

A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam

By Lewis Sorley

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Neglected by scholars and journalists alike, the years of conflict in Vietnam from 1968 to 1975 offer surprises not only about how the war was fought, but about what was achieved. Drawing from thousands of hours of previously unavailable (and still classified) tape-recorded meetings between the highest levels of the American military command in Vietnam, *A Better War* is an insightful, factual, and superbly documented history of these final years. Through his exclusive access to authoritative materials, award-winning historian Lewis Sorley highlights the dramatic differences in conception, conduct, and—at least for a time—results between the early and later years of the war. Among his most important findings is that while the war was being lost at the peace table and in the U.S. Congress, the soldiers were winning on the ground. Meticulously researched and movingly told, *A Better War* sheds new light on the Vietnam War.

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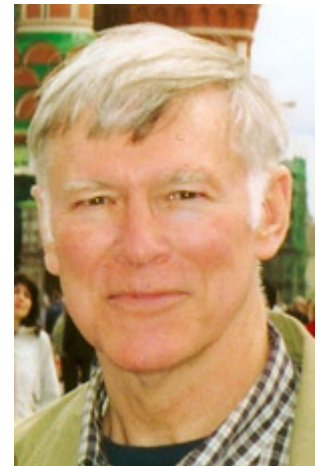
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Amazon Exclusive Essay: "New Vietnam War History" by Lewis Sorley, Author of *A Better War*



For a long time most people thought the long years of American involvement in the Vietnam War were just more of the same—with a bad ending. Now we know that during the latter years, when General Creighton Abrams commanded U.S. forces, almost everything changed, and for the better. Abrams understood the nature of the war and devised a more availing approach to the conduct of it. Building up South Vietnam's own armed forces got high priority, whereas before they had been neglected and allowed to go into combat outgunned by the enemy. The covert infrastructure which through terror and coercion kept South Vietnam's rural population under domination was painstakingly rooted out, not ignored as earlier. And combat operations were greatly improved, concentrating on large numbers of patrols and ambushes designed to provide security for the people rather than cumbersome large-unit sweeps through the deep jungle. Some commentators have called the description of these changes "revisionist" history, but actually it is new history. Virtually all the better-known earlier books about the war concentrated heavily on the early years, leaving the later period grossly neglected. New insight came importantly from a collection of hundreds of tape recordings of briefings and staff meetings in General Abrams's headquarters during the four years he

commanded in Vietnam. They are filled with human drama, professional debate, successes and frustrations, and ultimately a hard-won triumph, told in the voices of Abrams and his senior associates; such visiting officials as the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and a succession of often brilliant briefing officers. Later, of course, what they had won was thrown away by the United States Congress, but the story of their better war is still a dramatic testament to courage, integrity, devotion, and professional competence.--*Lewis Sorley*

From Publishers Weekly

Using a host of oral interviews, 455 tape recordings made in Vietnam during the years 1968-1972 and numerous other sources, military historian Sorley has produced a first-rate challenge to the conventional wisdom about American military performance in Vietnam. Essentially, this is a close examination of the years during which General Creighton Abrams was in command, having succeeded William Westmoreland. Sorley contends that Abrams completely transformed the war effort and in the process won the war on the battlefield. The North Vietnamese 1968 Tet offensive was bloodily repulsed, he explains, as was a similar offensive in 1969. Together, the 1970 American incursion into Cambodia and a 1971 Laotian operation succeeded in reducing enemy combat effectiveness. Renewed American bombing of the North and Abrams's use of air power to assist ground operations further reduced Hanoi's ability to wage war. Sorley argues that the combination of anti-war protests in America and a complete misunderstanding of the actual combat situation by the diplomats negotiating the 1973 Paris accords wasted American military victories. In spite of drug use and other problems, Sorley maintains, the army in Vietnam performed capably and efficiently, but in vain, for South Vietnam was sold out by the 1973 cease-fire, America's pullout and the failure of Congress to provide further military assistance to the South. Sure to provoke both passionate and reasoned objection, Sorley's book is as important a reexamination of the operational course of the war as Robert McNamara's *In Retrospect* is of the conflict's moral and political history. Maps and photos not seen by PW.
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From [Booklist](#)

The debate continues. Was the Vietnam War "lost" because of a failed national policy that refused to recognize Vietnamese Communism as a legitimate nationalist movement, or was it lost because of the spinelessness and meddling of Washington politicians who undermined brave Americans and South Vietnamese in the field? Sorley, a West Pointer and former CIA official, leans toward the latter explanation. Sorley points out the considerable successes in prosecuting the ground war and "nation building" in the hamlets and cities. The triumvirate responsible for those successes was General Creighton Abrams, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, and the director of the pacification program, William Colby. Sorley convincingly portrays them as both dedicated and wise, and he passionately argues that, given time and support, they could have achieved America's goal of a viable, non-Communist South Vietnam. Unfortunately, Sorley gives short shrift to counter arguments. Still, his points are well supported by reliance on newly available source material, and he makes a strong contribution to our unending national argument.
Jay Freeman

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William Fuller:

This A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam is great guide for you because the content that is full of information for you who also always deal with world and also have to make decision every minute. This specific book reveal it details accurately using great coordinate word or we can claim no rambling sentences inside it. So if you are read this hurriedly you can have whole facts in it. Doesn't mean it only provides you with straight forward sentences but tricky core information with wonderful delivering sentences. Having A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam in your hand like having the world in your arm, information in it is not ridiculous just one. We can say that no publication that offer you world in ten or fifteen second right but this publication already do that. So , this really is good reading book. Hey Mr. and Mrs. active do you still doubt this?

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