

The Administration in 2015 faces Veto Dilemmas at UN and in Congress



French demonstrators in Paris favoring Palestinian state

Source: AFP/Getty Images

As 2014 was closing a vote on a draft resolution introduced by the Jordanian UN Ambassador at the Security Council hit what may be a temporary speed bump for PA President Abbas. He is striving to impose a draconian solution to the long simmering dispute on the Jewish nation of Israel. The draft resolution [failed](#) to achieve the requisite 9 votes, losing by one vote. The US and Australia voted no. Five others abstained including the UK, Lithuania, South Korea and Nigeria. France, Luxembourg, Russia, China, Jordan, Chile, Argentina, and Chad voted in favor of the draft resolution. The draft resolution sought to fix a one year deadline for negotiations on declaration of a Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem based on the infamous War 1949 Armistice line. What fabled Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban deemed the "Auschwitz line". The draft resolution would require the end of the alleged 'occupation' of the West Bank by Israel losing its control over the Jordan Valley approaches and protection of over 350,000 Israelis in both Samaria and Judea.

Virtually on the announcement of the vote, PA President Abbas, now serving in the tenth year of an elected four year term, signed 20 UN covenants including the Rome Treaty making it eligible for observer status at the International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague. That would enable it to bring a charge of war crimes against Israel. This will confront the

ICC with a choice between recognition of anti-Israel issues versus international law matters. Further, the unilateral move by Abbas will likely cause the incoming GOP led Congress to consider retaliatory legislation further consternating Administration diplomacy in the region. Israeli PM Netanyahu [countered](#) saying:

The one who should fear the International Criminal Court at The Hague is the Palestinian Authority, which is in a unity government with Hamas, a declared terrorist organization like ISIS that commits war crimes.

We will take steps in response and we will defend the soldiers of the IDF, the most moral army in the world. We will repel this latest effort to force diktats on us, just as we have repelled the Palestinian turn to the UN Security Council.

US UN Ambassador Power blasted the PA vote because it precluded consideration of security guarantees outlined in UNSC Res. 242 for Israel to have defensible borders. She noted in her [remarks](#), "The deadlines in the resolution take no account of Israel's legitimate security concerns." The State Department director of its press office, Jeff Rathke, [criticized](#) the PA saying:

We are deeply troubled by today's Palestinian action regarding the ICC. Today's action is entirely counterproductive and does nothing to further the aspirations of the Palestinian people for a sovereign and independent state.

Palestinian Resolution reprise Veto

Besides the ICC ploy, the PA was anything but supine. The

change in the non-permanent membership of the UNSC might afford them another opportunity to re-submit the draft resolution, possibly obtaining the requisite 9 votes. As former US UN Ambassador John Bolton in a *Wall Street Journal* op ed published today, ["The U.N. Vote on Palestine Was a Rehearsal,"](#) wrote, "An influx of new Security Council members means a likely 'yes' vote – and a veto dilemma for Obama." Obama, as we have [noted](#) previously in Jeffrey Goldberg's *Atlantic* interview gave a broad hint that the US might abstain.

Bolton notes in his *WSJ* op ed the elements of this dilemma that may shortly face the Administration:

A firmer U.S. strategy might have prevented the dilemma from arising. The White House's opening diplomatic error was in sending strong signals to the media and U.S. allies that Mr. Obama, wary of offending Arab countries, was reluctant to veto any resolution favoring a Palestinian state. Secretary of State John Kerry took pains not to offer a view of the resolution before it was taken up. Such equivocation was a mistake because even this administration asserts that a permanent resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict requires direct negotiations and agreements among the parties themselves.

No draft resolution contrary to these precepts should be acceptable to the U.S., or worth wasting time on in the diplomatic pursuit of a more moderate version. This American view, advocated for years and backed by resolute threats to veto anything that contradicted it, has previously dissuaded the Palestinians from blue-smoke-and-mirror projects in the Security Council.

Bolton addresses how the reprise could shortly occur:

Several factors support a swift Palestinian reprise. First, they obtained a majority of the Security Council's

votes, even if not the required supermajority of nine. In today's U.N., the eight affirmative votes constitute a moral victory that virtually demand vindication, and sooner rather than later.

Second, the text of Jordan's resolution was wildly unbalanced even by U.N. standards—for example, it demands a solution that “brings an end to the Israeli occupation since 1967,” and calls for “security arrangements, including through a third-party presence, that guarantee and respect the sovereignty of a State of Palestine.” A few meaningless tweaks here and there and several countries that abstained could switch to “yes.” Third, on Jan. 1 five of the Security Council's 10 nonpermanent members stepped down (their two-year terms ended), replaced by five new members more likely to support the Palestinian effort.

Consider how Wednesday's vote broke down, and what the future may hold. Three of the Security Council's five permanent members (France, China and Russia) supported Jordan's draft. France's stance is particularly irksome, since it provides cover for other Europeans to vote “yes.” The U.K. timidly abstained, proving that David Cameron is no Margaret Thatcher