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Intervention in Lebanon: The 1975-76 Civil War

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Low Intensity Warfare is a curious blend of good research and unsupported opinion. Chapter 4, "The Warriors and Their Weapons," for example, provides a fairly accurate picture of the revitalization of Special Operations Forces (SOF) that has been undertaken over the last seven years, but then out of the woodwork pops the assertion that "the SOF buildup *could* lead to a new wave of U.S. military operations—*especially covert operations*—in the Third World." (Emphasis added.) Similarly, the discussion of Light Infantry Divisions (LIDs) is punctuated by the statement that "the major problem with LIDs may be simply the fact that they *exist*."

This odd juxtaposition carries through the case studies. With regard to El Salvador, for example, we are told that "a made-in-the-U.S.A. counterinsurgency is unlikely to contain or roll back a genuine historical movement struggling for equity and independence," the "new democratic consciousness of our age." Amid glowing reports about the communist government in Kabul, the book tells us that U.S. support for the Freedom Fighters in Afghanistan not only "invites grave risks of a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union" but could even lead to the use of tactical nuclear weapons. While the authors state categorically that "the Soviet Union is ideologically opposed to terrorism as a strategy of revolution. . . ." (Surprisingly, they appear not to have read Lenin), they equate U.S. LIC strategy with mobilizing our

armed forces "to plant land mines that blow up schoolchildren, to plot assassinations, or to bomb the countryside of desperately poor countries. . . ."

The concluding chapter, "The Costs And Perils Of Intervention," paints U.S. LIC strategy merely as an effort to make the U.S. military relevant by unleashing it against "indigenous nationalist movements." The "costs" go on for pages: loss of credibility, prestige, and influence; reckless disregard for international law; undermining democratic institutions in the United States; and, of course, the ever present NUCLEAR WAR.

Low Intensity Warfare is a disturbing book because it uses the vehicle of extensive research and factual information to carry an extreme message. The danger is that a reader who comes to this book lacking a solid understanding of the issues may assume that because the facts are right, the opinions must be right, too. In fact, one has to read carefully to discern where fact leaves off and supposition takes up.

I would recommend this book only to those with a professional interest in LIC and only for the purpose of understanding how the other side thinks.

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Weinberger, Naomi Joy. *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon: The 1975-76*

Civil War. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986. 367pp. \$29.95

Naomi Joy Weinberger has written a masterful account of the Syrian intervention in the Lebanese crisis of 1975-76. In the opening chapters of this study, the author presents the long cavalcade of both Lebanese and Syrian history and traces the origins of such poorly understood political topics as Lebanese "Confessionalism" and Syrian *Ba'ath* party government.

This book is a study in both Arab political science and history, and the author has analyzed the Syrian intervention in terms of "client-proxy-agent" relationships, often showing that Syrian strategy was designed to insulate its own mosaic society from the type of political violence which characterized the Lebanese crisis; in fact, her concluding chapter is practically the only published analysis of this intervention in academic terms. It is indeed this dichotomy of client-proxy relationships on both the international and regional levels which has helped transform the Syrian intervention in the Lebanese crisis from a temporary military adventure into a geopolitical nightmare for all concerned.

Although this scholarly treatment may not appeal to those readers whose interests concern military or diplomatic events, Weinberger presents enough historical data surrounding both the Lebanese crisis and the subsequent Syrian intervention to impress any reader. The author accurately illustrates that

Syrian society is in fact an ethnic mirror of its Lebanese contemporary, and she further proves that Syria's President, Hafiz al-Asad, was indeed anxious to contain the neighboring political violence before it ignited his own mosaic nation into such disorder. Weinberger's account is among the best works of the past decade to appear on this subject, and it is comparable to such early analytical works as *Crossroads to Civil War* by Kamal S. Salibi. In light of the American paranoia about obscure—but key—nations such as Syria, Weinberger's book deserves serious consideration by specialists and generalists alike.

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Appleman, Roy E. *East of Chosin*. College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 1987. 399pp. \$22.50

Roy E. Appleman turns military history into high drama in *East of Chosin*, a historical analysis of the annihilation of the Army's 31st Regimental Combat Team on the frozen eastern shores of North Korea's Chosin Reservoir in November 1950. The author analyzes the failures of command and leadership that abandoned a 3,000-man composite unit of the 7th Infantry Division in subzero Siberian winter, compelling the men to fend for themselves as best they could against overwhelming opposing forces. The only survivors were the 3 officers, 76 enlisted men, and 96 South Korean