

Kontum, for example, was not the only significant action of the Easter Invasion of 1972; the defenses of Hue and An Loc were equally critical. Also, from Vann's perspective (and Sheehan's), Westmoreland receives harsh treatment. While the failings of "Westy's" strategy are easy to see at this level, at the theatre level this clarity gets confused by the ambiguities brought on by the war's larger crosscurrents: a national vs. an international war, a revolutionary vs. an inter-state war, and a guerrilla vs. a conventional war. Westmoreland's *A Soldier Reports* (1976) is very tightly reasoned and, given the constraints under which he had to operate, at the very least, he did not disgrace himself—something that cannot be said for some of the commanders in the Korean War. Finally, there is something about the book's title that makes Sheehan, like Vann, manipulative. Sheehan quotes Vann as saying that he was "a bright shining lie." Vann clearly meant this only about how he was forced to play his role as an optimistic advisor, not about his feelings for the war itself, a cause in which he passionately believed. Sheehan, however, has taken this as a metaphor for *his* own beliefs about the war, implicitly criticizing Vann for failing to share the author's wisdom. Despite the brilliance of Sheehan's book, it is still by no means clear that Vann was wrong about the war, nor is it completely fair for Sheehan to use Vann to render a general indictment of it.

Nevertheless, Sheehan's book is a landmark contribution to an understanding of the Vietnam War. He has gathered its complexity and played it across the career of a truly remarkable American, John Paul Vann, part devil and part hero. In so doing, Sheehan has combined scholarly insight with vivid journalism to produce a true drama. Whether or not the Vietnam War was "a bright shining lie," as Michael Herr in *Dispatches*, (1978) would say, Sheehan's work has hit us with an "illumination round" that will light us into the next century.

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Shafer, D. Michael. *Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of US Counter-Insurgency Policy*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Professor Shafer, a political scientist at Rutgers University, travels familiar ground in his attempt to explicate fundamental failures of American policy definition and execution during the Vietnam War. The fact that the ground is quite familiar to students of that unhappy conflict in no way renders irrelevant this attempt to place history in the matrix of political science.

The author presents several different models which might serve to provide general explanation for the manner in which policy decisions were made as well as the inherent causes of failure. These include a

rational actor model, a bureaucratic dynamic model, and an individual behavior model among others. After establishing the spectrum of possible explanations, Professor Shafer investigates four case studies so as to test the general validity of each of the proposed models. The four case studies are: the French wars in Indochina and Algeria and the American involvements in the Greek Civil War, the Huk Insurrection, and the Vietnamese insurgency. The selection of the French experience in Algeria represents an interesting but not necessarily illustrative choice. While Shafer maintains that the French Algerian War met his several criteria better than a major alternative, the Malayan Emergency, the choice remains poor given the unique internal dynamics within the French Army High Command in the wake of the Indochinese debacle, the complicating presence of the Pied Noire in Algeria, and the involuted character of the war, which included military coup attempts against the French civilian government. Indeed, given the powerful effect which the British experience in Malaya had upon key players in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations as well as the relevance of the Emergency to one of Shafer's major conclusions, his exclusion of that conflict from the case study portfolio seems both mystifying and erosive of his thesis.

There is no doubt that the American experience in both the Greek Civil War and the Huk Insurrection were appropriate case studies; it is unfortunate that Shafer does not trace the critical incorrect lessons learned and correct lessons left unlearned which served to influence profoundly both American military counterinsurgency doctrine and the general policy community view of the nature and character of insurgency which continued from Truman through Johnson.

Shafer's view of the Vietnam conflict during its insurgent phase (1956-1965) constitutes an accurate, if unremarkable evaluation which correctly assesses the ideological astigmatism of three succeeding administrations as well as the willingness of American policy makers to impute to allies and adversaries alike a hierarchy of priorities and needs identical to those which existed in Washington. The combination of ideology and mirror imaging played an important part in the formulation of American policy and the development of mechanisms by which this policy was to be executed. Shafer's emphasis upon this synergy is well taken but incomplete. Unfortunately left out in the analytical cold were such critical loops as that which existed between military doctrine and policy goals and the flow of accurate intelligence estimates into inaccurate decisions. Had these loops been included, Shafer's analyses and conclusions would have been greatly buttressed.

Not surprisingly, Shafer concludes that American policy failed because of an American addiction to a rational actor theory of governmental behavior which assumed that Hanoi operated upon a Western calculus of rewards and punishment. He also concludes that Washington was locked in an endless search for a chimera, a single general solution to the challenge of insurgency. These conclusions as well as his underscoring of the unfortunate reality that the US lacked effective and employable leverage upon the various Saigon regimes are correct and

trenchant. All these points are sound and well taken; it is regrettable that the combination of questionable case selection and the overlooking of salient aspects of the decision-making process conspire to attenuate their force.

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Coleman, J.D. *Pleiku: The Dawn of Helicopter Warfare in Vietnam*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.

J.D. Coleman's book on the Pleiku campaign is an exceptionally well done narrative on a controversial and important subject. Those interested in the operational history of the Vietnam War, and in the air assault concept, should make every effort to read this book.

Narrative is Coleman's strong suit. The story he tells of the 1st Cavalry Division's battles against three regiments of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) holds the reader's interest throughout. We get the early story (mid 1950s-mid 1960s) of the air assault concept and how a small band of crusaders worked hard, and against substantial opposition both in and outside of the Army, to develop and have the Army accept the concept of air assault warfare. The hope of this group, which included the division's first commander, Major General Harry Kinnard, was that air assault warfare would liberate soldiers from the "tyranny of terrain." With the more powerful and maneuverable helicopters of the later 1950s and the new concepts which came out of this new technology everything, at least potentially, changed. The new found mobility theoretically allowed units to disperse and concentrate on the battlefield, to move and attack the enemy from behind or on his flanks, with astonishing rapidity. The concrete manifestation of the air assault concept's acceptance was of course the approximately 430 helicopters of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), with troops and pilots trained and prepared to implement the concept. Kinnard and other proponents of airmobile operations believed that the sky troopers—in their helicopter transports, protected by helicopter gunships—could jump over, as Superman's admirers would have put it, tall mountains in a single bound.

After describing the division (its structure and how it was to function), and its deployment to and initial operations in the northern provinces of South Vietnam (July-October 1965), Coleman launches into the story of the Pleiku campaign itself. He gives the reader a clear picture of the enemy, his strengths and weaknesses, his expectations from action in the Central Highlands, and then plunges the reader into action. We are marched smartly through the siege of the Plei Me Special Forces camp (19 October), the cavalry division's role in lifting that siege, it subsequent