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## The Lessons Of Vietnam

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latter years of the Corps' history, while more familiar to us all, are less impressive. There is a passage on page 179 which discusses the landing on Saipan in the Marianas during World War II that incorrectly identifies the 2d Marine Division as landing on the right or south of the sugar-mill town of Charan Kanoa when, in fact, it was the 4th Marine Division. The 2d Division landed on the left or north of the town. In fairness, however, the familiarity we all have with the events of the recent past has colored somewhat our individual impressions.

Simmons' Acknowledgement and Short Bibliography sections, and the Battle Honors section are most interesting and provide useful information for the curious reader.

Even President Harry S. Truman whose "fondness" for marines is well documented on p. 238 would, I believe, concede that Simmons' history is a good one and a valuable addition to any professional library.

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Thompson, W. Scott and Frizzell, Donaldson D. *The Lessons of Vietnam*. New York: Crane, Russak, 1977, 288pp.

A sensible, informed, sober discussion of the American involvement in Vietnam is all too rare. Many written commentaries have been inspired by outrage, or have given vent to frustration. As a result far too much of the literature on this recent, important and traumatic experience contains only a few nuggets of truth or flashes of insight. Too much of it falls into the category of pure bilge and hogwash, authors of which generally have little competence to analyze and to evaluate their subject matter. Certainly they had no responsibility for implementing the U.S. involvement.

We should be grateful to Professor Thompson and to Air Force Colonel Frizzell for providing this relatively short, but serious discussion of what happened in Vietnam. Based on a conference held at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in the spring of 1974, the papers presented and the comments from the delegates have been edited and arranged in a logical, coherent fashion which elucidates the issues to permit their serious examination. In this way one can see clearly both strengths and weaknesses.

It was indeed a remarkable conference. In addition to distinguished members of the academic community, the 31 participants included several senior former officials: Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, Gen. William Westmoreland, Maj. Gen. Edward Lansdale, Ambassadors Henry Cabot Lodge and Robert Komer, and the Honorable Paul Nitze. Although much of what these participants said is a restatement of previously held positions and at times seems to be a justification of them, it is still valuable as a starting point for further study and analysis.

The sensible organization, excellent editing and helpful comments by the editors directly raise important issues and show quite clearly where equally important issues were ignored. For example, Clausewitz told us that the "... first, grandest and most decisive act of judgment which the Statesman and the General exercises is rightly to understand" the kind of war they are engaging in. Stephen Young, who worked with AID and CORD, pointed out that the Vietnam War was an extension of Vietnamese politics. He noted that while this elemental fact was often expressed, it was seldom used to determine policy and to shape programs. This is a serious accusation which requires further study.

There was a general consensus that national objectives in Vietnam were both ill-defined (General Keegan) and

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negatively stated (Thompson and Frizzell). General Lansdale offered that U.S. leaders made no true political use of American military power. Gen. S.L.A. Marshall pointed out that insufficient force was used to achieve military objectives, a not very subtle point which has frequently been missed by critics and unqualified commentators.

Sir Robert Thompson noted that before Tet 1968 the war was a kind of perpetual motion in which the NVA and the U.S./ARVN forces could have gone on indefinitely, provided the Americans were prepared to do so, because of the failure to attack the VC/NVA rear bases. To him one of America's "truly effective acts" was the incursion into Cambodia in 1970, because it not only closed the port of Kompong Som, but it also showed the enemy that Cambodia was no longer off limits to our side. Sir Robert emphasized that the U.S. objective should have been to attack the enemy's logistics, rather than to defeat his main forces. Interestingly enough, in the same exchange, Ambassador Komer used the analogy of submarines threatening convoys, when he said, "What we never had in this war were submarines on the ground . . . (which) would really have tied the enemy up. It is those 12-man squads capable of moving in those mountain ranges that would have performed like submarines."

The theme of the importance of logistics runs throughout the discussions. Yet it is never adequately addressed, even when Sir Robert Thompson tells of how he was in Washington at the time of the Cambodia incursion and told Henry Kissinger that this act had gained for us at least 1 and maybe 2 years. He quotes Kissinger as saying, "Everyone in the Pentagon, State Department and CIA is telling me it has only gained us three months." To which Sir Robert replied, "That is not possible. Some of this stuff is coming from Europe on Russian and other ships: they cannot possibly in that time frame

do a switch of supplies and beef up the Ho Chi Minh Trail to put all that stuff down the Trail within a matter of just 3 months."

The effect of logistics on the war is largely an unexplored area, despite the report of the Joint Logistics Review Board. It is significant that by skirting and rarely addressing this point the conference participants—both academics and officials—show a serious lacunae in our general understanding of this particular war and in a larger sense in what thoughtful, responsible individuals think is important in order to understand war.

The making of day-to-day tactical decisions by civilians in Washington at least during the Rolling Thunder campaign was an understandably irksome fact of life for many senior officers in the chain of command who were bypassed. Colonel Frizzell quite properly discusses command/control arrangements. Inexplicably he refers to a "new management concept" which delegated to senior officers in the field the authority to make important day-to-day decisions. The use of the phrase "new management concept" is not only unfortunate, it is wrong. Colonel Frizzell is referring to a restoration of the integrity of the chain of command, and of command itself, in which decisions are made at the appropriate levels, subject, of course, to guidance from higher authority.

If our experience in Vietnam has demonstrated anything, it is that the President and the Secretary of Defense are unable over a long period to make day-to-day tactical decisions. Their province is policy guidance; determination of the desired effect of the tactical actions they initiate; and overall responsibility for the direction of the war. Subordinate officers in the chain of command should make tactical decisions, if only because they are closer to the scene and they do not have the additional burdens of the highest offices.

Robert Pfaltzgraff's summary is a concise and masterful statement of the "lessons learned":

- "The need for a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between military power and the development of an adequate indigenous political base."

- "The need to understand the close relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy."

- "The existence of gaps in historical experience and culture requires a broadly based understanding of the country in which military operations are conducted. . . ."

- "The need for a more accurate assessment of the military requirements for effective conduct of operations."

- The need to analyze goals and objectives more carefully.

- The need to establish workable and appropriate command/control relationships in an age of instantaneous communications and the possibility of nuclear conflict.

The great danger of our unpleasant and largely unsuccessful involvement in Vietnam is that we—both civilians and military—will put it behind us and ignore it. We will do this at our peril. Serious, concentrated study is required. To be productive and valuable, this should be free from rancor and emotion. Happily, a significant and important start has been made in this direction.

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"Non-atomic games" is a term used for mass games that are mathematically represented by utilizing a continuum of players. This highly scientific volume is concerned with the development of a value theory for such games, concentrating on the processes of coalition-forming and payoff distribution. The text consists of mathematical propositions and formulae.

Barraclough, Geoffrey. *The Crucible of Europe; the Ninth and Tenth Centuries in European History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976. 180pp. \$14.95

The Carolingian Empire, which arose after the fall of Rome, while it had serious systemic flaws that made its rapid demise inevitable, still laid the governmental and institutional bases for the subsequent states of France, Germany, and Italy. These three nations are treated, and there is a chapter on the strong fundamental Anglo-Saxon achievement in England—a contrast to the ephemeral establishments of the successors to the Carolingian Empire.