

BOOK REVIEWS

Rabinovich, Itamar. *The War for Lebanon, 1970-1983*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1984.

The title of this book, according to its author, may be somewhat misleading. The war for Lebanon, described by Dr. Rabinovich (head of the Dayan Center and the Shiloah Institute for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University) as "a conflict of domestic and external forces seeking to shape and control the Lebanese entity," began long before 1970 and unfortunately did not end in 1983. These years, however, form a particularly significant phase in the history of both Lebanon and its immediate environment.

Dr. Rabinovich writes that the events of the period 1970-83 unfolded through four distinct stages: the collapse of the Lebanese political system between 1970 and 1975, the civil war of 1975-76, the lingering crisis of the years 1976-82 and the war of 1982. A new postwar phase began in September 1982. Drawing from a variety of Arab and Israeli sources to clarify military moves, political ties, and diplomatic initiatives, Dr. Rabinovich follows the events of thirteen years of Lebanese history and analyzes the effects that foreign intervention and occupation have had on the political order.

Acknowledging that "the full story of the war for Lebanon in the years 1970-83 cannot yet be told" and that a book on a still "unfolding crisis" raises a number of obvious questions and difficulties, the author begins by explaining the paradoxical nature of the Lebanese state in the first chapter. In commenting on the degree of continuity between historic Lebanon and the post-World War I Lebanese state, Dr. Rabinovich uses two questions to focus his analysis: was the independent Lebanese republic of the years 1945-75 an essentially Christian state, the successor and perpetuator of a long tradition, or, alternatively, was it a new entity shaped by, but never fully adjusted to, the demographic realities of its 1920 boundaries?

In discussing the twelve-year period 1970-82, in chapters two through four, the author reviews the rivalries between different religious groups, political factions, economic interests, and the international allies and opponents with longstanding stakes in Lebanon. Dr. Rabinovich suggests that between 1972 and 1976 several events had an "unsettling effect" on Lebanon. The establishment of the PLO's principal base and headquarters in Lebanon was particularly important, and other events such as the oil embargo and the consequent accumulation of immense financial resources in some Arab countries were significant. The civil war of 1976 succeeded in turning Lebanon "into an almost empty shell." The author maintains that although the settlement of October 1976 ended the Lebanese civil war, the underlying problems — the continuing domestic conflict, Syria's quest for hegemony, the Palestinian issue, and Israel's

policies — that had unsettled the Lebanese political system, and had led to war in April 1975, remained unsolved.

Chapter 5 deals with the fifth Arab-Israeli war, June-September 1982, which Dr. Rabinovich claims “departed radically from the patterns of the previous thirty-four years of conflict. The war was fought in Lebanon, to some extent for Lebanon, but primarily by Israel and the PLO and to a lesser extent by Syria. It was the first Arab-Israeli war fought during a period of partial Arab-Israeli peace.” The concluding chapter of the book and a postscript deals with events from September 1982 to the fall of 1983 which served to underline “the continuing acuteness and importance of the Lebanese crisis.”

In sum, this is a scholarly book that deals with a complex and emotional topic. Accordingly, it will draw mixed reviews. It is an informative, relevant, and timely study that will appeal to the specialist. Maps, interspersed throughout the book, a thirty-page Appendix, reprinting the July 20, 1976 speech by Hafiz al-Asad, President of Syria, chapter endnotes, and a glossary provide valuable source data for the serious reader and researcher.

James B. Motley, Ph.D.
Colonel, USA (Retired)
Director, National Security Studies
Defense Systems, Incorporated

Gelman, Harry. *The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Detente*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.

Wildavsky, Aaron, editor. *Beyond Containment*. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1983.

In trying to come to terms with the Soviet challenge, two key questions present themselves: 1) What is the nature of Soviet foreign policy and the source of Soviet conduct; and, 2) What specific policies should the West follow in attempting to deal with the acute challenge posed by the Soviet Union. The two works under review complement each other very effectively since Harry Gelman's study is directed at answering the first question while the book edited by Aaron Wildavsky grapples with the second.

One of the central purposes of Gelman's book is to illuminate the mindset with which the Soviet leadership approaches East-West relations. His conclusions are fundamentally at odds with many of the optimistic assumptions adopted by supporters of detente in the 1970s, and for this reason, one hopes that this work will stimulate a good deal of thought and self-examination. His core argument is that the Soviet leadership views the world “as a single interrelated, many faceted