

# JOCUL „PEACEMAKER” CA UN INSTRUMENT DE REZOLVARE A CONFLICTULUI ISRAELIANO-PALESTINIAN

## „PEACEMAKER” GAME AS A TOOL OF SOLVING ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

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### SUMMARY

*This article is going to explore the paths students have taken to solve the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Considering that the students are Israelis and have a background of gaming, in the game called „PeaceMaker” they will try to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by satisfying both sides of it. Each player would win if she successfully manages to please each side of the conflict when construction, politics, and security are considered. This idea of a game is a brilliant and touchy one, because it is going to expose each „player’s” feelings, emotions and views of the whole conflict idea, where she stands and what is her background. Being exposed to both sides of the conflict is going to even raise the difficulty of the game, since it will eventually make players to go against their own background and agendas if they are going to play the other side.*

**Keywords:** *PeaceMaker game, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, conflict resolution.*

### REZUMAT

*Acest articol se refer  la c ile pe care studen ii le-au luat pentru a rezolva conflictul dintre Israel  i Palestina. Av nd  n vedere c  studen ii sunt israelieni  i au un fond de joc,  n jocul numit „PeaceMaker” vor  ncerca s  rezolve conflictul israeliano-palestinian prin satisfacerea ambelor p r i ale acestuia. Fiecare juc tor ar c ştiga dac  reu e te cu succes s  mulţumeasc  fiecare parte a conflictului atunci c nd sunt luate  n considerare construc ia, politica  i securitatea. Aceast  idee a unui joc este una genial   i emo ionant , deoarece va expune sentimentele, emo iile  i opiniile fiec rui juc tor ale  ntregii idei de conflict, unde se afl   i care este fundalul ei, fiind expus  ambelor p r i ale conflictului. va cre te chiar  i dificultatea jocului, deoarece  n cele din urm   i va face pe juc tori s  mearg  pe propriile fundaluri  i agende dac  vor juca de cealalt  parte.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *Jocul PeaceMaker, conflictul israeliano-palestinian, rezolvarea conflictelor.*

**Introduction to „PeaceMaker” game.** PeaceMaker is inspired by real events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A player is proposed to „be a leader and bring peace to the region before your term in office ends.” „PeaceMaker”

is actually two games in one: play both the role of the Israeli Prime Minister and the Palestinian President. The real news are played: „how would you react to the events in the Middle East presented using real news footage and images? Depending on what you bring to the table, we have three difficulty levels to choose from including calm, tense and violent”.

This game offers high risk- high reward system as it explores new possibilities and knowledge of each side, who also have to choose between diversity and consistency, which makes it hard because it is not understood properly (Cohen, McClure and Yu, 2007). Although actions are driven by curiosity, action diversity is crucial to solve complex problems (Gonzalez and Madhavan, 2011). Conflict resolution shows the huge importance of diversity in actions while attempting to satisfy both sides (Gonzalez and Madhavan, 2011).

Actions done by leaders depend on psychological reasons and sociological ones, as they all affect the actions that have to be done: for example, going in consistent patterns is the „safer” option because you are not taking some wild and unexpected actions; on the other hand, we cannot keep copy pasting decisions from the past as what have worked before may not work now, so action diversity is needed. In this paper, we are going to explore the diversity of actions students have considered in „PeaceMaker” to satisfy both sides, and we will compare the diversity of actions taken by both sides and the effect of background knowledge on decisions, finally examining whether background knowledge helps in winning the game.

**Consistency and diversity in conflict resolution.** The prospect theory of loss aversion suggests that decision makers fail to venture beyond what is expected

and accepted, because people will most likely reject them. Usually, people in their nature tend to look on the negative sides of loss rather than the gains of success, thus we will see if our students may also fall in this trap while solving the conflict. Human beings are usually afraid of risk taking, but in the process of conflict in „PeaceMaker” the players are expected to diverse in actions, since there are no consequences (Festinger, 1957).

### **Religious and cultural background.**

Religion is a very sensitive issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: although it is usually claimed the conflict is political, it actually has religious roots. Even if it is not said in public, many researchers and politicians agree that religion is the main motive for this conflict. Jews believe in the promised or given land (Palestine) from God and worship God for making them „the chosen people of God”. They believe that they were chosen over all other creatures of the world, and God gave them this land through a promise and it is rightfully „owned” by them and will be to the end of times, following that they justify all acts done to achieve this goal, which brings us to the present day. It is proven that doing something that does not go with your own thoughts or beliefs is a source of psychological problems. Such a situation happens when Israeli students have to make decisions against their culture, for example, to help Palestinians reclaim Al-Quds, for example (Martinie, Olive, and Millard 2010). In addition, the „PeaceMaker” game literally forces the players to put themselves in the other side’s shoes, which requires honesty and objectivity. Moreover, in this game, a player has to satisfy both sides and reach 100 on each side, while stumbling upon random actions depicted from the real life with news footage playing as prime minister of Israel or Pal-

estine, and she will lose if either of those sides reaches 50 or less, so it is the perfect „sandbox” to see if we can change a point of view of the player over the situation (Gonzalez and Czlonka 2010; Martin et.al., 2014).

**Participants.** 30 undergraduate Israeli students participated in the experimental study, the number reduced to 26 after four participant did not meet the requirements. Half of the participants already had some knowledge on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. 88% of participants spent 5 hours on average on video games, they had an urge to win no matter what, but the game forced them to take a stand against their own beliefs to win the game.

**The outcomes.** Results have shown major advantage for players who took more diverse actions to try and solve the conflict, which proves the hypothesis that readiness to take a risk pays more than the „safe mode” strategies. There were 11 players who have failed to complete the game and solve the conflict - they took far greater measure of safety, which ended up for them in losing the game. Israeli players are less likely to take more diverse actions when playing on the Israeli side rather than the Palestinian one. Moreover, Israeli students found it more difficult to adjust their mind frame and stannds playing in Israeli after playing the Palestinian, which shows that after being introduced to the Palestinian situation they have begun to show more empathy toward the Palestinians. Not surprisingly, more secular Jews demonstrated more diversity and flexibility in actions while playing the Palestinian role rather than religious Jews (Cuhadar and Kampf, 2014).

**Discussions.** Israelis showing empathy for Palestinians and vice versa, after playing as the hostile prime minister,

only shows one thing- students from both sides have a vast lack of knowledge about the other side. Since they are not able to access their area physically and interact with them, being exposed to the media, which strives to show their own people that the other side is the bad one and to blame it.

We can also assume that if the Israeli students played a role of an Israeli prime minister, the results could differ, because as we have seen, the media covers people eyes with lies and hate, to an extent that to see the other side players’ die is cheerful for them, so if they had to play the Israeli role first, they would not show much empathy or „mercy” for the Palestinians. We can also conclude what else motivated the players to „win” the game even in a cruel way. The majority players are real gamers, and over time they develop a habit of loving to win. However, we can’t consider this as simple as a game, because this game has a political-religious background towards the other side of the conflict, and playing it can be embarrassing to some or even shameful. The author also believes this game has exposed the media and the fog it makes to manipulate our feelings and emotions, so it is highly recommended that this game should be played by any citizen on both sides. Hopefully, one day the players can realize that the other side is also human, just as much as they are.

Finally, those who had better knowledge of the conflict between the two sides, had better understanding of the game and completed it better, rather than those who did not understand the whole situation. The more ignorant players focused on the security measures rather than doing actions that will benefit both sides and work on ending the conflict between them. Thus, people who don’t know much of the other side, tend

to take caution of them. So, best way to approach this kind of conflict is through sharing a true information between all humans and humanity, which is very difficult because each side has drowned their people with certain ethos based on some dishonest sources, like sacrificing for one country and home which indirectly kills some humanity values when seeing the other side people getting killed as a usual and very acceptable routine (Shamir, 2000). To conclude, „PeaceMaker” is a game with great purpose, since in addition to fun it supplies to gamers, it encourages gaining strategic knowledge and putting yourself in the other’s shoe, to feel her pain, suffering and point of view. The desired outcome – achieving the peace we have been long waiting for. The game actually fights the media channels that always work with their own agenda to show other side as evil guys and our side as the victims or the defenders of our rights. The media threatens that if we stop „defending” ourselves, they at certain point will step on us, which works on growing the spirit of violence and

envy from both sides. Considering the results that this game has shown, the author thinks this game should be in every Palestinian and Israeli house to strengthen the bonds between them and show that they both have their own lives and fears, and they both realize peace is the only solution and it is the only way to satisfy both sides of the conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been growing evil seeds since it begun. Maybe, we should stop and think about it- we are all human brothers and sisters, and should consider the other feelings and fears. The long-lasting war has left its signs on any one of the two sides and often the media lies and serves some certain interests, showing the other side as the attacker and assaulter, while „our side” is the victim of violence. The author hopes, the „PeaceMaker” game’s great benefit is at least in the fact that when we know the others attitudes and situation, we can appreciate and have empathy towards them , as well to act more flexibly and moving away from the pattern that we have been learning for all those years.

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