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The Certain Trumpet: Maxwell Taylor & the American Experience in Vietnam

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aspirations in the region, with particular emphasis on critiquing the antinuclear policies of the country's fourth Labour government.

The only complaint this reviewer has regarding this work is that it gives short shrift to the policies of France. France maintains possession of French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and the Wallis and Futuna islands, in addition to continuing to test nuclear devices in French Polynesia. Nuclear testing, the residual French territorial presence, and, until recently, uncharacteristically poor French diplomatic style, have made France very unpopular in the South Pacific. While almost all of the authors in this work deal with France's continued presence in and policies toward the region, there is no single comprehensive assessment of France in the South Pacific. Given the accommodating regional policy adopted by French prime minister Michel Rocard, an assessment of the chances that Paris can succeed in changing its heretofore badly tarnished image in the South Pacific would have been welcomed.

Fortunately, the publishers of this work state in the introduction that a second volume of essays is to appear in the future, which I hope will include essays on France and other important subjects. If the quality of the essays in the second volume equals those in this one, the two volumes together will surely constitute a major contribution to the understanding of this little-known but increasingly important region.

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Kinnard, Douglas. *The Certain Trumpet: Maxwell Taylor & the American Experience in Vietnam*. Washington, D.C.: Brassey's (US), 1991. 252pp. \$22.95

Douglas Kinnard, author of this truncated biography of the late General Maxwell Taylor, is a retired army brigadier who has in subsequent years made a distinguished second career as an academician at the University of Vermont and elsewhere. He now teaches at the National Defense University. Kinnard is the author of four previous books, including a study of President Eisenhower's management of strategy and, most notably, of a courageous and insightful analysis of Vietnam war policy based on a survey of army general officers who commanded there. That work, entitled *The War Managers*, which has just been republished in a Da Capo paperback edition, is required reading for anyone interested in professionalism and institutional ethics.

In *The Certain Trumpet* Kinnard concentrates on Maxwell Taylor's involvement in and impact on Vietnam-era policies, but precedes that analysis with enough material on Taylor's earlier life and career to demonstrate a continuum of behavior and values. This is important because in the portrait that emerges Taylor is seen as much less effective, less admirable, and less deserving of the high

posts and honors accorded him than his reputation would suggest.

Taylor emerged from World War II with a shining image as a young airborne division commander. But, Kinnard demonstrates, Taylor really did not have much stomach for jumping out of airplanes, and indeed may have made as few as three jumps in his entire career. Moreover he missed the biggest and most important battle his division, the 101st Airborne, fought during the entire war. Taylor was on temporary duty in the United States during the Battle of the Bulge, and his division artillery commander therefore led the heroic defense of Bastogne. After Taylor's return, Kinnard observes, "the remainder of the war was fairly routine for him and for the division."

Also apparent as early as World War II was a pervasive aspect of Taylor's personality, what Kinnard calls his "shadowy side," manifested in coolness and "that ever so delicate psychological distance" he maintained in his dealings with others. There is little of human warmth in the portrait of Taylor drawn by Kinnard, who had the advantage of knowing him personally.

Nevertheless, Taylor rose to the top of his profession, serving a difficult and frustrating tour as Army Chief of Staff during the Eisenhower years. Following retirement, Taylor wrote a bitter book denouncing Ike's emphasis on nuclear weaponry and consequent neglect of general purpose forces. Taylor is often characterized as a "soldier-scholar," yet

Kinnard—consistent in his revisionist portrayal of Taylor—calls this, Taylor's most influential book, "jargonistic and repetitive and resembling a series of Army briefing papers."

Then came Vietnam. Taylor, says Kinnard, "served longer and in more diverse ways than any other in the civil-military interface of the Vietnam period." This service included a stint as military representative of the president under John Kennedy, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam, and White House counsellor.

Called back from civil life by President Kennedy in 1961, Taylor was established in the White House as military representative. There, says Kinnard, and in his next post as JCS chairman, Taylor "was, as always, adaptable to his situation." He moved cautiously, offered advice only when asked, and did not seek to expand his portfolio.

The central issue of Taylor's role in the Vietnam era is probably his influence on decisions to deploy successive increments of U.S. troops. Kinnard observes that Taylor "remained an unregenerate hawk to the end." But the evidence on which he bases this summary judgment is mixed. Early on, Kinnard has Taylor in favor of bombing North Vietnam, arguing that "NVN [North Vietnam] is extremely vulnerable to conventional bombing, a weakness that should be exploited diplomatically in convincing Hanoi to lay off SVN [South Vietnam]." At a later point, however, he quotes minutes of a

White House meeting which note that "General Taylor commented that he would not be associated with any program which included commitment of U.S. Armed Forces." That is, of course, hardly the hawkish view. Still later, when Taylor was American ambassador in Saigon, he opposed introduction of U.S. combat troops, something Westmoreland was pushing for. Westmoreland won despite the comprehensive authority Taylor had been given in his ambassadorial instructions, terms of reference he himself had drafted.

Kinnard observes that "this momentous defeat finished the fiction of the all-powerful ambassador," and indeed concludes that Taylor "never did attempt to play that role." Kinnard states that back in Washington as a White House counselor, and in the twilight of his public career, Taylor became "a kind of publicist for a president trying to sell the public on the American effort in Vietnam."

Taylor had another largely unremarked but hugely significant impact on events in Vietnam, since—as Kinnard notes—it was he who was largely responsible for the choice of both General Paul Harkins and then, as his successor, General William Westmoreland as U.S. commander in Vietnam. Those were fateful choices, especially given the potential alternatives. In the latter case for example, those also considered included Generals Harold K. Johnson, Bruce Palmer, Jr., and Westmoreland's eventual successor, Creighton Abrams.

Given all of this, and there is much more than can be covered here, the only puzzle is why the author chose to call his book *The Certain Trumpet*. It is, of course, a play on the title of Taylor's own work, *The Uncertain Trumpet*. But it suggests that Kinnard found Taylor, unlike the Eisenhower described in Taylor's policy critique, a sound and admirable example. Yet such a notion is undercut on virtually every page.

Douglas Kinnard's book is both interesting and insightful, forming a useful supplement (and in many respects a counterpoise) to John Taylor's recent book about his father. What remains to be seen is which more nearly approximates history's longer-term judgment of Taylor's importance and reputation.

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Kunz, Diane B. *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1991. 295pp. \$39.95

Diane Kunz has written an interesting book. The Suez crisis exposed several threadbare fictions concerning relative national strength in the post-1945 world and confirmed the bipolar interregnum between the old (pre-1939) and the "new world order."

The crisis was precipitated in July 1956 when Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal following the collapse of efforts to secure Western funding for the Aswan Dam. Following unsuccessful diplomatic efforts to resolve