

Resolution 1515: Endorsement of the Road Map as a Blueprint for Peace

Resolution 1515, adopted in November 2003 by the Security Council had the same goals as 1397, but 'learned' to some extent, from the primary weakness of 1397: Its failure to tie actualization of a Palestinian state to fulfillment of clearly stated preconditions – spelled out in the Road Map. This change is reflected in the title of the plan: A Performance-based Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

The Road Map, a concept raised by President George W. Bush (June 2002), revised and re-revised and subsequently adopted by the Quartet (May 2003), accepted by Israel and the Palestinians (with reservations on both sides) at the height of optimism regarding the prospects of a 'new democratic Middle East' in the immediate aftermath of the Iraq War (for more details of this 'gestation process,' see the chapter on "Rejectionism"). In November 2003, the Security Council Endorsement of the Roadmap by the Security Council was an improvement on 1397, for it anchored the two-state solution envisioned in Resolution 1397 on practical "compliance-based" concrete steps that link the 'prize' (a Palestinian state) on performance (stopping the violence and democratic reform of the PA).

The Resolution has, however, sparked criticismⁱ, primarily that it is an attempt to 'engineer' accommodation by external forces, a tactic that may prove no more viable in addressing realities than the 1947 plan 'engineered' by the UN or a host of other plans floated in the past.ⁱⁱ Other criticisms are that 1515's carefully crafted 'balance' ignores the crucial need for total zero tolerance for terrorism and that the plan is woefully overoptimistic in its perception of the size and nature of the 'peace opponents' camp. Last but not least, critics have charged that the Road Map's rigid superstructure and 'time schedule' undermines the principle of direct negotiations of all issues that is the heart of 242 and could compromise even its own performance-base principle.

The Resolution is unquestionably a victory for Palestinian aspirations for statehood. The Road Map's sequence, which calls for an independent Palestinian state with provisional borders and attributes of sovereignty in Stage II – launched by an international conference prior to Stage III permanent status talks over all the substantive issues such as permanent borders and refugees, undercuts any incentive for Palestinians to make compromises on the Right of Return and other non-starters, and by 'putting the cart before the horse' distorts the principle of 'land for peace'. Furthermore, the proactive role envisioned for members of the Quartet weakens the principle of a directly negotiated peace between the parties.

The Arabs have sought to amplify these gains (which may boomerang producing the opposite effect) by reading into 1515 things that don't necessarily exist – particularly overstating the extent of 'reciprocity' or 'parallel progress.' Objectively, the demands on Palestinians in Stage I – to cease the violence totally and immediately with no excuses, and to carry out genuine reform the PA – are serious and substantive, almost an End of Days scenario for Palestinians, while the demands from Israel in Stage I are obtainable. Other Palestinians claim the Road Map means totally unfettered independence when in fact, the Road Map speaks of a demilitarized state.

A year after its endorsement, no progress had been made, leaving the impression that the Road Map has a good chance of ending up like countless other plans floated over the years that never got to square one.

ⁱ See, for instance, Ann Bayefsky's "The UN and the Assault on Israel's Legitimacy: Implications for the Road Map" (August 2003) (<http://www.jcpa.org/jl/vp501.htm>) and Daniel Mandel "Four-Part Disharmony: The Quartet Maps Peace" (Summer 2003) (<http://www.meforum.org/article/556>; <http://www.meforum.org/article/496>)

ⁱⁱ "To achieve by diplomacy what has yet to be achieved by history: that acceptance of Israel," in the words of one critic.

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