

# No Sure Victory: Measuring U.S. Army Effectiveness and Progress in the Vietnam War

By Gregory A. Daddis

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Conventional wisdom holds that the US Army in Vietnam, thrust into an unconventional war where occupying terrain was a meaningless measure of success, depended on body counts as its sole measure of military progress. In *No Sure Victory*, Army officer and historian Gregory Daddis looks far deeper into the Army's techniques for measuring military success and presents a much more complicated-and disturbing-account of the American misadventure in Indochina.

Daddis shows how the US Army, which confronted an unfamiliar enemy and an even more unfamiliar form of warfare, adopted a massive, and eventually unmanageable, system of measurements and formulas to track the progress of military operations that ranged from pacification efforts to search-and-destroy missions. The Army's monthly "Measurement of Progress" reports covered innumerable aspects of the fighting in Vietnam-force ratios, Vietcong/North Vietnamese Army incidents, tactical air sorties, weapons losses, security of base areas and roads, population control, area control, and hamlet defenses. Concentrating more on data collection and less on data analysis, these indiscriminate attempts to gauge success may actually have hindered the army's ability to evaluate the true outcome of the fight at hand--a roadblock that Daddis believes significantly contributed to the many failures that American forces suffered in Vietnam.

Filled with incisive analysis and rich historical detail, *No Sure Victory* is not only a valuable case study in unconventional warfare, but a cautionary tale that offers important perspectives on how to measure performance in current and future armed conflict. Given America's ongoing counterinsurgency efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, *No Sure Victory* provides valuable historical perspective on how to measure--and mismeasure--military success.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"This timely and important book is a major addition to the military history of the Vietnam War. It should be required reading for those grappling with the issues posed by counterinsurgency wars today." --George C. Herring, Alumni Professor Emeritus of History, University of Kentucky, and author of *From Colony to Superpower*

"In *No Sure Victory*, Gregory Daddis has asked questions about the past that speak directly to the present: How should progress in a counterinsurgency war be measured? What is the definition of victory-and what is its meaning? The effort of the US military and civilian command to answer these questions and their ultimate failure to do so is the burden of Daddis' book. He writes as a professional soldier as well as an historian, and his meticulously researched and carefully argued account makes a significant contribution to the ongoing effort to understand the Vietnam War." --Marilyn B. Young, Professor of History, New York University, and author of *The Vietnam Wars*

"Stunning in its research and highly sophisticated in its analysis, *No Sure Victory* is far and away the best study we have of the way the US Army measured its performance during the Vietnam War. Daddis argues that US strategists were far more interested in data collection than they were in data analysis. This failure had a dramatic impact on the conduct and outcome of the war. An important study with monumental implications for US military policy in the future." --Robert Brigham, Shirley Ecker Boskey Professor of History and International Relations, Vassar College

"...Engaging...Daddis has written a provocative and well-researched book...It will be of value to both students and historians of the Vietnam War, in addition to military professionals interested in contemporary counterinsurgency operations." --*Vietnam Magazine*

"*No Sure Victory* is a thought-provoking look at a problem that is both perennial and current...essential reading for anyone concerned with our current and probable future conflicts." --*MILITARY REVIEW*

"Deeply researched and revealing" -- *VVA Veteran*

"Daddis ... probes more deeply than anyone has previously done into the army's Measurements of Progress

Reports, and the collective inability to agree on a set of meaningful dominant indicators of military and political effectiveness." --Times Literary Supplement

"*No Sure Victory* is well researched, nicely organized, and lucidly written. The author backs his arguments with a judicious use of quotations and copious footnotes, and he frequently provides balance by explaining differing points of view. In short, this is a book worthy of serious consideration." --*ARMY HISTORY*

"Daddis has written an insightful analysis into the failure of American military and political leaders in measuring the effectiveness and progress of the U.S. war effort in Vietnam... *No Sure Victory* is a must read for anyone interested in avoiding the blatant mistakes of Vietnam." --*ON POINT*

About the Author

**Gregory A. Daddis** is Academy Professor of History at the United States Military Academy, West Point, and a Colonel in the US Army. A West Point graduate, he has served in numerous army command and staff positions in the United States and overseas and is a veteran of both Operations Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom. He is the author of *Fighting in the Great Crusade: An 8th Infantry Artillery Officer in World War II*.

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