

‘Road Map’ Begins in Mideast, But Must Change Washington Map

by Dean Andromidas

After convening his first two Middle East summits, U.S. President George W. Bush has committed himself to implementation of the Road Map for a Middle East peace, which will hopefully end over two years of violence and lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state by 2005. Speaking on June 4 at the closing of his summit with Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas), Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and Jordan’s King Abdullah II, Bush declared, “All here today now share a goal: The Holy Land must be shared between the state of Palestine and the state of Israel, living at peace with each other and with every nation of the Middle East.”

Both Abu Mazen and Sharon announced their acceptance of the Road Map: the former, “without any reservations”; while the latter responded with the carefully crafted phrase “as adopted by the Israeli government,” an apparent reference to a list of 14 “reservations” Sharon attached to the document.

Abu Mazen declared, “There will be no military solution for this conflict,” and he committed the Palestinians to “exert all of our efforts using all of our resources to end the militarization of the Intifada.”

Sharon peppered his statement with the word “security,” but ultimately declared, “It is in Israel’s interest not to govern the Palestinians, but for the Palestinians to govern themselves in their own state.” He also spoke of understanding the need for “territorial contiguity in the West Bank for a viable Palestinian state.” Furthermore, he said that Israel “will immediately begin to remove unauthorized outposts” of Jewish settlers on Palestinian territory, adding that Israel accepts the “principle that no unilateral actions by any party can prejudice the outcome of our negotiations.”

In his concluding remarks at the summit, held in the Jordanian Red Sea port of Aqaba, President Bush restated Sharon’s and Abu Mazen’s commitments, almost word for word, and then confirmed: “All sides have made important commitments, and the United States will strive to see these commit-

ments fulfilled.” Bush announced that he was appointing Ambassador John Wolf to lead a mission of monitors to oversee implementation of the Road Map, adding that he has called upon Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice “to make this cause a matter of the highest priority.”

After the deaths of 2,085 Palestinians and 781 Israelis over the last 32 months, has the Bush Administration committed itself to a Middle East peace and a Palestinian state? To answer that question, we must ask another, first: Can one part of the Bush Administration organize peace between Palestine and Israel, while another is leading an unjust occupation in Iraq and is calling for “regime change,” if not war, in Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia?

This second question is being answered by the campaign of top Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, who is driving the ongoing “countercoup” against the coup of the war party of Vice President Richard Cheney and his chicken-hawk nest. Whether Bush fulfills the promises he made in Aqaba on June 4, and in Sharm el-Sheikh on June 3, will be determined by the outcome of the LaRouche-led counter-coup. Without success on that front, Bush’s new initiative will prove to be no initiative at all.

Only the U.S. Presidency Can Force Sharon

According to Israeli commentator Uzi Benziman, writing in the daily *Ha’aretz*, Sharon’s government accepted the Road Map only after Secretary of State Powell told Sharon’s Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom, “The approval of the Road Map is at the top of President Bush’s agenda,” and that if it “was not approved, Washington would forbid Israel to make use of American weapons in the [Palestinian] territories.” Powell’s remark, which Shalom understood as a veiled threat to dry up the \$2 billion in U.S. military aid showered on Israel every year, was extremely “effective” in winning Sharon’s support. Sharon agreed to the recognition of a Palestinian



President Bush pointing to the responsibilities of both Israeli Prime Minister Sharon (left) and Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen, in Jordan summit on June 4. But it is a purge of war-hawk saboteurs in and around the U.S. Administration, upon which the Road Map's success depends.

state and an immediate evacuation of “illegal outposts” as stipulated in the Road Map.

The day before the Aqaba summit, Glenn Kessler wrote an article in the *Washington Post*, whose content was obviously leaked by White House circles, on the President's personal assessment of prospects for a Middle East peace. It revealed Bush's views on the Middle East as closer to those of his father's advisors—many of whom opposed the Iraq War—than to the views of the chicken-hawks in his own staff. On the question of Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories, Kessler wrote that Bush “baffled some of his aides,” when he asserted that “the Israelis are wasting their money on expanding settlements in the West Bank, because ultimately those projects will become housing developments for Palestinians.”

Kessler added, that the “leader in the region who has won his [Bush's] greatest respect is Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, who bluntly confronted the President last year over the Palestinian issue.”

The *Post* article also revealed that Bush had rebuffed attempts by Sharon and his U.S. allies among “the religious right and the neo-conservatives” to play the “Quartet Road Map”—the efforts made by the European Union, United Nations, United States, and Russia—against Bush's “June 24 Rose Garden speech,” last year. Bush, continued Kessler, thinks that the success of Prime Minister Abu Mazen in reforming the Palestinians' governing institutions and ending the military phase of the Intifada will “create a groundswell of popular support within Israel for creating a Palestinian state, and either the Israeli government accepts it or is replaced by a government that will.”

Are these just interesting insights? Do they portend a real shift in policy? Or are they just pre-summit spin? That is the question both Arabs and Israelis are asking.

Arabs Tell Bush: Don't Divide the Arab World

On June 3, Bush held a summit at the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, hosted by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, Jordanian King Abdullah II, Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen, and King Hamad of Bahrain. Egyptian sources told *Ha'aretz* that the Arab leaders said that Sharon, to them, remains a “suspicious object,” whose intentions must be closely monitored. Bush's promises to pressure Israel were also received with skepticism.

As for the fact that Syria and Lebanon were absent, Mubarak reportedly made clear to Bush that the composition of the summit meeting “embarrassed the Arabs . . . [and] people are talking about how we are dividing the Arab world into two. There are those who meet with you and those you boycott, those you threaten and those who go with you in the golf cart”—a reference to a widely circulated photo of Bush, Mubarak, and Crown Prince Abdullah sitting in a golf cart, with Bush at the wheel.

Responding directly to the U.S. chicken-hawks' continuing campaign against Syria and Lebanon, the President was told that these two countries are part of the Arab world, and that a solution to the Palestinian problem will not solve the Arab-Israeli conflict, as long as Syria and Lebanon are not involved. “We can't speak for all the Arab states,” Bush was told, and “we are committed to the Arab League decisions.”

EIR's Egyptian sources expressed similar skepticism, noting that the statements did not address such outstanding issues as the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their pre-1948 homes, borders, water, or even make a reference to Palestinian suffering. The only mention of the economic issues, was an invitation to the Arab countries to join in insane free-trade agreements with the United States. Our sources

pointed out, if Abu Mazen is pressured to “crush” militant groups—as implied by the fact that so much emphasis was placed on “fighting terrorism”—a Palestinian civil war could result. They pointed out that Sharon promised to remove “illegal outposts”—when, in reality, all 100 outposts are illegal, as are the settlements.

Finally, some sources also noted the absence of the other members of the “Quartet” that, along with the United States, drafted the Road Map.

Act Like ‘Eisenhower After the Sinai Campaign’

One of the litmus tests for whether the Israeli government is serious about peace, is what it does with the settlements. It was their expansion, which was a main cause for the collapse of the 1993 Oslo Accords. Writing in the *International Herald Tribune* of June 3, Henry Siegman of the New York Council on Foreign Relations, and a leading figure in the American Jewish community, polemicized, “The issue of settlements will tell us what we need to know about Sharon’s real intentions. It will also tell us what we need to know about Bush’s intentions. There is no justification for delaying the cessation of all settlement activity or the dismantling of outposts, for they serve no security purposes whatever. In fact, more than any other factor, settlements are responsible for Palestinian violence and for the absence of popular Palestinian opposition to terrorist groups. The settlement enterprise has been nothing less than the theft of Palestinian land in broad daylight, a theft made possible only by Israel’s vastly superior military force. The notion that [Prime Minister] Abu Mazen can confront and subdue terrorist groups while this theft continues is absurd.”

His view is also shared by many in Israel. Senior commentator Gideon Samet wrote in *Ha’aretz* on June 4, that President Bush should act like “Eisenhower after the Sinai campaign”: In 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower threatened to cut off economic aid to Israel, unless it immediately withdrew its forces from the Sinai, in accordance with the UN-brokered agreement which ended the Anglo-French and Israeli invasion of Egypt.

Telling Bush to “bang on the table” in dealing with Sharon, Samet warned the U.S. President of all the tricks Sharon will try to pull. He will say he doesn’t have the power to close illegal settlements: “It’s not true. The Israeli majority wants it.” Samet added, “Don’t make do with the outposts. There are more than 100 of them . . . [but] the Road Map must include a genuine freeze of the actual settlements” to get to the next step of “dismantling a large number of the older settlements in the occupied territories.” Most of all, Samet stressed, American Jews are learning that the peace process is what Israel really needs.

Other Israelis are writing that Sharon’s scheme will be to drag out phase one of the three-phase Road Map, until the U.S. Presidential election season overtakes Bush and causes him to lose interest. In this first phase, Sharon may dismantle

a few token settlements to create “contiguity” of Palestinian areas, but in the longer term, he hopes to ensure that the Palestinians will be squeezed between so many “security buffer zones,” that it will still be just one larger bantustan, rather than three smaller ones that will occupy no more than 40% of the Palestinian territories.

A few hours after Bush, Sharon, and Abu Mazen finished their Aqaba speeches, 20-40,000 settlers and other right-wing extremists demonstrated in Jerusalem’s Zion Square—the very site where, in Autumn 1995, the same demonstrators had compared peace-maker Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to a Nazi SS general, a month before an Israeli right-winger killed him at a peace rally.

National Religious Party Chairman Effi Eitam, a minister in Sharon’s cabinet, denounced the Road Map at the rally. He was joined by Tourism Minister Rabbi Benny Elon, leader of the Moledet Party, which believes in ethnic cleansing of the “Land of Israel.” Their “Jordan is Palestine” policy is to ultimately force Palestinians out of the Israel and the West Bank, into Jordan. Elon had just returned from Washington, where he helped rouse opposition to the Road Map among Christian fundamentalists.

Abu Mazen Is Working To End Violence

With the help of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and in coordination with President Yasser Arafat, Prime Minister Abu Mazen is moving to neutralize the threat from militant groups like Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Al Aqsa Brigades. Hamas official Ismail Abu Shanab was asked on ABC News’ “Nightline” broadcast, whether Hamas would stop attacks during the Israeli/Palestinian negotiations. He replied, “Definitely, yes. . . . We are ready to offer it at any time, if there is a guarantee that those preliminary steps will be taken as part of a full or widescale withdrawal, even if it is step by step.”

He qualified that Hamas opposes the Road Map, but welcomed U.S. assurances that the peace process would truly succeed in creating a Palestinian state. “The Road Map has a chance to succeed if the Americans block Israeli efforts to destroy it,” he added. “So we will continue our discussion to come out with something that strengthens internal unity among Palestinians, to give a chance to all peace efforts and reveal all the tricks Sharon is playing.” Abu Mazen is convinced that he can come to an agreement with these groups; but if Sharon continues with the targetted assassinations and military raids, or the U.S. pressures Abu Mazen to “root out the terrorist infrastructure,” then attacks will continue, and Sharon can continue his war.

The potential, and the danger of failure, of Bush’s initiative is reflected in the latest “Peace Index” conducted in Israel, which revealed that 59% of Israelis support the Road Map; yet, 66% said it would fail to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Bush can succeed if he takes on Ariel Sharon, but he will never do it, unless the White House putschists against the Bush Presidency are stopped.