

simply because they were "bewildered." The U.S. Army "killed impersonally with bombs, shells, rockets, and white phosphorous, and napalm...following the normal pattern of American military conduct." Sheehan does have the minor virtue of consistency in his ideological outlook. For him the Chinese communists were nothing of the kind. They simply wished to "win China independence and freedom from foreign exploitation and to build their country into a modern world." (Sheehan will never win any prizes for writing "lean, precise, prose.")

The "epic" ends in 1972, the year of John Paul Vann's death. There is nothing — literally nothing — on the subsequent final armored assault by North Vietnam that toppled the Republic of Vietnam, and, of course, nothing on the most eloquent, continuing refutation of Sheehan's whole misbegotten thesis: the boat people.

Sheehan has little to say about U.S. Army Special Forces, which is understandable, since here was a U.S. Army success story that he doesn't want to hear about.

Potential readers interested in the history of our Vietnam war should save their money; they could learn as much about the American Civil War by reading *Gone With The Wind*.

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On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War. By Col. Harry G. Summers Jr. Novato Calif.: Presidio Press, 1982. ISBN 0-89141-156-9. 225 pages. \$12.95.

Colonel Harry Summers has written a concise and insightful analysis of what was wrong with America's prosecution of the war in Vietnam.

Using Carl Von Clausewitz's, *Vom Kriege*, (On War), as a framework for his examination, he takes the position that the United States uselessly directed the preponderance of its war-fighting efforts against the Viet

Cong, following the Army's counter-insurgency doctrine of the day. We also failed as a nation to comprehend the true nature of strategic offense and defense, Summers says, and because of these twin blunders, we lost the war in Vietnam.

Using Clausewitz's concept of "center of gravity," Summers argues that the war was won not by the Viet Cong, but the North Vietnamese Regular Army. He contends that the Military Assistance Command - Vietnam squandered valuable ground combat troop strength against the elusive Cong, while the true threat, or the real center of gravity, was always the NVA.

Summers produces a scathing evaluation of our nation's foreign-policy-making apparatus, which despite successive administrations failed time and again to establish an overall strategic objective. Without a well-defined national strategic objective, Summers says, the conflict could not be won, since military strategy is based on political objective. U.S. political objectives changed with administrations and were always held hostage to domestic concerns and public opinion.

The statistical approach to war-fighting typified by former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara,

Summers says, failed to provide leadership where it was most needed, at the top. General Giap, leader of the NVA, understood what we did not: that the war in Vietnam would be won by maintaining a strategic defensive action designed to wear down the Americans, who were looking for a quick victory. The North Vietnamese won the psychological war waged in the hearts and minds of Americans who watched their evening news programs with horror during the Tet '68 offensive.

The author's arguments are powerful in their simplicity. He conveys his thoughts with remarkable clarity, and his writing style is brief and to the point.

Summers' book is written from a soldier's perspective, and every soldier, regardless of rank, could benefit from taking the time to attempt an understanding of our nation's worst political debacle of this half-century. But the work is not written only for soldiers; *On Strategy* may be much more useful reading to our elected leadership. It provides a superb vehicle by which politicians can begin to come to terms with the military as an instrument of national will. As Clausewitz pointed out, "War is politics by other means." Without question, Summers has created a document that will endure.

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