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THE ROAD MAP

By Dr. David Morrison

The Road Map is the internationally approved framework for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians about the creation of a Palestinian state. Its full title is *A performance-based roadmap to a permanent two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict* [1].

The Road Map was drawn up by the US and approved by the Middle East Quartet (US, EU, Russia and the UN Secretary General) in 2003. It was accepted by Israel and by the PLO on behalf of Palestinians – and later endorsed by the Security Council.

President Obama assured the PLO that the Road Map would be the framework for negotiations he was seeking to initiate between Israel and the PLO.

Pre-conditions on Israel

The Road Map requires Israel to take a number of well-defined steps prior to the start of negotiations. These include:

- “ Israeli leadership issues unequivocal statement affirming its commitment to the two-state vision of an independent, viable, sovereign Palestinian state living in peace and security alongside Israel ”
- “ GOI [Government of Israel] immediately dismantles settlement outposts erected since March 2001 ” , and
- “ Consistent with the Mitchell Report, GOI freezes all settlement activity (including natural growth of settlements) ” .

These conditions couldn ’ t be clearer: before negotiations start, Israel must

- make a public commitment to an independent, viable, sovereign Palestinian state,
- dismantle all settlement outposts erected since March 2001, and
- freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth

As we will see, Israel has fulfilled none of these conditions, yet the Obama administration is now urging the PLO to enter into negotiations with Israel.

On 25 May 2003, the Israeli Government, headed by Ariel Sharon, approved the Road Map by 12 votes to 7, albeit with reservations [2]. However, these reservations did not relate to the pre-conditions. The PLO accepted the Road Map without reservations.

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The Road Map was endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council in resolution 1515, passed on 19 November 2003, which called on the parties

“ to fulfil their obligations under the Roadmap in cooperation with the Quartet and to achieve the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security ” [\[3\]](#)

And as recently as 16 December 2008, in resolution 1850, the Security Council again called on both parties

“ to fulfil their obligations under the Performance-Based Roadmap, as stated in their Annapolis Joint Understanding, and refrain from any steps that could undermine confidence or prejudice the outcome of negotiations ” [\[4\]](#)

This refers to the Joint Understanding signed by Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas at Annapolis in November 2007 at the outset of the previous round of negotiations between Israel and the PLO. The Joint Understanding committed the two parties to “ immediately implement their respective obligations under the performance-based road map to a permanent two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict issued by the Quartet on 30 April, 2003 ” [\[5\]](#).



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On that occasion, President Bush went so far as to say that “ Israel must demonstrate it’s support for the creation of a prosperous and successful Palestinian state by removing unauthorized outposts, ending settlement expansion, ... ”. But, in practice, Israel never implemented the Road Map pre-conditions on settlements and the Bush administration didn ’t force it to do so.

An independent, viable, sovereign Palestinian state?

When Obama came to power, it looked as if as if he intended to make Israel fulfil the Road Map conditions prior to another round of negotiations.

At the outset, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu wasn ’t prepared to use the word “ state ” to describe the Palestinian entity that might be the outcome of negotiations, let alone make a public commitment to an independent, viable, sovereign Palestinian state as the objective of the negotiations. After pressure from Obama, he did allow the word “ state ” to pass his lips in a speech on 14 June 2009 [\[6\]](#), but he said that the security needs of Israel demanded

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“ clear commitments ” from the US that “ in a future peace agreement, the territory controlled by the Palestinians will be demilitarized ”, by which he meant:

“ without an army, without control of its airspace, and with effective security measures to prevent weapons smuggling into the territory - real monitoring, and not what occurs in Gaza today. And obviously, the Palestinians will not be able to forge military pacts. Without this, sooner or later, these territories will become another Hamastan. ”

Clearly, the “ state ” he had in mind would be neither independent, viable nor sovereign, as required by the Road Map. Rather, it would be firmly under Israeli control, much as Gaza is today. Nevertheless, this seemed to satisfy the Obama administration.

A settlement freeze?

At the outset, both President Obama and his Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, made unusually blunt demands that Israel cease settlement activity. As a result, expectations were raised in the Arab world and further afield that at last the US was going to use its considerable muscle to halt the Jewish colonisation of the occupied Palestinian territories, contrary to Security Council resolutions, that has gone on since 1967. For example, on 27 May 2009, Clinton laid down the law in the following terms:

“ With respect to settlements, the President was very clear when Prime Minister Netanyahu was here. He wants to see a stop to settlements – not some settlements, not outposts, not natural growth exceptions. ... That is our position. ” [\[7\]](#)

However, Israel dug its heels in and refused to comply with these demands, offering to “ restrain ” settlement building instead. And Obama has refused to force Israel to comply, by, for example, suspending a tiny fraction of the US tax dollars that find their way to Israel each year. As time went by, the administration ’s bluntness about Israel ceasing settlement activity melted away and, when he spoke at the UN General Assembly on 23 September 2009, the President announced his surrender to Israel, saying:

“ The time has come ... to re-launch negotiations without preconditions ... ” [\[8\]](#)

Since then, he has been pressurising Palestinians to enter into negotiations with Israel without the Road Map pre-conditions being fulfilled.

Eating the pizza

Settlement negotiations between Israel and Palestinians are no nearer success today than they were nearly two decades ago, when they began. The trigger for these negotiations was the PLO ’s recognition in 1988 of Israel ’s right to exist within its 1967 borders and its adoption of the objective of establishing an independent Palestinian state in the remaining 22% of Palestine. This “ historic compromise ” led to the Oslo agreement in August 1993 and to a series of negotiations under that agreement, culminating in the unsuccessful Camp David talks in July 2000.

Throughout the Oslo process, and subsequently, Israel has relentlessly continued to confiscate Palestinian land in the occupied territories and to plant Jewish settlers on it. In 1988, there were fewer than 200,000 Jewish settlers in the

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occupied territories. When the Oslo process began in 1993, there were about 269,000. By 2000, there were around 382,000. Today, there are around 500,000. (See, for example, *Comprehensive Settlement Population 1972-2008* [9], compiled by Foundation for Middle East Peace),

The territory which is supposed to belong one day to a Palestinian state is being steadily eaten into by Jewish colonisation. This has been the PLO 's reward for recognising Israel' s right to exist and entering into negotiations with it.

Michael Tarazy, a legal advisor to the PLO, once said: "It ' s like you and I are negotiating over a piece of pizza. How much of the pizza do I get? And how much do you get? And while we are negotiating it, you are eating it" . Israel must be forced to stop eating the pizza, otherwise there will be no pizza left to negotiate about.

That ' s why the cessation of settlement activity by Israel is an essential pre-condition for the opening of negotiations with Palestinians. If Israel is not prepared to cease settlement activity, as demanded by the "international community " , in order to facilitate negotiations, then there is, to say the least of it, grave doubt about its willingness to allow the creation of an independent and viable Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

References:

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