

# H-Net Reviews

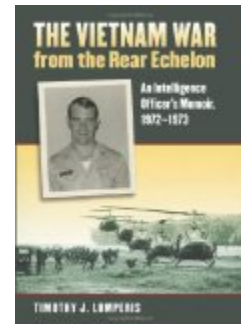
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Timothy J. Lomperis. *The Vietnam War from the Rear Echelon: An Intelligence Officer's Memoir, 1972-1973*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011. 272 pp. \$34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7006-1809-5.

Reviewed by Adam Richards

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey



Timothy Lomperis, a former United States Army intelligence officer and Vietnam War historian, has crafted a useful study of the war through a synthesis of memoir and historical analysis. Lomperis examines the process by which policy in Washington was translated into military action on the ground in Vietnam from the 1972 Eastertide Offensive through the 1973 Paris Peace Agreements by noncombat officers. He maintains that it was at the rear echelon level that intelligence officers gained a firsthand account of the ultimate betrayal of the South Vietnamese by the United States. Lomperis argues that between 1972 and 1973, the “war’s tragic fate was sealed” for the United States and South Vietnamese (pp. xii).

Lomperis contends that the analysis recommended by the intelligence officers within Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) was merely a charade, as much of the approved air and ground actions were predetermined by Washington. This included both Linebacker Operations launched against North Vietnam, and a number of additional targeting sites. Furthermore, Lomperis suggests that, following the Army of the Republic of Vietnam’s (ARVN) defense during the Eastertide Offensive, the United States believed that Vietnamization had worked and therefore quickened the pace of withdrawal.

For Lomperis, the tragedy was that the United States failed to realize that the South Vietnamese were highly dependent upon the regular support of its aid and personnel, especially following the Paris Peace Agreements. Washington tried to assuage the solitary fear of the South Vietnamese with aid packages such as Project Enhance Plus, but it was not enough to quell the North Vietnamese; as Lomperis appropriately notes: “[W]ith the

bulwark gone, nothing that we or the Vietnamese did in Saigon would make any difference” (pp. 198). Lomperis maintains that the failure of the United States in Vietnam to protect the South Vietnamese rests with President Nixon and Congress for pursuing a “decent interval” while cutting off desperately needed aid, and with the American public for its obdurate attitude toward the war. Lomperis states that these factors resulted in the collapse of South Vietnam.

Alongside his interpretation, Lomperis provides an in-depth discussion of his responsibilities in Vietnam, and, eventually, his disillusionment with the United States. In his first tour of Vietnam in 1972, Lomperis served as an intelligence officer under MACV. He was responsible for daily, weekly, and monthly briefings and providing intelligence analysis to his superiors. Lomperis contends that he, along with others in the intelligence community, was assigned to turn policy into action. During Lomperis’s second tour in 1973, he was assigned as an intelligence liaison officer for the newly minted Defense Attaché Office (DAO). He served primarily as a liaison between the Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam (CICV) in Saigon and the local Vietnamese. His time served in the Vietnam intelligence community allowed him to witness the plight of the South Vietnamese following the Paris Peace Agreements.

Eventually, his disillusionment with the war and the United States grew too large for Lomperis to remain in Vietnam. Originally, he believed that America was the leader of the Free World, fighting against the ungodly communist menace. However, soon after the end of the American participation in the war, he no longer believed

the United States was a trustworthy entity. Instead, Lomperis believed that his country had “turned its back on and betrayed a client state” (pp. 216).

Lomperis provides a stimulating analysis of the United States intelligence officer during the last American phase of the Vietnam War. His compendium on the history of the war intertwined with his personal account,

offers a new, dynamic source of information to Vietnam War scholars concerned with day-to-day intelligence activities at the ground level. In addition to his research and discussion, Lomperis provides a concise timeline of the war as well as a useful glossary aptly titled “Nam Speak.” Scholars will find this work as an excellent foundation to further research on the role that intelligence officers played during the Vietnam War.

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