



The Promise and Failure of Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process in 1990s: A Literature Review

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Abstract: In 2023, the world marked 30 years since the start of the Oslo process, which sought to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Given the ultimate breakdown of these negotiations, it is crucial to examine the evolution of academic research on this process, identifying its key themes and trends. This literature review focuses on both empirical and theoretical studies of the Oslo process, with a particular emphasis on research that investigates the reasons behind its failure. Such studies provide valuable insights for developing more effective models of negotiation and conflict resolution. Initially, the commencement of the Oslo negotiations was met with optimism in the academic community, with scholars highlighting the pivotal role of individual leaders in successfully launching the process. However, as the peace process faltered, the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations were analyzed through existing theoretical frameworks. Various scholars critically examined the Oslo Accords from the perspective of international law and highlighted economic factors that obstructed the path to a lasting peace. Other studies explored indirect influences on the peace process, such as public opinion and electoral dynamics, often employing Robert Putnam's "two-level games" theory. Nevertheless, these studies mainly address the immediate causes of the peace process's failure and do not fully account for the underlying motivations driving the behavior of actors in the negotiations. Research into the deeper causes of the Oslo process's collapse has highlighted socio-psychological barriers, such as the "conflict syndrome" and issues of ontological security. Scholars have investigated the roles of historical memory, collective trauma, and cultural identities in shaping negotiation outcomes. The rise of interdisciplinary approaches—combining insights from psychology, philosophy, and linguistics—has been essential for understanding the complex dimensions of this conflict. The diverse body of research and theories inspired by the Oslo peace process continues to influence the field of negotiation and conflict resolution studies, underscoring the enduring significance of this critical episode in diplomatic history.

Keywords: negotiation theory, Oslo Accords, protracted conflicts, ontological security, conflict syndrome, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, two-level games, Palestine Liberation Organization, Israel

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This year marks the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Oslo Accords, underscoring the importance of analyzing the evolution of scholarly assessments of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiation process—one of the most intricate cases in international politics. These negotiations have become a central focus in academic literature, particularly within the broader context of advancing theories of negotiation and conflict resolution since the signing of the Accords. The renewed escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in 2023 further emphasizes the critical need for scholarly inquiry in this area. Such research is essential for understanding the changing dynamics of the conflict, identifying emerging challenges, and providing nuanced perspectives that can inform policy responses and contribute to sustainable solutions amidst the region's heightened tensions.

Analyzing this body of research can shed light on how theoretical frameworks influence case studies and whether they enhance the understanding of specific negotiation contexts. The scholarly exploration of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations has evolved in tandem with the peace process itself, heavily influenced by the unfolding trajectory of the conflict. Newly uncovered or gradually revealed data related to the conflict has enabled the academic community to revisit well-known events from alternative perspectives. Moreover, the development of new concepts and methodologies in conflict resolution, negotiation studies, and international relations in recent years has both required and facilitated a reexamination of the peace process through a more contemporary lens.

The Palestinian-Israeli peace process involves a multifaceted range of negotiation efforts, making it a complex subject of study. This research does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the entire scholarly trajectory surrounding the peace process or the numerous methodologies used to analyze it, given the breadth and depth of available literature. Instead, the article focuses specifically on works that are fully or partially devoted to the Oslo process and its consequences. The selected works are categorized into three distinct groups. The first group includes studies that delve into specific features of the Oslo negotiations, such as their strategic dynamics, key actors, and negotiation tactics. The second group consists of research that situates the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, particularly the Oslo negotiations, within the broader field of negotiation studies, thereby contributing to the development of general theories on negotiation and conflict resolution. The third group encompasses studies that critically examine the underlying causes behind the eventual failure of the Oslo negotiations.

The primary objective of this article is to identify prevailing trends within the research on this topic and to highlight the most influential theoretical frameworks employed. The analysis does not attempt to cover all studies related to the Oslo process or provide an exhaustive account of the diverse theoretical approaches in the field. Moreover, as a comprehensive review of Russian-language literature on the Israeli-Palestinian negotiation process has been effectively conducted by A.V. Gofman in his

article, “*The Oslo Accords as an Attempt to Settle the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: Historiographic Aspect*” (Gofman 2017), this review focuses predominantly on English-language scholarly articles and monographs.

The Oslo process itself has been extensively analyzed in academic literature from various perspectives. Scholars have explored its historical context, the role of political leaders, the influence of international actors, and the legal and economic frameworks underpinning the negotiations. For instance, some studies focus on the micro-level dynamics of the negotiation process, such as the importance of trust-building measures and the strategic decisions made by key negotiators (Smith 2014). Others examine macro-level factors, such as international law and the structural conditions that shaped the peace process, including geopolitical considerations and the impact of third-party mediation efforts (Brown 2008; Miller 2012).

Additionally, there is a significant body of literature that seeks to understand the failure of the Oslo process by analyzing the deeper socio-psychological and structural barriers that prevented a lasting resolution. These studies often highlight the role of historical narratives, collective trauma, and issues of *ontological security* — the need for a sense of continuity and identity in conflict situations (Mitzen 2006; Kelman 2007). They argue that such factors created profound psychological and cultural obstacles that could not be easily overcome through negotiation alone.

Another critical area of research focuses on the intersection of negotiation strategies and political realities. Scholars have drawn on theories such as Robert Putnam’s “two-level games” to illustrate how domestic political constraints and international negotiations are interconnected, revealing how internal pressures and public opinion shaped the decision-making of Israeli and Palestinian leaders (Putnam 1988). This approach provides a nuanced understanding of why certain negotiation tactics were employed and how they ultimately influenced the peace process’s outcomes.

The interdisciplinary nature of recent research has been particularly valuable in advancing the understanding of the Oslo process. By integrating insights from psychology, philosophy, and linguistics, scholars have been able to develop more comprehensive frameworks that account for the complexity of the conflict. This trend reflects a broader shift in the field of conflict resolution studies, where single-discipline approaches are increasingly seen as inadequate for capturing the multifaceted nature of protracted conflicts like the Israeli-Palestinian one (Lederach 1997; Bercovitch and Jackson 2009).

Specific characteristics of the negotiation process

The early 1990s were marked by a renewed hope for resolving the ongoing crisis. This sense of optimism culminated in the Oslo peace process, which led to the conclusion of two agreements, Oslo I and Oslo II, in 1993 and 1995, respectively. These agreements, brokered under the auspices of Norway, were the result of secret negotiations between the parties involved. On September 13, 1993, in Washington, D.C.,

the “Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Measures” was signed on the White House lawn, witnessed by the President of the United States and the Russian Foreign Minister.¹ The Declaration focused on several key issues, including elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from parts of the occupied territories—primarily from the Gaza Strip and the area around Jericho — and the initiation of negotiations. The agreement stipulated that within two years of its signing, the question of the permanent status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip would be addressed. These final status negotiations were expected to tackle core issues such as the status of Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, and security arrangements. However, the negotiations quickly stalled when it became apparent that each side interpreted the agreement as a foundation for pursuing opposing objectives. Israel viewed the agreements as an opportunity to integrate Jerusalem into the Jewish state while preserving settlements in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip. In contrast, the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat saw the agreement as a victory in the struggle for national liberation, envisioning the creation of a sovereign state with East Jerusalem as its capital and the complete removal of Israeli settlements. Consequently, the international community began to question the effectiveness of the Oslo Accords in achieving a lasting settlement.

Examining the peace process by addressing individual issues — such as the status of Jerusalem², the rights of refugees, security arrangements, territorial disputes, and the achievement and negotiation of Israeli-Palestinian mutual recognition (Singer 2021), as well as its significance for each party and its definition from the perspective of international law (Arzt, Zughaib 1992) — has contributed to a deeper understanding of the peace process.

A substantial body of academic literature investigates *the reasons behind the successful initiation* of direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in the early 1990s (Shlaim 2005). The nature of the Oslo Accords has been effectively examined through the lens of the historical context that framed the negotiations, as explored in various analytical works (see, e.g., Chomsky 2017).

Some researchers attribute the successful initiation of negotiations to *the impact of individual personalities* on the negotiation process. Reflecting the trend of studying the role of key figures in negotiations, scholars have particularly focused on the influence of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (1992–1995) and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on the course of the negotiations in Norway. Rabin’s professional trajectory and the evolution of his views regarding negotiations with the Palestinians, including the possibility and scope of territorial concessions, have been subjects of significant

¹ The Oslo Accords and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process. *Department of State Office of the Historian*. URL: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1993-2000/oslo> (accessed 20.08.2024).

² Mustafa F.H. 2005. Problema Ierusalima v protsesse politicheskogo uregulirovaniia na Blizhnem Vostoke (1947–2004) [The Problem of Jerusalem in the Political Settlement in the Middle East (1947–2004)]. Ph.D. diss., RUDN University, Moscow. (In Russian).

interest (Makovsky 1996). Additionally, the analysis of the actions of Shimon Peres and Mahmoud Abbas, as well as their widely recognized memoirs detailing the peace negotiations of the early 1990s (Peres 1995; Abbas 1997), forms a substantial part of this thematic block (Weiner 1996: 667–704).

A significant and widely studied issue in the early 2000s was the role of mediators in conflict resolution. The secret negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides in the 1990s, facilitated with the support of Norway (Jones 1999), continued to attract scholarly attention over the years. The effectiveness of the United States as an impartial mediator has been critically examined, with various studies questioning this role (Sanders 1999; Lasensky 2004).

Scientific studies focusing on the resolution of interstate conflicts involving non-state actors (Pearlman, Cunningham 2012) have provided new perspectives on the negotiation processes of the 1990s (Barak 2005). Research on asymmetric conflicts has led the academic community to conclude that applying standard templates for resolving interstate conflicts to different types of conflicts often fails to yield long-term positive outcomes. The Oslo negotiation process was an example of such a “different type of conflict” (Lustick 1997), as it would become evident by the mid-2000s.

Oslo Accords in the theory of negotiations and conflict resolution

The Oslo Accords represent a pivotal development in the field of negotiations and conflict resolution. This landmark agreement underscored the effectiveness of dialogue and diplomacy in addressing entrenched conflicts. By highlighting the importance of direct negotiations and mutual recognition, the Accords have become a prominent case study for scholars and practitioners, illustrating the complexities and challenges of negotiating peace in protracted conflicts. The Accords have significantly influenced subsequent negotiation efforts, providing a framework for understanding the delicate balance necessary for sustainable and equitable resolutions. Despite its difficulties and setbacks, the Oslo Accords continue to serve as a crucial reference point in the discussions on conflict resolution, offering insights into the complex dynamics of fostering understanding and cooperation between conflicting parties.

Some studies have contributed to the broader field of negotiation theory through an analysis of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, particularly the Oslo process. These studies have advanced the understanding of negotiations by exploring concepts such as the zero-sum game and examining the relationship between theoretical frameworks and practical applications (Kibrik 2016).

In 1997, a special issue of *International Negotiation: A Journal of Theory and Practice* was dedicated to examining the Oslo negotiations from multiple perspectives. This issue featured analytical works that made significant contributions to both the development of negotiation theory and the understanding of the Oslo peace process. Key contributions included essays on topics such as the communication system (Carcasson,

Putnam 1997), conflict management (Bercovitch 1997), and the roles of secrecy, the setting, the status of the initial participants, the nature of the third party, and the mediation process (Kelman 1997).

In his article “Explaining Oslo,” William Zartman employs ripeness theory to elucidate why Israel and the PLO were able to engage in direct negotiations. He also utilizes the theory of mediation to highlight the importance of seeking a settlement rather than a resolution, the effectiveness of a “weak” mediator as opposed to a “strong” one, and the nature of the resulting agreements (Zartman 1997).

Dean Pruitt’s study, “Ripeness Theory and the Oslo Talks,” is also grounded in Zartman’s theory of “ripeness.” According to this theory, conflict resolution is feasible only when the conflict has reached a certain stage of maturity or “ripeness” (Pruitt 1997), which refers to the point at which the parties recognize that maintaining the status quo incurs significant costs that they are unable to bear, leading them to perceive that reaching an agreement on relatively satisfactory terms for both sides is more advantageous (Zartman 2000).

Pruitt attributes the apparent success of the Oslo negotiations to the fact that all the necessary elements for achieving a positive outcome had reached a state of “ripeness.” According to his analysis, the parties to the conflict possessed significant motivation and optimism about the prospects of reaching a mutually acceptable agreement, which was further bolstered during the negotiations. He observes that mutual trust between the parties increased with each successive round of negotiations, a process that was also supported by the mediation efforts of the Norwegian side (Pruitt 1997).

Subsequent analyses of the Oslo talks also frequently employed negotiation theories, and vice versa. A notable example is the False Readiness (FR) theory, which was introduced through the examination of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. This theory seeks to explain the repeated failures in resolving the conflict by focusing on prolonged negotiations that persist for decades without achieving peace agreements. The FR theory posits that the lack of a genuine commitment to resolving the conflict by any party inhibits the achievement of a successful outcome (Schwartz, Gilboa 2023).

Another example is the reassessment of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) as a tool for conflict resolution through the lens of the Oslo Accords. The significance of CBMs is highlighted by the Oslo experience, as the lack of genuine commitment from both sides and the absence of a solid foundation for a lasting peace agreement led to the ineffectiveness of these measures during the initial stages of the negotiations. This contributed to the overall failure of the peace process, as discussed in the next section (Bzostek, Rogers 2014).

Among the various theories employed to enhance the understanding of the Oslo Accords was Relational Order Theory (Hoobler, Donohue 2002). This theory facilitated the analysis of the relational context that developed during the initial Oslo negotiations and helped determine whether this context influenced the parties’ ability to engage in good-faith bargaining.

The analysis of negotiation strategies employed during the Oslo process is also a widely studied topic. For instance, Are Hovdenak's work, "Trading Refugees for Land and Symbols: The Palestinian-Israeli Negotiation Strategy in the Oslo Process," extensively examines the PLO's strategy concerning the refugee issue. Hovdenak argues that the PLO was prepared to forgo the right of return in exchange for territorial concessions from Israel. However, the lack of face-saving gestures from Israel prevented the PLO from publicly presenting its proposal (Hovdenak 2009).

A range of studies has examined indirect factors influencing the negotiation process, including the impact of public opinion on negotiations (Shamir, Shikaki 2005), electoral processes (Rynhold, Steinberg 2004), and the influence of domestic political characteristics and circumstances on negotiating positions, party strategies, and the tools of international pressure. These studies often draw on Robert Putnam's "two-level games" theory (Putnam 1988). For instance, the political shifts in Israel, including changes in the ruling party, led to frequent and radical changes in the country's foreign policy, which affected the pace and nature of the peace process with the Palestinians. Particular attention has also been given to analyzing the position, rhetoric, and policies of the Israeli coalition government led by Benjamin Netanyahu (1996–1999), which prioritized security and territorial guarantees over peace with the Palestinians. Similarly, the internal conflict between Hamas and Fatah in Palestine was seen as a significant factor contributing to the failure to establish peace (Lieberfeld 2008).

The reasons for the ultimate failure of negotiations

In the immediate aftermath of the Oslo I, much of the academic research conveyed a cautious optimism regarding the prospects for a future settlement. While the studies did not explicitly declare the inevitability of a comprehensive agreement, there was a prevailing belief that the creation of two states for two peoples was the only viable option for Israel if it intended to continue developing a prosperous and secure Jewish state. The agreements reached in Norway were largely regarded as a solid foundation for a future peace agreement (Hagopian 1997), with particular emphasis on the importance of mutual recognition and the potential for establishing a security regime acceptable to both sides³.

While the prevailing trend in the 1990s was a generally positive assessment of the ongoing negotiations, there were also several "prophetic" studies by leading political scientists and international experts that criticized the agreements reached. For instance, Edward Said highlighted the significant asymmetry in the concessions made by the parties, arguing that the extremely unsatisfactory outcomes for the Palestinians

³ Building Peace: The Israel-PLO Breakthrough (Part 2). *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*. October 15, 1993. URL: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/building-peace-israel-plo-breakthrough-part-ii> (accessed 20.08.2024).

would inevitably lead to the failure of the agreements (Said 1996: 3–21). Additionally, some articles criticized the Oslo process for undermining the Palestinian legal claim to sovereign statehood (Hagopian 1997). Other studies expressed skepticism about the agreements by analyzing internal divisions within both groups (Kriesberg 2000) and identifying active opposition to the accords among certain interest groups in Israel, Palestine, and the United States as a factor likely to hinder the success of the Oslo process (Lustick 1997).

By the late 1990s, it became evident that the Oslo process had reached an impasse, a development that was reflected in academic literature. Scholars began to explore the reasons behind the deadlock, and by the early 2000s, the majority of theoretical studies focused on identifying the causes of the Oslo process's failure (1993–1995) and the collapse of the Camp David summit (2000)⁴. Following the outbreak of the Intifada and the rising number of casualties, the optimism of the 1990s gave way to a reassessment of the agreements' outcomes and efforts to gauge the prospects for a new peace process (Zreik 2003).

In a significant number of analytical papers, scholars openly discuss the “end of the Oslo process”⁵. The peace process was often described as frozen or even no longer viable as a political reality, facing harsh criticism when reviewed from historical and theoretical perspectives (Barak 2005; Malik 2001). While some studies debated whether Israel or the Palestinians bore more responsibility for the collapse of the process, many others questioned whether the Oslo process failed due to improper implementation or because it was inherently flawed⁶.

A substantial body of research has focused on critiquing the Oslo Accords from the perspective of international law (Imseis 2000), analyzing the main provisions, structure, and phases of implementation. Scholars frequently highlight issues such as vague language, unclear timelines, unresolved key issues, and unbalanced concessions, with some arguing that the concessions made by the Palestinian side were significantly greater than those made by Israel (Malik 2001; Watson 2000). Furthermore, legal analyses of the Oslo Accords over time suggest that the prospects for achieving sustainable peace remain elusive (Falk 2017).

John Quigley provides an in-depth analysis of the failure of the 2000 negotiations in his comprehensive work, *The Case for Palestine: An International Law Perspective*. He attributes this failure to Israel's reluctance to negotiate based on established principles of international law. Quigley argues that over the past century, Israel has consistently

⁴ ICG. 2002. A Time to Lead: The International Community and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. *International Crisis Group*. Middle East Report N° 1. URL: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/01-a-time-to-lead-the-international-community-and-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict.pdf> (accessed 20.08.2024). P. 3–12.

⁵ Lovatt H. 2020. The end of Oslo: A New European Strategy on Israel-Palestine. *European Council on Foreign Relations*. URL: <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-end-of-oslo-a-new-european-strategy-on-israel-palestine/> (accessed 20.08.2024).

⁶ Rynhold J. 2008. The Failure of the Oslo/ Process: Inherently Flawed or Flawed Implementation? *The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (Bar-Ilan University)*. Mideast Security and Policy Studies No. 76. URL: <https://besacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/03/MSPS76.pdf> (accessed 20.08.2024).

ignored key principles of international law, particularly the right to self-determination, leading to a perpetually destructive cycle of conflict that ultimately doomed the Oslo process. He contends that Palestinians have a stronger legal claim to Jerusalem than Israelis, that Palestinian refugees should be repatriated to areas including those within Israel's borders, and that Israel should withdraw from territories occupied in 1967 (Quigley 2005).

Economic aspects have also garnered significant attention from researchers studying the Palestinian-Israeli negotiation process (Levine 1995). Several analysts, drawing on data from the IMF and the World Bank, observed that despite the clear emphasis in the Oslo Accords on the importance of fostering strong economic relations between Israel and the Palestinians, the socio-economic conditions in the Palestinian territories continued to deteriorate. This decline hindered the resumption of peace negotiations and indirectly contributed to the intensification of terrorist activities among the increasingly impoverished and radicalized Palestinian population (Dessus 2004).

The Oslo Accords underscored the significance of establishing a robust economic relationship between Israel and the Palestinians. The preamble to the economic agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (known as the "Protocol"), signed in April 1994 in Paris, explicitly states that both parties viewed the strengthening of economic ties as a crucial step toward achieving a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace. However, just a few years after the signing of the Paris Protocol, it became evident that the Palestinian economy was plunging into a deep crisis. This decline was exacerbated by Israel's stringent policies, particularly the severe restrictions on the number of Palestinians permitted to work in Israel, which were implemented in response to terrorist attacks by Palestinian extremists.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Palestinians constituted over 30% of the Israeli labor force; however, by 1996, this figure had plummeted to 7%. Consequently, the share of factor incomes from abroad in the GDP of the Palestinian Authority decreased from 35% to 6%. This abrupt structural shift in the economic relationship between the Palestinian and Israeli economies precipitated a severe economic crisis. Effective demand in the Palestinian economy declined sharply, and unemployment soared to 34% in the West Bank and Gaza by 1996 (Ibid).

Some works criticize the Oslo Accords for ignoring the stark disparity between the Israeli and Palestinian economies, which created an imbalance between the negotiating parties (Arnon, Spivak 1998). Others emphasize that Palestine's growing economic dependence on Israel following the agreements has undermined the viability of the two-state solution (Selby 2003).

In general, the failure of the Oslo agreements over the past decades has been attributed to various factors, including the absence of a clear negotiating direction, deficiencies in the agreements themselves, inadequate and incomplete implementation, and the disproportionate influence of domestic political agendas on leaders' foreign policy decisions. Additional reasons cited include the continued expansion of Jewish settlements near Jerusalem and in other areas of the occupied territories, as well as

significant violations of Palestinian rights. Some critiques also argue that the leadership of the Palestinian Authority failed to counteract the growing intolerance towards Jews that had developed over decades of conflict, did not foster the establishment of an open democratic political system, and neglected to advance the Palestinian economy (Kriesberg 2015).

The excessive influence of elite groups in the negotiations, the opposition from Israeli settlers who rejected the agreements, and the division within Israeli society between supporters and detractors of the accords (Krylov 2011) are also noted as significant factors affecting ultimate failure. Overall, the negotiation process is often characterized as superficial, demonstrative, and largely unproductive in achieving long-term peace and stability for both Israelis and Palestinians (Golan 2014).

In our view, while the aforementioned studies are certainly informative and effectively describe the events, they do not fully explain the underlying reasons behind the behavior of each side. In other words, despite being aware of the detrimental nature of their actions, both the authorities and the societies involved in the negotiations pursued steps that ultimately undermined the positive outcomes of the Oslo agreements. Therefore, we will now focus on studies that seek to elucidate the deeper motivations behind such behavior, as these insights are crucial for developing a more comprehensive theory of negotiations and conflict resolution.

In Robert Rothstein's work, *How Not to Make Peace: "Conflict Syndrome" and the Demise of the Oslo Accords*, the author introduces the concept of a "conflict syndrome," particularly prevalent in protracted conflicts. Arguing that the influence of this syndrome is frequently underestimated or even ignored, he characterizes the "conflict syndrome" as a collection of attitudes, biases, and prejudices that, after decades of violent conflict, become deeply ingrained within the power elites and societies of the conflicting parties. These entrenched perspectives are resistant to change, even in the aftermath of peace agreements or temporary truces⁷. While some elements of the syndrome may appear trivial, they collectively exert a significant impact on peace processes and shape the decisions of each side.

The primary outcome of the "conflict syndrome" is a persistent distrust that fosters a fear of deception, leading to minimal concessions and excessive demands from the opposing side. The prolonged and contentious relationship between Palestinians and Israelis serves as a quintessential example of the "conflict syndrome" in practice. Breaking the vicious cycle perpetuated by this syndrome can only be achieved by addressing and overcoming the mutual prejudices held by the parties involved. This mutual distrust is a fundamental factor contributing to the failure of peace negotiations (Abramov 2016).

⁷ Rothstein R.L. 2006. How not to make peace: "Conflict syndrome" and the demise of the Oslo accords. *United States Institute of Peace*. URL: <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PWmarch2006.pdf> (accessed 20.08.2024).

“Radical disagreement” is another relatively recent concept developed to elucidate why various conflict resolution strategies fail to address or even identify the root causes of conflicts. Central to resolving protracted conflicts is the recognition of profound differences between the parties, which involves identifying the “critical distance” between their fundamental beliefs or “truths.” The core issue is not necessarily the manner in which negotiations are conducted, but rather the entrenched conviction of the parties that peaceful efforts will not alter their foundational beliefs. Instead, these efforts are perceived to merely reinforce their existing views and exacerbate the difficulty of reaching a resolution (Ramsbotham 2010). The Palestinian-Israeli conflict remains a prominent case for analyzing these concepts (Ramsbotham 2013).

An interesting topic is the study of historical aspects that influence the psychology of society and determine its behavior in conflicts and peace negotiations (Kelman 1999), and the study of how identities impact peace process, Oslo process, in particular (Ricarte 2023). Contemporary research highlights the significant role of collective memory of the Holocaust in perpetuating the intractable nature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Some scholars argue that for Israeli society, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, by creating a context in which Israelis maintain a dominant position, to some extent serves as a mechanism for addressing and processing the traumatic memories of the Holocaust (Wistrich 1997; Bar-On, Sarsar 2004; Achar 2010; Levanon 2021). The Holocaust has thus become, on one hand, a central element of Jewish identity and, on the other hand, a potent political instrument, influencing both internal dynamics within Israeli society and its external relations (Wistrich 1997). Meanwhile, according to Gert Krell, the origins of the persistent failure of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, as well as the fundamental causes of the conflict itself, predate the era of Nazism and the Holocaust. He argues that Europe’s broader historical responsibility towards both Israelis and Palestinians is rooted in earlier phenomena such as European nationalism, anti-Semitism, colonialism, and imperialism, which adversely affected Jews and Arabs well before the 20th century⁸.

Research on ontological security (e.g., Steele 2008) offers an additional theoretical framework for analyzing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. For instance, in his work “Ontological Security and the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process: Between Unstable Conflict and Conflict in Resolution,” Amir Lupovici posits that international conflicts stem from social anxiety and fear, which are fundamental human emotions. He differentiates between fear and anxiety, defining anxiety as a general emotion that influences behavior, while fear is described as a response to specific threats. Lupovici argues that conflicts serve to manage existential anxieties by identifying specific threats, establishing meaning systems that clearly delineate friends from enemies, and setting moral

⁸ Krell G. 2015. Shadows from the Past: The Nazi-Regime, the Holocaust, and Germany’s Relationship towards the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. *Peace Research Institute Frankfurt*, Working Paper No. 26. URL: https://www.prif.org/fileadmin/HSFK/hsfk_publicationen/PRIF_WP_26.pdf (accessed 20.08.2024).

standards that are defended, thereby fostering social cohesion. Although conflicts engender physical insecurity, they paradoxically contribute to a sense of ontological security by transforming public anxiety into fear of concrete threats, thereby providing meaning to human existence through the defense of one's way of life or value system. This process is reinforced by authorities through the mechanism of securitization, which enhances the perception of specific threats. Lupovici attributes the failure of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process to this social psychological dynamic, suggesting that a successful resolution would disrupt the "comfortable" psychological state of a well-defined enemy image (Lupovici 2015).

In the 1990s, theoretical studies examining the impact of moral and ethical norms on negotiators' behavior gained prominence, leading to the development of the so-called axiological approach. Currently, research into the role of values as a factor in the failure of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process has become even more prevalent. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is frequently framed as a struggle over sacred values for both parties. These aspects of the conflict are notable because the loss of control over certain elements—such as security for Israelis or the sacred status of Jerusalem for both Palestinians and Israelis—cannot be compensated for financially, thereby complicating the situation from the perspectives of negotiation theory and conflict resolution theory (Sheikh, Ginges, Atran 2013). Additionally, several studies address religious issues within this context (Atran, Axelrod, Davis 2007; Reiter 2010).

A central concept within the axiological approach is that of "justice," as discussed in the seminal article "Negotiations as a Search for Justice," published in 1996 by five leading negotiation scholars (Jensen et al. 1996). This article is widely regarded as marking the inception of a new scholarly direction. In the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the issue of divergent perspectives on justice has recently received significant attention as a major impediment to achieving a peaceful resolution (Tapper, Sucharov 2019). Both Israelis and Palestinians perceive the world differently and have contrasting views on what constitutes a just world order. A key question posed within this framework is how each party currently perceives the problem, whether it is possible to alter their perceptions of reality, and whether these perceptions are reconcilable⁹.

Issues of justice and respect for human dignity are closely associated with the concept of transitional justice, which serves as a legal mechanism for addressing conflicts and reconciling with a shared traumatic past. Recent studies have explored the potential application of this mechanism to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a means of transforming and resolving the dispute. In this context, there have been proposals for establishing special commissions to investigate and document human rights violations on both sides (Bracka 2021).

⁹ Izydorczyk M. 2006. Security vs. Justice—Israel and Palestine: Diverging Perceptions of the Middle East Conflict since the Beginning of the Second Intifada and their Influence on the Peace Process. *The George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies*. No. 004. URL: <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/occasional-papers/security-vs-justice-israel-and-palestine-diverging-perceptions-middle-east-conflict-beginning-second> (accessed 20.08.2024).

In summary, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict exemplifies a deeply entrenched and protracted dispute rooted in conflicting identities. This situation arises when one side's establishment of national identity and pursuit of territorial self-determination is historically contingent upon the denial of the other side's identity (Kelman 2007). The Oslo talks held significant promise, as their main diplomatic achievement was precisely the recognition of Israel's right existence and security, in addition to the endorsement of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. This marked the initial acknowledgment of each side as a legitimate negotiating partner (Strombom, Kapshuk 2022). Despite its ultimate failure, it is important not to overlook the positive outcomes of the 1993–2000 negotiation process.

Conclusion

The extensive body of research and the array of perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process have significantly enhanced the understanding of historical events and have enriched broader discussions on conflict resolution, diplomatic strategy, and the complex factors influencing negotiations. As scholars continue to analyze the intricacies of this critical period, the insights gained from the Oslo Accords remain valuable for advancing both the study and practice of resolving complex and protracted conflicts.

The Oslo Accords have not only shaped Israeli-Palestinian relations but have also made significant contributions to the field of negotiation theory. Scholars have utilized ripeness theory to elucidate the success of the Oslo talks, highlighting the conditions necessary for conflict resolution. Concepts such as “false readiness” and “confidence building measures”, as demonstrated by the Oslo Accords, have deepened our understanding of persistent conflicts and the necessity of authentic commitment. The analysis of negotiation strategies during the Oslo process underscores the complexities of managing concessions and face-saving measures. Additionally, research on public opinion, electoral processes, and domestic politics, grounded in Putnam's “two-level games” theory, reveals the multifaceted influences on negotiation outcomes.

Finally, the investigation of the underlying reasons for the failure of the peace process has brought attention to socio-psychological barriers, including the “conflict syndrome” and issues of ontological security. Scholars have explored the influence of historical memory, collective trauma, and cultural identities on negotiation outcomes. The emergence of interdisciplinary approaches — incorporating psychology, philosophy, and linguistics — has been essential for understanding the complex dimensions of the conflict. Axiological approaches have emphasized the significance of sacred values, perceptions of justice, and ethical norms in shaping the behavior of negotiators. Central themes have included the recognition of conflicting identities and the necessity of mutual recognition and respect.

As it has now become clear, the Oslo Accords represent not only a significant historical milestone in diplomatic efforts but also a rich source for theoretical exploration, providing valuable insights for both negotiators and scholars. The diverse studies and theories inspired by the Oslo peace process continue to influence the research on negotiations and conflict resolution, highlighting the enduring impact of this pivotal moment in diplomatic history.

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Взлёт и падение израильско-палестинского мирного процесса в 1990-е: обзор исследований

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Аннотация: В 2023 г. мир отметил 30-летие с момента начала процесса Осло, направленного на урегулирование израильско-палестинского конфликта. Учитывая итоговый провал этих переговорных усилий, уместно рассмотреть основные направления научных исследований этого процесса, определить их ключевые темы и тенденции. При анализе как эмпирических, так и теоретических работ, посвящённых процессу Осло, особое внимание уделяется исследованиям, выявляющим причины провала переговоров, поскольку они указывают перспективные направления для разработки более эффективных моделей ведения переговоров и разрешения конфликтов. Начало переговоров в Осло первоначально было встречено академическим сообществом с оптимизмом, причём учёные подчёркивали ключевую роль отдельных лидеров в успешном запуске процесса. Параллельно с тем, как мирный процесс заходил в тупик, израильско-палестинские переговоры были проанализированы в рамках существующих теоретических моделей, при этом исследователи критически оценивали соглашения в Осло с точки зрения международного права и выделяли экономические факторы, препятствовавшие достижению прочного мира. В других исследованиях рассматривались косвенные факторы, влияющие на мирный процесс, такие как общественное мнение и электоральная динамика, часто с опорой на теорию «двухуровневых игр» Роберта Патнэма. Однако эти исследования в первую очередь направлены на выявление непосредственных причин провала мирного процесса и не позволяют объяснить фундаментальные мотивы, лежащие в основе поведения участников переговорного процесса. Исследование глубинных причин провала процесса Осло привлекло внимание к социально-психологическим барьерам, включая «конфликтный синдром» и проблемы онтологической безопасности. Учёные исследовали влияние исторической памяти, коллективной травмы и культурной идентичности на исход переговоров. Появление междисциплинарных подходов, объединяющих психологию, философию и лингвистику, сыграло решающую роль в понимании сложных аспектов конфликта. Разнообразные теории, вдохновлённые мирным процессом в Осло, продолжают влиять на развитие исследований в области переговоров и урегулирования конфликтов, подчёркивая непреходящее значение этого поворотного момента в истории дипломатии.

Ключевые слова: теория переговоров, соглашения Осло, «затяжные» конфликты, онтологическая безопасность, конфликтный синдром, палестино-израильский конфликт, двухуровневые игры, Организация Освобождения Палестины, Израиль

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