IKE THE Greek monster Hydra, the Reagan administration's Iran-contra debacle has produced numerous talking heads, each promising to tell the "real story" of what happened. Two of the latest are Constantine C. Menges' *Our Dangerous Liaisons: Inside the National Security Council: The True Story of the Making and Unmaking of Reagan's Foreign Policy* and Samuel Segev's *The Iranian Triangle: The Untold Story of Israel's Role in the Iran-Contra Affair*.

Menges, a special assistant to the president for national security affairs from 1983 through 1986, describes the infighting that plagued the Reagan administration's national security apparatus. Bitter battles were fought over Central America, the Middle East, counterterrorism, the Caribbean and Africa. But this is not exactly new. ... unintended—about the seeming paranoia, egomania and naivete of a senior Reagan administration official, Menges himself.

Menges portrays Secretary of State George Shultz as a rather unlikely Darth Vader, ruthlessly scheming to sabotage the president's foreign policy. Shultz's chicanery reaches new depths when he goes to the length of excluding Menges from key meetings.

Menges is assiduous in painting himself as the lone defender of Reagan on the national security staff, arrayed against a grand conspiracy determined to stifle...that the Iran-contra affair would never have happened if the president had received a personal letter from him in 1985—in which he says he outlined the "breakdown of the NSC decision-making process" caused by the State Department. Alas, he says, that letter, though edited and blessed by Director of Central Intelligence William Casey (Menges' hero) was blocked. That Menges actually believes the Iran-contra affair to be caused by the State Department, rather than a contemptuous disregard for the law by top administration officials, including Casey, is indicative of his book's problems.

ONE OF the lingering mysteries in the Iran-contra affair is the precise nature of Israel's role, which has never been thoroughly investigated—publicly at least—by the U.S. or Israeli governments. What was the exact nature of Israeli actions? What was said...planned by Israeli counterterrorism official Amiram Nir (who recently died in a plane crash in Mexico) and Oliver North?

With *The Iranian Triangle*, Segev, a respected columnist for the Israeli newspaper, *Ma'ariv*, has written a disappointing book. Though the first third of Segev's book provides a fascinating history of the mostly secret relationship between Israeli...material adequately covered in the investigations by Congress, the Tower Commission and the American news media.

In one area, however, Segev has obviously gained access to some highly placed Israeli sources. He recounts the secret European meetings in 1985 between...and the Israelis plotted to help overthrow the Khomeini regime by promising weapons to various Iranian officials.

There is also little new light shed on the mysterious activities of Amiran Nir, who abruptly squeezed out two Israeli businessmen and took over for Israel the arms sales to Iran.
Continued on pages

The thesis of this book is that the political process, as practiced in the United States, is deeply threatened by the influence of corporate PAC money and its impact on the political system. David Haward Bain, the author of "Sitting in the Shadows: Aftershock", explores the ways in which corporate interests have infiltrated American institutions, and how this has affected the ability of citizens to participate in the political process.

The book's central argument is that corporate PAC money has eroded the power and authority of the political system, leading to a decline in the quality of political discourse and a disregard for the principles of democracy. Bain highlights the ways in which corporate interests have influenced political decisions and shaped public opinion, and how this has led to a loss of faith in the political process.

By focusing on the role of corporate PAC money in American politics, Bain is able to provide a critical analysis of the current political landscape. His work is a call to action for politicians and citizens alike, urging them to reinvigorate the political process and ensure that the voices of ordinary citizens are heard.

"Sitting in the Shadows: Aftershock" is an important contribution to the study of political influence, and a timely reminder of the need for citizens to engage in the political process and hold their leaders accountable.