

ple of the world continue to improve will depend primarily upon human beings and not on nature." Arthur Simon: "A U.S. policy that would contribute toward food security and famine prevention is one that guards against the political use of food." Sudhir Sen: "There isn't much time to waste. The clock of global famine is still ticking remorselessly."

—Douglas Ensminger

THE DEFENSE POLICIES OF NATIONS

ed. by Douglas J. Murray and Paul R. Viotti

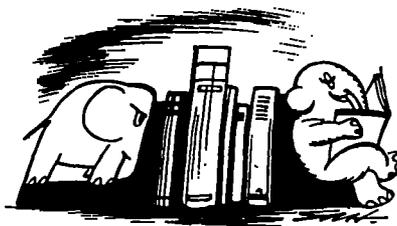
(Johns Hopkins University Press; 467 pp.; \$35.00/\$12.95)

This is a comparative study of the defense policies of ten nations: the U.S., USSR, U.K., France, West Germany, Sweden, Rumania, Israel, People's Republic of China, and Japan. It is intended to be useful to both students and participants in the defense policy process. There are ten original essays that address each of the nations above and thirteen readings on various issues relating to their national security policies. Nine bibliographical essays identify literature relevant to these studies; and the editors offer a rationale for the comparative study of national defense policies in their introductory and concluding chapters. They have included an organizational outline of well over a hundred topics, which makes possible, if the outline is satisfied, a certain degree of consistency in comparative analysis. In all, the text reflects the efforts of thirty-five individuals.

It is a unique undertaking; I know of no other such comprehensive compilation of information about defense policies. Rumania and Sweden aside—for in the large context of world security they are little more than interesting curiosities—these are the countries that play important roles in the international arena. The essays provide information on the current character and condition of the military forces of each and the national interests and strategic concepts that shape these forces. The readings are generally of better quality and of more interest than the country studies; they are the best short articles available from an extensive body of literature, and they consider the defense challenges facing each

nation at far greater depth. This is a useful work, but also—by the editors' own admission—just a beginning.

—John B. Keeley



Correspondence

VIETNAM REDUX?

To the Editors: U.S. involvement in El Salvador? Pro and con viewpoints have been expressed (notably "The Public and Limited War," *Under Cover, Worldview*, April). It seems the Vietnam experience still obsesses American statesmen, leading to a day-by-day approach to the problem. Even with the new program of trade, aid, and investment in the Caribbean area announced by President Reagan on February 25, there will be no change in the coming developments in El Salvador. The United States may prescribe more money and more weapons for El Salvador, but this will not stop the guerrillas from stepping up their attacks. And these attacks could leave the U.S. no other choice but to pursue a Vietnam-like course of action.

With this I don't mean the U.S. was strategically wrong in Vietnam. The failure in Vietnam was caused by something else, but definitely not by the U.S. decision in the 1960s to become involved. Had the chief U.S. negotiator in Paris been less intelligent but more experienced with Communist techniques of negotiation than Dr. Kissinger; had U.S. B-52s bombed North Vietnam some more days in December, 1972; had Watergate not forced Mr. Nixon out of office; had the U.S. Government taken different approaches in dealing with its friends, South Vietnam would have been saved and at this time we could have labeled the U.S. policy during those tormented years a success.

Although the parallels between El Salvador and Vietnam are far outnumbered by the divergences, there is a striking similarity in the manner with

which the U.S. writes its prescriptions. Of course the trouble in Vietnam and in El Salvador today is partly the Soviet threat. But the question remains: Why have Vietnamese and El Salvadoran peasants fought with such fanaticism under the Communist leadership? Marxist-Leninist doctrine is not the answer. Peasants don't live with theory, they live with the reality of life. In South Vietnam the Communist subversion was possible because the governments there did not enjoy the support of the people. Those who could provide the popularity and leadership to unite the country in an anti-Communist front were not supported by the U.S. The U.S. was too busy supporting docile generals to implement its own policies. Today with the El Salvador crisis U.S. officials consider only two alternatives: economic and military aid to save the regime of President José Napoléon Duarte or let El Salvador succumb to communism. They never look for other alternatives.

The U.S. has the habit of sticking to docile people in power, whether or not they have a consensus to rule from their fellow countrymen. This is the key to the problem of Vietnam in the past and El Salvador today. Consensus-by-law as Americans see it is by no means a substitute for consensus by heart.

Helping a country to choose its own leaders is indeed a very sensitive question in theory, but I think it is not quite as sensitive in practice—providing the U.S. adopts a new concept in dealing with Communist revolutions in Third World countries. Involvement is not in itself wrong. It is a must. The question is how to become involved effectively.

The Vietnam experience is our heritage. It should give the legacy to the world in its effort to fight for freedom. If the sufferings of the Vietnamese are to become a contribution to humanity, then the Vietnam syndrome should not prevent the American people from developing astuteness and creativity.

Tran Van Son

The writer, a former member of South Vietnam's House of Representatives, was imprisoned for six months after the collapse of the South's government. He fled Vietnam in April, 1977.