

Hudna (Truce) Accord: Getting the Roadmap on the Road?

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Brief Analysis

The Roadmap was never designed to be a blueprint. Instead, it provides a direction and a set of guidelines for Israeli and Palestinian actions. Because the Roadmap was negotiated not by Israelis and Palestinians but by members of the Quartet -- who are not responsible for implementing its steps--no one should be surprised that the Palestinians are redefining its provisions, nor that the Israelis are insisting on various conditions for its implementation. For the Palestinians, the issues of the day--the hudna (or ceasefire) and the Israeli release of prisoners--are not even part of the Roadmap. Both measures make sense insofar as they enable Palestinian prime minister Abu Mazen to produce calm and demonstrate that he can deliver. Abu Mazen believes that he has only a limited capacity to confront Palestinian militants, especially in the West Bank, and that he lacks the political or psychological support for even minimal action. The hudna may provide a means of producing calm without confronting Palestinian militants. From the Israeli standpoint, however, the Roadmap requires not just a truce, but arrests, collection of illegal weapons, and the dismantling of terrorist infrastructure. Initially, the Israelis predicated their withdrawals on seeing these tangible steps; they did not simply assume that the Palestinians would take responsibility for such measures. These conflicting expectations make it clear that the Roadmap will not fulfill its purpose unless it is built on understandings with and between the parties.

What Is Driving the Hudna?

Palestinians have expressed an overwhelming desire to see the current situation transformed. Two-thirds of the Palestinian population live under the poverty line, and internal closures designed to hamper terrorist activity make it impossible for them to lead a normal life. The hudna brings some hope of a return to normalcy. As for Hamas, the group's members recognize the mood of the Palestinian public and its desire for relief. They also want to use the

respite to replenish their capabilities, believing that Israel will provide them with a pretext for resuming the struggle at a time of their choosing.

The Tanzim

The Tanzim leaders, who are in their late thirties to early forties, were responsible for the first intifada and played a major role in the latest one. They endorse a two-state solution and have become a key force behind the drive for a ceasefire as well as the main base of support for Abu Mazen and his chief security aide, Muhammad Dahlan. In their eyes, the intifada has begun to serve Hamas's agenda of continuing struggle, not their own agenda of finding a political solution.

The Crux of the Matter

Abu Mazen's moment of truth will come when he is compelled to take action against the terrorist infrastructure. He is hoping that calm will result in the lifting of Israeli restrictions, which could in turn enable him to fulfill his Roadmap obligations. Yet, calm may make Palestinians reluctant to rock the boat by confronting Hamas at a time when the organization is quietly abiding by a ceasefire.

Adding to Abu Mazen's difficulties is Yasir Arafat's opposition. By playing on Palestinian fears of provoking civil strife, Arafat will oppose the dismantling of terrorist infrastructure and ignore Palestinian responsibilities under the Roadmap, all while implying that Israel is not doing its part. Abu Mazen will need the active support of Arab leaders to carry out his responsibilities and neutralize Arafat's opposition; such opposition already includes financing derogatory leaflets and actively working to undermine the prime minister within Fatah, in his talks with Israelis, and in his efforts to confront groups like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

U.S. Role

The United States has helped to spark the resumption of the peace process. This is a beginning, though, not the end; difficult issues remain. One of the biggest problems with the Oslo process was that the United States did not require accountability. In order to succeed, Washington will have to nurture the logic of responsibility that is emerging on both sides and set standards of performance that are understood by all parties. In particular, Palestinians and Israelis must develop the same understanding of phrases such as "dismantling terrorist infrastructure" and "freezing settlement activity."

DAVID MAKOVSKY

Hudna Accord or Odyssey?

Israel is now faced with both the promise and peril of a hudna. Will it prove to be a hopeful accord or an open-ended odyssey? For now, Israel's desire for calm has converged with the Palestinians' recognition that a hudna provides reformers with the relative calm they need to establish authority and confront the militants. This convergence was reflected in a recent poll showing that 96 percent of Israelis and 80 percent of Palestinians support a mutual cessation of violence. Having renounced violence as a means of resolving the conflict, Palestinian reformers have decided that establishing calm is the best way of encouraging U.S. and Israeli engagement on the Roadmap. Similarly, in his June 16, 2003, speech to the Knesset, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon made clear to his public that Israel needs quiet (not security or peace, as he usually states it), and that changing the current situation will require a period of transition.

If the hudna proves to be more than a means of establishing the reformers' authority—that is, if it becomes a context for dismantling terrorist infrastructure and confiscating weapons, as mandated by the Roadmap—then Israeli attitudes toward it are likely to change. Yet, if the hudna does not develop in this manner, Israelis will begin to view it as a security liability, one that prevents them from confronting Hamas and gives the organization a respite and an

opportunity to rearm. One test of the hudna may be the manner in which the Israeli security services respond to intelligence regarding an imminent attack; according to the ceasefire's terms, Israel must notify the Palestinian Authority (PA) of this sort of security concern. Moreover, it is uncertain how the PA would react to such information.

Confronting Rejectionists

The Bush administration's perspective on the Roadmap and the Aqaba summit emphasizes a commitment to confronting rejectionists early in the process. If this is not done, the rejectionist camp will derail progress toward a final settlement. Confronting such elements is the key to restoring the credibility of the peace process among jaded publics and reinforcing the sense of partnership that is necessary for tough concessions. Former secretary of state Madeleine Albright correctly argued that there is no moral equivalence between Palestinian bombs and Israeli bulldozers because human life is irretrievable. Nevertheless, Israel must demonstrate that it is serious about dealing with its own rejectionists by dismantling the settlement outposts.

The Oslo process of the 1990s witnessed only sporadic efforts to confront rejectionists. Oslo's timetable approach functioned on the assumption that reaching an agreement was the best way of ensuring security. The performance-based approach of the Roadmap is an inversion of that principle, placing the emphasis on behavior modification during its initial phase. Under the new formula, peace does not lead to security—security leads to peace.

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