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## The Lebanese Civil War

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## 102 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

Norton: The Lebanese Civil War

publication that will find a home aboard ship and in the libraries of Navy buffs worldwide. This short review cannot do justice to the enormous amount of accurate data contained in this large and well-presented reference work.

D.G. CLARK  
Commander, U.S. Navy

Deeb, Marius. *The Lebanese Civil War*.  
New York: Praeger, 1980. 159pp.

Gordon, David C. *Lebanon: The Fragmented Nation*. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1980. 297pp.

When confronting problems as intransigent and complex as the obscene destruction of Lebanon by parties, groups and individuals of every conceivable political stripe, one tends to be overwhelmed by the very inadequacy of our explanations for such carnage. Anyone familiar with the literature knows that only very few authorities have been able to capture adequately and objectively the web of circumstances that led to the war or the political machinations that have kept the Lebanese death dance in progress during 1975 and 1976 (and still keep it alive, albeit at an abated level). Indeed, it is rather an awesome task just to stay abreast of the shifting loyalties, alignments and relationships of the parties involved. Even those books that succeed in presenting a snapshot-in-time turn out to be keenly perishable, even in comparison to the corpus of literature on the modern Middle East which is not itself noted for durability.

Thus, approaching the two books under review, one is tempted on the one hand to expect too much, to demand success where others have failed, and on the other hand, to expect very little. Neither fulfills the grander expectation, but both manage to transcend the lesser. For very different reasons, these two books reward the reader, and while

neither one is indispensable, they offer insights and information not readily available in English.

*Lebanon* is a little book—the adjective is not demeaning—in the sense that this former American University of Beirut history professor has provided a workmanlike overview of modern Lebanon (1946-1976) that he then colors quite effectively through the judicious use of his own observations and the reproduction of entries from his personal journal interspersed throughout the book. While reading *Lebanon*, one is at first struck by its being rather pedestrian and lacking in insight, but after a time it becomes clear that Gordon's book should be judged as a personal document—almost a memoir—for what the author does best is to share the perceptions, fears and hopes of a non-Arab (with nearly a half century's experience in the Eastern Mediterranean) living in Lebanon during calamitous times. While it is of some value to read Gordon's look at the Lebanese polity, it is far more interesting to savor the vignettes and anecdotes that succeed in teaching us something about Arabs, Lebanon, the Beirut academic scene and the author. To illustrate:

Once I was interviewed by a local Arab magazine about my life in [a quarter of Beirut]. The few guarded remarks I made concerning my preference for life here, rather than in America, came out: "Professor Gordon hates America and thinks Beirut is a paradise." I objected to such a revision of what I had actually said. The interviewer's answer was: "We Arabs like to put things strongly."

[Notes from Gordon's journal, 1975, during the first stages of the civil war.]  
May 2: "A Bullet Dodger's Guide to Beirut" is available advising on what to say depending at whose barricade one is stopped.

.....  
 June 8: Breakfasts with an English friend on the other side of the city. The cat has just been shot by a sniper.  
 .....

[1976]

May 17: Beirut is not mentioned on the BBC and all is well!  
 5:30 p.m. the explosive crackle of machine gun fire from the street below us shatters our calm. In five minutes it is over. Only a private feud.

For those with an interest in Lebanon, this book leaves some major questions unanswered, but we finish the book with at least a fuller appreciation of the context of the problems, if not their explanation or solution.

*The Lebanese Civil War* is much narrower than *Lebanon* in its chronological focus. Deeb provides a pithy, excessively dry but useful treatment of the events of 1975 and 1976. He has identified seven phases of the war beginning with the Phalangist attack on a busload of Palestinians on 13 April 1975 that many observers point to as the incident that triggered the war, and ending with the creation of the Syrian-dominated Arab Deterrent Force in the fall of 1976. Within his chronological framework, Deeb separately treats each of the major participants: the conservative parties and organizations, the traditional Muslims, the "leftist" National Movement, the Palestine Resistance Movement, and Syria. As an initial criticism, it is unfortunate that the panoply of external actors who made their own macabre contribution to the civil war are mentioned only in passing. (This group would include Libya, Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Britain, France, and, some would suggest, especially the United States and the U.S.S.R.) But to

integrate the roles played by each of the states involved might have diminished rather than enhanced the clarity of Deeb's book. Thus, *The Lebanese Civil War* should be accepted on its author's terms, and that is as an attempt to dissect the war and its participants as a means of contributing toward a comprehensive picture.

This book turns out to be useful for two primary reasons. First, it is an essential scorecard that helps us to keep the players straight—no mean task. Second, it is a factual rendition of the events of the civil war from the various perspectives of the major participants. Deeb manages all this with commendable detachment. Indeed one has to search hard to find hints of Deeb's own sentiments and partialities—this is not a faint compliment considering the special pleading that so often characterizes writing on the Middle East.

While his choice of format inevitably leads to some repetition and retelling of events, he has managed to pack an admirable amount of data into 142 pages of text and notes. Most readers are likely to agree that Marius Deeb has provided a useful work that many who follow affairs of the Middle East will want to keep within easy reach, especially until the definitive study of the Lebanese civil war is published. Had Deeb found it possible not only to tell us what happened, but why (in the most profound sense), his book would have earned a more enduring place on the bookshelf.

Unfortunately, the "seventh phase" of the civil war did not bring down the curtain on the violence in Lebanon. Murder and maiming continue throughout the country, and the quasi-annexation of portions of southern Lebanon has led to yet additional realignments and sources for animosity. Sadly, the events chronicled by Deeb and Gordon may have precipitated the irreversible disintegration of a state

whose mention in the future may have to be couched in the past tense.

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Deutermann, Peter T. *The Ops Officer's Manual*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980, 185pp.

*The OPS Officer's Manual* is a highly readable book written for officers ordered to, or serving in, the billet of Operations Officer. The book deals successively with: The Operations Officer; Planning; Training; Stateside Operations; Deployed Operations; Reporting; Operational Emergencies; CIC; and Combat Operations.

Commander Deutermann's work is a useful reference for all Surface Warfare Officers and represents a significant contribution to meet the goal of enhanced professionalism. The principles outlined in the chapters on Planning and Reporting have wide applicability and could serve as the basis for the effective management of any department. Commanding Officers and Executive Officers will, likewise, find the book germane and, in many respects, more relevant than the department head will find it, inasmuch as some of the ideas presented can be implemented only with the concurrence of the CO or XO. The book is written in clear, straightforward style and the ideas presented are innovative, thoughtful, and thought-provoking. The strength of *The OPS Officer's Manual* is in its timelessness. Unlike some "how to" books of the genre, for example *Command at Sea*, Deutermann's work is not so specific as to be restricted by current regulations. Hence, it will not require frequent revision as rules and regulations change. Planning, preparations and a systematic, commonsense approach to routine evolutions are stressed. The author correctly assesses the key to handling Operational Emergencies to be preplanning. Those familiar with

catastrophes that result from proceeding into harm's way without well-conceived contingency plans will derive considerable satisfaction from reading the chapter here.

Training is a subject dear to the heart of all Executive Officers and Deutermann has made his chapter on training the longest in the book. One gets the distinct impression from reading the training chapter that it was written from the viewpoint of the Executive Officer, not the OPS Officer. There is certainly nothing wrong with this approach. It is always good for the OPS Officer to acquire a feel for the larger picture the XO (supposedly) possesses. The chapter is good reading and in it an alternative to the standard shipboard training system is proposed. Under Deutermann's system there is no need for semiannual, quarterly or monthly training plans, *per se*. Ultimately, however, some chronological scheduling of training is necessary. The author divides training into three categories: operational training; advancement training; and organizational training. These functional areas have separate cycles. Operational training is based on the employment cycle, while advancement training, naturally, is based on the advancement cycle. The advantage of looking at training in terms of the requirements of distinct functional areas is that it reflects reality. The training requirements of the fleet are mandated by separate and distinct agencies without regard to ship schedules and without regard to conflicts, redundancy or clear-cut goals. As a first cut, training can be viewed in functional terms. It is only aboard ships, when scheduling commences, that training becomes a system. Because chapter 8 of OPNAVINST 3120.32 is not regulatory in nature but offers "guidance" to commanders and commanding officers, it is probably only heresy, not criminal, to propose an