

**No trumpets, no drums: a two-state settlement of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.** By **Sari Nusseibeh and Mark A. Heller.** London Tauris 1991 183pp Index £12.95 ISBN 1 85043 365 8

*No trumpets, no drums* is an intriguing read, the value of which lies as much in the nature of the dialogue between the Israeli and Palestinian authors as in their blueprint for peace. A full quarter of the book is taken up with the personal statements of these two well known and respected academics. The pages illuminate the personal struggles of the authors as they reach across the vast gaps in their perspectives on rights and histories in the region. Each is representative of the philosophical compromises which their communities may have to make if ever they are to attain a pragmatic peace.

The exercise is based on the premise that the ‘key to the overall Israeli–Arab conflict is still in its communal dimension—i.e., in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict’, which itself depends on recognition of the principle of Palestinian statehood. While this is the minimum acceptable solution for the Palestinians, it can only be accepted by the majority of Israelis if their own fears are assuaged by a highly asymmetrical set of security provisions. The ‘fairness’ of these arrangements must take second place to the reality of the Israeli minimum requirement—secure borders.

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The chapters on security arrangements and borders prove the potential for commonsensical problem-solving. The issues of refugee return, settlements and the status of Jerusalem are less easily addressed and the chapters on these, although no fault of the authors, are inevitably less plausible. The question of water-sharing brings out the necessity of a regional framework for peace, the necessity of guarantees introduces extra-regional powers.

It is obvious that some things are far more easily said than done, never more so than in trying to rationalize the dilemmas facing Arab and Jew in their dealings with one another. In this case, the proposed conditions of peace-making go further than most in establishing the principles of compromise, mutual tolerance and pragmatic problem-solving. That it should be the result of a joint Palestinian–Israeli endeavour, which sought to accept, but overcame the basic disparities between the parties’ particular positions, adds tremendous credence to the idea that understanding and acceptance of each other’s fears can be reached. The authors are to be commended, therefore, not just for the qualitative substance of this publication, but for their courage in undertaking the project. The proviso for this is that the 1947 UN Partition Plan was an example of a pragmatic solution to an international dispute. Its long-term impact, however, has not been to secure peace or security for either Palestinians or Israelis. In the final analysis, sometimes it may be better to pursue the just solution, however impossible it may seem, thereby laying grievances to rest for good.

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