



The Strategic Lessons Unlearned from Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan: Why the ANSF Will Not Hold, and the Implications for the U.S. Army in Afghanistan

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The wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan were lost before they began, not on the battlefields, where the United States won every tactical engagement, but at the strategic level of war. In each case, the U.S. Government attempted to create a Western-style democracy in countries which were decades at least away from being nations with the sociopolitical capital necessary to sustain democracy and, most importantly, accept it as a legitimate source of governance. The expensive indigenous armies created in the image of the U.S. Army lacked both the motivation to fight for illegitimate governments in Saigon, Baghdad, and Kabul and a cause that they believed was worth dying for, while their enemies in the field clearly did not. This book examines the Afghan National Security Forces in historical and political contexts, explains why they will fail at the tactical, operational and strategic levels of war, why they cannot and will not succeed in holding the southern half of the country, and what will happen in Afghanistan year-by-year from 2015 to 2019. Finally, it examines what the critical lessons unlearned of these conflicts are for U.S. military leaders, why these fundamental political lessons seem to remain unlearned, and how the strategic mistakes of the past can be avoided in the future.

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