

# Tip-toeing around the israeli-palestinian conflict: drafting un's resolution for ...

[Politics](#)



## **UN Security Council Resolution 242**

On June 5, 1967, Israel preemptively struck Egyptian forces situated along the Israeli border in the Sinai Peninsula as a result of the mobilization of ground troops towards Israel. Egypt called on Syria and Jordan to attack Israel, causing the Israelis to retaliate, pushing the combined Arab forces back while conquering great swathes of land in the process. By the end of the war, six days after it began, Israel's territory tripled in size, having taken East Jerusalem and the West bank from Jordan, the Golan Heights from Syria, and Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. This displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and Syrians, resulting in long term consequences that can be seen up to this day. Soon after the end of the war, the UN began the process of drafting a resolution in order to preserve peace through returning the territories taken by Israel to their previous owners.

Drafting of the resolution began the summer of 1967 with the intent of successfully resolving the Israeli-Arab conflict and creating a lasting peace acceptable to both sides. All Security Council members agreed that Israel should not be allowed to keep all the territories it took in order to keep the peace with the surrounding Arab nations. Thus the first part of the resolution sought to return territories back to their previous owners. The main argument that took place was in regard to the specific wording of the first part of the resolution: "(i) Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict" (UNSC RES/242, 1967). Notice that the sentence does not specify which territories or how much territory Israeli forces have to withdraw from. This was the primary point of debate during

the drafting process of Resolution 242. The way the UN Security Council works is that there are always five permanent members: the US, UK, France, USSR, and China. Ten other temporary members rotate every two years to form a Council of fifteen. The permanent members have the ability to veto any resolution, and if any one of them votes no on a resolution, it does not pass. The Security Council is used to “ensure prompt and effective action” while representing the rest of the members of the UN. (FAQ, n. d.)

While everyone wanted to form a lasting peace, the ways of getting there differed in the amount of territory each nation thought Israel should withdraw from. The U. S. and the UK believed that the best outcome would come about if the wording was deliberately left vague. British Foreign Secretary George Brown stated: “It calls for ‘withdrawal of Israeli forces from territories occupied during the recent conflict.’ It does not call for Israeli withdrawal from “the” territories recently occupied, nor does it use the word ‘all’. It would have been impossible to get the resolution through if either of these words had been included, but it does set out the lines on which negotiations for a settlement must take place.” (Brown, 1971). Thus their motivation comes from the ideal that the sovereign borders of the conflicting nations are not up to the UN to decide, but for those nations to negotiate on their own. U. S. Assistant Secretary of State put it this way: “ “That Resolution did not say ‘withdrawal to the pre-June 5 lines’. The Resolution said that the parties must negotiate to achieve agreement on the so-called final secure and recognized borders. In other words, the question of the final borders is a matter of negotiations between the parties.” (Meet the Press, 1970) The US recognized that it would not be possible to pass the resolution

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without leaving the amount of land Israel was to withdraw from ambiguous in order to give some leeway to the change in borders. “ You and I both know they can’t go back to the other [1967] borders”, as President Nixon said regarding the issue. (Kissinger, 2003)

However other members of the UN had different ideas; the Soviet Union, Mali, India, Nigeria, and Arab nations preferred that the document read “ Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from all territories occupied”, effectively returning the borders to what they were before the war. Israel, recognizing that this would put them in a vulnerable position geographically, strongly opposed this, stating that this would go against the second clause of the resolution: “(ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.” (UNSC RES/242, 1967) Israel argued that the pre-war borders made the nation indefensible from outside threats, voiding the “ secure. . . borders” portion of the second clause. They preferred that the first clause read: “ withdrawal. . . from some territories”.

Thus, the actors can be seen as the US and UK, the USSR and Arab states, and Israel. Even though Israel was not on the Security Council at the time, it will still be included in decision making models because of its considerable influence on the decisions of states with seats in the Security Council as well as adding legitimacy to any resolution passed. No resolution would have been passed if Israel didn’t agree with at least some parts of it, as certain

members of the Security Council would have voted against it. This goes in line with cooperation and the prisoner's dilemma. In a prisoner's dilemma case, Israel is grouped with the US/UK since both oppose "all territories" to be ceded, while the USSR and Arab States are in support of "all territories". It can be seen that both sides get the most benefit by cooperating and voting for the resolution to omit "all territories". The table has been modified to account for the veto system. If both veto each other's resolutions, there will be no resolution passed at any time and no lasting peace. If the US/UK veto the USSR's resolution or vice versa while the other votes for their own resolution, no resolution is passed either.

Israel/US/UK

USSR/Arab States

Vote for Veto

Vote for 1, 1 0, 0

Veto 0, 0 0, 0

In this case the resolution being voted on was the version that omitted "all" territories, the version that the US/UK put on the table. Again this table is not entirely according to the traditional prisoner's dilemma, and the USSR/Arab States were able to be persuaded to vote for the resolution through back channel negotiations in order to form a large enough coalition to ensure the vote goes through. For example, US Ambassador Goldberg pledged to return the West Bank to Jordan and compensate the state for any territory it would

have to give up if they agreed to the resolution. (Foreign Relations XIX, n. d.) Along with some discussion and debate, the USSR, eventually supporting whichever decision the Arab States went with, followed in kind by voting for the resolution.

Thus the USSR and their allied states demonstrated some rational thinking through strategic voting. Although they desired that “all” territories be returned, President Johnson had explained to Premier Alexei Kosygin that deciding the borders of the Middle East in a UN resolution would not be wise (Foreign Relations XIX, n. d.), and on seeing that that would be what seemed just and right in international eyes, resulted in the USSR voting differently than what they wanted to in order to maintain their image of legitimacy for future resolutions, leaning towards the long-term game.

With the preferences of all parties kept as they were before negotiating started, the actors can be seen as the US and UK, the USSR and Arab States, and Israel. As discussed before, the preferences of the actors have to do with the specific wording of the first clause of the resolution. The US and UK wish to leave the amount of territory Israel has to return unstated, the USSR and Arab States want all the territorial borders to return to what they were before the war, and Israel want to have the clause state that they can retain “some” territory. This can be visualized on the following table:

Utility USSR/Arab States USA/UK Israel

3 A C B

2 C B C

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## 1 B A A

A = “ withdrawal all from territories” Israel returns all land to previous owners

B = “ withdrawal from some→ territories” Israel has the explicit right from the UN to keep some territories

C = “ withdrawal from territories” Israel has to return territories but not specified which – to be negotiated later

This process is one-dimensional since there is only one issue to be decided on, the wording of the first clause of the resolution. As such, a one-dimensional spatial modeling method can be used to determine the outcome of the process.

Figure 1 displays the preference order graphically. It can be seen that there is one alternative that provides the best alternative in that none of the actors have that alternative as having the lowest utility. Thus Black’s Single Peaked Preference can be used to find the most likely winner of the debate, which would be to omit how much territory Israel would have to withdraw from by wording the first clause as “ Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict”.

Using the round-robin tournament method, it can also be seen that there is no Condorcet’s paradox. Comparing the two alternatives in each actor’s preference ordering, option C (from territories) is preferred over option B (from some territories), and option B is preferred over option A (from all

territories) when B is compared to A. Then while comparing the two extremes, option C and option A, option C is preferred over A (Essentially  $C > B$ ,  $B > A$ ;  $C > A$ ). The preferences are completely transitive and thus there is no Condorcet's paradox. This also means that there is a Condorcet winner in this situation, meaning there is a policy, or resolution draft in this case, that defeats every other alternative when compared to each individually. This would be the same one as predicted by Black's Single Peaked Preference: Omitting how much territory would be returned.

The predictions modelled by the spatial projections were correct. On November 22, 1967, Resolution 242 was unanimously passed by the UN Security Council. This situation was tricky to model using the rational approach because of the complex situation and the nature of the UN Security Council. The amount of influence non-voters had on the process (Neither the Arab States nor Israel sat on the Security Council) through their respective "representatives", or members in the Council that supported them, complicated the process, as the voters were not the same nations that were involved. For example the USSR effectively represented the Arab States' interests. The passing of the resolution has an impact to this day. The resolution was not completely successful, as Syria and the PLO rejected the resolution on the grounds that the amount of land returned to them was not satisfactory. However this resolution laid the groundwork for future treaties and resolutions and both eventually embraced this resolution in addition to many others that worked to solidify peace between Israelis and Arab nations in the region. In the end the drafters of the resolution stood by their decision to keep the wording ambiguous: " We wanted that to be left a little vague

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and subject to future negotiation because we thought the Israeli border along the West Bank could be “rationalized”; certain anomalies could easily be straightened out with some exchanges of territory, making a more sensible border for all parties.” (Rusk, 1990)