



Lauder School
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Diplomacy & Strategy

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The Political and Security Simulations Unit
at The Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS)
and the Lauder School of Government Diplomacy & Strategy, IDC Herzliya

An Israeli-Palestinian Agreement: The Day Before

Executive Summary

by

Lesley Terris, Haim Assa and Michal Shavit

Background:

The simulation **An Israeli-Palestinian Agreement: The Day Before**, was held at IDC Herzliya by the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy MA program, in cooperation with the Political and Security Simulations Unit of the IDC. The exercise, which took place on August 28, 2013, was held against the background of the United States' renewal of the peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, with US Secretary of State John Kerry serving as special envoy to the negotiations.

The goal of the simulation was to explore the political, regional and international conditions necessary in order to move the sides towards an agreement.

Participants: Approximately 30 senior policy makers, academic experts and former diplomats took part in the exercise, playing of roles of actors relevant to the simulation scenario. The actors represented in the exercise included: The United States, Israel, Palestinian Authority, Hamas, Egypt, the EU, Hezbollah, Syria, Jordan, Global Jihad and the International Media.

The participants were requested to reflect in the simulation the positions of the actors they were assigned to represent rather than their own beliefs on the issues addressed.

Format: The simulation entailed two rounds of interactions and talks. Each round was prompted by a scenario presented to the participants and culminated in a round-table discussion.

The Opening Scenario: The opening scenario (presented at the beginning of the simulation) provided information regarding a "leak" from the Israeli-Palestinian talks. According to the leak, Secretary Kerry had presented to the sides a peace plan for discussion based on the 1967 borders with territorial swaps such that the Palestinian state would comprise 90% of the West Bank and 85% of the Jewish population in the West Bank would remain within Israel's borders. In addition, Israel would give the Palestinians an unspecified piece of territory (to be agreed upon) from within the green line. The plan also included Palestinian compromise on the issue of Palestinian refugees and a compromise on the division of Jerusalem between Israel and the Palestinian State.

Furthermore, it was leaked to the media that Secretary Kerry had given the sides the following ultimatum: The sides were to reach a formula for an agreement on the two issues of Palestinian refugees and borders

within two weeks. The sides would be requested to present their proposal on these issues at an Athens summit planned to take place in two weeks in Athens, Greece. Otherwise, significant sanctions would be exerted against both the Israelis and the Palestinians.

After hearing the opening scenario the teams dispersed to hold consultations and talks.

ROUND I of the Simulation

Main events in the first round:

- The United States team in the simulation immediately took an active role by summoning the Israelis and Palestinians to hear their positions. The American president's attitude in the simulation towards the Israeli prime minister was one of caution. This triggered discontent among the Israelis who expressed opposition to what they perceived to be an intervention in Israel's internal affairs. In the meeting between the United States and the Palestinian team, the Palestinians demonstrated willingness to reach an agreement and perceived the ultimatum as an opportunity to make progress towards a comprehensive agreement.
- The Israeli prime minister in the simulation **opened a secret channel with the Palestinians** by sending a special envoy to the Palestinian team to explain Israel's perception that the only way forward would be through a series of interim agreements between the sides. The Palestinians, who are strongly against interim agreements, stressed their insistence on a comprehensive agreement approach, and demanded that the point of departure between the sides must be former Israeli PM Ehud Olmert's 2009 proposal.
- The simulation's Athens Conference. The conference was chaired by the United States. After the teams presented their positions with no agreement on the two issues (refugees and borders), the United States announced that parallel to continuation of the talks between the sides, an additional channel would be opened to focus on practical implementation of partial or interim agreements reached. The US approach from now on would be "implementation of issues agreed upon". In addition, to support the Palestinians, a financial assistance package would be provided by state-members of the Ad Hoc Liaison committee and the Gulf States. The Palestinians expressed strong objection to the new American approach and again stressed their insistence on negotiations on a comprehensive agreement. The Hamas objected to any concessions on part of the Palestinians and threatened to derail any progress in that direction.

Following the simulation's Athens Conference the teams dispersed for further consultations.

ROUND II of the Simulation.

Against the setting of the US guidelines put forth in the Athens Conference, the teams again dispersed for consultations and talks.

Main events in the second round:

- Strong disagreement between the sides developed due to the different approaches to the talks (the comprehensive agreement approach as advocated by the Palestinians vs. the interim agreements approach as advocated by Israel (and the US)).
- Halfway through the second round, **the simulation command** (Sim-Com) intervened by unilaterally informing the simulation participants that the right-wing Habayit Heyehudi party had left the Israeli government and was replaced by the central-left-wing Labor party. This proved to be a game changer in the simulation. However, this situation (announcement) lasted for only several minutes - until the Israeli government denied the announcement. However, in the brief interim, the United States showed enthusiasm by inviting the Israeli prime minister to Washington.
- Furthermore, the Palestinians (who received the announcement regarding the coalition change while the secret Israeli envoy was in their room) abruptly shifted their posture and demonstrated willingness to discuss pragmatic interim agreements. Both of these developments were reversed when the Israeli team denied the coalition change: the US received Israel with a cold shoulder in Washington and the Palestinians recanted any willingness to work toward interim agreements.
- At one point the Sim-Com announced that Palestinian terrorists had carried out an attack at the Israeli college of Ariel (located in the West Bank) and killed several Israelis. The Israelis responded by suspending all contact with the Palestinians.

MAIN INSIGHTS FROM THE SIMULATION

1. Terror attacks by (Palestinian) “spoilers” within the green line or in the West Bank will be exploited by extreme right wing factions in the Israeli government to derail talks.
2. To make sure negotiations do not fail, they must continue even in face of terrorist incidents and settlement building. Otherwise, it will be difficult, if not impossible to reach an agreement.
3. An agreement must be reached between the sides regarding the negotiation approach (comprehensive vs. interim) before any real progress can be made on the core issues.
4. The Palestinians strongly object to interim agreements. However, *this stance is likely to become more flexible vis-a-vis a more peace oriented Israeli government.*
5. The Palestinians will encounter strong opposition by the Hamas unless the Hamas is given a stake in the talks.
6. A behind-the-scenes informal channel between the Israelis and Palestinians is a valuable asset in keeping lines of communication open at all times even when official talks are suspended, and consequently in getting talks back on track.

7. An agreement is unlikely with a right-wing government in Israel. A change in the composition of the government to include more central-leftist elements generates a softening in the Palestinian positions and increases trust. Together with confidence building measures, this constitutes a key to pushing negotiation forward.

List of Participants

Israel:	Ambassador Danny Ayalon, Former Minister Zvulun Orlev, Danny Dayan, Dr. Shavit Mathias, Adv. Moty Cristal
Israel (opposition)	Prof. Galia Golan, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, Yariv Oppenheimer
United States of America:	Ambassador Zalman Shoval, Former Consul Yaki Dayan, Dr. Nimrod Novik, Former Consul Asi Shariv
Palestinian Authority:	Former Minister Ashraf al-Ajrami, Prof. Khalil Shikaki, Col. (Res.) Shaul Arieli, Mr. Danny Rubinstein, Mr. Ahmed Renim, Mr. Elias Zannaniri
Hamas:	Dr. Anat Berko, Dr. Reuven Paz
Islamic Jihad:	Dr. Ely Karmon, Dr. Jonathan Fine
Egypt:	Dr. Ofer Israeli
Syria:	Prof. Eyal Zisser
Hezbollah:	Dr. Eitan Azani, Dr. Shaul Shay
European Union:	Mr. Tommy Steiner
Jordan	Amb. Dr. Oded Eran,
Israeli Press:	Mr. Gideon Levy
Arab Press:	Mr. Jacki Houry
International Press:	Mr. Gidi Kleiman, Ms. Aude Marcovitch