

Uncertainty and risk-taking in peace-making: The Israeli experience

Peace-makers will normally enter into a peace agreement only if they believe that the outcome of such decision is likely to be favorable that its prospective benefits will exceed, or at least not less than its prospective costs.

Since peace decisions are made under conditions of uncertainty that may involve risks (although uncertainty does not in itself necessarily involve risks), decision-maker should be aware of them. We can differentiate among the following risks in peace-making, which refer mainly to the other side's potential behavior following the signing of the peace agreement: (1) the other side will not perform its full obligations in the agreement, (2) will render its performance less valuable than promised and accepted, (3) will not be capable of performing the obligations it is undertaking because of its weakness, (4) will raise certain previous demands after the implementation of the agreement, (5) will break the agreement deliberately after getting its bargain. Because of these possibilities peace-makers, therefore, should be aware that a prospective peace agreement may turn out badly, leaving one in a worse situation than if it not entered into the peace agreement.

Since peace-making may involve risks, therefore, peace-makers should be aware to the following questions before making a decision: What calculated risks to take in peace-making? How serious and damaging are the perceived consequences of violation of the peace agreement? How controllable and containable are the risks taken? and How to manage risks in order to minimize the costs in case of violation of the agreement?

Following theoretical discussion, the paper will introduce Israel's strategies of coping with risks involved in peace making with Arab actors.

Professor Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov
The Department of International Relations
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
Msbarsi@mscc.huji.ac.il