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The Politics of Defeat: America's Decline in the Middle East

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unbalanced reliance on atomic weapons and a strategy of defense based on desperation would be helpful to us in thinking through present defense choices.

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Churba, Joseph. *The Politics of Defeat: America's Decline in the Middle East*. New York: Cyrco Press, 1977. 224pp.

No area of the world is as potentially explosive and dangerous to world peace as is the Middle East. American policy in this area during the past decades has not ranked among our finer achievements. Sound critical scholarship is necessary; viable alternative, imperative. Unfortunately, a high portion of that which professes to be scholarship is polemic; and that, which calls itself analysis is little more than tract. *The Politics of Defeat* is a classic example of this debasement.

On the surface, Joseph Churba has impressive credentials: Ph.D. in International Relations and Middle East Studies from Columbia University, graduate of the National War College, instructor at the Air University, Air Force Middle East intelligence analyst, and prolific author. But this book is not the work of a scholar or even an objective observer. It is a shallow, emotional polemic, a personal critique of American policy based upon spurious factual information and specious logic. Source material is limited, biased, and poorly employed. Throughout the book, personal opinion is professed as substantiated fact.

Churba is a committed Zionist. The book must be read with this in mind for it underlies and colors every word of his argument. He forthrightly states his purpose in the opening lines of the preface: "to demonstrate that the validity of Israel is crucial to the United States and

that the United States must therefore categorically commit itself to the defense and preservation of that nation."

Few would challenge the United States historic and moral commitment to Israel; or that this commitment is realistic and in the interest of the United States. But our commitment must be kept in perspective and in a constant process of assessment. Every Israeli national interest and aspiration is not consistent with American interest as Churba would have us believe. The United States has legitimate interests in the Arab world as well. The fact of oil cannot be dismissed as easily as Churba attempts. Difficult as the task is, American policy must be one of firm commitment to the integrity of Israel yet a middle ground between Arab and Israeli aspirations.

This Churba cannot accept. He discounts any advantages of closer U.S.-Arab relations. He dismisses the Arab world as pliant surrogates of the Soviet Union. In fact, the author cloaks his Zionism in a convenient anti-Communist framework. No question exists that Soviet penetration of the Middle East has been detrimental to genuine U.S. interests there. But Churba creates a picture of American policymakers' indifference to this Soviet activity, an acceptance of a policy of "inexorable defeatism." He exaggerates Soviet success and explains away apparent rebuffs as mere facade.

Churba dispenses with the Palestinians and "the Palestinian problem" in the same manner. He proclaims that really there are no such people as the Palestinians. They are nothing more than Hashemite Jordanians attempting to carve out another illegitimate Arab state in the area, an enclave which by definition would be a Soviet base for subversion, "a Cuba for the Middle East." Palestine, he declares, is merely part of "the grand Soviet design . . . being actively sketched at the present time."

The author asserts that Israel is the only force standing in the way of Soviet domination of the Middle East; yet her position, her vital role, is not appreciated by the United States. Churba demands that the United States tie itself completely to Israel who is fighting our fight for us. She is "a priceless strategic stronghold, a reliable anti-Communist bastion, an essential contingency base and a crucial link in the NATO defense posture." At any cost, Israel is a "national security bargain for America."

Why does the United States not fully appreciate the Israeli effort and her dilemma, Churba asks. Why has our policy been so muddled? The author claims that State Department, the Pentagon, and the Intelligence community are Arab oriented and anti-Israeli. He offers nothing more than his own word to substantiate these neo-McCarthyite charges. He even claims that he was dismissed as a Pentagon analyst for challenging rampant anti-Israeli bias.

The book is a compendium of assertions proclaimed as fact. One final example must suffice. Rejecting any legitimate Palestinian grievance, Churba avers that the peoples of the area have never suffered any form of injustice by Israel. Any problems are entirely their own making: "The fact that some Arabs may have suffered during the period of reestablishment of Jewish sovereignty over a part of Palestine is the direct result of a stubborn refusal to reconcile themselves to its existence."

Though myopic, Churba's book is not worthless. It affords a good example of the Zionist perspective. It is interesting reading, vibrant and committed. More importantly, it raises questions worthy of serious debate and more sophisticated analysis than the author offers.

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Collins, John M. and Cordesman, Anthony H., *Imbalance of Power, Shifting U.S.-Soviet Military Strength*. San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1978. 316pp.

Collins, John M. *American and Soviet Military Trends--Since the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Washington: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, 1978. 496pp.

The Spring 1977 issue of this publication reviewed *United States/Soviet Military Balance: A Frame of Reference for Congress*, commending the pamphlet "for its breadth, its detail, and its brevity." Its author, John M. Collins, a Senior Specialist in National Defense at the Congressional Research Service (CRS), has now followed that 1976 effort with two more extensive studies. Only brevity has suffered. His format has evolved from handbook, to almanac, to single-volume encyclopedia. However, his style has remained that of a dispassionate observer providing facts and asking questions of his readership—the Defense and Congressional decision-makers in Washington, it is hoped. Through page after page of tables, graphs, histograms and charts, complemented perfectly by concise explanatory prose and notes, he portrays the results of years of implicit policy decisions made by explicit budgetary incisions.

Imbalance of Power contains data through 1976 and provides "Net Assessment Appraisals" in each section by Anthony H. Cordesman, former assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Defense Intelligence Board. Of the two books, it can be read the most easily and leaves the survivor with some sense of understanding. *Trends* has picked up 1977 data, lacks the "assessment" sections, and adds substantial portions covering U.S. and Soviet defense organizations and functions, along with annexes