Israel & Palestine: Why They Fight and Can They Stop?

Bernard Wasserstein (2003)

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This book presents a new interpretation of the historical and contemporary realities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
Bernard Wasserstein challenges the conventional view of the struggle as driven primarily by irrational, nationalist and religious ideologies. Instead he focuses on hitherto relatively neglected dimensions - population, labour, environment and the social dynamics of political change. He shows that Israelis and Palestinians live today in 'Siamese twin societies'. However much they may wish to, neither side can escape the presence and influence of the other. Despite the current impasse, bloodshed and hate-mongering, Wasserstein offers a realistic basis for optimism. The demographic, economic and social imperatives are compelling the two sides towards some form of symbiosis and accommodation. This original view of relations between Jews and Arabs in Palestine and Israel over the past century offers hope for progress towards peace in the Middle East.

Reviews

'For those wishing to better understand the Israeli-Palestinian war this is a mandatory book. Highly recommended.'
International Affairs

'In this short and elegant essay Bernard Wasserstein slips in a good deal of history, while wasting no time lamenting mistakes or injustices well beyond remedy. The rationality of the arguments is impressive.'
Sunday Times

'First rate ... Professor Wasserstein writes with tremendous clarity and strenuous dispassion.'
Contemporary Review
Sadly, with much more settlement building, a more extreme right wing electorate (and governments) in Israel, the assaults on Gaza etc, this now seems like wishful thinking. That said, I would still recommend this book to anyone looking for a quick, even-handed guide which provides slightly different angles to those found in many such books. Read more. Helpful. Sending feedback Thank you for your feedback. Sorry, we failed to record your vote. “Rewarding Israel for building settlements sends the clear message to other dictatorships around the world that they, too, can do as they please and that they, too, will be rewarded,” she argues. “Every country under threat around the world will hear that they, too, can be invaded, their land stolen and their people deprived of rights.” But the plan would reconfigure the conflict, which would present an opportunity for shrinking it, argues Micah Goodman. While it wouldn’t end, he says, it would be different: “The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a conflict between occupiers and the occupied.” Critics should respect the painful conclusions Israelis have drawn about just what kind of Palestinian state they can safely accept, writes the Times columnist Bret Stephens.