

Hanson next follows the implementation of this plan in case studies of one infantry regiment from each of the four divisions in the Eighth Army: the 19th Infantry, the 27th Infantry, the 31st Infantry, and the 8th Cavalry. The case studies, which make good use of the quarterly combat effectiveness reports, provide strong support for his thesis. There are detailed descriptions of regimental officers working hard to improve readiness and of how the obstacles outlined earlier impeded their efforts. The author, however, does not explain why he selected these regiments. Most likely the 27th Infantry was selected because it was widely seen as the best regiment in Korea during the summer of 1950. If so, a better choice would have been to contrast this regiment with the 34th Infantry, 24th Infantry Division, rather than the 19th Infantry. The 34th Infantry was widely seen as the worst white regiment during this same period and its performance was considered so poor that the Eighth Army inactivated the regiment and replaced it in the division with the separate 5th Regimental Combat Team.

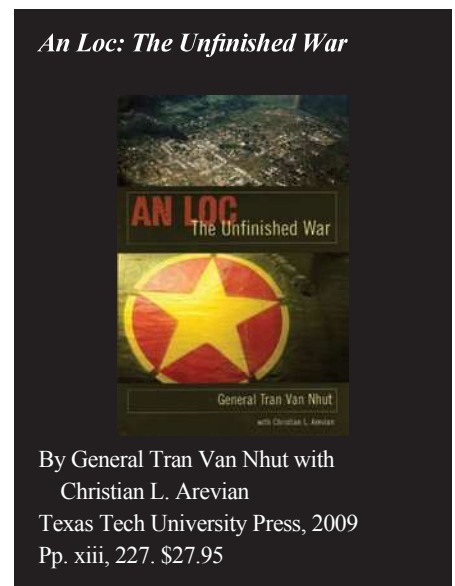
Three of the case studies end with the regiment alerted for deployment to Korea, yet the one for the 31st Infantry concludes with a brief discussion of the regiment's first combat during the Inch'on-Seoul campaign. Hanson does not explain this choice. Perhaps it is because the 31st, like the other 7th Infantry Division regiments, was ripped apart to provide fillers for the other three divisions as they deployed and then was reconstituted in Japan with replacements from the United States and thousands of impressed Korean civilians. Hanson credits the regiment's success in this campaign to the core of officers left in the regiment who had participated in Walker's training program.

Still, while the intent of the book is to counter the Fehrenbach School and not to analyze the combat performance of the Eighth Army during the summer of 1950, the

author provides an incomplete argument by following one regiment into its first battle but not the other three. Including a discussion of the other regiments' first combat actions also would have linked this book with another important revisionist work, Richard E. Wiersema's 1997 School of Advanced Military Studies monograph, "No More Bad Force Myths: A Tactical Study of Regimental Combat in Korea," which argued that the reverses in the summer of 1950 "resulted from trained professionals in senior leadership positions making decisions based on arrogant assumptions and a failure to understand their own forces or those of the enemy" (p. 46).

Those battles during the summer of 1950 came in a war neither the Eighth Army nor the rest of America had expected to fight. By challenging conventional wisdom with detailed research, Thomas Hanson's *Combat Ready?* is revisionism of the best sort, and he convincingly discredits arguments blaming the disappointments of this unexpected war's first few months on soldiers who failed to take their duties seriously. This is an important addition to the historiography of the U.S. Army and the Korean War and to any discussion about how to create units ready for combat.

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Review by Nathaniel L. Moir

An Loc: The Unfinished War is a well-written account of the Vietnam War that focuses on the 1972 Easter Offensive. The author, General Tran Van Nhut, a former South Vietnamese Marine officer (1954–1964) and Army officer (1964–1975), provides both an interesting and informative perspective on the conflict without revisionism or rancor. Significantly, the work sheds light on the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) as a fighting force and the circumstances under which it eventually operated independent of U.S. forces through the “Vietnamization” of the war.

General Van Nhut, with Christian L. Arevian, does not offer an apologist treatise for ARVN, an organization often discussed derisively in some biographical and historical accounts of the war. Rather, he examines factors, both political and military, that led to the North Vietnamese victory. The eventual outcome of the Vietnam War was partially the result of the maelstrom of South Vietnamese politics, the complexities of Vietnamization (again, both political and military), and the U.S. government's “limited war” approach that imposed political constraints on execution of military objectives. These challenges are detailed chronologically through an important point of view, that

of an ARVN officer. Moreover, he provides a frame of reference for the battle of An Loc in early 1972 and helps describe how Vietnamization increasingly left the South Vietnamese to fend for themselves against the North Vietnamese People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and an array of Viet Cong forces as the United States drew down its ground troops and the provision of airpower.

The first third of the book details the progression of General Van Nhut's military career beginning in 1954 after the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu. Interestingly, the general had the opportunity to attend both the United States Marine Corps basic course in 1958 and the Marine command and staff course at Quantico in 1961. Technically precise task organizations and descriptions of tactical and operational maneuvers that are also intertwined with easy-to-read prose reflect General Van Nhut's solid tactical training and background. Further, there are a number of interesting anecdotes that describe South Vietnamese forces' operations against the Binh Xuyen crime syndicate in the Rung Sat swamps southeast of Saigon (detailed in Chapter 3, "Early Assignments"), as well as fighting with the Hao Hoa and Cao Dai religious sects. Chapter 3 provides a firsthand description of the Training Relations and Instruction Mission (TRIM) established by the United States in 1955 as a joint Franco-American effort to train the South Vietnamese. Later in the chapter, insight into the forced implementation and eventual failure of the Agrovillage Program (later renamed the Strategic Hamlet Program) is provided. These all too briefly covered subjects are a highlight for readers wanting to learn more about South Vietnam's armed forces prior to the introduction of conventional U.S. military forces in Southeast Asia in 1965.

After the first three chapters, General Van Nhut describes his participation in the coup against President Ngo Dinh Diem as a Viet-

namese Marine officer. Due to his popularity with his troops and his participation in the coup, General Van Nhut, a field grade officer at the time, was later transferred to the South Vietnamese Army. Ostensibly, this was done to preempt any cabals from forming that might threaten the oligarchy that deposed Diem. What follows are descriptions of the political paranoia that gripped the weak governments struggling to gain legitimacy in South Vietnam. In this regard *An Loc: The Unfinished War* is not for novice students of the Vietnam War, although historians will find much of interest—especially the explication of the 1972 Easter Offensive, the primary focus of the book.

With Vietnamization in full swing, the 1972 Easter Offensive was a tactical victory for the South Vietnamese military, but the offensive also indicated the strength of the PAVN and the resiliency of Viet Cong forces (despite losses during Tet in 1968). Although Vietnamization was a period during which South Vietnamese forces still received support from the United States and other allies, they received reduced assistance that continually diminished in power and consistency. General Van Nhut vividly describes sagging South Vietnamese morale as air strikes against known PAVN forces decreased, were turned off and on again (depending on the status of negotiations), and then finally halted. Regarding support for the South Vietnamese military, he suggests that Vietnamization should have begun in 1960 in order to achieve an independent South Vietnam strong enough to withstand North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces. It is certainly arguable that the viability of Vietnamization would have been much greater had it been better planned and given more time; similar arguments have been made regarding the coordination of other programs, such as the pacification program, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS), that was not implemented fully until

1968. Of course, the corruption and unsustainable milieu of South Vietnamese politics, as the author notes, were primary obstacles to more effective courses of action.

While General Van Nhut acknowledges ARVN failures, such as Ap Bac in January 1963, he also discusses the codependent relationship that U.S. forces arguably fostered, intentional or not, as they took over the conflict as their own in 1965. The author would seem to agree with T. E. Lawrence's maxim that, to paraphrase, "the Host Nation doing something tolerably well is better than outside forces doing it for them." If Vietnamization had begun in earnest as early as 1960, the war might, of course, have turned out differently. However, when the reader steps back and assesses the politically confused state(s) of U.S. foreign policy at the time, which arguably drove the implementation of Vietnamization, there is much to reconsider for those who would blame or dismiss ARVN patriotism and capability.

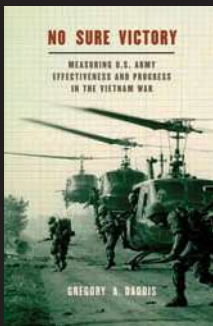
After the tactical success of An Loc, on which the 1972 Easter Offensive was centered (along with Binh Long Province to the northeast of Saigon), the author was promoted to commander of the ARVN 2d Division. The book does not cover the remainder of 1972 or the years of 1973 and 1974 in much detail but rather moves on to the critical early months of 1975. At that point, Van Nhut focuses on events that led to the final collapse of South Vietnam on 29 April 1975, as ARVN units eventually dissolved when faced by PAVN forces' occupation of Saigon.

Historians and students of the Vietnam War will benefit from reading *An Loc: The Unfinished War*. The perspectives offered on the formation of South Vietnamese forces after the 1954 Geneva conference, the 1963 coup, and the 1972 Easter Offensive (with its focus on An Loc), as well as the descriptions of how Vietnamization affected the overall outcome, are worthwhile and contribute to the body of literature on this still controversial war.

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No Sure Victory: Measuring U.S. Army Effectiveness and Progress in the Vietnam War



By Gregory A. Daddis
Oxford University Press, 2011
Pp. xix, 334. \$34.95

Review by Andrew J. Birtle

One of the most perplexing aspects of counterinsurgency warfare is this: how does one know if one is winning in a war without fronts, where the enemy is both everywhere and nowhere, and where the intangible can be as influential as the tangible?

In *No Sure Victory*, Army Col. and West Point professor Gregory A. Daddis examines “how the U.S. Army component of the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam assessed its progress and effectiveness” during the Vietnam War (p. 17). Ultimately, the search for viable metrics proved stillborn, as inexperience with counterinsurgency warfare, institutional biases, muddled

strategic thought, an obsession with statistics, false reporting, overoptimism, bureaucratic inertia, and disingenuous posturing by soldiers and politicians alike doomed efforts to produce realistic appraisals. The consequences, he argues, were catastrophic—misplaced efforts and the projection of an unjustifiably rosy depiction of progress that, when exposed by the 1968 Tet offensive, led to a public backlash that undermined U.S. war efforts.

The author points to some specific weaknesses in the system of metrics used in Vietnam. First, the system focused on data collection rather than analysis. The sheer volume and variety of information collected overwhelmed efforts to make sense of it. By measuring everything, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), in effect measured nothing. Second, the author indicates that soldiers consistently confused operational effectiveness with progress. The two were not equivalent, Daddis says, for killing did not necessarily translate into winning. Third, the book demonstrates that all U.S. military chiefs in Vietnam, from Lt. Gen. Lionel C. McGarr to General Creighton W. Abrams, wrestled with the exact same problems of measurement and ultimately employed the same (misguided) solutions. Of particular note in this regard, Daddis argues that there was no appreciable difference between Generals William C. Westmoreland’s and Abrams’ systems of metrics. Both failed to produce meaningful measures of progress.

No Sure Victory is well researched, nicely organized, and lucidly written. The author backs his arguments with a judicious use of quotations and copious footnotes, and he frequently provides balance by explaining differing points of view. In short, this is a book worthy of serious consideration.

Of course no book pleases every reader 100 percent. There are a few points of interpretation where this reviewer differs with the author, but the discussion is going to focus on some broader, structural concerns.

First, *No Sure Victory* offers a macro view of the subject of metrics in Vietnam. It does not delve into the details of various programs, nor does it cover the important advisory system. Rather, it summarizes the nature of some of the metrics programs and places them into the larger context of the war. How the metrics were used, or abused, in portraying the war to the American public is really the heart of the book. This is an understandable approach, and many will appreciate Daddis’ interweaving of the two narratives—the evolution of the war and the evolution of efforts to gauge it. But the trade-off here is a lack of information on the systems themselves. Readers seeking details about the Pacification Attitude Analysis System and the results it produced will not find them here, nor will they find in-depth examinations of many of the other measurement systems used during the war.

A more troubling issue concerns the author’s tendency to blame MACV—which readers may easily confuse with “the Army” as the author tends to use the terms interchangeably—for deficiencies in measuring progress. In fact, the book wanders far from its declared narrow focus on “the Army component” of MACV. Many of the programs Daddis criticizes were not the exclusive provenance of “the Army component.” Many were either requested, designed, or imposed by the Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, the White House, or civilian think tanks employed thereby—but not, to this reviewer’s knowledge, by the Department of the Army. Daddis mentions only briefly Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara’s penchant for numbers and systems analysis. Similarly, though he cites criticisms of MACV’s metrics by such non-Army luminaries as Thomas Thayer, Chester L. Cooper, and the RAND Corporation, he fails to mention that these same critics often helped build the very systems they subsequently would criticize. Consequently, the book leaves the