

# Camp David II Aftermath: Options for the Next Ninety Days

by [David Makovsky \(/experts/david-makovsky\)](#)

Aug 4, 2000

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[David Makovsky \(/experts/david-makovsky\)](#)

David Makovsky is the Ziegler distinguished fellow at The Washington Institute and director of the Koret Project on Arab-Israel Relations.



### Brief Analysis

In the aftermath of Camp David II and with the start of the Knesset summer recess yesterday, there appears to be a 40-90 day "window" for Israelis and the Palestinians to determine whether a diplomatic breakthrough is still possible or whether the parties will move in alternative directions.

Political Standing of Players Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority (PA) Chairman Yasir Arafat received very different welcomes after Camp David. Barak undoubtedly emerges from the Knesset summer session bloodied, yet he appears unbowed. Barak's minority government has been reeling from setbacks including the resignation of his foreign minister, David Levy, the preliminary passage of different bills calling for early elections, and the defeat of Labor candidate Shimon Peres for president. Barak holds no fewer than an astonishing 13 of the 24 cabinet portfolios of his government, and can count on the support of only 42 members of the 120 member Knesset (although this figure could rise to just short of 60 with the support of members in the opposition). Barak has been willing to endure these political indignities because he believes that the price for rebuilding his religious and rightist coalition is forswearing the potential for progress that he made at Camp David. Barak wants to provide every opportunity possible for the reconvening of Camp David and he feels that he has a window of up to 90 days to test whether an agreement can be struck.

For his part, Arafat's refusal to compromise on Jerusalem won him a hero's welcome back home. He has since engaged in a diplomatic whirlwind tour both inside the Middle East and outside the region to assess future support for his positions. Although he maintains that he will unilaterally declare a state on September 13th, doubts remain as to whether he will carry out the threat.

Overview of Camp David II Territory. Agreement was near. Israel offered to cede 88% of the West Bank, while the Palestinians favored a figure very close to that amount. Israel agreed to land swaps, whereby it would relinquish sand dunes near Gaza but inside Israel, in exchange for Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Israel would retain four settlement blocs, along with settlements straddling the 1967 Green Line and other minor border rectifications. Taken together, Israel would retain approximately 140,000 of the estimated 180,000 settlers. Apart from well-known blocs such as Gush Etzion, Maaleh Adumim, and Ariel, Israel would also be able to keep Beit El and Ofra,

which are east of Ramallah and north of Jerusalem. These settlements have an approximate population of 8,000. Two settlement areas left off the discussion table were Kiryat Arba on the outskirts of Hebron with 7,200 residents and Gush Katif in Gaza with a population of 5,000. Israeli troops would also be permitted to patrol the Jordan Valley for the next 12 years. Beyond that, Israel will have access to certain valley sites, apparently where pre-positioned military equipment will be stored. Israel will also be involved in monitoring the Allenby Bridge crossing, but its exact role remains undetermined.

Refugees. Agreements here were not completed. Both sides agreed that there would be no limits on the number of Palestinian refugees that could enter the West Bank, but there was no understanding on how many individuals would be permitted to enter Israel; the gaps between the sides remain significant on this count. The sides agreed on the creation of an international mechanism that will deal with individual compensation claims. According to President Clinton, the two sides also agreed that compensation would be granted to Sephardic Jews who resided in Middle East countries and fled to Israel upon the state's creation.

Jerusalem. Israel agreed to cede sovereignty over Palestinian neighborhoods just inside the city's boundaries, such as Beit Hanina and Shuafat. These neighborhoods would be part of a new Palestinian city called Al-Quds that would also include villages just outside the municipal boundaries. In return, there would be an overall reconfiguration of Jerusalem's boundaries, whereby settlements such as Gush Etzion, Maaleh Adumim, and Givat Ze'ev become part of the city and sovereign Israel. Taken together, this would provide Jerusalem with a net addition of some 75,000 Jews.

Palestinians and Israelis differed on other parts of the Jerusalem question, namely the Old City, the status of Arab neighborhoods just outside the Old City, and religious sites such as the Temple Mount. Israel offered autonomy in areas outside the walls and a "special regime" inside the Old City while the Palestinians wanted complete sovereignty. Clearly, the Temple Mount was the most sensitive issue. The U.S. put forward a variety of proposals including offers to build a kilometer-long bridge from Abu Dis to the Temple Mount and grant Palestinians "custodianship" of the holy sites, while Israel would retain sovereignty. The Palestinians, however, wanted sovereignty in the Old City, ceding only the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall.

Amid differences over Jerusalem, the U.S. put forward the idea of deferring the unresolved aspects of Jerusalem, while securing an agreement on the rest. Clinton contacted key Arab leaders asking for them merely to support a deferral of the issue, rather than bless compromise on Jerusalem.

In the end, Arafat turned down the idea of deferring Jerusalem, while Barak provisionally accepted the idea, despite the obvious downside; that is, such an approach would not permit him to say that all issues were resolved, despite his yielding close to 90% of the West Bank. He would have had to suffice with a formula saying only that Palestinians have no further claims except regarding Jerusalem.

Possible Scenarios for Returning to Camp David The assumption is that Clinton will only take this step if it has assurances from Arafat and Barak for some compromise formula on Jerusalem or an agreement to defer the status of unresolved parts of the city. In order to win Arafat's approval, the U.S. will seek to obtain some form of political cover from Cairo and Riyadh. To that end, it dispatched the head of the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Edward (Ned) Walker.

Public comments by Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mousa during Barak's visit to Alexandria yesterday suggest that the Egyptians do not want to take any responsibility for Arafat's decision on Jerusalem. On the other hand, it is useful that there is no Arab summit scheduled, a move that would have invariably played to the lowest common denominator and thus stiffened Arafat further. One idea the U.S. may explore to address the Temple Mount issue is delineating a functional split of responsibilities without addressing the issue of sovereignty.

Should there be a deal, it is clear that Barak would be forced to call new elections. Given the recent Knesset votes

against him, approval of a law to hold a national referendum on a peace agreement looks unattainable. Unlike the elections of 1996 and 1999, when the focus was on the prime ministerial race, Barak would need to campaign in new elections not just for himself, but for a friendly Knesset that would ratify any deal. No peace agreement would have legitimacy without Knesset approval, whatever the outcome of a referendum.

Talks collapse. Amid Palestinian refusal to compromise on Jerusalem and unwillingness to do a deal not involving the contested parts of Jerusalem, there is no hope for a revived Camp David. In such a scenario, there is a countdown to a unilaterally declared Palestinian state, whether it occurs in September, or more likely after the U.S. elections in November. In retaliation to a declaration by Arafat, Barak will act unilaterally as well, by annexing settlements and other areas controlled by Israel. (Israel currently holds approximately 60% of the West Bank) In that case, Barak will seek to garner as much support as possible from his domestic rivals in order to deal with a looming confrontation. Moreover, he will shift gears and focus more on domestic issues. One cannot rule out that Ariel Sharon would agree to a Labor-Likud "government of national responsibility," if for no other reason than to prevent a challenge from Benjamin Netanyahu.

Fallback. Both Israelis and Palestinians pull back from the brink and reach a fallback deal, whereby Israel and the Palestinians agree to coordinate a Palestinian declaration of statehood and related security arrangements, and in return, defer other issues for an indeterminate amount of time.

Wildcard. In deciding whether to resolve a dispute over meters with the Syrians-along Lake Tiberias-or wrestle over kilometers in Jerusalem with the Palestinians, Barak could reopen negotiations with Damascus. There are preliminary signs that the Syrians view an economic opening to the world--sought by new Syrian President Bashar Assad--as being invariably linked to progress on peace. Given Bashar's priority to consolidate power at home, the likelihood for such a scenario must be seen as slim. Yet, in the event it occurs, such a resumption of talks could either pave the way for a breakthrough, or in the mind of Barak, have tactical value in persuading the Palestinians that they are not the only game in town.

David Makovsky is a senior fellow at The Washington Institute.

Policy #273

---

## RECOMMENDED

### BRIEF ANALYSIS

#### [Bennett's Bahrain Visit Further Invigorates Israel-Gulf Diplomacy](#)

Feb 14, 2022

◆  
Simon Henderson

(/policy-analysis/bennetts-bahrain-visit-further-invigorates-israel-gulf-diplomacy)

### BRIEF ANALYSIS

#### [Libya's Renewed Legitimacy Crisis](#)

Feb 14, 2022

◆  
Ben Fishman

(/policy-analysis/libyas-renewed-legitimacy-crisis)



## BRIEF ANALYSIS

# The UAE Formally Ceases to be a Tax-Free Haven

Feb 14, 2022



Sana Quadri,  
Hamdullah Baycar

[\(/policy-analysis/uae-formally-ceases-be-tax-free-haven\)](#)

## TOPICS

[Peace Process \(/policy-analysis/peace-process\)](#)

[U.S. Policy \(/policy-analysis/us-policy\)](#)

## REGIONS & COUNTRIES

[Israel \(/policy-analysis/israel\)](#)

[Palestinians \(/policy-analysis/palestinians\)](#)