

# BOOK REVIEWS

*The Longest War: Israel in Lebanon.* By Jacobo Timerman, translated from the Spanish by Miguel Acoca, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982, 167 pp., \$11.95.

Reviewed by OWEN KUPFERSCHMID

Jacobo Timerman was the editor of a leading Argentine newspaper when his country's military imprisoned and tortured him for crimes alleged but never proved. He did not "disappear" because he was too prominent. Once released, the newly discovered human rights *cause célèbre* chose to make his home in Israel, a place "where a Jew does not need an invitation to live," as he once put it. *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* recounted his prison experiences: the tortures, humiliations and the nature of his captors. Since few others survived to describe their experiences in Argentine prisons during the "dirty war," Timerman's work will endure as a monument to the disgraces of that period's regime.

From his vantage point in Israel, Timerman watched the Israeli invasion in Lebanon, recording his observations and emotions in several *New Yorker* articles which evolved into *The Longest War*. To a large extent, this book is Timerman's diary of the war, and it informs us not only about the author's outrage and anguish over the invasion but also about the Israeli mood during the war, the nature of the debates and the currents of opinion. The work, however, is more than a journalist's impressions. It tells of one man's view of Israel as he thinks it is and should be. This vision, the reader soon realizes, is largely intended for a foreign audience.

*The Longest War* contains several recurring themes. First, Israeli society is ill and its politics rotten. The war is symptomatic of such illness because, as Timerman tells it, the Israelis knew it was coming, knew it was unnecessary and yet were powerless to stop it. In a nicely turned phrase, the author explains that the Israelis became involved in Lebanon because, being accustomed to looking for madmen on their borders, they failed to see the madmen inside them. The war effort was aided by Prime Minister Begin's and former Defense Minister Sharon's speed in deceiving the public about the war's purpose and progress. When deceit failed, Begin provided "false analogies" to justify an action which became costly beyond expectation. Timerman contends that the invasion was "Sharon's war" since, according

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to the author, the former Defense Minister apparently believes that "any political contradiction could be resolved with the proper military move." Israel's leaders frighten Timerman. That Israel acquiesces to these men frightens him even more.

Begin is characterized as an intuitive but "unbalanced" politician who is ordinarily in perfect harmony with the mood of the Israeli voter. Timerman maintains, quite correctly, that a majority of Begin's supporters are Sephardic Jews originating in North Africa, the Middle East and Asia. For this "least socially and culturally developed sector of the population," Timerman has few kind words. He sees them as the backbone of Begin's populist politics and says:

I have seen their counterparts in Argentina, solidly behind Peron even when the Leader was drowning them in alienation and in an economic crisis, creating the conditions for their repression by enduring military dictatorships. The loyalty of these classes, always a majority, toward the charismatic and seemingly invincible leaders guarantees neither the rationality nor the health of the political situation.

Timerman considers the Israeli government to be essentially democratic but threatened by Begin's understanding of the term. Begin's actions are said to be "establishing the basis for another kind of country: a totalitarian country which, like all totalitarianisms, cannot be likened to any other." The invasion of Lebanon, it seems, heightened those "reactionary" and anti-democratic trends, while involving Israel in a series of historical "firsts" that allegedly raised unique issues for the nation.

The list of firsts given by Timerman is extensive. The invasion of Lebanon was the first war Israelis fought for non-defensive purposes, the first engendering guilt among segments of the population, the first not to be a common cause, the first bringing destruction to entire cities and the first in which Israeli military spokesmen lied and the press aided in deceiving the public. The war was the first in which the military objectives were unclear to the troops, the first in which the damage inflicted — including casualty figures — was hidden, the first in which reservists returning from the front demonstrated because they felt betrayed, and the first in which the objectives were political. (Timerman fails to analyze the 1956 Suez War in light of some of these "firsts.") He wishes to demonstrate that these developments created a crisis of identity for Israeli Jews by making them reverse the traditional position of the victimized to becoming that of the victimizer.

For Timerman, Israelis cannot cite the actions of other armies as justification for their behavior. The invasion undermined the "moral edifice unstintingly

maintained [by Israelis] for thirty-four years of national independence." In the combination of the Lebanese invasion with Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, he sees the destruction of the "moral integrity" of the state. The sight of Jews violently repudiating their historical role as victims and fighters for social justice sparks Timerman's anguish. For him, being a Jew demands accepting a higher ethical standard than that observed by other peoples.

Timerman's adopted countrymen are not the only ones who disappoint him. He holds the Arabs responsible for having made peace virtually unimaginable for Israelis. He believes that the Palestinians are imprisoned by the same militarist posture as the Israelis and is furious with those academics and politicians who stoke the flames of Palestinian "machismo" rather than helping to find realistic policy. The Palestinians will have to

find leaders who will establish a political strategy that will defend their national identity and give them an independent nation. We Israelis will do the same. We will defend our democracy. We will try to recover our dignity. We will try to rebuild our moral values. We will have to inspire the majority of Israelis to cherish democracy . . . [and] to recognize that Israel will have peace only when it can accept living together with a Palestinian state in the same region.

Timerman's aggrandized sense of mission often infects his prose as well as his perceptions. For example, the sight of a West Bank Arab planting trees to beautify Timerman's neighborhood fills him with angst so deep that "I can only relieve myself by vomiting for this Israel which wants to be like South Africa." Mawkish descriptions like these pervade the book. His recounting of his one day foray into Lebanon is rife with melodrama.

The reader is struck by some of Timerman's characterizations of Israelis. He quotes author and kibbutz member Amos Oz as saying that "human beings do not need to be happy, nor can they be." Timerman comments that "only an Israeli can say this with such ease, and coolness — and at the same time be young, beautiful, and struggling happily for the future. Exactly like Amos Oz." And, he comments: "The fatalism of Israelis is incredible — they accept whatever happens to them without asking themselves who brought it on or why." "The men and women who pass by [on the kibbutz] radiate the possibility of a pleasant country, of an honest humankind." Such observations are the stuff of *El Al* ads.

One senses that Timerman has had few conversations with Israelis who are neither articulate nor glamorous. Who are the Israelis for Jacobo Timerman? Far fewer than an American audience might like to know about, given his admitted inability to speak Hebrew. Members of the

Sephardic community are among those with whom he has apparently not spoken at length.

The tension between Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews is, according to Timerman, "artificially promoted." Characterizing one of the most serious problems currently facing Israeli society in those terms does an injustice to Sephardic claims of mistreatment. It also fails to place due weight on a problem that preoccupies Israelis. And the analogy of Begin's Sephardic supporters to Peron's admirers is too pat, as there are vast differences between the political behavior of the masses in Israel and the economic displacement, political demagoguery and overt violence of the *Peronistas*. Timerman's reference to the Sephardim as the "least culturally developed" members of Israeli society betrays an attitude, presumably not artificially promoted, which represents the type of condescension against which the Sephardim rail. So much for compassion toward downtrodden Israelis.

Another salient issue Timerman glosses over with his treatment is the basic question of whether Israel should be judged by universal standards or rather should be a "light unto the nations." This question, asked long before the invasion of Lebanon, raises the issue of whether Israeli identity is at core Jewish or whether Israelis are creating a distinct national identity removed from considerations of Jewishness. This is no trivial issue; Timerman demonstrates that Israelis themselves occasionally distinguish the two identities. He emphasizes, however, that Israelis were concerned about how, as Jews, they were able to behave as they did in Lebanon. Timerman overlooks the fact that many Israelis object to the idea that Jews have special moral responsibilities. Israeli author and leftist A. B. Yehoshua is a prime proponent of the normalization of Israeli-Jewish identity and Ariel Sharon expresses these same sentiments, although in less profound ways. They both reject Timerman's premise that Israeli Jews have a special duty to behave morally simply because they are Jews. For many Israelis, "chosenness" is an anachronistic, diasporan concept to be shed. Being a "light unto the nations" now brings derisive comments.

Timerman does acknowledge the Israeli ambivalence about Diaspora Jewry. He accuses the *Jerusalem Post* of "burying" a statement made by three prominent Diaspora leaders against the invasion. He claims this was an attempt to hide their opinions as part of the disinformation campaign. A few pages earlier, however, he cites *Jerusalem Post* columnist Yosef Goell as criticizing government news restrictions concerning the destruction in Lebanon. Timerman cannot have it both ways. Either the *Jerusalem Post* manipulates the news to fool the public, thereby muting criticism, or else the press is openly critical about the constraints placed on it. The buried reference is better explained by the fact that Israel does not jump when Diaspora leaders speak. Again, one doubts Timerman's analytical judgment.

Timerman also fails the reader in his recitation of Jewish history. He tells us that "Israel is a country of great verbal violence. Anybody familiar with the history of Jewish institutions in the Diaspora knows the phrases of lament and of accusations that are the ingredients of the long civil war which has split the Jewish people for thousands of years." Jewish history is replete with deeply rooted, occasionally violent, differences of opinion on every conceivable matter; one can point to the Talmud discussions or the Altalena affair to support this proposition. But elsewhere Timerman maintains that Jews have always stood with "all the just causes at once, with a humanist simultaneity of priorities."

Now, given the complexity of Jewish history, this statement is a gross generalization. Some Jews have had universalist impulses; others have remained particularists. Here, Timerman's flaws do not stem from an inability to speak Hebrew. Rather, they stem from a far deeper problem. He romanticizes Jewish and Israeli history, yet he proposes to explain Israel to a foreign audience. His assertion that the invasion of Lebanon undermined the moral edifice of the state "unstintingly maintained for thirty-four years" ignores that fact that Israelis have previously confronted morally complex issues. Whatever happened to prior debates about the West Bank, about the use of Arab laborers, about Israeli militarism, about vigilantes and brutal soldiers? What ever happened to the Lavon Affair, where Israel debated its role as an *agent provocateur*?

*The Longest War* is not bereft of value. As a period piece, it serves to recount some of the major events in the invasion of Lebanon. It also raises many of the moral issues facing Israelis. Timerman quotes important Israelis freely and gives credit where due, thereby providing an introductory "who's who" for the reader who wishes to become more familiar with current Israeli politics and literature. We have a useful compendium of some of the obscured events and documents of the war: Eli Geva's renunciation of his position as commander of a force overlooking Beirut, the letter in which Simha Guterman bemoans the death of his son in Lebanon — ending the family line — and accuses General Sharon of accomplishing what the Nazis could not. For those interested in Timerman, his meditations on his life in Israel, his wife, his childhood in Argentina, and the Holocaust, permit a view of a man who is not a consummate insider and purveyor of moral truths. His quieter moments allow us to glimpse Timerman the outsider, a man who feels kinship with the geography of his country more easily than with its people.

A darkened vision pervades *The Longest War*. Timerman doubted the ability of the Israelis to hold an impartial inquiry into the Sabra and Shattila massacres. He expressed little faith in the power of the democratic opposition. Time should have quelled Timerman's cynicism on the matter of the inquiry while at the same time supporting his distrust of Begin's

cynical use of democracy. Whether his pessimistic view of the democratic opposition is well-founded remains to be seen. A recent *Jerusalem Post* poll shows an increasing number of Israelis willing to exchange occupied land for peace. If that proposal becomes a reality, we can expect the numbers favoring this option to rise further. Under those circumstances, perhaps not even Begin would be able to deceive the Israeli people about their best interests as Timerman defines them.

*The Longest War* serves a variety of purposes. It provides an opportunity to share or confirm anger, sadness or outrage over Israeli behavior in Lebanon and the West Bank. The reader seeking what one reviewer has called a "moral tract" will find it in Timerman's writing with its thundering, if overwrought, pronouncements on the consequences of the invasion, the domination of Palestinians in the occupied territories and the future of Israeli democracy. Yet readers looking for an accurate portrayal of Israel, Jewish identity as it is understood by many Israelis and the nature of Israel-Diaspora relations, will be disappointed. *The Longest War* is a facile work filled with errors and misleading characterizations. Timerman touches on the moral issues facing modern Israel in a thorough manner, but his brush is too broad and his anger too deep to provide a good description of what is happening around him. In his dedication, Timerman writes his hope that *The Longest War* will help "us" for "We Israelis are confused and frightened." In reality, the book will help very few; the arguments he raises have been raised by many Israelis with more credibility and clout than Timerman has in his adopted land. For the foreign audience to which he addresses this work, those familiar with Arab-Israeli affairs and modern Jewish history will hear Timerman echo many an outcry, with little that is new to distinguish his version.

*Nuclear Power in the Developing World.* By Daniel Poneman, Winchester, Mass.: Allen & Unwin, 1982, 272 pp., \$27.50.

Reviewed by MATTHEW H. ADLER

If politics is the art of the possible, the politics of nuclear nonproliferation often seems to be the art of the impossible. In their attempts to control the spread of nuclear weapons, nonproliferation advocates must meet challenges on a variety of fronts. If American military and technological assistance to an ostracized proliferator is cut off, some may claim that the suspect nation is a rock of pro-Americanism in an otherwise troubled region. If American export policy is tightened, the domestic reactor industry will charge that the government is putting its own businesses at a serious competitive disadvantage without any favorable result since the gap will gladly be filled by other supplier nations. If, on the other hand, all export controls are lifted, suppliers will all too readily demonstrate their willingness to sell sensitive technologies that can be diverted to weapons use. Yet if supplier nations band together in an attempt to exercise some restraint, as did the members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group which began meeting in London in 1975, they are greeted with Third World protests of monopoly, conspiracy and self-interest.

The problem with nuclear nonproliferation is that it seemingly asks for something for nothing. Under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), supplier nations are asked to forego profits in all cases and political leverage in some cases by refusing to sell certain products to certain nations. The only return for this sacrifice is the hope that an idealistic policy may succeed or at least push the inevitable further into the future. Recipient nations, meanwhile, are asked to forego a sovereign right to possess nuclear weapons, as well as technological capabilities that might one day result in energy self-sufficiency, in return for promises of technological assistance and nuclear disarmament by the developed nations.

Given the lack of strong reasons for a commitment to nonproliferation policy, it is not surprising that suspicion and ill-feeling pervades all sides. Since the Indian explosion in 1974, supplier nations are wary of the possibility that nuclear power programs in the Third World may evolve into nuclear weapons programs. Developing countries, meanwhile, resent both the paltry technological assistance they have received and the continued vertical arms buildup by those very nations which instruct them not to develop their own nuclear weapons.

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These festering resentments call for an educational effort aimed at both sides, and Harvard Research Fellow Daniel Poneman steps admirably into this role. In *Nuclear Power in the Developing World*, Poneman examines the diverse motivations that draw developing countries to nuclear power. While always remaining conscious of the danger of nuclear proliferation, Poneman avoids the ethnocentricity that is often exhibited by nonproliferation advocates. Nonproliferation policy is, after all, essentially discriminatory; whatever justifications may be offered concerning the possibility of a safer, nonnuclear world, the underlying reality of nonproliferation instruments such as the NPT is that the only states who are permitted nuclear bombs are the rich nations which already own them. To a Third World that is highly sensitive to any kind of discrimination, this is offensive. Further efforts to impede what developing countries perceive as legitimate and badly needed power programs can only backfire, thereby jeopardizing those nonproliferation policies already in place.

Nonproliferation advocates make their cases with great urgency by painting chilling pictures of a hair-trigger world in which the smallest border war can evolve into nuclear holocaust. Poneman brings this same sense of urgency to the developing countries' quest for energy. He does not ignore the "impure" motivations that may drive a poor nation toward a weapons program — the desire for prestige at home and abroad, the need to quell domestic strife by uniting over a difficult task, the attraction of threatening rivals with a deadly weapon — but what emerges from *Nuclear Power in the Developing World* is a portrait of a class of nations desperate for inexpensive electricity. These countries, not the few who desire the bomb, are in the majority among the Third World. Poneman sensibly urges that nonproliferation policies which treat all developing countries alike and fail to make this distinction will be useless at best and counterproductive at worst.

Those LDCs which today have nuclear reactors do so because of the panacea nuclear power was perceived to be in the 1950s and 1960s. Nuclear power was viewed as the ultimate symbol of development. To the Third World, it was almost as if the developed nations were rich because they had nuclear reactors rather than the reverse: that they were only able to afford reactors because of their immense wealth. Reactors were expensive, but in the long run they were viewed as worth this cost since a successful nuclear program promised energy self-sufficiency. In a Third World bent on freeing itself from colonial domination, this self-sufficiency must have seemed particularly attractive; later, when the OPEC "oil shocks" crippled many developing economies, self-sufficiency came to have a more immediate and less philosophical value.



Yet just as self-sufficiency is a motivation to pursue a nuclear program, it may also act as a disincentive. Poneman points out early in this work that not all LDCs have elected to pursue nuclear energy; indeed, most have rejected the nuclear option, and this book discusses these nations as well as those which have nuclear programs. Poneman breaks the LDCs into three categories: independents, which desire nuclear self-sufficiency; dependents, which desire electric power rather than prestige and which thus rely heavily on foreign suppliers in return for quick energy; and nonnuclear nations, which do not have a nuclear program. These typologies are helpful in emphasizing the author's point that there are motivational differences among LDCs. Yet his case studies (Argentina as an independent, Iran as a dependent, and Indonesia as a nonnuclear country) are strained by attempting to generalize from the specific. These chapters could have been omitted from an otherwise excellent work.

The disincentives of nuclear energy are many: nuclear power is a tremendous drain on capital (it is 70 percent capital-intensive, Poneman tells us, compared to 45 percent for oil and 45-60 percent for coal), its complexity may be beyond the grasp of the Third World's scientific community (or it may siphon off the available talent, resulting in a "brain drain" that leaves few qualified scientists for other areas), and its expense leads to unhealthy balance of payments deficits and foreign exchange shortages in nations whose economies are precarious at best. In addition, the uranium needed to power nuclear plants is unavailable in most developing countries. Thus the path to energy "independence" often means becoming dependent on foreign suppliers much in the same way as LDCs rely upon OPEC producers today. A nation can attempt to close the fuel cycle and render this dependency unnecessary by reprocessing the spent material from its nuclear reactors. Yet, since reprocessing can be used to produce weapons-grade plutonium, this course is discouraged by supplier nations (particularly the United States which, as an example to the rest of the world, banned commercial reprocessing under the Carter Administration).

There remain, however, significant reasons for a developing country to grasp at whatever energy straws are available. In contrast to the North, the share of energy costs in the South as a percentage of national income is rising. These nations are also hit proportionately harder by oil price increases since, unlike the developed nations, LDCs are unable to rearrange their consumption patterns. The burden thus falls on capital and foreign exchange reserves. With each year that the ever elusive promise of development recedes further into the future, disaster looms imminent, especially given the population explosion in the Third World. Poneman describes how, in some developing nations, businessmen who require electricity

must power their enterprises with their own generators. Westerners, accustomed to electricity from some mysterious central source at the throw of a switch, cannot begin to comprehend such a critical situation. The great need for electricity exemplified by this tale should cause Westerners to hesitate before they begin to moralize to the Third World about nonproliferation.

LDCs which seek a nuclear program find eager salesmen. The high cost of reactors in the West has actually worked to the Third World's benefit. Faced with a shrinking domestic market due to environmental concerns and the high costs of regulation, suppliers in the developed nations have turned to the LDCs for customers and are providing very favorable export terms, sometimes at the expense of nonproliferation concerns. Poneman writes that this desperate desire to export is the "Achilles' heel of the advanced nations." The future of nuclear power in the developing nations may turn on how long the manufacturers in the West are able to keep their Third World customers insulated from the true economics of the situation.

The gravity of the energy problem in the South has blinded some LDCs to the real costs of nuclear power. As Poneman writes, "the issue . . . is not whether nuclear power in fact can fulfill the economic objectives of Third World governments, but whether they think it can, and why." This book should affect that thought process, for Poneman paints a staggering picture of nuclear economics. Despite the current favorable terms, few Third World nations can afford a nuclear program without financial assistance. The burdens are staggering, and there are doubts as to the ability of the LDCs (given the current state of the world financial market and the decision by international financial institutions such as the World Bank to discontinue loans for nuclear programs) *ever* to pay.

Poneman writes that "when asked how to prevent the construction of a French reprocessing plant in Pakistan, one analyst replied 'Ask for a down payment.'" Moreover, while LDCs cannot afford the luxury of environmental concerns, the costs associated with nuclear disasters are a major disincentive. Poneman notes that the Three Mile Island cleanup cost over one billion dollars and asks, "what developing country could sustain a similar loss without drastic economic consequences?" These high costs support Poneman's point that for most LDCs' nuclear programs, the energy motivations are at least as important as security concerns:

Nuclear power is far too expensive to be judged on vague national security considerations alone. Thus, a plan of long-term economic development through the installation of nuclear power plants remains politically necessary. . . . The cost of

adopting the nuclear option is so great that it could not even be considered unless nuclear power is deemed essential to domestic energy policy.

Despite Poneman's grim portrait of the economics of nuclear power, ultimately this is a pro-nuclear energy book, in the sense that all non-proliferation advocates must be pronuclear. In other words, the developed nations will not force LDCs away from the bomb by forcing them away from nuclear power. If nuclear power fails it will be from its own economic weight. Nonproliferation advocates can recommend and aid the development of alternative energy sources, but suppliers must also meet their pledges to assist nuclear programs in the South. Only in this way will the developed nations retain the trust of the LDCs and remain in a position to influence the continued course of energy programs in the Third World. Nuclear assistance is not something to be unilaterally abrogated.

Of course, some nations will continue to pursue a nuclear program despite the economic situation, due to their desire for nuclear weapons. While Poneman is correct that not all nations with nuclear power programs have sinister designs for nuclear weapons, neither should one make the opposite mistake and assume that some nations have anything *but* sinister motivations. It is worth noting that those nations Poneman places in his "independent" category — Brazil, Pakistan, Argentina, South Korea, Taiwan and Israel, among others — are precisely those nations which are reportedly pursuing a nuclear weapons capability. This leads to speculation as to whether a desire for independence necessarily leads to weapons ambitions. Poneman fails to address this critical point.

He does, however, note the significant bargaining chip that the nuclear weapons states have given these threshold nations by breaking their NPT pledge to negotiate in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race. This is a serious breach and the importance of this point to the LDCs cannot be overemphasized. Americans feel threatened only by Soviet bombs; in the South, *every* developed nation's nuclear arsenal is a threat. Poneman warns that the problem here is not that the threshold states will develop nuclear weapons to balance the superpowers' stockpiles, since no LDC could ever hope to either threaten or defend itself from the United States or the Soviet Union. Rather, the arms race costs nonproliferation advocates their credibility and reduces their leverage over threshold states. Hypocrites carry little moral suasion. Ronald Reagan perhaps realizes this lesson. By engaging in a wholehearted arms race with the Soviets and downplaying nonproliferation policy, Reagan may have tacitly acknowledged that efforts at horizontal nonproliferation are inconsistent with vertical proliferation.

While overall Poneman has made a valuable contribution to the non-proliferation debate, he nonetheless has committed certain errors. He says that Libya's Colonel Qadhafi attempted to buy an A-bomb from China "and then sent uranium and money to Pakistan to secure a role in that project." The footnote provided in the text goes only to the China half of this story, while the charge of an "Islamic bomb" has been disputed elsewhere.

Second, he criticizes those who charge that nonproliferation is a political rather than a technical problem. Poneman believes that technical restraints, such as inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency and controls on exported materials, are extremely important and have prevented a number of nations from joining the nuclear club. While it is certainly true that once a nation embarks on a nuclear weapons course technical barriers can impede its progress, it is for reasons of politics and security that the nation takes its initial nuclear steps. To concentrate on technical "fixes" rather than the underlying causes is to apply band-aids to a serious disease.

Finally, Poneman's attack on Carter for inconsistency is itself inconsistent. Poneman criticizes the strict Carter nuclear export policy because it required the United States to treat its "essential" allies such as Europe and Japan in the same manner as "riskier" nations. Yet on the very same page he writes that the Carter policy was viewed as discriminatory. Treating Japan the same as LDCs at least mitigates the impact of the perceived discrimination. If Poneman meant to argue, as he does in his conclusion, that the United States should move away from "across-the-board" applications of its export policy, he could have been far more clear.

These flaws notwithstanding, *Nuclear Power in the Developing World* emerges as a balanced, informative and intelligent appraisal of the dilemmas involved in obtaining power without proliferation. Poneman concludes with some cogent recommendations. Central to these proposals is the need to strengthen the NPT in order to provide greater rewards for NNWS signatories. As Poneman writes, "in practice, NPT parties do not receive preferential treatment. If anything, they are taken for granted, while all sorts of special offers and exceptions are made for those nations which adamantly refuse to commit themselves to nonproliferation agreements and most assiduously avoid international safeguards." Preferential treatment to NPT holdouts, Poneman urges, must be halted. This treatment is given in the professed hope that it might coax these nations into the nonproliferation regime and that some observance of safeguards by these pariahs is better than none at all. In reality, these reasons are often little more than rhetoric used by political leaders and reactor suppliers who have their own reasons to provide threshold states with sensitive technology.

Poneman's suggestions are fine as far as they go, but they make the same mistake as do all "hardline" nonproliferation proposals; namely, they fail to account for contingencies. Nonproliferation policy occasionally calls for difficult choices which may lead to the emergence of other, more important, choices. For example, until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Jimmy Carter was the strongest supporter of nonproliferation ever to sit in the White House. After the invasion, however, Carter fought to supply India with enriched uranium and to provide Pakistan with an expensive security package. American assistance to both nations previously had been cut off due to suspicions about their nuclear programs. Carter, however, came to believe that nonproliferation efforts had to be relegated to a secondary position given the immediate problems the United States faced in retaining its regional influence.

Thus, a successful new nonproliferation policy requires that another proposal be added to Poneman's suggestions: The United States and other nuclear suppliers must reach a threshold determination, both among themselves and in domestic policy councils, that the perils of proliferation are of sufficient magnitude to justify temporary setbacks in other areas. Long-run consistency requires that some reversals be suffered from time to time. Otherwise, nonproliferation efforts will be made only when convenient and, eventually, enough new countries will possess the bomb to make such efforts utterly meaningless.

At present, however, there is room for some optimism. The LDCs initially opted for nuclear power under the influence of the developed countries — what Poneman calls "influence by circumstance." As the latter move away from nuclear power, perhaps the LDCs will also pursue alternative energy forms. Poneman demonstrates how great a role economics has always played in this controversy. It was atomic energy, not atomic bombs, that first inspired LDCs to pursue a nuclear program. It will be the inefficiencies of nuclear power, not the opposition to the bomb, that will cause LDCs to renounce their nuclear programs.

A number of factors support this prediction. Oil prices have fallen drastically, while reactor costs continue to climb. Pressures are mounting on the United States and the Soviet Union to negotiate an arms limitation pact. Most significantly, after all these years, nuclear power has a dismal track record in the Third World. Poneman reports that even in the LDCs' most advanced nuclear nations — India and Argentina — nuclear power provides merely 2 percent of installed electrical capacity.

Phasing out nuclear power, however, will only solve the proliferation half of the problem. Without increased aid to LDCs for other power sources, the South will be back at square one on energy. Too often nonproliferation efforts and attempts to develop energy in the Third World

have proven to be mutually exclusive. Poneman's book is a welcome step in reconciling these policies because it shows the impracticality of nuclear power for developing countries while remaining sensitive to the South's legitimate needs and motivations. The next challenge for the developed countries is to ease the Third World away from nuclear power, not by condemning their interest in the nuclear bomb but by arguing that the pursuit of atomic energy has proven to be an economically ruinous course. When the developed world can move the debate to these pragmatic grounds and adopt the tone of the accountant rather than the preacher, it will have taken a major step toward solving both the proliferation of weapons and the paucity of power in the Third World.

*Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa from Eisenhower to Kennedy.* By Madeleine G. Kalb, New York: Macmillan and Company, 1981, 448 pp., \$19.95.

Reviewed by MAXWELL CHIBUNDU

If and when the Organization of African Unity (OAU) holds its nineteenth annual "heads of state" conference, the gathering of Africa's fifty-one leaders will be no more than a formality. Whatever jubilation that might have naturally flowed from the commencement of a third decade in the life of an international organization is bound in this instance to be muted, for the last eighteen months have been particularly turbulent for the OAU. While not even the most ardent supporters of the OAU advanced it as the paradigm of a successful regional organization, its detractors nonetheless grudgingly acknowledged its unique role in, and value to, African politics. The organization may have failed to furnish solutions for such problems as civil wars in the Sudan, Nigeria and Chad; it may have been unable to prevent or control cross-border conflicts such as Tanzania's invasion of Uganda, the Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara or the use of Libyan soldiers in the Chad conflict, but it did provide the institutional framework for attempting to tackle such problems. The organization was a forum for discussion and consensus building. It actively promoted the "African point of view" and effectively conveyed that view in such global bodies as the United Nations. Above all, the OAU gave practical meaning to the widely shared belief among Africans that "African problems" should receive "African solutions."

Increasingly, however, these paeans to the OAU appear to be losing strength. Squabbles within the organization which led to the postponement of the highly symbolic meeting of the heads of state attest to this. With the OAU's future so much in doubt, perhaps Africanists and African leaders who ascribe to the philosophy that African problems are best resolved by Africans would be well advised to study certain aspects of African unity illuminated in Madeleine Kalb's *Congo Cables*.

This lengthy treatment of one of the more tragic events in post-independence African history — events unquestionably influential in the founding of the OAU — touches on many of the issues surrounding current controversies.

A tightly structured book, *Congo Cables* chronologically describes (and occasionally analyzes) the international dimensions of the civil conflict that erupted in the central African country shortly after Belgium technically

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granted independence to the Congolese people on June 30, 1960. While the concluding chapter does update the events in the Republic of Zaire (1981), the narrative focuses on the two-and-a-half years between formal independence and the renunciation by Moïse Tshombe in January 1963 of Katanga secession.

Although the reader may glimpse the complexities of politics in a newly independent state, the book's focal concern is not the internal dynamics of government and political opposition or even outright military rebellion. Rather, *Congo Cables* concentrates on foreign involvement in the internal struggles for power in a new state. More specifically, it is an attempt to tell the story in the context of superpower rivalry. Dr. Kalb uses biographies and memoirs, newspaper reports, investigative reports by the Congress of the United States, personal interviews and, above all, U.S. government cables to recount that story.

She describes in a fast-moving panorama the turmoils of the first two-and-a-half years of Congolese independence under the tutelage of the United Nations, buttressed by actors in Washington, New York, Moscow, Brussels, London, Accra, Cairo and Delhi. Baptized into a "Cold War" world, the nascent state was doomed to political instability when the charismatic but mercurial prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, was condemned to death by the Eisenhower Administration within sixty days of Lumumba's rise to power. The U.S. government, it appears, was convinced that nothing short of the physical demise of the Prime Minister would suffice to prevent the scourge of communism which a successful Lumumba government would visit on the newly independent states of Africa.

First in Moscow and then across the Atlantic in New York, the flamboyant leader of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev — with characteristic enthusiasm and little else — barreled into the fray, determined to save the Lumumba government and thereby offer other African states the Soviet Union's alternative way of life. Meanwhile, Eisenhower's Administration was replaced by a new generation of politicians who intended to rewrite U.S. foreign policy. Khrushchev failed not only to keep Lumumba in power but also to prevent his death and, attracted by the possibilities of a new beginning with the United States, reconsidered his African policy.

Through it all, the United Nations, under the firm control of Dag Hammarskjöld and his representatives, stoically tried to protect life and property in a disintegrating state, thereby incurring the wrath of the Soviet Union, then of the United States, and then again of the Soviet Union. The Belgians and the British vacillated between the role of colonial masters in the know and of second-rate powers who, deprived of their crown jewels, feebly protested American actions but eventually bowed to the wishes of their protector. The Afro-Asian bloc (the "neutrals") indecisively



(and frequently inconsequentially) wavered between support for the United Nations and its Secretary General, on the one hand, and joint independent action to preserve the Congo's independence, on the other hand. These diverse forces occasionally and — in my view, though not in Dr. Kalb's — inexplicably coalesce, providing stability in the Congo. It was during such a lull that the United Nations managed to extricate itself from the Congo in 1963, but only after the Congo was firmly in the orbit of the United States, thanks in no small part to the role of a journalist-turned-soldier, (Joseph) Mobutu Seseseko.

Despite the "racy" tenor of the commentary, what emerges from *Congo Cables* is not merely the "journalistic truth," with which modern historiography has made its peace, but historical truth. Dr. Kalb does not rely principally on the recollections of participants or their self-serving memoirs. She does not depend mainly on newspaper reports (although she uses this source extensively and with impressive results). Rather, her account is documented by U.S. government cables (about 2,500 in all) procured between 1975 and 1980 under the Freedom of Information Act. The special value of the cables is that their use enables her to reconstruct the internal debates and discussions that took place in both the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations which shaped U.S. policy in the Congo.

Those debates demonstrate that the premise of an overriding "national interest," which commands the allegiance of all decision makers, is false. Views varied not only from one administration to another but within administrations. U.S. policy in the Congo often resulted not from any innate forces or beliefs but from compromises between contending views within the American government and shifting realities in the Congo. It is true that all U.S. officials desired a minimal role for the Soviet Union in the Congo, but there were serious differences in opinion as to the most effective way to achieve such a broad objective. Among possible options were direct U.S. military intervention, use of the United Nations, use of "conservative" African countries or the use of "conservative" Congolese. Other U.S. officials saw the need as one of promoting the United States in the Congo, not merely of forestalling Soviet influence in the Congo. For many officials, the Congo was merely a proxy for the continent of Africa. *Congo Cables* offers a unique opportunity to appreciate the multi-faceted decision-making process in the United States government in foreign affairs and raises the hope that similar material on decisionmaking in other governments will be forthcoming.

The conclusion above, based as it is on the portrait of "how diplomacy really works" as revealed in *Congo Cables*, may be criticized on the grounds of structural flaws in the materials used. As Dr. Kalb writes in her preface, she obtained fewer than half of the cables she had sought. Even more

significantly, as she readily admits, a scholar wishing to avail herself of the Freedom of Information Act suffers from the handicap of lacking precise knowledge of what documents exist and is therefore often forced to take stabs in the dark. Finally, the reader should bear in mind the author's biases. Her selection of what views to reproduce in *Congo Cables*, from a set as diverse as those to be found in the U.S. government, may be skewed. These are possible shortcomings which may be remedied as more information becomes available. But they do not detract from the contributions made by *Congo Cables* to an understanding of the process of decisionmaking by government officials.

The question remains, what lessons of relevance to the world of the 1980s can be drawn from a book about foreign involvement in the Congo? The process of decolonization is virtually over and the political immaturities demonstrated by the Congo crisis are, presumably, well in the past. Moreover, the intervening twenty years have witnessed a redirection of superpower conquests away from wooing developing countries and towards the harsh realities of nuclear confrontation and economic warfare. No one today questions (as did the British in 1962) "Soapy" Williams' axiom that "Africa should be for Africans"; on the contrary, the even more concrete statement, "African solutions to African problems," is widely endorsed.

There are, in the view of this reviewer, two broad lessons to be learned. The first is that, given the continued vitality of the bipolar structure of world politics, the belief that it is possible to isolate the African continent from superpower interaction amounts to sheer fantasy. There were no innate reasons why the Congo should have been the battleground for superpower rivalry in Africa. Such explanations as "time" (the nascent status of African political independence), "geography" (Congo's size and/or strategic position on the continent) or "economics" (the Congo's mineral wealth) are not compelling. Superpower involvement in the Angolan civil war belies the "time" argument. Dr. Kalb's work amply demonstrates that while the Congo, by virtue of the rapidity of its independence process, created an environment conducive to foreign involvement, it was the resulting instability of the process that encouraged the intervention. Angola was a re-creation of that environment, and superpower rivalry in the Horn of Africa shows that instability need not be a creation of the decolonization process.

Nor was superpower intervention in the Congo precipitated or controlled by the Congo's strategic position or its mineral wealth. With regard to the former circumstance, the elusiveness of defining exactly what is meant by the phrase "strategic importance" suffices to dismiss the claim. Virtually any African country is strategically situated in relation to some goal or

other of the superpowers. Recent controversies over U.S. policy towards Libya effectively convey the point. Libya may or may not be "strategically" situated by virtue of its Mediterranean coastline; it may or may not be strategically located because it shares a common border with Egypt; it may or may not be strategically situated because it shares a common border with the Sudan, Egypt's ally; it may or may not be strategically situated because it shares a common border with Chad (which is supported by the Sudan, a friend of Egypt, an ally of one of the superpowers). It does not necessarily follow that the magnitude and nature of superpower involvement in Libyan politics will be the same in all cases, but *Congo Cables* illustrates the variety and potency of various forms of superpower involvement. Even the least maligned forms of superpower involvement, such as logistical support to one faction or economic sabotage against another faction, can have potent effects.

With regard to the "economic" argument, economic determinists will be shocked to learn that Dr. Kalb had written well over four-fifths of her book before introducing an economic rationale to explain U.S. policies in the Congo. "Ideology," not "economics," appears to have been decisive and, given the current American administration, it would be foolhardy to dismiss the struggle for ideological dominance between the superpowers as a shaping force of global politics. Thus, as long as Africans live in a polarized world, the possibility and indeed likelihood of superpower involvement in African politics will persist.

Assuming, however, that Africa's clarion call of "Africa for Africans" was to be miraculously heeded, then those Africans who would be providing the solutions to African problems would find useful Dr. Kalb's exhaustive account of the difficulties faced by the United Nations as its multinational troops were immersed in keeping law and order in a fragmented society. Voting and paying for multinational troops to police internal conflicts is the least demanding aspect of peacekeeping by an international organization. Delineation of the responsibilities of the international force, supervision and control of the conduct of the soldiers, furnishing logistical support to the peacekeepers and defining the allegiance of the troops are all issues which raise troublesome questions, answers to which raise further questions challenging such fundamental notions as "national sovereignty" and "political independence." Courage, determination and diplomatic skills are required but are not in themselves sufficient.

The failure of the OAU's peacekeeping attempt in Chad highlights the limited capacity of African nations to cope with the problems enumerated above. Furthermore, in Chad, as in Shaba province, providing "African solutions" required the participation of non-Africans. Thus, a second lesson of relevance to today's Africa is that, in order for international cooperation

to assist a third nation to work, the scope and nature of the assistance must not only be clearly defined, but such assistance must be consistent with the needs on the ground and must be implemented by an overall command structure courageous enough to tread on tender tentacles. Current OAU disagreements do not suggest African leaders have reached such a consensus. The 1980s are not the 1960s; twenty years of political independence has shown that African peoples have demands on the global structure which are distinctly African. Yet African states do not exist outside the global economic and political regimes. They will be, in the 1980s as in the 1960s, buffeted by the demands of a polarized global system. But as the story of *Congo Cables* demonstrates, the demands of the global system do not lie in a single continuum. Those demands are not independent of the particular needs of the individual countries or continents; a process of alignment and realignment of needs and demands enables participants to cope with the system. Africans have done so with some success, and in doing so have not only reacted to the global system but have compelled the system to adjust some of its demands to the resources of the African states. The process by which this interaction sometimes takes place is the exciting though unshattering tale of *Congo Cables*.