

STEP 1: Issue for which you are trying to predict the most likely future.

What environment should the United States expect to encounter should the Middle East Peace Process significantly change?

Israel is a major regional power in the Middle East and is an ally of the United States. Political instability in Israel, specifically the Gaza Strip and Golan Heights, serves to increase tensions and promote volatility in the already precarious region of the Middle East. The United States, therefore, must anticipate and predict changes in the environment of the Middle East Peace Process to remain engaged in the stability of the region.

STEP 2: Specify the national “actors” involved.

The national actors involved include: The Israelis, personified by Prime Minister Ehud Barak; the Palestinians, personified by Chairman Yasser Arafat; and the United States, personified by President George W. Bush.

STEP 3: Perform an in-depth study of how each national actor perceives the issue in question.

Overview:

Since its creation in 1947, Israel has been battling with the Palestinians for land and with Arabs in general for its very existence. The wars of 1954 (Tri-partite War), 1967 (6-Day War) and 1973 (Yom Kippur War) increased the size of Israeli controlled land, displacing an undeterminable number of refugees.

Up until the early 1990's, the Israelis waged military actions against the Palestinians while the Palestinians conducted terrorist actions against the Israelis. In

1993 the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), an umbrella organization led by Yasser Arafat came to the negotiation table.

By 1995, the Palestinians formed their own government, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), and gained limited autonomy within Israel. Peace talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis continued on and off since then, halting occasionally in response to escalating violence on both sides of the conflict. Some of the key issues in the negotiations are: Palestinian sovereignty; general and individual amnesty for past offenses against Israel; the return of Palestinian refugees; but the most critical issue is the division of land between the Palestinians and Israelis.

Israelis:

Throughout history, most notably during World War II (WWII), non-Jews discriminated against, treated as second-class citizens, persecuted and killed Jews. As a result Israel cherishes geographic and political security. The Arab-Israeli Wars from 1947 to 1973 heightened this fear of insecurity. Israelis believe they paid blood for land, spilled during the Arab-Israeli Wars, and it will take more blood before they will relinquish any land.

During WWII the Germans forced Jews from their homes. The Jews lost their property and nearly all assets they could not carry. To the Israelis, the feelings associated with ceding land to the Palestinians are reminiscent of losing their lands and properties during WWII. This feeling is magnified since the Israelis feel that these particular lands were promised to them in a religious context and that they fought and bled for these lands in a secular context. They are the victors, and to the victors go the spoils.

The Israelis believe themselves as being willing to discuss compromise but view the PNA as balking. In a Camp David summit during July 2000, Prime Minister Barak considered the U.S. proposals put forth by U.S. President Bill Clinton but Chairman Arafat rejected them completely, being totally unwilling to compromise.¹ The Israelis portray themselves as being willing to make concessions but make it clear that they still have their own interests and aspirations that need to be addressed. Prime Minister Barak's willingness to compromise, while not getting results, galls the Israeli people. Barak's dip in the polls, and probable defeat in the upcoming February 2001 elections to hard-liner Likud party-leader Ariel Sharon, reflects this opinion.

The Israelis also believe that Chairman Arafat is not being forthright in the Peace Process. They believe that Arafat is either unwilling or unable to stop Palestinian violence against the Israeli people. This violence is an obstacle to land division and the peace process. According to the Israelis, Chairman Arafat committed to stop the violence in a meeting in Paris with the American Secretary of State Madeline Albright on 04 October 2000 and again made an agreement at Sharm El-Sheik on 17 October 2000 to call for an end to the violence.² However, Israelis maintain that Chairman Arafat never made any proclamations, never denounced those that committed violence, and never gave any serious effort to curb the violence. The Israelis allege that Chairman Arafat is using the violence as a ploy to gain the advantage in negotiations.

Palestinians:

¹Current Situation in Israel - Answers to Frequently Asked Questions, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0i9o0>.

²Ibid.

Yasser Arafat led the PLO, an umbrella organization that committed terrorist attacks against Israeli targets in an effort to bring about the existence of a Palestinian State. Chairman Arafat now leads the PNA, but the splinter extremist groups that once belonged to the PLO still exist and have their own agendas. Chairman Arafat is no longer able to control these extremist groups, which in turn weakens his authority and his negotiation ability with the Israelis. Chairman Arafat has to appear to be in charge to keep his popular support, and so he often has to take a hard line in relations with Israel so that he will not be labeled as “weak.” This phenomenon hampers Chairman Arafat’s ability to make concessions with the Israelis and turns the negotiation into a zero-sum game where the Palestinians have certain unrealistic demands and will not negotiate or alter them. The Palestinians believe they will get their demands, though they may seem unrealistic to an outside observer, without concessions if they continue their strategy of terrorist attacks against the Israelis. This circular logic does not lead to a productive peace process.

The Palestinians are also wary of the Israelis when it comes to agreements and treaties. The Palestinians want an international presence in the mediation of the peace process and in the enactment of any agreements to ensure the Israelis comply and do not slip through any loopholes. Palestinians contend that Israel has found ways to subvert the intent of past agreements, like with the agreement to withdraw the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) from contested areas of occupation, and the Palestinians want to ensure that this will not happen in any future agreements.³

United States:

³Palestinian Position, http://www.pna.net/peace/pal_position_2.htm.

The United States desires peace between the Israelis and Palestinians and wants to be involved in the mediation of the Peace Process due to the political currency involved in solving the 50 year-running Middle East conflict. The United States understands that regardless of the fighting, unless one side totally obliterates the other, the issue will always come back to the negotiating table. President Clinton summarized this belief during a White House Press Briefing on 05 July 2000, “They will have to return to face the same history, the same geography, the same demographic trends, the same passions and the same hatreds.”⁴ The United States realizes the division of land is a very sensitive issue but knows that it would be the best for both parties to come to an agreement and end the 50 years of bloodshed.

STEP 4: Specify all possible courses of action for each actor.

The three actors have two options each:

Israel:

- A. Agree to a peace settlement.
- B. Do not agree to a peace settlement.

Palestinians:

- A. Agree to a peace settlement.
- B. Do not agree to a peace settlement.

United States:

- A. Apply pressure for a peace settlement.
- B. Do not apply pressure for a peace settlement.

STEP 5: Determine the major scenarios within which you will compare the alternate futures.

Scenario 1: Peace (PL) – The Israelis and Palestinians divide land and peace ensues.

⁴US PRESS RELEASE, 05 Jul 00, <http://secretary.state.gov/www/briefings/01/00/000705db.html>.

An agreement is reached on boundaries and land division that is acceptable to both actors. Once enacted, the division plan succeeds and is accepted by the general populace of both actors.

Scenario 2: War (WL) – The Israelis and Palestinians divide land and war ensues.

An agreement is reached on boundaries and land division that is acceptable to both actors. Once enacted, the general populaces of both do not accept the division plan. Extremist groups on both sides initiate attacks against the other which escalates into a general melee between the two actors.

Scenario 3: Status Quo (SQ) – The Israelis and Palestinians continue the Peace Process and sporadic attacks on both sides continue.

No peace agreement or division of land can be reached. Negotiation talks continue, frequently stalling as Israelis are killed in terrorist attacks and Israeli IDF soldiers kill Palestinians, with no major progress or breakthroughs occurring.

STEP 6: Calculate the total number of permutations of possible “alternate futures” for each scenario.

Using the formula $X^y = Z$, where X equals the total number of courses of action available, y equals the total number of actors and Z equals the total number of alternate futures for comparison.

Scenario 1 (LP): $2^3 = 8$

Scenario 2 (LW): $2^3 = 8$

Scenario 3 (SQ): $2^3 = 8$

STEP 7: Perform a pairwise comparison of all “alternate futures” to determine their relative probability.

Scenario 1: Peace (PL)

Possible Future	Israel	Palestinians	United States	Votes
1	A	A	A	7
2	A	A	B	6
3	A	B	B	0
4	B	B	B	2
5	B	B	A	3
6	B	A	A	5
7	B	A	B	1
8	A	B	A	4

Scenario 2: War (LW)

Possible Future	Israel	Palestinians	United States	Votes
1	A	A	A	7
2	A	A	B	6
3	A	B	B	2
4	B	B	B	1
5	B	B	A	2
6	B	A	A	4
7	B	A	B	2
8	A	B	A	4

Scenario 3: Status Quo (SQ)

Possible Future	Israel	Palestinians	United States	Votes
1	A	A	A	1
2	A	A	B	0
3	A	B	B	3
4	B	B	B	3
5	B	B	A	7
6	B	A	A	6
7	B	A	B	3
8	A	B	A	5

STEP 8: Rank the “alternate futures” for each scenario from highest relative probability to the lowest based on the number of “votes” received.

Research shows that the possibility of establishing an acceptable division of land between the Israelis and Palestinians in the near future to be very unlikely. Because of

this, Scenario 3 (SQ) will be examined as the most likely scenario that the United States will face. The possible futures of Scenario 3 (SQ) have been arranged below from those receiving the most votes to the least, or none.

Scenario 3: Status Quo (SQ)

Possible Future	Israel	Palestinians	United States	Votes
5	B	B	A	7
6	B	A	A	6
8	A	B	A	5
7	B	A	B	3
4	B	B	B	3
3	A	B	B	3
1	A	A	A	1
2	A	A	B	0

Assumptions for Scenario 3 (SQ):

1. Likud hard-liner Ariel Sharon defeats Ehud Barak in the 06 February 2001 elections and takes a harder stance on the division of land.
2. The new Bush administration takes time to absorb the situation and get up to speed on the intricacies involved before becoming an active mediator.
3. No outside third-party threats to either the Israelis and/or Palestinians emerges.

Alternate future (AF) 5 received the most votes with seven votes, followed by AF 6 with six votes and AF 8 with five votes.

STEP 9: Assuming that each future occurs, analyze each “alternate future” in terms of its consequences for the issue in question.

What environment should the United States expect to encounter should the Middle East Peace Process significantly change?

Alternate Future 5:

AF 5 predicts that while the United States actively pushes for an agreement, the Palestinians and Israelis will not be able to make enough concessions to appease each other. This would force the United States to either abandon its efforts, increase its

attempts at conciliation, or bring in yet another mediating source. The political environment would not change in the region but Pro-Israeli and Pro-Palestinian lobbies, in order to increase efforts to bring about a satisfactory conclusion, would apply more pressure to the Administration.

Alternate Future 6:

AF 6 predicts while the United States actively pushes for an agreement and the Palestinians are willing to accept certain parameters, but the Israelis balk and are unwilling to enter the agreement. This would force the United States to take a harder line, and to force them to the negotiation table with the Israelis since the Palestinians are clearly willing to negotiate. Palestinian extremists would use Israel's reluctance as an excuse to step up terrorist attacks, hindering any future attempts at settlement. Regional instability would ensue, detracting from the United States' national interests in the region.

Alternate Future 8:

AF 8 predicts while the United States actively pushes for an agreement and the Israelis are willing to accept certain parameters, the Palestinians balk and are unwilling to enter the agreement. This would force the United States to take a harder line with the Palestinians in order to bring them back to the negotiation table since the Israelis are clearly willing to negotiate. Palestinian extremists would view the PNA's refusal to negotiate as an opening to renew terrorist attacks, which would in turn evoke reprisals from the Israelis, and overall would undermine the peace process. Regional instability would ensue, detracting from the United States' national interests in the region.

STEP 10: Determine the "focal events" that must occur in our present in order to bring about a given "alternate future".

Alternate Future 5:

The following “focal events” must occur in our present to initiate AF 5:

- Hard-liner Ariel Sharon is elected as Israel’s new Prime Minister.
- There is a failure to arrive at a mutual agreement concerning the disposition of Jerusalem, and both sides are unable to negotiate other controversial land disputes.
- Negotiations stall.

Alternate Future 6:

The follow “focal events” must occur in our present to initiate AF 6:

- Hard-liner Ariel Sharon is elected as Israeli’s new Prime Minister.
- PNA is unable to stop Palestinian extremist violence towards Israel.
- Negotiations continue under the mediation of the Bush Administration.

Alternate Future 8:

The following “focal events” must occur in our present to initiate AF 8:

- Ehud Barak retains his position as Israeli Prime Minister.
- PNA doesn’t attempt to curb Palestinian extremist violence towards Israelis.
- Negotiations continue under the mediation of the Bush Administration.

STEP 11: Develop indicators for the “focal events”.

Focal event indicators for Alternate Future 5:

The following “indicators” must occur in our present to initiate the focal events of AF 5:

- Hard-liner Ariel Sharon leads polls by a 20 point margin in January 2001, indicating strong support by the Israeli people for his anti-concession platform and ultimately leading to his eventual election.
- Chairman Arafat does not denounce Palestinian violence but instead continues verbal attacks against Israeli government. Palestinian extremist groups take this to be an official “blessing” to continue and increase attacks against the Israeli people.
- Violence against Israelis by Palestinians continues, causing Israeli reprisals. The Israeli heavy-handed reprisals lead to further Palestinian violence and protests against the Israelis further escalating the chain of violence.

- President Bush fails to retain any key personnel in the mediation process for smooth transition purposes causing a vacuum in the driving force behind the peace process.

Focal event indicators for Alternate Future 6:

The follow “indicators” must occur in our present to initiate the focal events of AF 6:

- Hard-liner Ariel Sharon leads polls by a 20 point margin in January 2001, indicating strong support by the Israeli people for his anti-concession platform and ultimately leading to his eventual election.
- Chairman Arafat delivers an announcement to all Palestinians, calling for an end to the violence against Israelis.
- Israel withdraws from the peace process, or significantly alters their position to effectively deny the obtainment of Palestinian goals, causing Palestinian extremists to increase violence against Israelis in retribution.
- President Bush retains key personnel in the mediation process for smooth transition purposes, keeping a strong third part presence in the peace process.

Focal event indicators for Alternate Future 8:

The following “indicators” must occur in our present to initiate the focal events of AF 8:

- Ehud Barak’s last minute emphasis and drive on the peace process appeals to the populace, radically altering the populace’s perception to favor Barak over Sharon come election day.
- Chairman Arafat does not denounce Palestinian violence but instead continues verbal attacks against Israeli government. Palestinian extremist groups take this to be an official “blessing” to continue and increase attacks against the Israeli people.
- Violence against Israelis by Palestinians continues, causing Israeli reprisals. The Israeli heavy-handed reprisals lead to further Palestinian violence and protests against the Israelis further escalating the chain of violence.

- President Bush retains key personnel in the mediation process for smooth transition purposes, keeping a strong third part presence in the peace process.

STEP 12: State the potential of a given “alternate future” to “transpose” into another “alternate future”.

The most likely switch to occur would be the “transposition” of AF 6 to AF 8 if Prime Minister Ehud Barak manages to retain his position of Prime Minister in the February 2001 national elections. Prime Minister Barak is more likely to agree to concessions and make compromises than is the hard-liner Sharon.

Conclusions:

The actors involved in the Middle East Peace Process will continue their slow, sporadic negotiations without any tangible results. Violence will continue in the region as Palestinians conduct terrorist attacks against Israelis and attack IDF forces. The cycle of violence will come full circle as Israel conducts reprisal attacks against the Palestinians, resulting in further attacks from the Palestinians. President Bush will be forced to take a harder stance, possibly cutting international aid and freezing certain trade agreements, with both the Israelis and Palestinians, in order to bring them back to the negotiation table to achieve stability to the region.

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