

Strategic Insight

The Roadmap: A Phased Vision for Israel and Palestine

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Strategic Insights are published monthly by the Center for Contemporary Conflict (CCC). The CCC is the research arm of the [National Security Affairs Department](#) at the [Naval Postgraduate School](#) in Monterey, California. The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Naval Postgraduate School, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

August 4, 2003

Since May 2003, President Bush has undertaken a high-profile diplomatic intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even during the war in Iraq, the President made clear his commitment to issue the long-awaited "[Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)", composed by an international Quartet including the United States, European Union, United Nations, and Russia. Official publication on 30 April 2003 was followed by at least putative acceptance by Israel and the new Palestinian Prime Minister [Mahmud 'Abbas](#).

The current White House peace initiative is different than the U.S. approach to the Middle East dispute since Bill Clinton left office. After the [Camp David](#) summit failed in July 2000, the Bush campaign decried the level of American involvement in Israeli-Palestinian affairs. Guided by advisers who believed that the time was not yet ripe for active American mediation, George W. Bush criticized Clinton's frequent intervention into [Israeli-Palestinian minutiae](#). In this view, the 2000 failure undermined U.S. international prestige.

With violence peaking during his first year in office, the President refrained from activism. The White House lukewarmly endorsed the [Mitchell Report](#) and [Tenet Plan](#), and intermittently dispatched envoys to the region. Beyond sporadic condemnation of Palestinian terror and harsh Israeli reprisals, Bush kept out of the fray.

Only after the accumulation of Palestinian-Israeli carnage did President Bush begin to address matters directly. In a [24 June 2002 speech](#), he called on Palestinians to choose new leaders not linked to terror—directly implicating Yasir 'Arafat, head of the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a supporter of terrorism. Bush also promised that a new Palestinian leadership committed to democratic reform would permit the United States to undertake a sustained effort to achieve Palestinian statehood and overall peace.

The U.S./European-encouraged appointment of Mahmud 'Abbas as Palestinian Prime Minister in mid-April 2003 and the publication of the Roadmap were followed by an American-sponsored [4 June summit at 'Aqaba](#), Jordan, where Israel, the Palestinian Authority and friendly Arab regimes pledged commitment to the new initiative. A [25 July visit](#) by Mahmud 'Abbas to Washington—the first by a senior Palestinian to the White House since 2000—was followed by a [29 July meeting](#) between President Bush and Ariel Sharon.

The Roadmap

The Roadmap outlines a three-phase process that will produce a two-state solution and the final end of Arab-Israel-Palestinian conflict in 2005. The Quartet dubs it a "performance-based and goal-driven roadmap, with clear phases, timelines, target dates, and benchmarks aiming at progress through

reciprocal steps." Scheduled tasks consist of a) security undertakings; b) political commitments; and c) a U.S./Quartet/Arab world role:

Phase I: Ending Terror, Normalizing Palestinian Life, Building Institutions

Palestinian Authority (PA)

Security:

- Unequivocal end to violence; visible efforts to prevent attacks on Israelis
- Begin sustained, effective operations aimed at all engaged in terror
- Restructured Palestinian security forces and Israel Defense Forces (IDF) resume cooperation

Political

- Begin draft constitution for Palestinian statehood
- Appoint Palestinian ministers empowered for reform
- Steps to genuine separation of powers, including legal reforms

Government of Israel (GoI)

Security

- No actions undermining trust, including deportations, attacks on civilians confiscation/ demolition of property, destruction of institutions
- Progressive IDF withdrawal from areas occupied since September 28, 2000

Political

- Facilitate travel of Palestinian officials
- Improve humanitarian situation
- Immediate dismantling of post-March 2001 settlement outposts
- Freezing all settlement activity including 'natural growth'

International Role

- Quartet begins informal monitoring, consults with parties on formal monitoring implementation.
- U.S. rebuilding, training and resumed security cooperation in collaboration with outside oversight (U.S.—Egypt—Jordan). Supports comprehensive cease-fire.
- Arab states end support for violent groups.
- Continued donor support through NGOs for private sector development.

Phase II: Transition to Independent Palestinian State with Provisional Borders

PA

Security

- Comprehensive security performance, cooperation

Political

- Elections

- New constitution for democratic state approved by Palestinian institutions.
- Empowered reform cabinet
- Palestinian state with provisional borders

GoI

- Implementation of prior agreements, to enhance maximum territorial contiguity
- Further action on settlements with establishment of a Palestinian state

International Role

- International Conference after Palestinian elections to support economic recovery and independent state with provisional borders.
- Arab states restore pre-intifada links to Israel.
- Multilateral engagement on water, environment, economic development, refugees, arms control.

Phase III: Permanent Status Agreement and End of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Palestine State

- Reform in preparation for final status.
- Effective security performance

Palestine-Israel

- Permanent status agreement in 2005
 - Agreed, realistic solution to refugee issue
 - Resolution on Jerusalem accounting for political-religious concerns of both sides
 - Two states living side-by-side in peace and security.

International Role

- Second Conference at beginning of 2004
 - Endorse independent Palestinian state with provisional borders
 - Begin process leading to permanent status resolution in 2005
 - Support progress toward a comprehensive Middle East settlement.
- Arab state acceptance of full relations with Israel and comprehensive peace.

The New, the Old... and the Problematic

In the context of the [1979 Camp David Accords](#), 1991 Madrid Process, [1993 Oslo Declaration of Principles](#), the Mitchell Report, and Tenet Plan, the Roadmap is a combination of old and new initiatives:

The (At Least Rhetorically) New

Unlike Oslo, the Roadmap espouses establishing a sovereign Palestinian State within secure borders as a basis to ending the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Likewise, it requires Israel both to dismantle post-March 2001 settlements and to freeze new activity in the Territories—including "natural growth" of settlements, while casting Israelis and Palestinians as equal negotiators; unlike Oslo, the PA is no longer an implied junior partner. Conversely, the Roadmap assumes the PA—both as conceived in 1993 and after three

years of armed conflict with Israel—is unsuited to peacemaking, security, or democratic governance, and requires radical reform.

The Roadmap also calls for several international bodies (the Quartet, multi-lateral groups) and procedures (international conferences) to facilitate the peace process, indicating Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation is too important to be left to Israelis and Palestinians. In this conception, international involvement will increase over time. Finally, the Quartet has stipulated concrete actions for both sides, to be taken according to a timetable.

The Old

As in the Oslo vision, the Roadmap prescribes phased disengagement, negotiation, and attainment of sovereignty, rather than a one-time final status deal. The three phases are to reinvigorate cooperation and confidence, requiring Israeli-Palestinian interaction, coordination, and agreement on security, political, territorial, and humanitarian matters. And, as has been the case since the mid 1970s, foreign funding and expertise will aid peace and state making.

Again reminiscent of the Carter years and first Bush presidency, bilateral reconciliation is intended to midwife regional peace. Syria, Lebanon, countries with some ties with Israel after Oslo (Tunisia, Qatar, etc.), and ostensibly Saudi Arabia and Iraq will join the peace process. Progress in Israeli-Palestinian relations will strengthen the contribution the peace process makes to regional stability, just as broader Arab-Israeli reconciliation will buttress the Palestinian-Israeli track, through multilateral involvement region-wide issues.

Problems

The most glaring shortcoming in the Roadmap is the lack of an enforcement mechanism. There is no entity to verify Israeli-Palestinian fulfillment of commitments. What will prevent Israel from security measures or settlement contrary to the Roadmap, aside from international opprobrium—which Israelis have come to expect in any event from an assumedly anti-Semitic world? PA foot-dragging on preventing terror or reforming the political system can always be explained by the fragility of the PA's security arm, or the vagaries of internal PA maneuvering.

Conversely, holding parties responsible for their conduct might derail the process on "technicalities," with implications for U.S. prestige. The enforcement-coercion gap is all the more problematic given the telescoped timetable: Phase I should have already been completed according the Roadmap text; Phase II is to last from June 2003 to December 2003, while the whole conflict is slated to end in 2005.

Second, incorporating other countries, international bodies, and NGOs into the peace process means that the "Quartet +" formula depends on domestic political and economic stability in many countries and the ability to keep the Palestinian-Israeli issue at the center of a crowded global agenda. Similarly, all the principal Arab states have their own unique interests vis-à-vis Israel and the Palestinians, and several do not respond well to U.S. entreaties.

A third problem involves rejectionist hijacking. The requirement of ending terror is understandable, and unavoidable. But it is too easy for terror groups to hijack the process, or for Sharon to use Palestinian violence as an excuse not to fulfill commitments.

Finally, the Quartet has put off the hard part of the peace process. The most difficult elements of any Israeli-Palestinian agreement will be the status of [Jerusalem](#) and Jewish settlements in the [West Bank](#) and [Gaza](#), followed closely by the disposition of Palestinian refugees. Left until projected final status negotiations under the Oslo rubric, the Roadmap also leaves these issues until quite late in the game, hoping that successful peacemaking in Phases I and II will have prepared the psychological way forward to a final settlement.

Recent events suggest how these shortcomings might produce important consequences for the overall success of the Roadmap. The protagonists have already missed their timetable goals for Phase I and are already two months into the seven-month period of Phase II. Israelis have refused to release large numbers of Palestinian prisoners citing security concerns, while they continue to build a [fence](#) physically isolating pieces of Palestine. 'Abbas, for his part, has claimed the PA is capable of no more than a three-month ceasefire (*hudna*) with Hamas and cannot yet confront terror head-on—until Israel demonstrates good will by releasing prisoners and ending West Bank "[Bantustanization](#)."

It is perhaps more productive to consider the Roadmap as a rough path catalyzing sustained Israeli, Palestinian, and U.S. engagement rather than a foolproof plan that guarantees peace. Yet, if chief protagonists fail to live up to even the most flexible interpretation of the timetable, the process itself risks corruption by mistrust, disaffection, and the strengthening of antagonistic forces—in this case Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Fatah break-aways, and the Israeli settler movement. Thus, the absence of a credible mechanism with clearly articulated, agreed-upon criteria specifically tasked to hold Israelis and Palestinians to their commitments at the risk of material consequences may indeed prove to be the Achilles heel of the Roadmap.

Fair Assumptions

If the United States government concludes that the American regional and global strategic interest truly requires full Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation, the Bush administration will have to come to grips with certain realities.

Atmospherics and Domestic Pressures

Israeli and Palestinian officials are not willing or able to cooperate fully with each other. Ignoring this fact for the sake of an Oslo-reminiscent "[sliding into peace](#)" cannot work. Three years of bloody, grotesquely visceral violence have opened up such a wide emotional-psychological rift between the mainstream of Palestinian and Israeli society that relying on gradual confidence building to suspend confrontational disbelief is delusive.

As for Palestinian political realities, Mahmud 'Abbas may be a fine *diplomat*, but he is as yet quite weak as a Palestinian *politician*—and he is viewed as such by the Palestinian street and Israeli security officials alike. He has no autonomous power base in Palestinian society, and is without the prestige of a guerrilla past.

'Abbas is an American imposition on 'Arafat, and the latter has worked to undermine him with all his substantial levers of influence. This includes reorganizing policy-making bodies to rein in 'Abbas; subjecting him to public tongue lashings; and disassociating himself from the Roadmap. Likewise, Palestinian security chief [Muhammad Dahlan](#) does not "own" the PA's several security formations, which are loyal to individual commanders allied with 'Arafat, or are controlled by 'Arafat alone.^[1] Of course, three years of fighting have so gutted Palestinian forces that they cannot take on elements opposed to the Roadmap.

For 'Abbas to confront rejectionist groups while carrying forward reforms of the PA, he will require the greatest leeway in fulfilling the very commitments he assented to in Phase I of the Roadmap. Indeed, taking the 'Arafat lesson, 'Abbas is likely to find that rejecting U.S. desires—and Israeli pressures—increases his popularity among Palestinians.

In the medium term, requirements of peacemaking will thus negatively impact on the domestic status, even personal safety, of the fellow travelers on the Roadmap—for Sharon as well as 'Abbas. And, no Arab-Israeli negotiations have ever occurred without the expectation of positive domestic results.

Procrastinating

Oslo postponed the most emotional, symbolic, and fundamental issues to some indeterminately-timed final status negotiation, assuming good will would smooth the way to a final settlement. Part of that good will meant no side would take unilateral moves by creating irreversible facts on the ground.

The past ten years have shown that Israelis and Palestinians do not abstain from actions prejudicing final outcomes: ongoing negotiating processes set off a frenzy of these acts. Ironically, then, those basic, currently "insoluble" issues—in particular settlements and Jerusalem—that could derail a fragile process if mooted at the outset could ultimately demolish what will only be a house of cards if they are not taken up now in some meaningful way.

A Genie Too Big for the Bottle

Terror will not go away. No ceasefire will evolve into groups like Hamas, Islamic Jihad, or even Jewish fringe groups laying down their arms. No humanitarian-economic aid avalanches will decrease their appeal among a core constituency whose very identity requires principled, unyielding opposition to the other side. Bombings, infiltrations, massacres will continue, likely spiking during periods of intense negotiations, and persisting for years after a settlement.

Best Practices

Any American government at this stage in the game will have to observe certain Peace Process standard operating procedures:

1. **Sustained involvement.** Regardless of criticisms of the Clinton years, the most effective way to keep Palestinians and Israelis on the road to peace is intensive American involvement. Expert analysis indicates that rather than the media-attuned Clinton approach, the Carter model of 1978-1980 is essential.^[2] Without continuing high-level American engagement signaling intent and commitment, Israelis will not move and Palestinians will have no faith in the American vision. Recent mediation by Condoleezza Rice implies that the White House might have concluded this as well.

Hopefully, the Bush administration will empower Assistant Secretary of State [John Wolf](#) to become involved in the details of peacemaking. He will have to be crystal-clear to Israeli and Palestinian interlocutors about what they must do to further the process. Flexibility is important, but concrete expectations of substance and time, particularly on settlements and terror, must be repeatedly articulated.

2. **Monitoring, holding to account.** U.S. officials, along with Quartet members, will need to devise a credible system for ensuring Israeli-Palestinian fulfillment of commitments. A [trusteeship](#) or foreign armed forces are non-starters. Instead U.S. policy makers must craft concrete disincentives to recalcitrance that persuade Sharon, 'Abbas, and 'Arafat that the opportunity cost of departing from the Roadmap is too great.

3. **Do not count on friends.** Though linkage between the Israeli-Palestinian process and broader Arab-Israeli reconciliation has conceptual appeal and an air of reassuring finality to it, U.S. officials should not attach themselves to it. It is as yet a tried but untrue proposition that Arab-Israeli reconciliation will be a one-fell-swoop affair; it is to be encouraged, but is far from integral to a process that already has too many variables ready to hijack it.

4. **Force force protection.** Israel is likely much better suited to direct-action counter-terror operations in Israel and the Territories than American forces. Yet, the United States can incorporate into the War on Terror a vigorous, sustained campaign to undermine rejectionist groups' global funding. A combination of diplomacy, police-work and limited armed intervention in cooperation with friendly regimes can also disrupt training sites, contact points, and arms sources within Arab and Middle Eastern countries. Such initiatives might drive groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and [Hizbullah](#) to focus more energy on force

protection and less time on peace process-derailing acts of violence, while making the cost of affiliation with them too high for all but the most committed.

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For related links, see our [Middle East Resources](#).

References

1. Christopher Coope and Guy Chazan, "In the Crossfire: Once in Intifada, A Palestinian Now Must Hold it Back," Wall Street Journal 7/15/03, A1.
2. See William Quandt, Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab Israeli Conflict Since 1967 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 372-76 in particular.