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“September” needs Israel's "awakening" and not politician's bluffs

By

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Yossi Alpher's proposal of "Buying into Palestinian Statehood" (New York Times, June 24, 2011) is based on the following wishful assumptions for the "day after":

- President Abbas will not consider his mission as accomplished and resign, but stay on to rule and negotiate.
- "The President's men" will stay in office or survive in any election and negotiations will continue as "business as usual"!
- Palestinian society will remain divided between Fateh and Hamas, and the latter will not change its positions.
- A Palestinian state can be reached without compromising on Jerusalem and without a fair and just implementation of UN Resolution 194 (1948) on the right of return.
- Palestinians will accept the term "Jewish State" and agree on territorial swaps and not demand the full implementation of the UN Partition Resolution 181 (1947) in terms of land [56.47% for the Israeli state and 42.88% for the Arab state and an international zone of around 0.65%].
- Palestinians will continue under the "prison culture" of 44 years of occupation and behave and carry on Israeli instructions to extend conditionally their "municipal authority" into Gaza, including crushing of Hamas, notwithstanding Palestinian reconciliation.
- Israel's "security arrangements" in the Palestinian state will resemble those of today in disregard of both Palestinian security needs and the new state's call for international protection.
- The Arab peace initiative of 2002 is still on the negotiation table after a decade of Israeli refusal and reservations.

However, Israel would be well advised to have its own "awakening" on the September episode before it will be too late and free itself from the bluffs of Netanyahu and his likes.

The PLO/PA is determined to submit its bid for recognition of the Palestine State based on the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital to the UN General Assembly by July 20th. This historical decision is of equal importance to that of the mutual PLO-Israel recognition in 1993. A look at the internal, regional and international factors that led to this decision demonstrates why the above assumptions are beside the point.

Internally, the UN vote will:

- empower Palestine's position in the international arena and by this unite the people behind their leadership as well as strengthen Palestinian reconciliation.
- fill the political vacuum of the futile negotiations.
- free the PLO/PA of its dependency on initiatives, offers and favors of external players and move the conflict into a new arena away .
- mobilize the Palestinian youth to develop a non-violent movement and become part of the culture of the Arab Spring.
- end the "culture of prison" affecting all aspects of life (education, health, economy, tourism, etc.).
- open the door for Palestinians from the Diaspora to return unconditionally.
- end the siege, closure & separation of Gaza.

Regionally, the following factors are significant:

- The Arab Spring has spread its contagious Jasmin fever with the yearning for the birth of civil states, democracy, rule of law and Arab dignity – Palestine being no exception.
- The new Arab League Secretary General Nabil al-Arabi believes that the negotiations process has reached its dead end as the Quartet conditions in the post-Bin Laden era are of the past; as President Obama will not act during his re-election campaign; as the 27 EU member states will not agree on a consensus; and as current Arab rulers, while political, diplomatically and financially supportive of the Palestinians, are not holding on to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and do neither seek direct involvement nor a conflict with Washington. Thus, Al-Arabi favors an international conference under UN auspices and sees September as a "test" in that direction.
- The Arab League and the new Egypt are in full support for the September mission, and Turkey has repeatedly confirmed its full support for Palestine's statehood bid.

Internationally, internationalization of the conflict at the UNGA would:

- open all Palestine files for debates at the UNGA, including unimplemented UN resolutions from over six decades.
- renew discussion on Jerusalem as corpus separatum (including Bethlehem) with ideas on an open, shared (rather than an exclusive Israeli) city.
- expose the vetoes of the US and few others against ending Israeli occupation and the Palestinians' right for self determination.
- have an estimated 2/3rd or more of the UN's 192 member states to stand in clear support and recognition of Palestinian rights.
- have Palestine as a full member in all international bodies, including the International Court of Justice.
- open the opportunity to request protection by international forces and be part of international efforts or debates towards ending Israel colonization drive in Palestine.
- end the Oslo culture of draft agreements, vague negotiations, the PA system, and thus assist the PLO's transformation in to a State.

One thing is sure: Palestinians will not be the same after September! They will have to translate the state recognition into real issues on the ground, such as travel (citizens) and economy (open trade) to name but few. The most important challenge, however, will be to hinder Israel from disturbing the new Palestine enjoying "sovereignty." Then, international protection is the key to follow words (recognition) with deeds!

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