

Reasons of oslo peace process failure

[History](#)



Introduction After eight rounds of secret talks, the famous handshake between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat in Washington on September 13th, 1993, appeared to denote a dream come true – two hitherto sworn enemies, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), officially recognised each other and put their signatures under a peace agreement, aka the Declaration of Principles (Selby, 2003, p. 4; Mattar, 2005, p. 66). The Declaration was intended to set the framework and timetable as well for further bilateral negotiations and agreements that shortly thereafter gained currency as the Oslo Accord; which, in turn, suggested the possibility of peace between Israel and the Palestinians being just around the corner (Selby, 2003, p. 4). Or at least the bulk of the Western press, as well as many politics and political observers were tempted to foresee such a development – not surprisingly, the US President Clinton announced “ a new era” for both the Middle East and the world (Selby, 2003, p. 4).

The Palestinians eventually conceded that the time has come to put the decades-long conflict and confrontation to an end; arguably having realised that lasting peace settlement and reconciliation are preferable to never-ending war, or due to the major setback suffered as a result of Arafat’s support for Iraq during the occupation of Kuwait and Operation Desert Storm, as the case might be. On the other hand, Israel’s decision to admit PLO as a legitimate peace partner could be attributed to a variety of reasons, most notably continued international pressure and the dramatic shift in policy during Rabin’s second term as Israeli Prime Minister (Mattar, 2005, p. 66). However, both sides agreed a mutual recognition, series of measures to build trust and partnership in vital areas, including economic ones, as well as the establishment of Palestinian self-government in parts of Gaza strip and <https://assignbuster.com/reasons-of-oslo-peace-process-failure/>

West bank (Selby, 2003; Mattar, 2005, p. 66).

Even though most observers considered the initial phases of Oslo Accord an unprecedented breakthrough, which was mainly due to the realised need and effort made by leaders from both sides to establish a long-lasting peace between the two nations, at the end of the day, the peace process has proved to be a failure (Brown, 2003, p. 7; Mattar, 2005, p. 66). The fundamental goal of permanently appeasing the region wasn't achieved, the creation of an independent Palestinian state failed as well, despite the transfer of control over the Gaza Strip and West Bank to autonomous Palestinian rule and the significant international donor effort for the reconstruction and development of both areas (Selby, 2003, p. 4; Ynetnews, 2009). The anticipated build-up of trust and confidence also failed and after the negotiations at Camp David in July 2000 the peace process was finally blown up by the outburst of the second intifada (Ynetnews, 2009).

There are contrasting assessments of the reasons behind Oslo's failure amongst scholars, observers and participants, which could be generally grouped in terms of each party's responsibilities in undermining the peace process, namely those of the Israelis, the Palestinians, and the Americans as well. The Israeli participants, for example, offered five explanations for the Palestinian part of responsibility for the failure of the process, as follows: the role played by the late Arafat himself; the Palestinian mismanagement of the negotiations and their implementation; Palestinian misunderstandings of the Israelis; the cleavages within the Palestinian leadership; and their ultimate failure and violation of the agreements by turning to violence and terrorism (Kacowicz, 2005, p. 258). There is almost a consensus among the Israeli participants, Ayalon, Ginossar and Hasson, that the Palestinians' main

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responsibility for the failure of the process has been their ineffectiveness in preventing and fighting terrorism, even though there was adequate cooperation between the security services, especially between 1996 and 1999 (Kacowicz, 2005, p. 258). However, some Israeli participants complained that the successive Israeli governments lacked a clear sense of the final goals of the negotiations; Ayalon, for instance, stated that “ there is a lack of grand vision in the formulation of Israeli policies” (Kacowicz, 2005, p. 258).

The Palestinians understandably blamed Israel for the failure of Oslo Accord, bringing the settlement issue to the fore, along with the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre committed by a Jewish settler during the observance of Ramadan (Tuman, 2010, p. 93). The Cave of the Patriarchs terrorist act was actually used by Hamas not only to recruit fighters, but also to step up violence; while the actions of Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) to quell the riots in Hebron, Gaza, Ramallah and Jerusalem, which erupted as a consequence of the massacre, were also viewed – from a Palestinian perspective – to have badly damaged the Oslo Peace accords (Tuman, 2010, p. 93).

On the other hand, the Palestinian-American intellectual Edward Said, who is considered the Palestinians’ most powerful political voice (Fisk, 2008), pointed out that the Oslo peace process denoted nothing but “ an agreement to keep Israeli hegemony over the Palestinian territories safeguarded by hypocritical rhetoric and military power” (Said, 2000, p. 188). Said also described the US role in mediating between the two sides as rather hypocritical, stating that the Palestinians entered “ an appalling spiral of loss and humiliation, gulled by the United States” (Said, 2000, p. 188). Others, like the Independent’s Middle East correspondent Robert Fisk, blamed both

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the US and Britain for failing to condemn the Israeli misconduct while blaming Hamas (Fisk, 2008).

An interesting view is presented by Selby (2003), who considers the issue of Israeli-Palestinian water politics to be the focal in regard to Israeli-Palestinian relations and in the broader sense – to Oslo's failure (p. 5).

The prime objectives of this dissertation are to examine the core perspectives within the debate surrounding the failure of the Oslo peace process, to apply postcolonial theory to the analysis of the Oslo peace process, to identify the chief causes behind Oslo's failure and draw lessons from it.

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