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## Consequences of Failure

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rational, and, hopefully, successful national strategy can be devised and executed.

The author is quite correct when he says, "Strategy formulation always has been and always will be an art as well as a science."

B.M. SIMPSON, III  
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy

Corson, William R. *Consequences of Failure*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1974. 215p.

*Consequences of Failure* is an echo of the aftermath of the Vietnam war. William Corson has successfully avoided a head-on confrontation with the open question of why we failed and instead has dealt with what war-related problems have been created for various segments of our national life.

A writer sympathetic to the traumatic nature of such affairs, the first part of Corson's book seeks to soothe the attendant bitterness, much like a doctor trying to comfort a nervous and confused patient. He does this by removing the immediate cause of ill feeling, the particulars of Vietnam. He instead concentrates on the failures of other great powers: Rome, Imperial Spain, and England in the American colonies and the Irish Revolution of 1916-22. He makes it clear to the reader that the United States is not the first nation to suffer such a failure and that when put in the proper perspective, failure may not be as disastrous as first appears.

Corson has also used the historical vehicle both to illustrate particular points that he later attributes to the American scene and to create possible American scenarios. For example, the shoddy treatment received by British troops after their failure in the Hundred Years' War and the unwillingness of the British Government to confront certain war-related problems within the "system" created the roots of an unwieldy

social problem that ultimately led to the Wars of the Roses—civil war. The warning to America, though never openly stated, is clearly implied.

The second part of Corson's book concentrates on the specific problems that have been created by Vietnam for the American military, economy, and public. The military, as a microcosm of society and an area in which Mr. Corson has considerable personal experience, is singled out for particular attention. His observations are far from flattering. An ever-expanding drug abuse problem, dissent and disillusionment over the nature of America's role and the methods used to carry out that role, the breakdown of civilian and military leadership, and the accelerated level of racial tension are all discussed individually and are directly related to the Vietnamese failure.

Just as every great success must have its heroes, so a failure must have its villains. *Consequences of Failure* leaves little doubt as to the identity of this unfortunate group. It consists of those who saw the possibility of failure and, either through knavery or self-delusion, sought to cover it up and those who attempted to substitute artificial success for reality by using such things as the "body count" for a yardstick. Corson does not limit membership in this group to the ones who "perpetuated" the war, but includes those who should have acted far sooner to reduce the problems of drug abuse and racial conflict. Mostly through the efforts of these people to obscure or misrepresent their own non-performance, Corson feels the great majority of public confidence in government was replaced by cynicism.

The book's conclusion reflects an equally pessimistic note. Recognizing a tendency to forget Vietnam that has been accelerated by the preoccupation with Watergate, Corson has described the reaction of American society to the phenomenon of failure as similar to that of a man with all the warning signals of cancer but who refuses to see a doctor

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for fear of confirming what he already knows. In the case of American society going to see a doctor acknowledges the fact that we have failed, but it also represents the first step toward recovery. Clearly the Nation cannot ignore failure, and the sooner remedial action is begun the better. What were comfortable and familiar ways ultimately led to disaster, and if we are to profit from the experience, we must be willing to make the sacrifices necessary to repair the great rifts in our national fabric.

Mr. Corson has taken upon himself an incredibly broad topic and has dealt with it in somewhat less than 200 pages. Needless to say, many of his observations and conclusions are general and a bit simplistic, but his basic point is well taken. A national failure shapes policy just as surely as does success, and future decisions must be made with that in mind. If we are to proceed in any sort of viable manner, we must first repair the damage. *Consequences of Failure* is a good starting point in the assessment of what choices are available for that repair.

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Heggy, Alf A. *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria*. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1972. 327p.

Dr. Alf A. Heggy, an associate professor of history at the University of Georgia, has written a perceptive, scholarly, and timely study of the Algerian nationalist rebellion during the 1954-1958 period. This first-rate study, financed in part by the Army Research Office in Durham, N.C., is of great value to social scientists, professional military personnel, lay readers, and scholars alike. The book, divided into 16 chapters, complete with 10 charts, 8 maps, a glossary of French and Arabic terms, a list of abbreviations for French terms,

12 pages of bibliography, 39 pages of footnotes, and an index, can be used equally well as a reference work on insurgency and counterinsurgency. Dr. Heggy's study is made especially impressive by his utilization of unpublished documents, his fastidious documentation and footnoting, and his personal experience in Algeria. The son of a missionary who served in Algeria for 30 years, Dr. Heggy received some of his education in France and returned to Algeria during his school vacations. His understanding of the Algerians, their manners, their aspirations, and their frustrations is quite apparent in the book and adds immeasurably to the authenticity and quality of insight that the reader will find.

In the first three chapters, Professor Heggy traces the political history of Algeria and its Moslem and European inhabitants from 1830, when it became a French possession, until the outbreak of the rebellion in November 1954. The author lucidly explains the political mobilization and maturation of the Algerians, both in Algeria and in France (where they were migrant workers), and the creation of the Moslem political elites that eventually led the revolution.

French policy in Algeria was largely geared to accommodate the interests of the French settler rather than the Moslem, and the attendant result was that an increasing number of Algerians became estranged from France, as demonstrated by the 1945 uprisings. Beginning with legislation in 1947, the French Government began to replace its time-honored colonial policy of assimilation with one of autonomy. (p. 30) Yet, asserts the author, "The French failure to effect reforms in Algeria before the situation there became crucial cost dearly in terms of local popularity. By and large, the natives [that is, the Moslems] had lost faith in the government of France even before [the outbreak of the rebellion in] 1954." (p.

99)