

The Road Not to Be Taken:

Assessing the Quartet Roadmap for Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking

by [Robert Satloff \(/experts/robert-satloff\)](/experts/robert-satloff)

Oct 23, 2002

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Robert Satloff \(/experts/robert-satloff\)](/experts/robert-satloff)

Robert Satloff is executive director of The Washington Institute, a post he assumed in January 1993.



Brief Analysis

During his visit to Washington last week, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon was reportedly handed a forty-three-point document titled "Elements of a Performance-Based Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." This document, the product of intensive consultation between the four members of the Middle East peace process Quartet (the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations), offers the most ambitious and detailed plan yet to restart Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking after more than two years of terror and violence.

Brief Outline of the Roadmap

The roadmap envisions three "phases" of activity: Transformation/Elections (October 2002-May 2003), Transition (June 2003-December 2003), and Statehood (2004-2005).

The first phase is itself broken into two stages: October-December 2002 and January-May 2003. During the first stage, it is envisioned that Palestinians prepare the legal basis for elections, draft a new constitution "for statehood," and begin retraining and rebuilding their security forces. Palestinians are asked to take three steps toward Israel: issue an "unequivocal statement reiterating Israel's right to exist in peace and security and calling for an immediate end to the armed Intifada and all acts of violence against Israelis anywhere"; end all incitement; and "begin phased resumption of security cooperation as agreed in the Tenet work plan." At the same time, Israel is asked to facilitate Palestinian Authority official travel "without restriction"; transfer tax revenues; lift curfews and ease travel between Palestinian areas; dismantle settlement outposts erected since the start of the Sharon government; and end actions "that undermine trust," including attacks in civilian areas and deportations (what the roadmap calls "punitive measures"). Meanwhile, Arab states will "move decisively" to cut off funding of extremist groups. During the second stage, "as comprehensive security performance moves forward" and Palestinians meet "agreed judicial, administrative and economic benchmarks," it is envisioned that Israel "freeze all settlement activity," reopen closed Palestinian economic institutions in "East Jerusalem," and withdraw its forces progressively to pre-intifada positions, enabling Palestinian legislative elections to be held. At the close of this phase, Egypt and Jordan would return their ambassadors to Israel.

The second phase (Transition) starts after Palestinian elections and ends with the "possible creation of a Palestinian state with provisional borders." During this phase, the Quartet would convene an "international conference" to launch negotiations on "the possibility" of such a state. The conference would be "inclusive," i.e., based on the goal of a "comprehensive" peace on all tracks (Syria-Israel, Lebanon-Israel). At this time, other pre-intifada Arab-Israel links would be restored (e.g., trade offices with Gulf and North African countries), including the revival of "multilateral talks." Inside the territories, Palestinians would approve a new constitution and take important security measures (e.g., "complete collection of illegal weapons" and "disarm military groups"). For its part, Israel is envisioned as completing, with Palestinians, negotiations for the "creation of a state with provisional borders," as well as taking unspecified "further action" on Jewish settlements "simultaneous" with the establishment of the Palestinian state (implying that the provisional borders would not be limited to the current boundaries of Areas A and B).

The third phase (Statehood) opens with a second "international conference" to endorse the agreement on Palestinian statehood with provisional borders and launch "final status negotiations" to reach a permanent settlement in 2005. Should that be attained, the roadmap envisions "Arab state acceptance of normal relations with Israel and security for all the states of the region."

Silence on Arafat

The roadmap makes no mention of Yasir Arafat or, as President George W. Bush called for, "new" Palestinian leadership. However, in numerous clauses in which it refers to actions by the Palestinian Authority, the roadmap effectively relies on Arafat's participation and support. For example, only Arafat can issue the statement reiterating Israel's right to exist, appoint a new cabinet, create an "empowered" prime minister, permit the restructuring of security services, and so forth. Interestingly, the elections envisioned by May 2003 are legislative alone, not presidential (as Arafat has already announced) or municipal (as President Bush first outlined in June). Evidently, the Quartet believes it possible to finesse the Arafat issue, gaining his support for reform measures designed to undermine his rule while denying him the popular mandate that he wants to prove his continued relevance. This is almost surely naïve—either Arafat will demand presidential elections as the price for playing the Quartet game (confirming precisely the sort of "failed leadership" President Bush decried), or he will, at every step, try to denude the reform process of content. Although the Quartet clearly did the best it could to paper over U.S.-European-UN differences over Arafat, the result was an approach that is likely either to strengthen Arafat, to impede reform, or both.

Inching toward an Imposed Peace?

Although the roadmap reaffirms the concept of "negotiations between the parties," many of its proposals and the context in which they are presented collectively chip away at that very idea. The convening of two international conferences, the proposition that "judgments" of progress will be determined by the Quartet, and the creation of a "permanent" monitoring mechanism suggest the not-so-creeping internationalization of Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. The implication of the detailed timeline offered within this roadmap is that the peacemaking engine can be expected to have gathered so much speed by 2004 that neither Israelis nor Palestinians will be in a position to stop the international locomotive pushing for a final agreement.

International Supervision

On the positive side, the roadmap repeatedly injects the idea of "performance-based" peacemaking, suggesting that actions, not timetables, will determine movement from one phase to another. Indeed, the terms "performance-based," "benchmarks," "supervision," "monitoring," and "oversight" are mentioned no fewer than thirteen times.

To buttress this emphasis on performance-based peacemaking, the roadmap envisions a blizzard of monitoring

mechanisms. A not-exhaustive list includes a U.S.-Egyptian-Jordanian "outside oversight board" for security cooperation; U.S. security officials overseeing implementation of the Tenet work plan; "internationally supervised security training"; an "agreed transparency monitoring mechanism" for Palestinian finances; and a "permanent monitoring mechanism on the ground." As if these measures were not enough, the roadmap calls for an "enhanced international role in monitoring transition" to be set up once a Palestinian state is established.

Despite all this, the roadmap's conception of supervision is, at best, uneven and, at worst, illogical and self-contradictory. On the one hand, the roadmap envisions progressively more extensive and intrusive monitoring and an ever-growing role in this bilateral conflict for international actors. This vision is exemplified by the astonishing proposal for a "permanent" mechanism, suggesting an international presence assessing Israeli and Palestinian behavior in perpetuity. (Such a proposal even exceeds problematic ideas for a U.S. or international trusteeship, which at least envision that the trustee's role would, at some time, come to an end.)

On the other hand, however, the roadmap has strange gaps built into the monitoring process. By the time Palestinians are supposed to end incitement, for example, no supervisory mechanism is yet in place to monitor compliance. Moreover, no outside role is envisioned for determining whether the Palestinian constitution comports with agreements with Israel (e.g., Will Palestinians have a military draft? Will Palestine be demilitarized?) or for overseeing the work of the proposed Palestinian election commission (e.g., Can suspected terrorists run for parliament?). The roadmap offers no view as to what constitutes compliance (i.e., 100 percent effort, 100 percent results, or "reasonable effort producing passable results?"), nor does it prioritize which requirements are deal-breakers (i.e., triggering a determination of what would constitute "material breach" of core commitments, to use the language of the UN Iraq debate).

Perhaps most problematic is the telescoping of various steps, rendering any serious monitoring effort meaningless. For example, within the same six-month period in the second half of 2003, Israel and the Palestinians are supposed to complete negotiations for statehood at the same time as Palestinians are supposed to collect illegal weapons and disarm militant groups. Without the passage of a substantial amount of time to ensure that these Palestinian commitments have been met, it is impossible to imagine any Israeli government agreeing to the sort of compromises for statehood that the roadmap envisions. (The idea that the roadmap envisions no conclusive effort toward collecting illegal weapons or disarming militant groups for another year is by itself unnerving.)

Sequencing

The roadmap also runs counter to the thrust of President Bush's "security first" approach (outlined in his June 24, 2002, speech), which envisions an end to terror and violence as a precondition to further diplomatic engagement. But whereas previous Quartet statements suggested simultaneity in calling for Israeli and Palestinian steps toward peacemaking, the sequencing in the roadmap actually suggests a series of substantive and irreversible Israeli steps in advance of complementary Palestinian steps. For example, in the stage that Palestinians are asked to "reiterate" (i.e., repeat their previous commitment regarding) Israel's right to exist and end incitement (though without monitoring), Israel is asked to accept numerous restrictions on its security operations in the territories, to transfer tax monies, and to dismantle settlement outposts. Even the one demand made of other Arab states during this period is not conclusive, i.e., Arab states are asked only to "move decisively to cut off public/private funding of extremist groups," not the more categorical "end all public/private funding of extremist groups." The sequencing in this document turns the Bush approach fully on its head.

Conclusion

A close look at the Quartet roadmap shows that it fails to meet three key objectives: 1) its heavily orchestrated chronology and extraordinary supervisory powers for the Quartet run counter to the fundamental premise of a peace

"negotiated between the parties"; 2) its call for substantial Israeli territorial and operational moves in advance of substantive—as opposed to declaratory—Palestinian efforts to prevent terror and incitement reverses the generally accepted notion of performance-based peacemaking; 3) the telescoped timeframe for implementation will almost surely create an unstoppable momentum to move on to subsequent phases of the process, transforming the vital task of ongoing monitoring of compliance into a pro forma exercise. And, from a U.S. policy perspective, nothing in the roadmap guarantees "new Palestinian leadership," as called for by President Bush. On the contrary, in numerous places, the roadmap implicitly acknowledges Arafat's continued operational role as Palestinian leader.

As a springboard for new and intensive peacemaking efforts, the roadmap has numerous flaws. It is unclear, however, whether the document actually represents an evolving U.S. view toward pursuing the peace process after the coming confrontation with Iraq, or whether it has been tabled only as a temporary expedient to allay Arab and European concerns in advance of war in the Gulf. Even if the roadmap is only a device to deflect these concerns, such initiatives often have a way of taking on a life of their own. Breathing further life into this approach, without a top-to-bottom revision of both concept and detail, would render President Bush's June 24 approach stillborn.

Robert Satloff is director of policy and strategic planning at The Washington Institute.

Policy #402

RECOMMENDED

BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Unpacking the UAE F-35 Negotiations](#)

Feb 15, 2022

◆
Grant Rumley

(/policy-analysis/unpacking-uae-f-35-negotiations)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

[How to Make Russia Pay in Ukraine: Study Syria](#)

Feb 15, 2022

◆
Anna Borshchevskaya

(/policy-analysis/how-make-russia-pay-ukraine-study-syria)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

Bennett's Bahrain Visit Further Invigorates Israel-Gulf Diplomacy

Feb 14, 2022



Simon Henderson

[\(/policy-analysis/bennetts-bahrain-visit-further-invigorates-israel-gulf-diplomacy\)](/policy-analysis/bennetts-bahrain-visit-further-invigorates-israel-gulf-diplomacy)

TOPICS

[Peace Process \(/policy-analysis/peace-process\)](/policy-analysis/peace-process)

[U.S. Policy \(/policy-analysis/us-policy\)](/policy-analysis/us-policy)