



# The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After

By Edward W. Said

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**The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After** By Edward W. Said

Soon after the Oslo accords were signed in September 1993 by Israel and Palestinian Liberation Organization, Edward Said predicted that they could not lead to real peace. In these essays, most written for Arab and European newspapers, Said uncovers the political mechanism that advertises reconciliation in the Middle East while keeping peace out of the picture.

Said argues that the imbalance in power that forces Palestinians and Arab states to accept the concessions of the United States and Israel prohibits real negotiations and promotes the second-class treatment of Palestinians. He documents what has really gone on in the occupied territories since the signing. He reports worsening conditions for the Palestinians critiques Yasir Arafat's self-interested and oppressive leadership, denounces Israel's refusal to recognize Palestine's past, and—in essays new to this edition—addresses the resulting unrest.

In this unflinching cry for civic justice and self-determination, Said promotes not a political agenda but a transcendent alternative: the peaceful coexistence of Arabs and Jews enjoying equal rights and shared citizenship.

*From the Trade Paperback edition.*

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## **The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After** By Edward W. Said Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1641296 in eBooks
- Published on: 2007-12-18
- Released on: 2007-12-18
- Format: Kindle eBook

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

In his 18th book, Palestinian writer and Columbia University literary scholar Said (author of the highly praised memoir *Out of Place*) once again brings acute insight to a controversial subject. In 50 essays (most of which were originally published in the Cairo Ahram Weekly and London's *al-Hayat*), he offers a bleak and somewhat cynical view of the Middle East peace process since Oslo. Deeply concerned with the fate of the Palestinian people, and without mincing words, Said probes their relationship to the Israeli government and their lives under Arafat's Palestinian Authority. He skewers the Oslo Agreements--arguing that Palestinians merely surrendered to the Israelis--as well as the Palestinian Authority and Arafat. (Peace, he points out, can only exist if equality and respect exist; as a result, he urges Palestinians to resist Israeli settlements with nonviolent demonstrations and to create stable, democratic institutions that can coexist peaceably with Israel.) Throughout, Said also comments on the role of intellectuals in political discourse, the Holocaust and, in a particularly poignant essay, the political development of his son, Wadie. Although they're stimulating, because these essays originated as newspaper columns, they're also occasionally repetitive, and some of the events that inspired them have receded into oblivion. Still, on the whole, this is a potent analysis--one that refuses to follow a party line--of the complexities and stark realities of Middle Eastern politics. (Apr.)

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#### From Library Journal

The Oslo "peace process," which resulted in the signing of an agreement between Israel and Palestinian leader Yassir Arafat, has been the subject of numerous books, articles, and commentaries. In this refreshing and intelligently argued book, Palestinian American Said (English and comparative literature, Columbia Univ.; Orientalism; Culture and Imperialism) provides a sobering analysis of the pitfalls of the Oslo agreement. Most of the essays in this collection have appeared in Cairo's *al-Ahram Weekly* and *al-Hayat*, London's Arabic-language daily. Each essay is Said's reflection on a dimension of the Palestinian predicament. Said convincingly explains why the "peace process" has had damaging effects on the fabric of Palestinian society and polity. (It puts nothing in writing, for instance, about the further expansion of Israeli settlements.) He is as critical of the corruption, incompetence, and authoritarianism of the Palestinian Authority as he is of American and Israeli postures. In his vintage style, Said forces the reader to look beyond clichés, sound bites, myths, and conventional thinking about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Highly recommended for public and academic libraries.DNader Entessar, Spring Hill Coll., Mobile, AL

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#### From Booklist

As he did in *Peace and Its Discontents* (1996), Said gathers four-dozen essays on the Mideast. Most first appeared between 1995 and 1999 in *Cairo Ahram Weekly* and (in Arabic) in London-based *al-Hayat*; "On Visiting Wadie" and "Truth and Reconciliation," were written for the *London Review of Books* and the *New York Times Magazine*, respectively. Readers familiar with Said's work will not be surprised that he is more critical of Arafat and the Palestinian Authority than of Israel's leaders, nor that he views Oslo-based negotiations in the context of U.S.-dominated globalization. Some of Said's essays respond to current events: announcement of the Oslo accords and, later, the Wye agreement; specific negotiations; actions by the Palestinian Authority; and visits to the Mideast by U.S. leaders. Other pieces take a longer view, such as "The Role of the Private Sector," "Modernity, Information, and Governance," "Isaiah Berlin," "Mandela, Netanyahu, and Arafat," and "Art, Culture, and Nationalism." An always provocative commentator. *Mary Carroll*

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