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# The Art of Insurgency: American Military Policy and the Failure of Strategy in Southeast Asia

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Hamilton, Donald W. *The Art of Insurgency: American Military Policy and the Failure of Strategy in Southeast Asia*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998. 216pp. \$55

Donald Hamilton has written a textbook about the antecedents to, and the U.S. experience in, Vietnam. The reader should not be led astray by the title. The real subject of the book is the subtitle, *American Military Policy and the Failure of Strategy in Southeast Asia*.

Hamilton provides interesting historical insights into the American Vietnam experience. He also looks at the subject of insurgency with fresh eyes. The merger of Vietnam and insurgency in this book rekindles research that was done in the 1960s and 1970s about what insurgency really is. Readers primarily interested in learning more about the U.S. experience in Vietnam can safely skip over the insurgency discussion and proceed directly to the post-World War II material. Those interested in insurgency theory can profitably compare Hamilton's explanation of it to other attempts with which they might be familiar.

Still, Hamilton comes up short in two ways. The first is his insistence that insurgency is more a form of war than politics, and the second is his explanation, which incompletely reconstructs the work of Roger Darling ("A New Conceptual Scheme for Analyzing Insurgency," *Military Review*, February 1974). Specifically, Hamilton's conflict model portrays a questionable dichotomy. He correctly sets insurgency apart from civil war and, incorrectly, from revolution. He portrays it as both indigenous and nonindigenous, and then

he dichotomizes insurgency as transforming into civil war if indigenous, and into revolution if nonindigenous. It is his portrayal of revolution, and by extension insurgency, as non-indigenous that brings into question the definitions used in his theoretical explanation.

That aside, Hamilton provides unique insights concerning Vietnam that are revealing, at least to this reviewer—Hamilton's discussion of the "domino theory" in particular. Readers interested in the historical antecedents of U.S. involvement in Vietnam will profit from Hamilton's research. Although he explains that his work "is not comprehensive enough" to ensure that the lessons of American involvement will positively affect global security policy in the future, it is illuminating enough to help policy makers understand some very painful history.

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Whitcomb, Darrel D. *The Rescue of BAT 21*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1998. 164pp. \$27.95

In March 1972, American participation in the Vietnam War was winding down. The policy of Vietnamization had been in effect for three years, and the vast majority of U.S. ground forces had been withdrawn. Covering that withdrawal were hundreds of American aircraft, located on carriers in the South China Sea and at bases in Vietnam and Thailand. On 1 April things changed dramatically, when the North Vietnamese launched a massive