

Briefing Paper: The Road Map and the Prospects for Peace

1. What are the key issues?

The Palestinians want to establish an independent Palestinian state that includes the West Bank, the Gaza strip, and East Jerusalem. These are the areas originally assigned to the Palestinians in the UN Partition Plan of 1947 (rejected by the Palestinian Arabs at that time) and captured and occupied by Israel in the Six Day War/the 1967 Mideast War. UN Resolution 242 (Nov. 22, 1967) called for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the Six Day War. Palestinians seek a peace agreement that establishes final borders for Palestine consistent with UN resolution 242, recognizes the right of Palestinians to a capital in East Jerusalem, and provides a homeland for millions of Palestinian refugees driven from their lands and homes in Israel as a result of the Israel-Arab war of 1948. This last Palestinian demand is usually referred to as the “right of return.”

Israel wants to keep parts of the lands occupied after the 1967 war where 450,000 Israelis live today. Since 1967, Israel has established Jewish settlements in the western sector of the West Bank closest to Israel. Israel opposes any return of Palestinian refugees to Israel. Israel annexed the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967 and East Jerusalem in 1980. Israeli claims to East Jerusalem have been strengthened over the years by the steady construction of Jewish settlements in the area. Ehud Olmert has indicated that he is willing to relinquish some of the outlying Jerusalem neighborhoods to the Palestinians but insists that the Old City of Jerusalem which contains Muslim Holy sites, remain under Israeli control.

2. Why has the Bush Administration initiated a renewal of the Israel-Palestine peace process?

The Administration’s primary objective appears to be the containment of Iranian power in the region. The invitations to attend the Annapolis conference sent to moderate Arab nations and the exclusion from the conference of Iran and Hamas suggest that the Administration is trying to bolster its influence with moderate Arab nations after its failures in Afghanistan and Iraq. In supporting a renewal of the peace process, the Bush administration may be trying to deprive Iran of the “Palestinian card.” The invitation to Syria (designated by Bush as one of the actors in the axis of evil) is seen by observers as an effort to woo Syria away from the Iranian orbit.

Enfolding the Israel-Palestine peace process within the US-Iranian conflict raises important questions: 1) Is the U.S. vision of its stake in the so called war between civilizations likely to be served by trying to pit moderate, secular Muslim nations against militant Islamic nations/factions? David Wurmser, a former advisor to Dick Cheney, warns that if moderate Arab states are seen to “march off to Annapolis to surrender before U.S. and Israel, that could be a greater gift to the Iranians than anything else Iran could achieve.” 2) Is the participation of Arab nations likely to nudge the U.S. into efforts to moderate Israeli demands? If the U.S. uses its historic influence with Israel, a break-through in the peace process is conceivable. In the absence of American pressure on Israel, a break-through is hard to imagine. 3) Is a long term peace possible if the U.S. continues to treat Iran and Hamas as irrational pariahs and terrorists? The tendency of the Bush Administration to confuse the nation of Iran with the antics of

Ahmadiniyhad does nothing to promote the creation of a stable and peaceful Middle East. Hamas will probably respond to its exclusion by trying to play the spoiler.

3. **Does the Road Map provide a reasonable framework for future peace negotiations?**

The Road Map was proposed by the Quartet (U.S. Russia, UN and European Union) and announced on June, 2002 in a speech by George Bush. On July 1, 2003 Ehud Olmert and Mahmoud Abbas agreed to the creation of two states --a secure state of Israel and a “viable, democratic and peaceful Palestine.”

Phase 1. This is referred to as the “confidence building” phase. Phase 1 called for an end to Palestinian violence and reforms of the PA government including the drafting of a constitution and holding free elections. Israel was supposed to take “all necessary steps to help normalize Palestinian life” including withdrawal from Palestinian areas occupied since Sept. 2000 and the imposition of a freeze on all settlement activity. Phase 1 also envisioned cooperation between Israel, Palestine and the US in the creation of an effective Palestinian security system. The Israeli Defense Force was supposed to withdraw from areas occupied since Sept. 2000 as Palestinian security measures improved. Phase 1 also called for the creation of a donor assistance effort to rebuild Palestine.

Phase 2. The Quartet was to judge the progress of Palestinians toward the creation of governing institutions and their effectiveness in eliminating the threat of terrorism through implementation of security measures. Steps were to be taken to secure “maximum territorial contiguity” for Palestine. The parties were then to move toward an agreement on the creation of provisional borders.

Phase 3. After all conditions had been met, negotiations would move on to the settlement of “final status issues” including borders, Jerusalem, refugees, and Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Appeals for a return to the Road Map should be viewed with considerable skepticism. The process failed for several reasons. 1) It failed because negotiations on the fundamental “final status” issues were postponed until all other conditions had been met. The conditions were never met. 2) **It failed because neither Israel nor the Bush Administration was committed to Israel’s compliance with its responsibilities under Phase I.** Predictably Israel regarded its security needs as the first priority: Sharon insisted that the building and preservation of settlements in the occupied West Bank were essential to its security. The Palestinians bore the heaviest responsibility for demonstrating good faith. The Israelis declared that they would not fulfill their obligations under the Road Map until convinced that the Palestinians had fulfilled theirs. The peace process, they insisted, must be “performance driven.” The Palestinian Authority could not satisfy its more militant elements and guarantee the end to violence so long as Israel failed to take any steps to meet its obligations under the requirements of Phase 1.

By March, 2004 Israel, with the full support of the Bush Administration, abandoned the Road Map. Sharon set his own terms for which settlements should be removed, took steps to ensure the permanence of many of the so-called “unauthorized” outposts and initiated the

construction of new settlements and the expansion of existing settlements. Since Sept. 2000 – the date specified in the original Road Map as the baseline for withdrawal from Palestinian territories -- Israel has changed the facts on the ground. It has constructed an enormous 522 mile barrier that swallows up Palestinian land along the western border of the West Bank and has established a matrix of control over Palestinian movements (constructing by- roads, tunnels, check points, etc.) that, according to a recent UN document, has fragmented the West Bank into a series of enclaves, isolating Palestinian communities from each other and making impossible the development of a sustainable Palestinian economy or a workable two state solution. Sharon did authorize the withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip. After announcing the disengagement from Gaza, Sharon pledged to the Israeli people that the settlement blocs in the West Bank would be retained. He also promised that Palestinian refugees would never be permitted to return to Israel. This pledge had the approval of the Bush Administration. In a letter written to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Bush acknowledged the “legitimacy” of these plans, stating that realities on the ground – meaning existing major Israel population centers in the West Bank -- made it unrealistic to insist on a return to the armistice lines of 1949. He also stated that the US agreed with Sharon’s position that the right of return would mean return to the West Bank, not to Israel. In short, without consulting the rest of the members of the Quartet, Bush radically altered the meaning of Phase I of the Road Map. Ehud Olmert has pursued the plan outlined by Sharon.

All major parties to the meeting in Annapolis have agreed that that they will weave discussion of the final status issues into the entire negotiation process. However, the failure of Israel and the PA to agree to any meaningful preliminary statement of intentions makes it more likely that the parties will return to the shibboleths of the “confidence building process.” Like Sharon before him, Olmert has stated that the dismantling of settlements and the discussion of final status issues can go forward only **after** the Palestinians “dismantle terror infrastructure.” It is not surprising then that Abbas has insisted that Israel must first freeze construction of settlements, dismantle outposts and remove Israel Defense Forces from checkpoints. The confidence building process has once again frozen both parties into historic postures of intransigence.

4. **Do Abbas, Olmert and Bush have the political power required to deliver on the compromises necessary to achieve peace?** Most observers think not. Olmert is under investigation for corruption and for his mishandling of the war with Lebanon. He is besieged on the right by hard-liners who have tied his hands with demands that he give “nothing away.” Ehud Barak, Olmert’s defense minister and rival, stands waiting in the wings should he waiver on security issues. Bush also lacks the political support to carry forward new initiatives. He is gambling on a successful peace process to boost his “legacy.” However, he is hobbled by ties to pro-Israeli elements in the Republican Party, his own indifference to if not ignorance of the issues, and a preference for letting the two sides negotiate the issues on their own. He is very unlikely to play the part of an effective broker. Only time will tell whether Condoleezza Rice can successfully take on the post-summit monitoring that will be required to move the process along.

Abbas has been weakened by the ouster of the PA from Gaza and by Israeli imposed restrictions on his capacity to build robust governing institutions. Although apparently the weakest of the three leaders, Abbas may have unexpected resources. After the ouster of the PA from Gaza in July 2007, the US and Israel, in an effort to destroy Hamas, sought to strengthen Abbas' hand. They, along with the EU, have cooperated in helping the PA create a more effective security system. The PA has made progress towards equipping and training PA police and security forces. US Army Lieutenant General Keith Dayton is currently stationed in the Middle East where he is responsible for training Palestinian Security Forces. In 2007, the EU gave \$1.47 billion in aid to Palestine, an undisclosed portion of which is used to train and equip Palestinian police forces. In recent weeks Israel gave its approval for a shipment of Russian armored vehicles, 1000 rifles and 2 million rounds of ammunition to aid Abbas in this struggle to suppress militant Palestinian groups. The true extent of this cooperation is very hard to judge. Neither Abbas nor Olmert would benefit politically from full disclosure. And the cooperation is fraught with hazards.

Israel complains that Dayton is undermining Israel's security needs by demanding the removal of road blocks and check points and by insisting that Israel do more to help equip PA security forces. The PA complains that Israel is interfering with its own efforts to suppress violence. Although Israel has approved of the PA's deployment of 500 police in the turbulent city of Nablus, the IDF continues to invade refugee camps near Nablus in search of terrorists, thereby undermining public support for PA police forces. The PA police and security forces cannot become effective in their efforts to establish internal security if hampered by Israeli interventions. Israel is unwilling as yet to take the risk of actually permitting the PA to govern. The confidence building issue really comes down to whether Israel can break free of its understandable but crippling obsession with total control over the West Bank. Unless Israel is willing to abandon some of these security obsessions – its matrix of control over PA security activities and the movement of Palestinian peoples and goods – Palestine will be doomed to a form of apartheid that is unjust, and Israel will continue to reap the consequences of its occupation.

Salam Fayyad: Everyone's Favorite Palestinian. The appointment of Salam Fayyad as the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority is perhaps the most promising developments for the future of Palestine and for the region. Fayyad was born after the Nakaba (the Catastrophe). He is the only prominent leader in either Israel or Palestine who has no personal memory of either the Holocaust or the Nakaba. He was born in 1952 in a village near Tul Karm in the West Bank. He is an internationally respected economist (Ph D in economics from the University of Texas at Austin) and diplomat with close ties to Condolezza Rice and members of the Israeli leadership. He worked for eight years at the World Bank and served as the International Monetary Fund's representative to Palestine between 1996 and 2001. He has worked to reform notoriously corrupt Palestinian financial affairs, implemented reasonably successful efforts to establish the rule of law and disarm militias, and has warned Mosques against inciting violence and intimidation.

Fayyad believes that the economic reconstruction of Palestine is an essential component of any successful peace process. According to a report in the *Independent*, a UK newspaper, he has just completed a 33 page “confidential” document outlining a vision for the future of Palestine to be presented to a donor’s conference scheduled for January. The document is intended to convince the international community to finance a \$5.8 billion reconstruction effort over the period 2008-2010. Fayyad’s document warns that no reconstruction is really possible without significant changes in the Israeli occupation regime, specifically the fragmentation of Palestinian territories into isolated cantons created by the tightened grip of economic occupation, settlement growth and severe restrictions on the movement of Palestinian citizens. According to the *Independent* report, reconstruction efforts will focus on improving policing and disarming militant organizations, improving teacher training and school materials, rebuilding the infrastructure of roads and water -processing and delivery, reopening the Gaza airport, and addressing health care and malnutrition issues .

The language of the document reflects some of the principles dear to neo-liberal economists. Fayad pledges that the economy will be “open to markets around the world.” It promises to “slash the public sector deficit,” reform pensions, and repay a substantial proportion of the arrears owed to the private sector and to public employees. The document also promises to realize the “enormous potential of private sector investments.” It is a document to gladden the hearts of most of those involved in the peace process. It addresses Israel’s security issues, outlines plans consistent with the creation of responsible governing institutions in Palestine, and promises profits for investors of all sorts. At this time it is impossible to know whether the Fayyad plan for economic reconstruction will be a Marshall Plan for Palestine or another instance of the shock therapy imposed by “Disaster Capitalism.”¹ On the issues directly relevant to the peace process the document envisions that the future Palestinian state will be in control of West Bank and Gaza, with borders consistent with the pre-June 1967 boundaries and with East Jerusalem as its capital. Tony Blair, the EU’s special envoy to the Middle East, is also at work on plans for Palestine’s economic rehabilitation. Both are working to integrate the anticipated peace process with these economic rehabilitation plans. If the Arab nations can be persuaded to make their own contributions to this plan and if Israel proves cooperative, there may be reason to hope for progress towards peace in the Middle East. Abbas may have more working for him than meets the eye.

5. **Is it possible to imagine a peace plan that Israel and Palestine might agree upon?** When asked to suggest a way out of the impasse, both Israelis and Palestinians will say, off the record of course, that the way forward depends upon the following conditions:
- a) A return to the pre-1967 borders: the Golan Heights should be restored to Syria and the West Bank and Gaza should become the new Palestinian state. An exception should be made for three major Jewish settlement areas which would be annexed by Israel – shorn of the elaborate barriers, walls, check points, by-roads and lands confiscated to ensure Israel’s

- security. In exchange, Israel should surrender a comparable amount of land in Israel to Palestine.
- b) Jerusalem should be divided in a way that provides a capital for both Israel and Palestine in East Jerusalem. An international regime should be created to protect the Holy sites of Jews Muslims and Christians.
 - c) An internationally funded program for the compensation of refugees should be created. The Palestinian refugee should be given the opportunity to move from the camps into the new state of Palestine or into other Arab countries willing to receive them. Funds should be provided for preparing them for their new lives and integrating them into their new communities. The funds for this process should be provided by all countries that have a stake in the future of a peaceful Middle East – Israel, the US, the EU and most importantly other Arab nations.

6. What policies should the U.S. pursue to promote a successful peace process?

Should the US leave the details of any negotiation process up to Israel and the PA?

Should the US take an active role in shepherding the peace process?

What must the US do to perform the role of an effective broker in the peace process?

How should the U.S. define its priorities?

Should the US support a renewal of the process outlined in the Road Map?

Should the US become an active proponent of a Marshall plan for Palestine?

Would the adoption of Fayyad's plan serve as an alternative to the Bush administration's vision of a war of civilizations in the Middle East?

Should the U.S. continue to isolate Iran and Hamas from diplomatic efforts to resolve issues in the Middle East?

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ⁱ Disaster Capitalism is a term used by Naomi Kline (*The Shock Doctrine*, 2007) to refer to the opening of societies reeling from various kinds of disasters to an economic regime that privatizes all national resources and opens markets to the global influences of international capital flows and global corporate entities. (Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Poland, Russia, Iraq, etc.) Often engineered by the World Bank and IMF, the result in many countries has been a dramatic widening of the gap between the poor and the super rich.