinian definition of a refugee and the general definition elaborated by the UNHCR. The immigration and refugee laws of the main resettlement countries generally incorporate the UN refugee standard. If Palestinian refugees are to be resettled in significant numbers, then adjustments would likely have to be made in numerous national legal systems. Potential resettling governments will thus have to review their laws and make any necessary amendments in order to establish new or expanded humanitarian admissions that would cover Palestinians (Helton, forthcoming).

**Economic dimension**

If some returnees will consume from the resources of the place to which they return, others will bring capital and expertise sufficient to generate improvements to the country’s economy. Some studies have demonstrated that the capital influx and investment that accompany the return of professionals generates investment. This type of investment is significantly different from the classical model of remittances studied in the Arab world (Hanafi, 2001), which were dominated by limited economic benefits and negative effects of migration, weak investment of remittances in productive activities, and inflation provoked by the transfer of currency (Saad Al Din and Abdel Fadil, 1983; Fergany, 1988).

Contrary to studies that view returnees as a future burden on Palestinian society and that studied the absorptive capacity of Palestinian refugees from a narrow and short-term economic perspective, other studies have shown great potential benefit from the absorption of returnees, considering the new dynamics and positive externalities that might be established by their return (Van Hear, 1996). The Oslo transition period generated a high rate of growth in the Palestinian territories. Gross domestic product and gross national product before the Intifada were higher than in neighboring countries, with the exception of Israel. If this level is regained, the Palestinian territories will attract refugees at least from Jordan and Egypt, especially if family members contribute at the initial stage. Some Palestinians might also move from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank, where income is higher. This also applies to Israel, where future government policy will determine whether Palestinian workers, engineers, and Information Technology professionals can assume or resume residence there.

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18 In 1978, a sample survey conducted by Khader and Badran in Jordan found that about half of the remittances from Jordanian workers in Kuwait were channeled towards investment purposes, including 20.5 percent to education alone (Khader and Badran: 1987:41; cited by Husseini, 2000).

Many studies, like those of Nicholas Van Heer (1997), have provided us with very enlightening conclusions drawn from several case studies about return migration as a generator of employment that also encourages an economy to flourish. Van Heer studied four return experiences. The first was the case of the 50,000 Asians who were expelled from Uganda in 1972 and a subsequent limited return (some 7,000) two decades later, which was an important factor in the recovery of the Ugandan economy. The second case dealt with the forced exodus of 300,000 ethnic Turks from Bulgaria to Turkey in mid-1989. In this case, external assistance aided integration greatly. The third case concerned the exodus of 350,000 of Palestinians from Kuwait and other Gulf States most of whom went to Jordan. The mass migration from Kuwait and the Gulf represented a ten percent growth in Jordan’s population, increasing it to approximately 3.8 million. While the immediate consequences of the mass arrival were negative and disruptive, some longer term benefits with great potential for the national economy became apparent within the first two years. Two factors played a major role in the positive economic impact: First, the majority of returnees were well-educated and skilled professionals who immediately entered the labor market; secondly, the migration was accompanied by a large influx of capital (estimated at some $1.5 billion - Central Bank of Jordan in 1992). The economic behavior of the returnees and the manner of their social integration could tell us much about what to expect in the territories. In all these three cases, external assistance was a positive factor in integration. In comparison, the expulsion of 800,000 Yemenis from the Gulf states, with no external assistance in the late 1990’s, showed a negative impact on the society of origin.

We can also draw lessons from the Israeli experience. Israel had a high rate of investment during the peak period of migration. Between 1950 and 1955, the investment rate was 13 percent, and during the waves of Soviet Jewish migration between 1988 and 1992 the rate reached 13.6 percent (Naqib, 2003: 45).

**Conclusion**

Finally, I would conclude that the lessons from the international refugee regime and from different return migration experiences indicate not only what is likely to be the volume of repatriated refugees but also the pattern of this return migration.

The political, social, economic and institutional dimensions of return migration vary from case to case, according to the time-span of exile and the nature of the political conflict. In spite of this diversity, there are always themes repeating: the return of refugees does not mean the return of the whole refugee community; the conflict in almost all cases cannot be settled without the resolving the refugee component; the return of refugees is not necessarily an economic burden for the place of origin; return is not a necessary a permanent movement but it is part of a transnational movement in which returnees maintain social, economic and political ties to their previous host country; the ‘homeland’ is not anymore a concept which refers exclusively to the place of origin. This last issue especially needs more attention.

The return of refugees, as many experience demonstrated, is a new migration. Thus it is by definition a complex process of economic, social and cultural adaptation and integration with the new the place of origin while keeping some ties with the previous place, especially in the case of the protracted refugee status creates. Rural people become urban, and women are empowered in many receiving countries, much more
than their sisters who stay in the some Southern countries. The lesson to be learned
for the Palestinian case is that one should disconnect partially the question of the right
of return from the sociology of return.

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