

## **Reviewing the Middle East peace process: Two decades of empty negotiations [1992-2012]**

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### **Reviewing the Middle East peace process: two decades of empty negotiations**

Over the past two decades, Palestinians have sat around the “negotiating table” on numerous occasions with successive Israeli governments and with a stated view of achieving a negotiated resolution to the intractable Palestine-Israel conflict. For years, Israel has claimed that the persistent failure of this so-called peace process was the result of Palestinian intransigence and of Israel having no reliable “partner for peace”. However, an independently authenticated cache of confidential documents, records, contemporaneous notes and transcripts of private meetings between the two sides leaked in 2011, revealed a very different picture.

Known as the Palestine Papers, the documents provide an extraordinary and unprecedented insight into a decade of peace negotiations, exposing them as a process of gradual subjugation and conspiracy. They revealed that Palestinian negotiators were willing to make concessions on a scale inconceivable to the average Palestinian and, moreover, they highlight the weakness, desperation and humiliation of those negotiators in the face of unyielding Israeli indifference and US bias.

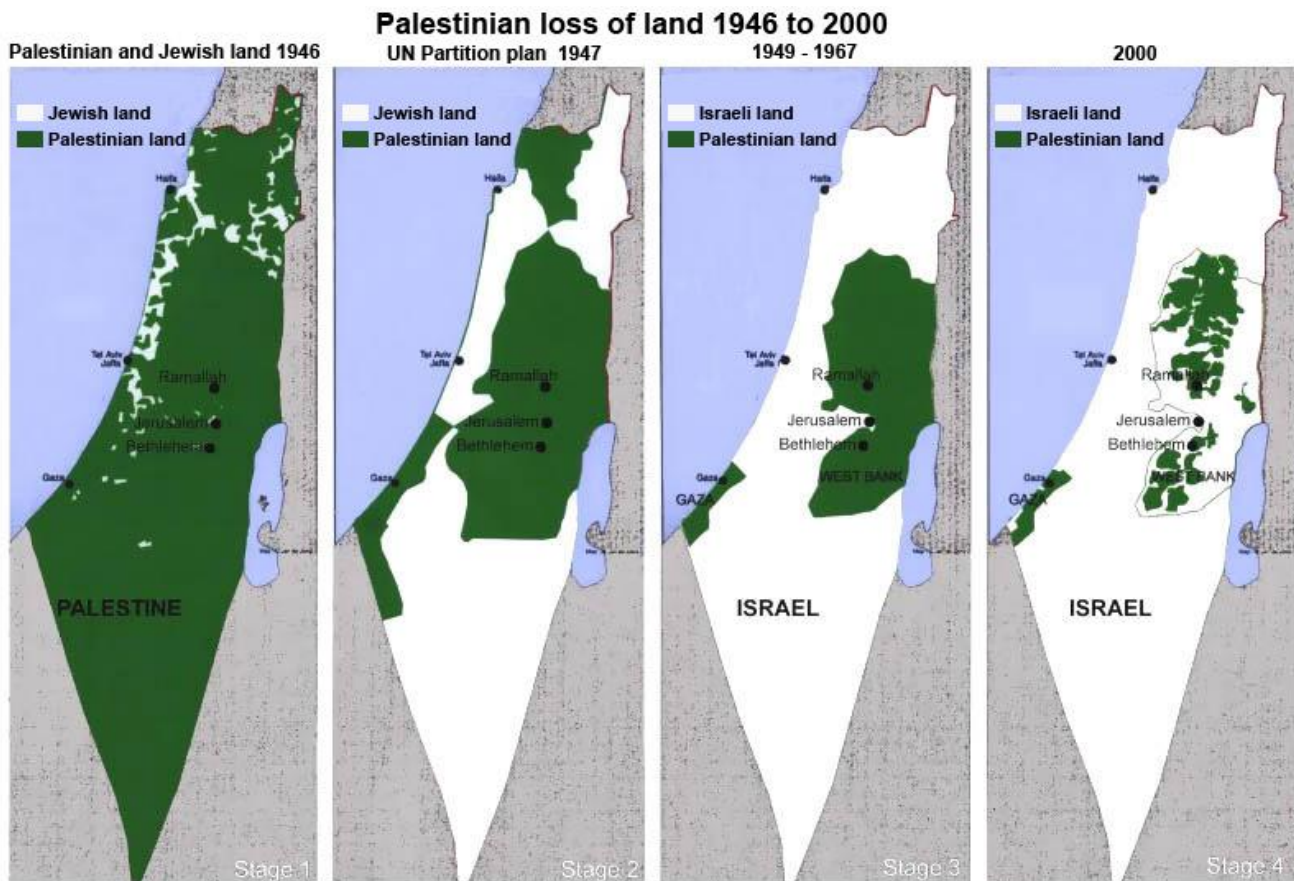
### **Background**

- Following the 1948 War and the establishment of the state of Israel in historic Palestine, three quarters of a million Palestinians were driven out of their homes and forced into exile. During the 1967 War between Israel on one side, and Egypt, Jordan and Syria on the other, a second wave of refugees was created and the remainder of the land of Palestine was occupied militarily by Israel. A year after that, Israel began establishing illegal Jewish colonies on that land. The Palestinian refugees have never been allowed to return to their land, despite UN resolutions reaffirming their right to do so.
- The “peace process” is the term used to describe the endless Middle Eastern diplomacy that has followed these wars aimed at resolving the conflict and establishing an independent Palestinian State. It refers to the gradualist, US-led approach predicated upon the belief that a genuine and durable solution can only be achieved through direct negotiations with an emphasis on the process of peace rather than its actual achievement.
- In 1979 and 1994, Israel signed peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan respectively. Nevertheless, conflict continues to rage between Israel and the Palestinians. The difficult nature of this core conflict stems from a range of “final status” issues which include differing definitions of what Palestinian sovereignty would entail; the future status of Jerusalem; the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes; the issue of settlements and state borders; and the allocation of water resources.



- According to various UN Security Council Resolutions, both Israel’s settlement policy and its occupation of Palestinian territory are illegal under international law. Resolution 446 states that settlements constitute a serious impediment to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.
- It has been a long and widely held belief that the peace process is a ruse intended to provide cover for the open-ended occupation, settlement and systematic confiscation of Palestinian territory. The Palestine Papers provided further, irrefutable proof of this.

**Negotiations**



**Prominent Middle East peace plans and proposals**

This review seeks to provide a brief overview of significant negotiations which have constituted the peace process from its inception to the current day. Below are summarised the most prominent proposals and plans for peace put forward over the last two decades. The most significant of these has been the Road Map for Peace which was a defining point in the process as it was the first time that an American president called for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

<b>The Madrid Peace Conference, 1991</b>	
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Madrid, Spain - hosted by the Spanish government with co-sponsorship by the US and the USSR.</li> </ul>
Key Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US President George H. W. Bush</li> <li>• US Secretary of State James Baker</li> <li>• Israeli President Yitzhak Shamir</li> </ul>
Framework of Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To serve as an opening forum for peace between Israel, Palestine and neighbouring Arab states; to inaugurate negotiations on both bilateral and multilateral tracks that also involved the international community.</li> <li>• To achieve peace treaties between 3 Arab states (excluding Egypt) and Israel.</li> <li>• Talks with the Palestinians were based on a 2-stage formula, the first consisting of negotiating interim self-government arrangements, to be followed by permanent status negotiations which were essentially the formula followed in Oslo.</li> </ul>
Proposals/impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on the idea of “abandoning the dynamics of confrontation”, the basic formula of “land for peace” was put forward. It had huge symbolic significance as the first bilateral talks which far outweighed any practical &amp; legal accomplishments.</li> <li>• UN Resolution 3379<sup>1</sup> which considered Zionism to be a form of racism and racial discrimination was, historically, revoked as a pre-condition to Israel’s participation in the conference. Resolution 46/86 was passed in its place.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> UN Resolution 3379 proclaims the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It affirms that “any doctrine of racial differentiation or superiority is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous” and expresses alarm at “the manifestations of racial discrimination still in evidence in some areas in the world, some of which are imposed by certain Governments by means of legislative, administrative or other measures.”



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The number of states recognising Israel nearly doubled to include powers like China and India along with some Arab countries.</li><li>• There was a reduction in the Arab boycott and the initiation of economic relations with some Arab states.</li><li>• Israel-Jordan negotiations at the conference led eventually to a <a href="#">peace treaty</a> in 1994.</li></ul>
Why the talks failed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overshadowed and undermined by secret talks in Oslo, Norway.</li></ul>

**Oslo Accords 1994**



<b>The Oslo Peace Accords, 1993</b>	
Called officially the Declaration of Principles of Interim Self-Government Arrangements (DOP)	
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Fafo Institute in Oslo, Norway.</li> <li>• Hosted by the Norwegian government.</li> </ul>
Key Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin.</li> <li>• PLO President, Yasser Arafat.</li> <li>• Israel Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.</li> <li>• US President Bill Clinton.</li> </ul>
Framework of Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.</li> <li>• To set out a five year transitional period eventually leading to a permanent settlement based on UN Security Council Resolution 242<sup>2</sup> and 338<sup>3</sup>. Within this period, the two sides were to discuss:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The status of Jerusalem;</li> <li>▪ Palestinian refugees;</li> <li>▪ Israeli settlements;</li> <li>▪ Security arrangements;</li> <li>▪ Borders; and</li> <li>▪ Relations and cooperation with neighbours in the conflict region.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Adopted following the Six-Day War in 1967, Resolution 242 became the foundation of all future Middle East diplomatic efforts. It emphasises the ‘inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security’. It also calls for (i) Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict; and the (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.”

<sup>3</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 338 was adopted in 1973, and called for a ceasefire to the Yom Kippur War



<p>Proposals/impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These were the first set of direct talks between Israel &amp; the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). The resulting agreements were completed on August 20<sup>th</sup> &amp; officially signed on 13<sup>th</sup> September during a public ceremony in Washington.</li> <li>• As a result of the Accords:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Israel was called on to withdraw its forces from parts of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank;</li> <li>▪ The right of the Palestinian people to self-governance was affirmed;</li> <li>▪ Israel recognised the PLO as the legitimate (although unelected) representative of the Palestinian people; and</li> <li>▪ The PLO recognised the right of the state of Israel to exist.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Rabin, Arafat and Peres were awarded the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts.</li> <li>• In 1995 Rabin was assassinated after which any potential for progress from the talks ground gradually to a halt.</li> </ul>
<p>Why the talks failed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence between the Israeli armed forces and the Palestinians intensified, undermining progress and making any further attempts at negotiations untenable.</li> <li>• No attempts were made to dismantle the illegal settlements; on the contrary, settlement expansion along with the settler population actually increased almost two-fold.</li> <li>• During the period, there were four<sup>4</sup> different Israeli prime ministers to contend with and the dynamics between the leaders were changing constantly.</li> <li>• The deceit of leaders such as Benjamin Netanyahu, who had no intentions of adhering to the agreement signed by his predecessors.<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Yitzhak Rabin (Labour 1992-1995), Shimon Peres (Labour 1995-1996), Benjamin Netanyahu (Likud 1996 -1999) & Ehud Barak (Labour 1999-2001)

<sup>5</sup> In a video leaked to the press in 2010, Netanyahu is seen boasting about how he manipulated the US in the ongoing peace process: “They asked me before the election if I’d honour [the Oslo Accords] ... I said I would, but ... I’m going to interpret the accords in such a way that would allow me



**1996-1999 Agreements**

The then newly-elected Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, declared a “tit-for-tat” policy towards violent resistance against the military occupation, which he termed “reciprocity”. The policy stipulated that Israel would only take part in the peace process if Arafat desisted from what the Israelis termed the “Palestinian revolving door policy”; i.e. incitement and (in) direct support for terrorism. After Israel considered its conditions partially met, the Hebron and Wye River Agreements were signed.

<b>The Hebron Agreement, 1997</b>	
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Erez Checkpoint between Israel and Gaza.</li> </ul>
Key Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benjamin Netanyahu</li> <li>• Yasser Arafat (PLO)</li> <li>• US negotiator Dennis Ross</li> <li>• US Secretary of State Warren Christopher</li> <li>• Israeli chief negotiator General Dan Shomron</li> <li>• Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat</li> </ul>
Framework of Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The redeployment of Israeli military forces in Hebron in accordance with the Oslo Accords.</li> </ul>
Proposals/impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within ten days of the agreement being signed, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) withdrew from 80% of Hebron in the occupied West Bank.</li> <li>• By March, Israel was to have begun the first phase of withdrawal from rural areas in the West Bank. Eight months later, it was to carry out the second phase. The third phase was to have been completed before mid-1998. This would entail Israel withdrawing from remaining parts of the Occupied Palestinian territory of the West Bank, but not include settlements or “military zones”.</li> </ul>

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to put an end to this galloping forward to the '67 borders. How did we do it? Nobody said what defined military zones were. Defined military zones are security zones; as far as I'm concerned, the entire Jordan Valley is a defined military zone. Go argue."



Why the talks failed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In a leaked video,<sup>6</sup> Netanyahu was heard explaining his manipulation of the Hebron Agreement; as the Huffington Post put it: “Netanyahu then explained how he conditioned his signing of the 1997 Hebron agreement on American consent that there be no withdrawals from “specified military locations” and insisted he be allowed to specify which areas constituted a “military location” - such as the whole of the Jordan Valley. “Why is that important?” Netanyahu asked. “Because from that moment on, I stopped the Oslo Accords.”</li> </ul>
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<b>The Wye River Memorandum, 1998</b>	
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Aspen Institute, Wye River, Maryland, USA.</li> <li>Signed at the White House.</li> </ul>
Key Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benjamin Netanyahu</li> <li>PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat</li> <li>US President Bill Clinton</li> </ul>
Framework of Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Memorandum was a political agreement to implement the earlier Interim Agreement [Oslo Accords] of September 1995.</li> </ul>
Proposals /impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The main agreements dealt with the redeployment of Israeli forces out of the occupied West Bank and concerns for security on both sides.</li> </ul>
Why the talks failed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The actions taken by the Israeli government which was at the time under the leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were, by his own admission, wholly insincere. He admitted taking steps to ensure the Oslo Accords never got further than the signing of the papers; expressed contempt for any viable peace solution; and asserted of his US ally: “I know what America is. America is something that can be moved easily.”</li> <li>After transferring just 2% of Area C to Area B, and 7.1% of Area B to Area A, Israel felt that the Palestinians were not reciprocating as per the agreement.</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid





<b>Camp David Summit, 2000</b>	
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camp David, Maryland, USA.</li> </ul>
Key Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak</li> <li>• PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat</li> <li>• US President Bill Clinton</li> </ul>
Framework of Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To negotiation a “final status settlement” to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.</li> </ul>
Proposals/impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arafat insisted that the Summit was too premature and that the interim period stipulated within the Accords had not been implemented satisfactorily.</li> <li>• The Summit went forward without an agreement being reached; instead a “Trilateral Statement” was issued.</li> <li>• Arafat rejected the offer, and was later blamed for the collapse of the talks and for his “unwillingness to compromise on the sovereignty of the Haram [Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound in Jerusalem]”.</li> </ul>
Why the talks failed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinton’s proposals appeared to recognise Israeli sovereignty over the holy sites and “to prepare the conditions for Palestinian enclaves within the city, all separated from each other... Hence, while in theory the Clinton proposal called for ‘maximum contiguity for both,’ in practice it translated into ‘maximum contiguity for Israel.’”</li> <li>• Arafat told Clinton: “The Palestinian leader who will give up Jerusalem has not yet been born. I will not betray my people or the trust they have placed in me. Do not look to me to legitimise the occupation! Of course, it can continue longer, but it cannot last forever.”</li> <li>• The Palestine Papers later confirmed that one of the core issues behind the failure of Camp David was the status of occupied East Jerusalem, and particularly the holy sites. Barak and Arafat apparently attempted to negotiate, but it was confirmed that this particular sticking point led to the “acrimonious collapse” of talks.</li> <li>• The right of return for Palestinian refugees, boundaries and security were also key areas of contention.</li> </ul>



<b>Clinton's "parameters", 2000</b>	
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>
Key Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US President Bill Clinton</li> <li>• Israeli President Ehud Barak</li> <li>• PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat</li> </ul>
Framework of Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Described as a "take it or leave it" plan. US President Bill Clinton set out a set of final status proposals or "parameters" which each side could either accept or reject. No changes to the document were acceptable.</li> </ul>
Proposals/impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues dealt with included:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Jerusalem</b> – Israel would have sovereignty over the Western Wall and the Palestinians over the Temple Mount [Al-Aqsa], while Israel would have "symbolic ownership" over the whole area; East Jerusalem and the Old City were to be divided along ethnic lines.</li> <li>○ <b>Territory</b> – Palestinians were to gain 94-96% of the West Bank along with the Gaza Strip and Israel was to annex the remainder, include almost all the existing illegal Israeli settlements - 80% of settlers were to remain under Israeli sovereignty. There would also be a "land swap" of 1-3% of Israeli territory.</li> <li>○ <b>Refugees</b> – Palestinians were to waive their claim to an unlimited "Right of Return" to Israel proper, and Israel was to acknowledge the "moral and material suffering caused to the Palestinian people by the 1948 war". Both parties were to agree that UN Resolution 194 had been implemented.</li> <li>○ <b>Security</b> – Israel was to maintain a military presence at fixed locations in the Jordan Valley for a set period of time which would decrease as the "threat to Israel" decreased. The Palestinian state would gain sovereignty over its airspace; it would be a "non-militarised state"; it would have no army but a "strong security force"; and in an event of national security, Israel would be permitted to deploy military forces.</li> <li>○ <b>End of conflict</b> – the parameters required that UN resolutions 242 and 338 be implemented.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



<p>Why the talks failed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite a degree of support and acceptance of Clinton’s proposals on both sides, both also had issues with certain aspects of the parameters. Barak alluded to the Israeli reservation in a 20-page letter. According to Clinton, Palestinian reservation fell “outside” the parameters.</li> <li>• An agreement could not be reached.</li> </ul>
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<p align="center"><b>The Taba Summit, 2001</b></p>	
<p>Location</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taba, Sinai Peninsula, Egypt.</li> </ul>
<p>Key Players</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prime Minister Ehud Barak</li> <li>• PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat</li> <li>• Hosted by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak</li> </ul>
<p>Framework of Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talks continued based on the Clinton parameters and reaching a “final status” in the negotiations to end the conflict.</li> </ul>
<p>Proposals/impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues detailed within the parameters were discussed further, with the Israeli negotiating team presenting a new map, a move that was accepted by the Palestinian side as a way forward in the negotiations.</li> </ul>
<p>Why the talks failed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No further negotiations were conducted by Barak at the time and the parties did not come to an agreement. A month later, the right wing Likud Party came to power under Ariel Sharon and Barak publicly distanced himself and Israel from the negotiations, stating that he and Clinton “were in agreement that the ideas raised in the past months are not binding on the new government in Israel”.</li> <li>• Any progress made in these talks was quickly abandoned.</li> </ul>



<b>The Road Map for Peace, 2003</b>	
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aqaba, Jordan.</li> </ul>
Key Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The “Middle East Quartet” - the US, EU, UN and Russia</li> <li>• US President George W Bush</li> <li>• Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon</li> <li>• Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas</li> </ul>
Framework of Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The agreement was first outlined by US President George W Bush and later drawn up by the Quartet.</li> <li>• It set out the principles of a “road map” for peace which aimed at working towards the creation of a “viable” two-state solution to the conflict.</li> <li>• It was proposed that in exchange for statehood, the Palestinian Authority would agree to end violence and make essential democratic reforms to its political system.</li> </ul>
Proposals/impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The “Road Map” was meant to take place in three stages.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>First:</b> a demand for the immediate halt of Palestinian violence; that a rebuilt and refocused PA security apparatus target “terror”; the reform of Palestinian political constitutions; the dismantling of illegal Israeli settlements built since March 2001; to freeze settlement activity; and a “progressive Israeli withdrawal” from the Palestinian territories occupied after September 2000. All this was seen as a way to build confidence between the two parties involved.</li> <li>• <b>Second:</b> the actual creation and recognition of an independent Palestinian state and an international conference on the Road Map.</li> <li>• <b>Third:</b> a path to end the conflict permanently with an agreement on the final borders, the status of Jerusalem, the Right of Return of Palestinian refugees, and Israeli settlements. The final stage also included the surrounding Arab states making the necessary peace deals with Israel.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A series of letters, interviews and public statements issued in 2004 constituted a follow up on the implementation of the Road Map, but which effectively aborted it at the first stage. Two significant changes were made to the original proposals:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The initial proposal of Israel withdrawing back to 1949 borders was deemed “unrealistic” considering the “facts on the ground”.</li> <li>○ It was considered that Palestinian refugees returning to a Palestinian state rather than Israel would be a “fair and realistic” solution to the crisis</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Why the talks failed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abbas, together with other Arab leaders, announced support for the plan and promised to work on cutting-off funding to the armed resistance. Sharon and his cabinet also “approved” the Road Map, but attached 14 reservations to the plan in a political tactic aimed at sabotage. Sharon later rejected Israel’s main requirement of settlement freeze as “impossible”.</li> <li>• Bush also backtracked on his pledge of 2005 as the date set for the commencement of negotiations and the establishment of a Palestinian state, stating that it was now an unrealistic aim and blaming the non-fulfillment of the plan on the eruption of violence and a change in the political landscape.</li> <li>• Under the obligations of the Road Map, neither party fulfilled its responsibilities; Israel has expanded rather than halted settlement activity; the IDF patrols and redeploys into Palestinians controlled areas regularly in what it describes as actions to combat “terrorism”, while the PA has not been able to crack down on the Palestinian resistance as much as Israel would have liked.</li> <li>• As a consequence, talks stalled yet again and fresh violence broke out.</li> </ul>



<b>The Geneva Initiative/Accord 2003</b>	
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officially launched at a ceremony in Geneva, Switzerland.</li> </ul>
Key Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alexis Keller – the initiator of the Accord</li> <li>• Other creators included negotiators and architects of previous negotiations including;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Former Israeli Minister and politician, Dr Yossi Beilin</li> <li>○ Former PA Minister, Yasser Abed Rabbo</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Framework of Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was a model permanent status agreement negotiated in secret over two years and aimed at ending the conflict and realizing the national aspirations of both parties.</li> <li>• It was based on previous official negotiations, international resolutions, the Quartet Road Map, the Clinton parameters, and the Arab peace initiative.</li> </ul>
Proposals/impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It aims at presenting a comprehensive solution to all the vital issues that fuel the conflict. The main concepts included:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A return to the pre-1967 borders.</li> <li>○ Jerusalem to be divided administratively with East Jerusalem becoming the capital of a Palestinian state and West Jerusalem becoming the capital of Israel.</li> <li>○ Palestinians will limit their demand of the Right to Return in exchange for Israel removing their illegal settlements from certain areas, and will end claims on and demands from the Israeli government.</li> <li>○ The establishment of a non-militarised Palestinian state, and detailed security arrangements.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Why the talks failed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Accord received significant international support, including from Yasser Arafat [who approved it in principle but not in detail], Bill Clinton, George Bush and Colin Powell. 48 former heads of state or other high profiled figures also expressed their support.</li> <li>• It was criticised strongly in some arenas, for apparently sacrificing the Right of Return for statehood.</li> </ul>



<b>The Annapolis Conference, 2007</b>	
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The US Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, USA.</li> </ul>
Key Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PA President Mahmoud Abbas</li> <li>• Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert</li> <li>• US President George W. Bush</li> <li>• US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice</li> <li>• Representatives from China, the Arab League, the EU, Russia and the UN.</li> </ul>
Framework of Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To resolve the Middle East conflict using the proposals made in the “Road Map for Peace” which included the establishment of a Palestinian state.</li> </ul>
Proposals/impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This was the first time that both sides of the conflict entered talks with the understanding that the final solution would involve a two-state solution.</li> <li>• The conference also realigned the role that the Quartet played in the Middle East conflict with the US taking the lead yet again and demoting the other three members to lesser importance.</li> <li>• The outcome of the conference included a joint statement signed by both parties supporting a two-state solution.</li> </ul>
Why the talks failed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The commitments required as pre-conditions to the signing of a final status agreement according to the obligations stipulated by the Road Map caused problems for both sides.</li> <li>• The conference itself was fundamentally flawed from the start due to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The ineffectiveness of US efforts and their “hands-off” policy which contributed to paralysis and rendered possible the adoption of unilateral actions by Israel.</li> <li>○ The Israeli government under Olmert suffered from internal weakness and the fragmentation and polarisation of the political system, which meant it was not strong enough to broker an agreement.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>




- The political and military rise of Hamas, which meant that Abbas could no longer decide on behalf of the people of Gaza.
- The shadow of the rising power of Iran loomed large alongside other “facts on the ground” non-conducive to the achievement of an agreement, including the breakdown of the ceasefire agreement between Hamas and Israel.

**Direct talks 2010**





<b>Direct Talks September, 2010</b>	
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various locations, including- Washington D.C, Sharm el-Sheikh and New York.</li> </ul>
Key Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu</li> <li>• PA President Mahmoud Abbas</li> <li>• US President Barak Obama</li> <li>• US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton</li> </ul> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>
Framework of Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To revive the stalled peace process by having the two parties agreeing to direct talks for the first time in two years. This included the two-state solution as a final resolution, with the creation of an Israeli state for the Jewish people and a Palestinian state for the Palestinians.</li> </ul>
Proposals/impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unlike previous US Presidents, Obama decided to make the Palestine-Israel conflict a priority of his administration. From early January 2009, he made various positive gestures toward the Arab and Muslim world stating that the US “does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements” as it “undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop.”</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The build-up to direct talks in 2010 saw Netanyahu place the following conditions on any future peace deal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Jerusalem becoming the “united capital of Israel”;</li> <li>○ Palestinians giving up their demand for their Right of Return; and</li> <li>○ The right for “natural growth” of existing illegal settlements.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In response, Abbas reiterated that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A Palestinian state was to be created on the 1967 borders; and</li> <li>○ All illegal settlement building in the occupied territories must be halted.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• However, the Palestine Papers revealed that the chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, was willing to make “creative” and unprecedented concessions and overtures around the sovereignty of Jerusalem and the holy sites, by accepting the Clinton parameters rejected previously by Arafat.</li> <li>• After ten months of indirect talks and back-tracking, the two parties began their first set of US-brokered direct negotiations in Washington DC in September. These were shortly followed by a second round of talks in Egypt. As a result: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The PA and Israel agreed on the “principle” of land swap – Israel exchanging part of its territory in exchange for illegal settlements, although the land swap ratio was disputed.</li> <li>○ Prime Minister Salam Fayyad walked out of a meeting in New York after Israel insisted on the “two states for two people” mantra, which would mean ultimately the expulsion of non-Jewish citizens of Israel as well as negating the Right of Return of Palestinian refugees.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Why the talks failed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Israel refused to extend its partial moratorium on settlement construction which ended on September 26 after which date it pursued a vigorous programme of settlement expansion. This included a new settlement plan for East Jerusalem.</li> <li>• The Palestinian Authority refused to recognise Israel as a Jewish state.</li> </ul>



## Conclusion

After over two decades of peace negotiations, Palestinians continue to be oppressed; they remain stateless, refugees, and prisoners in their own land. The reasons for the on-going façade of “good will” gestures and overtures are politically motivated and aim to ensure that leaders are seen to be working actively towards a peace deal.

The failure of negotiations can be put down to the following:

- Israel’s unreasonable and impossible pre-conditions, such as the demand that it be recognised as a Jewish state and demands for sole sovereignty over Jerusalem and the holy sites which is unacceptable to both the Palestinian people and those of the wider region.
- Palestinians do not have a representative, united leadership; Mahmoud Abbas remains without a mandate.
- The inherent Right of Return of Palestinian refugees is rejected by Israel altogether.
- The ever continuous incursion into Palestinian land, or what is left of it, by illegal and “self-legalised” Israeli settlements/colonies which continue to make a two-state solution a distant possibility – or as many experts have said - an unrealistic objective altogether.

