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## Westmoreland's War: Reassessing American Strategy in Vietnam, by Gregory Daddis

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the conflict, as opposed to focusing on *how* America fought. Moyn then traces a shift toward the end of the war, particularly Telford Taylor's trenchant criticism of American warfighting practices, which Taylor came to view as unlawful. By contrast, Moyn argues that criticism of our modern conflicts is directed at the conduct of hostilities—torture, rules of engagement, and war crimes. He ascribes this to the end of conscription and the relative inoculation of much of the American public from the effects of our wars abroad, but also to a larger shift in the broad discourse about the law of war in the modern era, in which the means and methods of warfare are much more tightly regulated.

The final essay builds to some extent on Moyn's work, though Larry May's "War Crimes Trials during and after War" is less cogent and ultimately less valuable. May sets out to examine whether war crimes trials are best prosecuted while hostilities are still under way or after hostilities are concluded. Controversially, May argues that war crimes trials during hostilities ought to address *jus ad bellum* matters: once a tribunal finds that unlawful "aggressive war" is being waged, soldiers of that side are on notice that they may be participants in the war crime of aggression. This strikes the reviewer as highly implausible, and for that reason this essay is perhaps the weakest of the five.

Ultimately, *Law and War* is a collection of essays that are largely conceptual and highly normative in their arguments. As such it is undoubtedly a thought-provoking and challenging book, but also one that is not likely to be of immediate use to military lawyers per se. On the other hand, for non-lawyers who ponder the role of law in

war, in policy making, and in shaping and reflecting societal norms, the book offers many valuable insights.

JOHN MERRIAM



Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's War: Reassessing American Strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2015. 320pp. \$36.95

General William Westmoreland, the American commander of Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) from 1964 through 1968, remains one of the most contentious personalities of the Vietnam War, still the subject of intense debate among veterans and historians of the war. Prevalent still is the view that "Westy" could not see the forest for the trees, or vice versa, and disastrously lacked strategic vision and operational creativity owing to his parochial focus on employing Cold War "big unit" doctrine and attrition to combat an insurgent war of unification. The most extreme of such assessments of Westmoreland comes from Lewis Sorley, who in multiple works, notably *Westmoreland: The General Who Lost Vietnam* (Houghton Mifflin, 2011), all but charges Westmoreland with gross negligence.

Gregory Daddis, formerly of the Military History Department at West Point and now associate professor of history at Chapman University, offers what he believes is a more balanced view of this controversial general. In *Westmoreland's War*, Daddis argues that instead of lacking understanding of the conflict in Vietnam and warmly wrapping himself in the comfort of familiar "big unit" doctrine, Westmoreland embraced counterinsurgency approaches

and pacification, strongly supported building up the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), and recognized the importance of establishing the political legitimacy of the government of the Republic of Vietnam among the South Vietnamese people. Far from the bumbling, career-climbing martinet characterized by Sorley, Daddis's Westmoreland at least asserted an intellectual understanding of the challenges of revolutionary warfare. Daddis argues that Westmoreland recognized the need for pacification and other counterinsurgency measures, but failed to articulate his strategy publicly or to his commanders in the field, ending up conducting what was in essence an unwinnable war. Daddis offers a challenging corrective on Westmoreland, but some will find that his ideas fall a bit short. What Westmoreland said and wrote, which Daddis ably reveals through his extensive and valuable archival research, does not connect to what happened on the battlefield. Westmoreland could not militarily rectify the political problems of South Vietnam, and, as both the military and political situations continued to deteriorate, Westmoreland in turn relied more on big-unit search and destroy operations and the massive firepower the American military had at its disposal. The military situation, arguably, dictated that Westmoreland use his limited resources—yes, limited resources—to stem the tide on the military side at the expense of manpower and resources for pacification and other nonkinetic programs. Attrition, whether Westmoreland intended it or not (Daddis argues not), was the public face of his strategic and operational approach throughout his tenure as commander of MACV. If that was indeed the case, then Westmoreland's

failure is in part one of miscommunicating what it was he believed he was doing in South Vietnam, if not disconnecting that belief through intent or ignorance from the military reality his forces faced, especially from 1966 forward.

Vietnam was not Westmoreland's war. Yes, Westmoreland has been and probably will continue to be the face of that conflict. He is, after all, an easy if not agreeable target on which to place a great deal of blame for the American debacle. However, as Daddis correctly points out, the Johnson administration, not Westmoreland, placed limitations on what Westmoreland could do in Vietnam. Political leaders in Washington, like the military leader Westmoreland, eagerly accepted the primacy of American firepower as a military solution to both military and political problems in South Vietnam. Still, one must accept that the officials of the Johnson administration grounded those limitations in deep political earth. At the time, they believed they had good reasons for approaching the conflict the way they did. Ultimately, as Daddis suggests, it did not matter what those in Washington, Saigon, or MACV did. The war in Vietnam was a bad war that American leadership believed had to be fought nonetheless, resulting in defeat and tragedy that still haunts the United States fifty years later.

*Westmoreland's War* is an important book. Scholars of the conflict should read it. Daddis offers thought-provoking arguments that counter the Sorley school on the Westmoreland years of American involvement in Vietnam. Whether one agrees with Daddis (or Sorley for that matter), diligent scholars must consider Daddis's point of view and his interpretation of the archival evidence. Daddis has made a valuable

contribution to the discussion, just as he did with his similarly provocative *No Sure Victory: Measuring U.S. Army Effectiveness and Progress in the Vietnam War* (Oxford, 2011). As for Westmoreland, the debate continues.

WILLIAM THOMAS ALLISON



Hill, Christopher. *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014. 448pp. \$30

An American diplomat for over three decades, Christopher Hill's service took him all over the globe and into some of the most challenging circumstances faced by a member of the Foreign Service. This account of his unique postings during that dynamic time frame is a vivid reminder of how much the world has changed.

In his memoir, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy*, Hill, now a dean at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver, traces his rise in the Department of State in a style that is engaging and lively. His writing is honest and reflective as he recounts his interactions with some of the most distinguished and most notorious individuals to grace the world stage. Over the course of his fast-paced narrative, he doesn't pull any punches in his assessments of people or policy decisions and, most importantly, he shares valuable and candid insights (both successes and failures) and lessons learned over his distinguished career.

Prior to his start in the State Department, Hill spent two years in the Peace Corps. He recalls trying to influence a local credit union election in Cameroon

and failing miserably. He learned the folly of trying to change the behavior of an entire community. He writes, "Years later, in the Middle East, in the Balkans, in Asia, I would see time and time again systemized efforts on the part of the United States to pick winners in situations we understood little about. Like my efforts at the Tole Tea Estate's credit union, they never worked."

Another key theme that emerges is the importance of mentoring and how it enabled Hill to reach his full potential in the State Department. His early assignments under Lawrence Eagleburger (later Secretary of State under George H. W. Bush) in Yugoslavia and Richard Holbrooke (lead negotiator at the Dayton Peace Accords and later ambassador to the UN) at the European Bureau exposed him to two of the best practitioners of statecraft in the U.S. government.

After recounting the great success at Dayton, Hill transitions his narrative to the latter part of his career, in which his record as a Foreign Service officer is a little more mixed. He describes the numerous actors, both domestic (politicians and members of the military) and international, that he encountered during some of his most demanding billets. These postings, as the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, envoy to the North Korean nuclear talks for the Bush administration, and the U.S. ambassador to Iraq for the Obama administration, seem to have left Hill unfulfilled and somewhat frustrated.

He takes both administrations to task for what he believes was an unhealthy blend of partisan politics and lack of a long-term policy vision. Of particular note is Hill's withering critique of Vice