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**FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE**

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*Lebanon  
Post-Mortem*

"Assad and the Future of the Middle East" by Robert G. Neumann, in *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1983/84), P.O. Box 2515, Boulder, Colo. 80321.

Now that Syria's President Hafez al-Assad has blocked the U.S.-backed peace-keeping effort in Lebanon, he "has emerged from years of isolation and placed himself at the power switch of Middle-East policy. For some time to come, he will remain a man who cannot be ignored."

So writes Neumann, former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. Yet Assad is not without problems. His domestic power base is narrow: He is a member of the Alawite Muslim sect while most of his countrymen are Sunni Muslims. And Assad is backing the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran's war with Iraq, Syria's wealthier and more powerful neighbor. At war's end, Assad may face Iraq's wrath.

Assad's Syria is now Moscow's chief "window" in the Middle East, the recipient of generous military aid from the Kremlin, and home to some 8,000 Soviet troops who operate its modern anti-aircraft and



Syria has occupied parts of Lebanon since the 1976 Lebanese civil war, when some of the nation's Maronite Christians asked for Syrian aid.

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other missile systems. But, Neumann reports, "the Syrian tail often wags the Soviet dog." Against Moscow's wishes, for example, Assad fomented a revolt against Yasir Arafat in the ranks of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) last year that split the guerrilla group.

Assad cannot be denied the dominant role in Lebanon that he wants, Neumann argues. Leaders of Lebanon's Druse and Shiite Muslims, and some non-Maronite Christians, have lined up behind Assad, albeit grudgingly. But Lebanon, created artificially after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, has long been "slippery ground" for foreign powers. The Syrian leader's success is by no means assured.

To win the wider leadership role that he seeks in the Arab world, Assad will have to tackle the Arab-Israeli question. That will require a choice between pursuing diplomacy or launching a new Arab war against Israel. Despite Assad's alliance with Moscow, damage to U.S. interests is not foreordained. Washington, Neumann cautions, will have to master "the traditional Middle-Eastern game of opposing and cooperating at the same time."

## *Reshaping NATO*

"A Plan To Reshape NATO" by Henry Kissinger, in *Time* (Mar. 5, 1984), Time-Life Bldg., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

"An alliance cannot live by arms alone. To endure, it requires some basic agreement on political aims that justify and give direction to the common defense." So warns former U.S. Secretary of State Kissinger, pondering the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). He calls for drastic action to save the alliance.

Intractable disagreements divide the United States and its European allies. U.S. leaders favor a tough stance toward the Soviet Union and Third World; their European counterparts take the opposite view. Most important, NATO cannot agree on a new defense strategy, needed now that Moscow's vastly expanded nuclear arsenal makes the American pledge to meet Soviet aggression with nuclear weapons much less credible.

Kissinger concedes that frequent flip-flops in U.S. foreign policy (e.g., on the SALT II treaty) give the Western Europeans some cause for complaint. But he thinks that the chief problem is Europe's long dependence on the United States for its defense, which has bred European "guilt, self-hatred, and a compulsion to display *independence* of the U.S." He detects a hint of "schizophrenia" in Europe: "a fear that the U.S. might not be prepared to risk its own population on a nuclear defense of Europe, coupled with the anxiety that America might drag Europe into an unwanted conflict."

Kissinger's solution: a new division of responsibilities within NATO. The Western Europeans, with twice the Soviet Union's wealth and half again its population, should concentrate on defense of the Continent by greatly strengthening their own nonnuclear forces. The United States, with 282,000 troops in Europe today, would maintain "highly mobile conventional forces capable of backing up Europe" but would assign more troops to the defense of the Middle East, Asia, and other areas.