

ASSESSING THE AMERICAN WAR

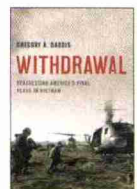
Three titles revisit, memorialize, and summarize America's war in Vietnam.

Withdrawal:

Reassessing America's Final Years in Vietnam

Gregory Daddis. Oxford Univ., \$29.95 (288p) ISBN 978-0-19-069108-0

In this second volume in a two-part reassessment of the American war in Vietnam, Daddis, a retired Army colonel who teaches at Chapman University, expands on the arguments he made in 2014's *Westmoreland's War*. He continues to recast the accepted view of the abject failure of Gen. William Westmoreland's war-of-attrition strategy and to shatter the idea that his successor, Gen. Creighton Abrams, implemented a more successful one—only to have Congress, the antiwar movement, and the media snatch defeat from the hands of victory. Daddis mines official records and solid secondary sources to suggest that Westmoreland took a more nuanced approach than that for which he is generally credited.



Daddis also posits that Abrams made no significant changes in strategy after he took over in 1968 and that the war effort was doomed for reasons that had very little to do with politicians, the media, or antiwar demonstrators.

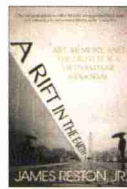
He persuasively argues that few U.S. historians have factored in the most important determinant of the war's outcome: the role of the Vietnamese. Daddis's sound and convincing advice is to look at the Vietnam War "as many Vietnamese see it—the American War"—in other words, as one part of a long fight for self-determination. (Oct.)

A Rift in the Earth: Art, Memory, and the Fight for a Vietnam War Memorial

James Reston Jr. Arcade, \$24.99 (272p) ISBN 978-1-62872-856-9

Historian and Vietnam veteran Reston (*Luther's Fortress*) shares the rocky, controversy-filled story behind the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (popularly known as the Wall) in this well-written examination of how the memorial was conceived and built. The story of the Wall has been told before, including in two first-person books by men who were instrumental in building it: Jan Scruggs (*To Heal a Nation*, written with Joel Swerdlow) and Robert Doubek (*Creating the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*). Reston makes liberal use of those two books here, along with many secondary sources. Few of the

main players come out unscathed in Reston's telling; while Scruggs vacillated in his support for extra design elements, designer Maya Lin remained "brusque and uncompromising"; Tom Carhart and Jim Webb, critics of Lin's design, are portrayed as blustering bullies; benefactor H. Ross Perot was bullheaded and petulant; and memorial proponent Sen. John Warner was "self-congratulatory." Some readers may take issue with Reston's occasional references to the Wall as the "Vietnam Memorial" or the "Vietnam War Memorial." The memorial was not intended as a monument to the war; rather, it was designed as a tribute to those who served in the war, living and dead. That minor criticism aside, Reston has produced a credible account of this contentious affair. Illus. Agent: Markus Hoffman, Regal Hoffman & Associates. (Sept.)



The Vietnam War, 1945–1975

David Parsons, Marci Reaven, and Lily Wong. New-York Historical Society, \$17.95 trade paper (96p) ISBN 978-1-907804-77-9

Produced in conjunction with a mammoth New-York Historical Society exhibition on the Vietnam War opening in October 2017, this slim volume pairs a concise, chronological history of the war with a stunning collection of mostly black-and-white images. The photographs, posters, and other illustrations manage to briefly but accurately cover virtually every important political, geopolitical, military, and societal aspect of the war. The book runs from the end of WWII, when the U.S. underwrote France in the latter's war against the communist Viet Minh in what was then known as Indochina, to the North Vietnamese and Vietcong victory in 1975. The voices of several American veterans of the conflict feature alongside a summary of the war's impact on their lives—and its impact on American culture, society, and politics. Historian Reaven, the exhibition's curator, and her colleagues have produced an admirably objective, albeit very brief, look at what they rightly call "a signal event in the history of the twentieth century." Photos & illus. (Sept.)

