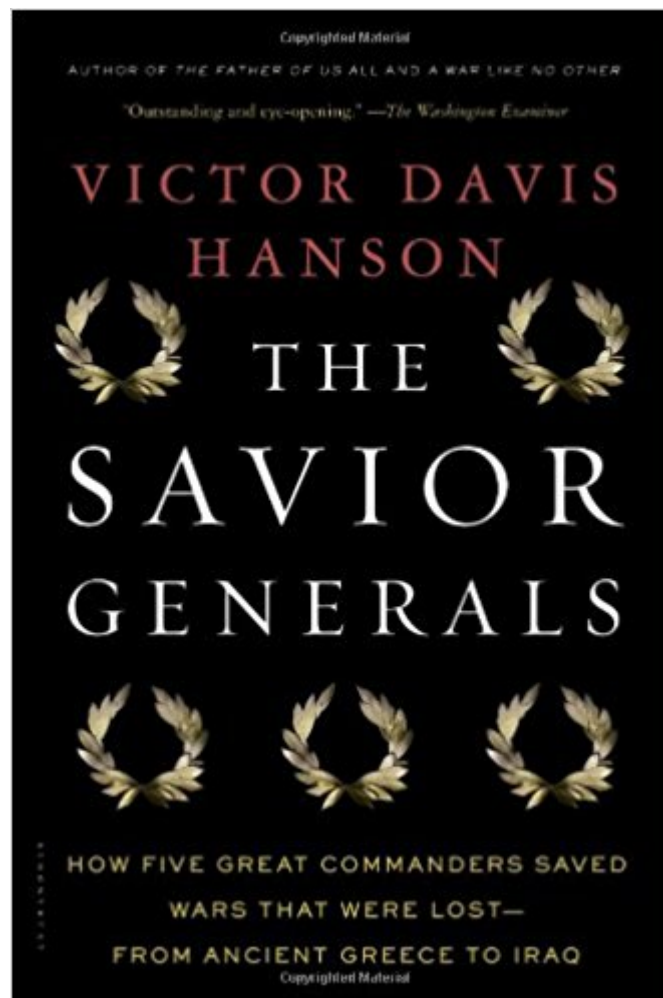




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# **The Savior Generals: How Five Great Commanders Saved Wars That Were Lost - From Ancient Greece To Iraq**



## Synopsis

Prominent military historian Victor Davis Hanson explores the nature of leadership with his usual depth and vivid prose in *The Savior Generals*, a set of brilliantly executed pocket biographies of five generals (Themistocles, Belisarius, William Tecumseh Sherman, Matthew Ridgway, and David Petraeus) who single-handedly saved their nations from defeat in war. War is rarely a predictable enterprise—it is a mess of luck, chance, and incalculable variables. Today's sure winner can easily become tomorrow's doomed loser. Sudden, sharp changes in fortune can reverse the course of war. These intractable circumstances are sometimes mastered by leaders of genius—asked at the eleventh hour to save a hopeless conflict, one created by others and frequently unpopular politically and with the public. The savior generals often come from outside the established power structure, employ radical strategies, and flame out quickly. Their careers regularly end in controversy. But their dramatic feats of leadership are vital slices of history—not merely as stirring military narrative, but as lessons on the dynamic nature of consensus, leadership, and destiny.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Business has its turnaround artists; so does warfare. Classical historian Hanson presents five generals who retrieved wars from defeat, three Americans (William Sherman, Matthew Ridgway, and David Petraeus) and two from ancient history (Themistocles of Battle of Salamis fame and Belisarius, briefly the restorer in the 500s of the Roman Empire). As a group, they exhibit commonalities that Hanson develops through the specific situations they confronted. In each case, despondency descended on wars going wrong, and dispelling it as much as a strategic change of

course lay behind these generals' successes. Each one, Hanson argues, was a good communicator, up the line to their leaders, down the line to their soldiers, and more widely to civilians. Dispelling hopelessness by rejustification of a cause, explaining plans to redeem it, and restoring morale, they were, in Hanson's view, contrarians who naturally irritated political interests with their repudiations of preceding failures of strategy. Ingratitude was usually these generals' reward; after their rescue operations, most were shunted aside. Students of military leadership will be intrigued by Hanson's astute set of cases. --Gilbert Taylor --Este texto se refiere a la edición en Hardcover.

"An instructive series of portraits of five military outsiders called in to turn defeat into victory." Kirkus Reviews "It is not really news that Victor Davis Hanson has written another outstanding and eye-opening book. He has done that before and repeatedly, on a variety of subjects." The Washington Examiner "Students of military leadership will be intrigued by Hanson's astute set of cases." Booklist "Mr. Hanson's fluency with a broad range of historical epochs, which has made him one of his generation's most notable historians, is on full display in *The Savior Generals*." Wall Street Journal, Mark Moyar

VDH is one of the great historians of his generation. He won the Presidential Humanities Award in 2007 and the Bradley Prize in 2008 but neither is mentioned on the book jacket. VDH is humble just like the subjects of his book. More impressive than the volume of his output (he writes multiple columns per week) is the breadth and depth of his knowledge and analysis. To my mind, the real challenge of any military historian is not getting bogged down in too many details but still giving the reader enough details. VDH excels there. The generals selected by VDH were the right choices. They all had some common characteristics that were true over the centuries. Most interesting to me was General Ridgway as I (probably like most Americans) knew nothing about him. He inherited a dire situation in Korea and turned it around in 100 days. Think about that for a second. No South Korea and the Kim family running the whole show for a bigger populace. An entirely different consumer electronics industry throughout Asia. What does the auto industry look like without a South Korea? "Uncle Billy" Sherman is widely misunderstood and under appreciated. The South could more or less stomach the death and injury, but when the property of the plantation owners was destroyed; well, that's something entirely different. Burning Atlanta destroyed the transportation hub and the march to the sea destroyed the South's will to win. And consider this VDH item: Lincoln well

could have lost the electoral college vote but for Sherman's capturing Atlanta. If Lincoln lost the election, we'd have two (or maybe four) republics instead of one United States. The concluding chapter is great. It contains one of VDH's constant themes: we will always have wars as human nature is unchanging despite our high tech ways. And on a policy and political note, VDH has instructed us that a war doesn't end until the enemy \*knows\* it is defeated. One side can't just declare a war as being concluded. I guess Professor Hanson hasn't been invited out to the links with President Obama for some light instruction on the nature of war and victory. But maybe VDH doesn't golf!

I dipped into the book with a particular concentration on the modern era. I confess my knowledge of the Korean conflict has always been sketchy, mostly involving the resentments of veterans who in the aftermath of Vietnam felt forgotten and the pain in the Korean-American community over the long separation of their nation and their families. This portrait of Matthew Ridgeway helped paint the geopolitical context, as well as contributing to the thesis of the book. In turn, the book's thesis that these heroic leaders not only rescue a cause that seems to have been lost, but reshape the very nature of the conduct of war in some significant way going forward, suggests that the role of David Petraeus in leading the surge in Iraq may be far more consequential than is immediately apparent. Of course, as the author acknowledges, it is too early to make that judgment with any certainty. But it is interesting to note that his precipitous fall from grace is actually entirely consistent with the pattern of the savior general.

Basically Mr. Hanson reveals how the perceived lost cause is never lost when a great leader can see how to win. Very motivational, However we can see that all these commanders were used and then in a way, cast aside. My favorite general has always been William T. Sherman. He took care of his boys and did not cast their lives away. A man who understood how the rifled musket had changed warfare. Of all the best things he earned was the affectionate name of "Uncle Billy" by his men. He brought real war to the people who had only read about it in the newspapers.

A recurring theme of Hanson's work is that democratic soldiery is more effective than those of despotisms. It was the Greek edge over the Persians, and it informs his intriguing mini-biographies of three "savior generals": warriors who led conscripts to destroy tyrannies. Much as I would like to agree with Hanson, his eloquently expressed historian's perspective could be corroborated by research by military sociologists. But even if you don't completely accept his broad thesis, you will

find the stories of these three leaders fascinating and well-told. It takes a broad-gauged historian to connect these stories across the centuries.

Independence of thought, the elevation of truth over consensus, and a quiet confidence in the righteousness of their cause, make up some of the common traits of the Savior Generals so ably illustrated in this fascinating book. Recommended.

A page turner. Reveals extraordinary accomplishments. The USA is especially blessed in this area. Sherman, Ridgeway, Petraeus are loyal accomplished soldiers who served in greatest need. The close of the book summarizing the saviour traits was inspirational.

Started out great ! and then when we got to Petraeus the arguments for the man grew weaker and weaker. I did appreciate the the history behind the situations.

For those of us VDH fans we come to expect this level of scholarship. He has a marvelous ability to analyze historical conflict and the people at the center of it (in this case several generals ) spanning several thousand years and do it in a cogent ,thoughtful and frankly educational way. I know a lot of military history . I always learn something new when I read his books

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