

*Vietnamization: Politics, Strategy, Legacy.* By David L. Anderson. (Lanham, Md., Rowman and Littlefield, 2019. xii + 173 pp.)

David L. Anderson's *Vietnamization: Politics, Strategy, Legacy* offers a persuasive answer to an old question: Could the United States have won the Vietnam War if only American leaders had done more to bolster the South Vietnamese military during and after the withdrawal of U.S. forces? Over the years, numerous authors of have answered in the affirmative. If only Washington had done more to equip and train the South Vietnamese, goes the argument, the government in Saigon could have preserved its independence over the long run.

Anderson rejects this contention in no uncertain terms. He delivers his argument via incisive analysis of “Vietnamization,” a cornerstone of U.S. policy embraced by Richard Nixon after he became president in January 1969. Mounting opposition to the war convinced Nixon that he must withdraw U.S. forces from Vietnam. And yet, notes Anderson, Nixon and his top foreign policy aide, Henry Kissinger, also believed that they could not simply abandon the fight. The solution was the “Vietnamization” of the war—the replacement of U.S. combat troops with beefed-up South Vietnamese forces.

Vietnamization was, Anderson argues, a political success for Nixon. Expansion of South Vietnamese forces meant that the administration could plausibly claim it had a plan for victory even as U.S. troops went home. In strategic terms, however, Anderson argues that Vietnamization was a total failure. Although the Nixon administration pumped vast resources into South Vietnam, Saigon's military stood no chance of staving off defeat once U.S. forces had left.

Anderson's explanation of this failure hits some points that will be familiar to readers versed in the history of the war. With admirable concision, the book argues that South Vietnamese armed forces, like the Saigon regime more generally, suffered from poor leadership, rampant corruption, indifference among the general population, and the taint of dependence on foreigners. But Anderson adds valuable nuances by demonstrating the unsurmountable challenges that confronted South Vietnamese personnel charged with quickly learning technical and specialized tasks that had been carried out by highly trained Americans.

In making the latter point, Anderson relies partly on an autobiographical chapter narrating his experiences in Vietnam as a sergeant in the U.S. Army Signal Corps in 1970. Breaking from the dense prose that prevails elsewhere

in the book, Anderson colorfully relates his frustrations with the language barriers that separated him from his South Vietnamese counterparts at a time when the two militaries needed to work closely. He also shares his dawning awareness that South Vietnamese personnel would need as much as eight to ten years to grasp the complexities of communications equipment provided by the United States, far more than the brief period allowed by the Nixon administration, to create a fully capable force.

Another highlight of the book is Anderson's final chapter, which deftly compares American failures to create robust state institutions in Vietnam with more recent missteps in Iraq and Afghanistan. In all three places, Anderson contends, Americans ignored formidable political, cultural, and historical realities and saddled themselves with impossible challenges.

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*Pulp Vietnam: War and Gender in Cold War Men's Adventure Magazines.* By Gregory A. Daddis. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020. 358 pp.)

At the height of the Cold War, American pulp magazines offered stories of adventure, sex, and power. In sum, Gregory Daddis argues, they produced a "particular version of martial masculinity" that shaped soldiers' expectations of and experiences in combat during the Vietnam War (p. 5). For Daddis, these magazines, largely neglected in the historiography of the Vietnam War, provide crucial insight into how "preexisting sociocultural dynamics" in the United States prepared U.S. soldiers to think and behave in violent ways, especially but not only against women (p. 6).

Bearing titles such as *Stag*, *Man's Conquest*, and *American Manhood*, the pulps explicitly invoked, harnessed, and propagated a vision of masculinity rooted in patriotism, racial dominance, sexual conquest, physical toughness, and pugnacity. As such, they worked to resolve the widespread and oft-voiced mid-century fear that American men had gone soft. American men, many claimed, were overly mothered, sexually impotent, and sheltered from the strenuous life in cushy corporate jobs. As such, they were not prepared to resist the rising tide of communism at home or abroad. But not in the world of the pulps. There, lurid tales of combat heroism and carnal virility, often drawn from World War II and the Korean War, served as "antidotes to men's fears and anxieties" (p. 229). In these stories, U.S. soldiers were always the good guys. They defeated ruthless enemies (Nazis and communists,