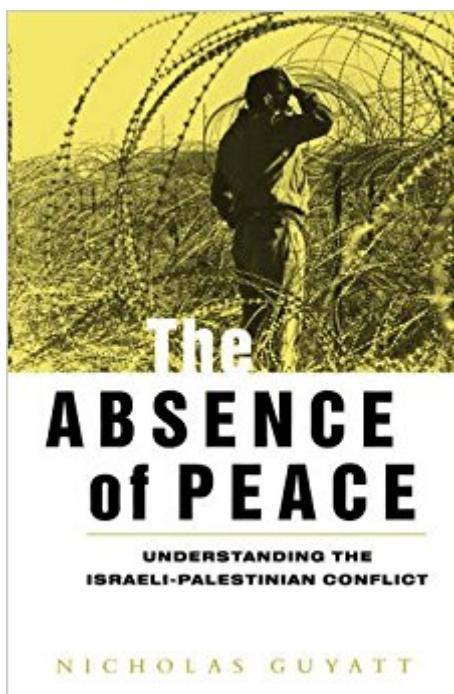


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The Absence Of Peace: Understanding The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict



Synopsis

Why does the Israeli army still occupy the vast majority of the West Bank? Why has the Palestinian standard of living declined dramatically since the beginning of the Oslo peace process? Why do suicide bombers attack Israel's cities? Fifty years after Israel's founding, why is there no peace between Israelis and Palestinians? The Absence of Peace offers an answer to all these questions, combining an analysis of the political events surrounding the Oslo process with an account of life on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza Strip under the 'peace' regime. Nicholas Guyatt explains the historical context of the latest peace efforts and the motives and interests of the various players, regional and international, who are party to the agreements. This book also plots the disastrous course on which the present peace process is headed, towards a greater Israel, a series of Palestinian reservations and even more violence between the two sides. Most importantly, The Absence of Peace rejects the suggestions that there is no solution to the conflict, and offers practical ideas for a more stable and enduring agreement between Palestinians and Israelis.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Guyatt, a Cambridge historian and visiting scholar at Princeton University, has conducted some solid research on the current Middle East peace process and concludes that the Oslo Agreement is a failure, primarily because of Israeli intransigence and public policy. The background provided is a rather stilted version of the history of Palestine, which, according to the author, was wrenched from its rightful native inhabitants by Zionist interlopers. Expropriation of Palestinians' land led to the

development of the violent trappings of Palestinian extremism and anti-Israeli outbursts. The Oslo Agreement, the author concludes, was doomed from the start and never really had a chance to succeed because Israel had no intention of honoring it. Palestinian self-determination and independence can only be achieved when the remnants of Israel occupation are totally eliminated. While his approach is not particularly balanced, Guyatt spells out his perspective in clear terms and provides the reader with an articulate understanding of the Palestinian position. Recommended for large collections. ?Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba Coll., Salisbury, NC Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"The 'peace process' in the Middle East has been seriously misunderstood, in my opinion, with very unfortunate human consequences. Nick Guyatt's lucid and well-informed study is a badly needed corrective. I hope that it will be widely read, and will help bring about a redirection that is imperative if ominous prospects are to be averted, and some measure of peace and justice are to be achieved." - Noam Chomsky

A more appropriate title for this book would be: The Absence of Peace: Palestinian Perspectives on the Oslo Peace Accords. This title would make clear that (a) this book presents solely the Palestinian perspective and (b) the scope of the book is relatively recent events. Thus, this book is not a good choice for those who are looking for an overview of the entire Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. However, for those who already have developed a basic historical and political framework for this complex arena, this book is immensely helpful. In order to understand the repeated failure of the peace process, one must understand the Palestinian perspective. This author crafts an articulate and well referenced description of how Palestinian frustration, anger, and hopelessness have been fueled by Israeli actions. This book asserts that the Oslo Peace accords have exacerbated the on-going problems and presents a view of Palestinian life within the restrictions imposed on building, work, and travel within Israel. As a relatively neutral observer to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I found it very helpful to have the Palestinian perspective described so succinctly and articulately. The final chapter of this book provides recommendations of possible options for future resolution of the conflict. This chapter was the highlight of the book and will assist me in understanding the success or failure of future efforts. A note about perspectives and bias. The author is clearly impassioned and highly critical of Israel and its leaders. Nonetheless, I found Absence of Peace to be well referenced and credible. For example, most of the criticisms of Israeli leaders are supported by direct quotes from these leaders that have been published in newspapers.

Each chapter concludes with 3-10 pages of footnotes. I also cross-referenced some of the allegations made against the Israeli security forces with Amnesty International reports and found them to be consistent. However, it is clear that this book presents solely the Palestinian perspective. For example, the author is repeatedly critical of the limitations imposed on Palestinian travel, but never acknowledges that Palestinian suicide bombers have at least some causal responsibility in these Israeli actions. It is very likely that this book will enrage readers who hold staunchly Zionist or pro-Israeli perspectives. Overall, *Absence of Peace* is a readable and important book. It provides an understanding of Palestinian perspectives on the Oslo Peace Accords that also informs the reader's understanding of the broader issues within Israel and Palestine.

Nicholas Guyatt's "The Absence of Peace" is a well-researched, thoughtful book on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Focusing on developments since the 1993 Oslo accords, Guyatt considers the causes of the peace agreement's failure. The author concentrates on the inherent difficulties in the accords themselves: for instance, that Palestine and Israel are inequitable authorities; that the PLO is only one quasi-authoritative body of Palestinian representatives; and that the United States, as permanent member of the UN Security Council, is in a position to veto all UN resolutions criticising Israel's actions. I found Guyatt's analysis of Yitzhak Rabin's and Shimon Peres's political lives very helpful: for neither are so "dovish" as journalists have made them out to be, especially in light of Rabin's assassination, an act that made him the martyr for peace he really was not. Guyatt's treatment of Israeli-European relations was also very helpful. On the whole, I consider this book a very balanced criticism of Israeli policies toward the Palestine question. Unlike many other books on this topic, Guyatt's analysis refrains from conspiracist rhetoric while taking critical note of Israel's actions. Heartily recommended.

Nicholas Guyatt's *The Absence of Peace* is a work of obvious erudition which will be totally unacceptable to almost any pro-Israeli reader or historian. Masquerading as an indictment of the Oslo accords, it trashes the peacemaking reputations of Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, implies that Israel has relentlessly engaged in ethnic cleansing, and laments the legacy of the Holocaust, which prevents the European Union from applying diplomatic pressure adequate to compel a return to the borders of 1949 or 1947. Based largely on the documentation of Palestinian groups and partisans like Chomsky and Findley, it is a thinly-disguised attack on the legitimate achievements of the Middle East's only democracy, noteworthy only for an illuminating account of Operation Grapes of Wrath.

This book is atrocious. It uses false claims and illogic to justify stealing land from the land-poor. If we all behaved like Guyatt, we'd be at war all the time, with no mechanism for thinking about peace, let alone talking about it or achieving it.

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