



Conflict and Bargaining in the Middle East: An Israeli Perspective.

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Lebanon; others have chosen to swim with or in some cases lead Arab (largely Muslim) movements—for example the Orthodox Arabs; yet others, weak and defenceless have almost been annihilated—such as the Assyrians in Iraq. Christians have also been at the head of emigration away from the Middle East.

Dr Betts gives the subtitle 'A political study' to his book which is a suitable description of the role the Christians have been forced into. Sheer survival has been a political effort, but it also describes the politicking within and between the various churches. Religious life has often taken second or third place to national, sectarian and personal rivalries. Understandably, therefore, little attention is paid in the book to the quality of Christian life in the Middle East or to the attitude towards the various 'reforming' trends prevalent in the West. The book deals chiefly with the religious demography of the area, described by sect and by country, to the social structure of Christian communities, and to the role of Christians in 'religious' and secular politics. This latter section is in fact often little more than a mention of any Christian who has held government office. Lebanon is, of course, another matter and Dr Betts's approach here is rather confusing. The 1975 edition of the book was obviously written before the civil war. Like most authors he then saw Lebanon as the ideal of sectarian co-operation and he appears somewhat reluctant to revise (or rewrite) his opinions in the light of recent happenings. His firm prediction that 'Christians in Lebanon will continue to govern their own affairs and destiny' (p. 226) seems optimistic and begs the question what kind of Lebanon will be left for them to govern?

The historical introduction is not always convincing, notably his titling the period 633–1798 'the dark millenium', implying that only with Napoleon came light to the Middle East. Is the period after the French invasion which witnessed the massacres of Armenians and Assyrians brighter than the earlier years of Muslim-Christian co-operation in Spain and elsewhere? Less sweeping judgments can also be questioned. For example the tone of Ottoman-Christian relations is set by his sentence—the Ottomans 'contemptuously termed the socially inferior Christians' *rayah* or flock. But according to Gibb and Bowen in Ottoman usage *rayah* denoted settled free farmers and their families, both Muslim and *dhimmi*, in contrast to the men of the pen and of the sword. It was not necessarily a term of contempt, or if it was, not exclusively applied to Christians. There is a number of other dubious historical statements and rather glib political judgments.

Finally, one can sympathise with the author in trying to provide up-to-date statistics, having to use the 1960 census in Egypt, Syria 1960, Iraq 1957 and Lebanon 1932 and 1921! Very few useful statements can be made on the basis of such figures.

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DEREK HOPWOOD

Conflict and Bargaining in the Middle East: An Israeli Perspective. By Shlomo Aronson. *Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1978. 448 pp. £14.25.*

THERE is a striking disproportion between the excessive length of this new book on the Middle East conflict and the paucity of the original material it contains. A second and related deficiency stems from the author's inability to develop a coherent analytical framework or to present any distinctive central thesis. This conspicuous absence of any clear focus leaves him free to roam over the entire history of the conflict during the last three decades in a most unsystematic and unscholarly manner. Any hope of discovering the basic purpose of the book is irrevocably shattered by the concluding chapter which consists of a series of largely disconnected and obscure generalisations expressed in the most convoluted and pretentious style. 'Historically', we are told, 'it is an asymmetrical conflict in which cognitive-postulative leaders like Ben-Gurion

and Sadat act their limited roles in their coalitions, while manly-responsive bargainers, and emotional-postulative or ideological-legalistic leaders, like Nasser, Eshkol, Meir, Dayan and Begin play their roles in their own and in other camps' (p. 352). The 'bargaining' part of the book deals at length with Kissinger's diplomacy and here we are told that 'One can see this step-by-step approach as an expression of the structural-functionalist variant of positivist-evolutionary thinking on the future' (p. 201). Anyone who can see this can see anything.

Although both the conflict and the bargaining involve the super-powers as well as the local parties the author decided, as he explains in the Preface, to refrain from offering an in-depth analysis of Arab and Soviet behaviour. The wisdom of this decision is fully vindicated by the quality of his subsequent reflections on Soviet and Arab behaviour and especially by his epilogue on Sadat's peace initiative. The bulk of the book is about Israeli behaviour in the conflict and America's role in the search for peace. In the discussion of Israel's foreign and defence policies the author rightly stresses the impact of domestic factors but, in the absence of any coherent framework, political analysis frequently degenerates into a miscellaneous and only very loosely related mass of details. His treatment of the images and perceptions which condition Israel's behaviour is not without interest but is by no means original. On American policy the author does not add significantly to what is already available in the more substantive and reliable works of Bernard Reich, William Quandt and Nadav Safran. By ploughing through this tome the dedicated area specialist will come across some new facts, occasional insights and some intriguing speculations on Israel's position in the nuclear field. The general reader will find it a frustrating and unrewarding experience.

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Egypt's Uncertain Revolution under Nasser and Sadat. By Raymond William Baker. *Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard University Press. 1979. 290 pp. £11.20.*

THIS is probably the most convincing assessment yet made of the extent to which Egypt's regime since 1952 has changed the economic and social condition of her people. 'In later years', Professor Baker notes, 'the regime realised that, strangely enough, the ease with which it had accomplished the revolution from a long-term perspective constituted a drawback' (p. 27). Having prepared their coup in secrecy, the leaders found themselves in possession of absolute power without anything approaching a comprehensive programme of reform and without a political base. Their attempts to establish the latter were only moderately convincing and, while their objectives evolved in practice over a broad front, they did so in response to political imperatives as much as to fulfil any ideological concept. The agrarian reform which was their first major achievement was to a considerable extent motivated by the need to break the political power of the large landowners, and was in any case of relatively modest dimensions, resulting in a redistribution of 17 per cent of the cultivable land to about 8 per cent of the *fellahin*. Two of Mr Baker's chapters are of particular value in tracing the subsequent efforts of the regime to alleviate rural poverty by extending the agricultural co-operative movement and the provision of health care in the villages. They also throw light on the ways in which admirable reformist intentions have been undermined by Egypt's notorious bureaucracy, the numbers of which are said to have grown from about 250,000 in 1952 to over a million by the 1970s. This growth in turn had a positive as well as a negative aspect, being in part a response to the massive problem of unemployment and underemployment.

There have of course been success stories, most notably in the administration of the