

# Reviews

## Unique Insights on the Surge

**Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War.** Peter R. Mansoor. Yale University Press. 384 pages. \$28.

**By Col. Richard Swain**  
U.S. Army retired

Peter R. Mansoor's *Surge* is one of the most important contributions to come out of the long, controversial war in Iraq. The strength of this book rests on a combination of thorough research, meticulous documentation and authoritative presentation. The author, a retired colonel, was Gen. David H. Petraeus' chief of staff during the surge. He now holds the General Raymond E. Mason Jr. Chair in Military History at Ohio State University. Mansoor displays mastery of published sources, deepened with research into the personal papers of both Petraeus and Gen. George W. Casey Jr., commanding general of Multi-National Force-Iraq from 2004–07. The author also draws on unique personal perspectives and insights gained as a key staff officer and observer at critical events in Washington, D.C., and Baghdad. The book includes a foreword by Petraeus, providing his perspective of the matters addressed—perhaps a prolegomenon to a future commander's account.

*Surge* begins with a highly critical retelling of the post-invasion U.S. occupation. The author lays the source of much of the later turmoil directly on the policies of Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III and his neo-conservative contacts in DoD. He tracks the 2005 transition strategy, announced by President George W. Bush in August, to its collapse in 2006 with the outbreak of intense inter-communal violence incited by terrorist bombings, citing the destruction of the "Golden Dome" mosque in Samarra in February as a trigger event.

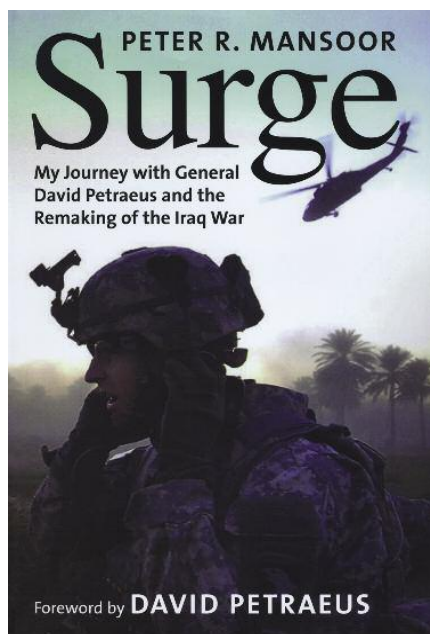
By June 2006, it was clear in Washington, D.C., that conditions in Iraq

had changed, and the 2005 strategy would not produce an outcome acceptable to the President. The author describes the movement that ultimately produced the surge strategy announced by Bush on January 10, 2007. The surge involved reinforcement of U.S. forces already in Iraq

when the full force was available, and then gain the political tolerance to draw out the subsequent drawdown and transition as long as necessary and/or politically possible. All the while, diplomats sought to influence communal reconciliation and define a postwar U.S.-Iraq relationship. Then-Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, the commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq (who later succeeded Petraeus), did most of the actual orchestration of the surge.

The goal of the surge was to build confidence in the Iraqi government and provide it breathing space to make progress on the political issues that still divided the nation; that is, to gain authority and grip. In the author's view, the success of this effort was realized in March and April 2008, when Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, on his own initiative, took the offensive against the Shia militias in Basra and allowed U.S. forces to destroy the Sadr militia's hold on Sadr City in Baghdad. In spite of the Iraqis requiring rapid U.S. reinforcement in Basra, Mansoor calls the action a decisive moment in the war that "changed the political calculations of many Iraqi leaders and made politics the operative forum for the division of power and resources in Iraq going forward."

Aside from describing the period of the surge, the book serves as a reference in the debate currently being conducted over the counterinsurgency doctrine that informed but—as Mansoor makes clear—did not dictate military strategy in Iraq. The applied strategy was pragmatic: a fighting approach to securing the population, according to the facts on the ground, certainly not in slavish adherence to T.E. Lawrence's rules for dealing with the World War I Arabs (Petraeus' own utilitarian rules for the surge are recounted in the text); theories of French colonels of the Algerian War (the author is critical of their applicability); or even Petraeus' earlier list of principles following his 2005 re-



with five additional Army brigades and 4,000 marines. It focused on securing the population of Baghdad in concert with Iraqi forces, exploiting the ongoing "Sunni Awakening" (encouraging Sunni tribal militias to fight terrorists) and conducting an aggressive counterterrorist program. Critically, Petraeus distributed his forces in small security stations throughout Baghdad, reversing the practice of his predecessor, who concentrated forces on the periphery to avoid provoking an unsettled population.

Since it would take from January to June to complete the buildup, and Petraeus and Iraqi Ambassador Ryan Crocker were due to report to a skeptical Congress in September, commanders had to orchestrate the operational strategy to begin in February, rise to a crescendo of activity over the summer

turn from Iraq (*Military Review*, January–February 2006). Coalition casualties for 2007 were the highest of the war, with most suffered in the first six months of the surge.

As a practical matter, the surge began to draw to a close with Petraeus' and Crocker's second round of congressional testimony on April 8–9, 2008,

while fighting was still ongoing in Basra and Baghdad. Ultimately, of course, the government of Iraq balked at a long-term U.S. presence, and President Barack Obama withdrew the last U.S. forces from Iraq in December 2011.

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faculty member at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, he was the Third Army historian for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. From 2002–07, he was professor of officership at the William E. Simon Center for Professional Military Ethic at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York.

## 'The Taming of Douglas MacArthur'

**The Most Dangerous Man in America: The Making of Douglas MacArthur.**  
Mark Perry. Basic Books. 416 pages.  
\$29.99.

**By Col. Cole C. Kingseed**

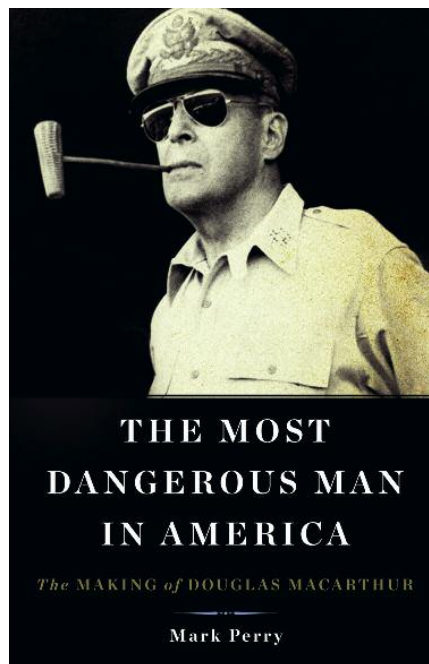
U.S. Army retired

In 1932, during a lunch in Albany, New York, with Rexford Tugwell, one of his economic advisors, New York Gov. Franklin D. Roosevelt called Gen. Douglas MacArthur "the most dangerous man in America." As Army Chief of Staff, MacArthur had recently dispersed the "Bonus Army" from its encampment on the Anacostia Flats in Washington, D.C. Roosevelt feared that Americans would turn to a "hero on horseback" to rescue them from their economic plight. The subsequent relationship between Roosevelt and MacArthur remained extraordinarily complex. Seeded by mutual suspicion, it was "less a voluntary partnership than an indispensable collaboration."

In this book, Mark Perry explores how Roosevelt and MacArthur "engaged in a delicate political minuet that recasts our understanding of one of the most important soldiers of our history." Perry specializes in dual biographies, and in compiling this book, he relied on memoirs and reminiscences, standard biographies of MacArthur, and each military service's official history and operational reports.

Though Roosevelt and his advisors provide an intriguing backdrop to Perry's story, MacArthur commands center stage. Subtitled *The Making of Douglas MacArthur*, this book probably ought to be titled *The Taming of Douglas MacArthur*, because that is ex-

actly what Roosevelt sought to do from the beginning of his presidency. As Roosevelt informed Tugwell in 1932, "We must tame these fellows and make them useful to us." Perry posits that as Roosevelt set to tame MacArthur, Army Chief of Staff Gen. George C. Marshall worked to make him "useful" by implementing Mac-



Arthur's strategic vision to shape victory in the Pacific.

Perry explores the dual-sided MacArthur: the flawed character who at times was his own worst enemy and the brilliant general who won the Pacific War. When MacArthur perceived that Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had accompanied him to the Philippines in 1935, was becoming more popular with Philippine President Manuel Quezon in 1937, MacArthur sought to limit Eisenhower's access to the president.

In the remaining years that Eisenhower served as MacArthur's aide, the general proved narrow-minded, paranoid, vindictive and jealous of his senior aide. Years later, when time and circumstances delayed MacArthur's timetable to liberate the Philippines, MacArthur appeared "small-minded, embittered, and suspicious."

On the other hand, Perry assigns MacArthur relatively high marks as a military commander. MacArthur's most significant defeat, the loss of Luzon in early 1942, was the result of senior commanders, including MacArthur, who "were mentally unprepared for war." MacArthur's generalship during the opening months of the Pacific War was in "stark contrast with the competence displayed for the remainder of the war." Perry opines that MacArthur's lasting memorial remains Operation Cartwheel, the reduction of Rabaul in Papua New Guinea and its 100,000-soldier garrison.

By war's end, Roosevelt and his successor succeeded in taming MacArthur, and in World War II, both presidents made the general useful for their political purposes. Roosevelt supported MacArthur's promise to return to the Philippines and assigned him command of the Southwest Pacific Theater of Operations because MacArthur's pronouncements were in consonance with Roosevelt's war strategy and quieted Roosevelt's political enemies. On the same day Japan surrendered, President Harry Truman appointed MacArthur "Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers for the purpose of enforcing the surrender of Japan" and instructed him to "take such steps as you deem proper to effectuate the surrender terms."

In an increasingly complex world, alignment between theater commander and head of state remains paramount in achieving national objectives. Perry's examination of Roosevelt and MacArthur's volatile relationship between 1932 and 1945 is instructive in both the positive and negative sense. In *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends*, Eisenhower stated that if MacArthur ever recognized the existence of a clean-cut line between military and civil authority, he generally chose to ignore it. The Roman historian Tacitus could just as

easily have been describing MacArthur when he stated, "Some might consider him as too fond of fame; for the desire for glory clings even to the best men longer than any other passion."

So let it be said about MacArthur. Had he retired after accepting the Japanese surrender aboard the USS *Missouri* on September 2, 1945, history would consider MacArthur one of America's greatest soldiers and perhaps its premier battlefield commander. Because he did not, and because Truman dismissed MacArthur from his

command in Korea in 1951, the public view of MacArthur remains mixed 70 years following V-J Day. In *The Most Dangerous Man in America*, Perry has made a monumental contribution to our understanding of two extraordinary leaders—one civil and one military—who shaped a strategy for the defeat of Japan.

*Col. Cole C. Kingseed, USA Ret., Ph.D., a former professor of history at the U.S. Military Academy, is a writer and consultant.*

## World War I Provides Warning for Future

**The Month That Changed the World: July 1914.** *Gordon Martel. Oxford University Press. 512 pages. \$34.95.*

By Philip F. Napoli

As readers of this magazine know well, this year marks the 100th anniversary of the start of World War

I, an event with epochal significance for the history of the world. In the past year or so, historians, enthusiasts and general readers have been deluged with a flood of works tracing the origins of this massive conflict, with contributions by eminent historians including Margaret McMillan, Max Hastings, Christopher Clark and

Sean McMeekin, among others.

Gordon Martel's contribution, *The Month That Changed The World: July 1914*, while aimed at the general reader, is nevertheless a painstakingly detailed narrative of diplomatic history tracing the events between the killing of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, through the August 4 de-

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<sup>1</sup> Available **ONLY** on the AUSA website at [www.ousa.org/ilw](http://www.ousa.org/ilw).

<sup>2</sup> Lead story.

<sup>3</sup> Winner of the 2013 AUSA/Army Capabilities Integration Center (ARCIC) writing contest.

clarations of war by Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary. "This is a book about how it happened," he writes. It is about "how those responsible for making fateful choices—the monarchs and politicians, diplomatists and strategists—grappled with the situation and failed to resolve it without war."

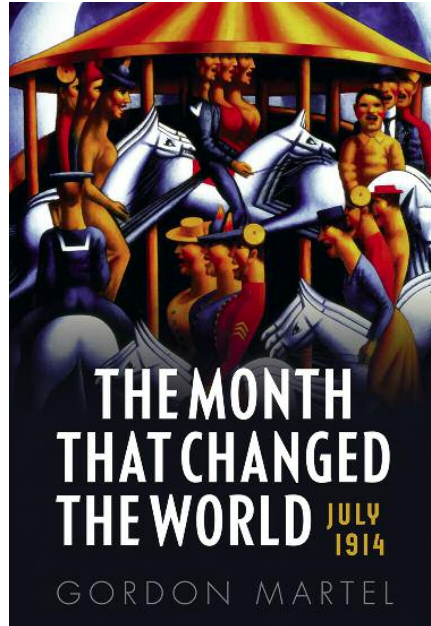
**M**artel, an emeritus historian from the University of Northern British Columbia, deeply immersed himself in the published diplomatic papers of Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, France, Austria-Hungary and Serbia, as well as the historiographical literature, in order to frame his study. He writes well: Despite coming in at more than 400 pages, the book reads very much like a novel. Indeed, Martel tells us that he drew on Ian Rankin's crime fiction for inspiration. As is often the case in a detective novel, the characters in the book, the leading statesmen of the era, are not omniscient; they make mistakes, have temper tantrums, follow false leads and are forced to contend with conflicting evidence and imperfect information.

Using this technique, Martel attempts to follow the story as the participants understood it at the time, with all their false hopes, mistaken assumptions and bad choices laid bare. As he does so, Martel resists the desire to point the finger of blame at any particular individual or nation for the cataclysm that followed, striving to allow readers to arrive at their own judgments about responsibility.

Readers who are well-versed in the historiography of the origins of World War I will find the concluding chapter, "Making Sense of the Madness," particularly compelling. Here, Martel reviews the historiographical literature, arguing that much of the earlier work on the origins of the war had been driven by political concerns. As a result, interpretations have shifted over time as different political issues gained salience.

Much of this historiography, Martel argues, with its search for the "real" causes of the war in such things as the system of secret alliances, militarism, nationalism, economic imperialism,

propaganda, and the unspoken assumptions and cultural imperatives of social and intellectual history, have given us the sense that in some fashion or other, World War I was inevitable. "This is wrong," Martel asserts. "War was not inevitable. ... Real people, ac-



tual flesh-and-blood human beings were responsible for the tragedy of 1914—not unseen, barely understood forces beyond their control."

Herein lies the book's thesis and central argument. It is only by a detailed look at the choices men faced and made at the precise hour of decision that we can come to understand how a conflict that claimed an estimated 16 million lives began. In making these choices, the leaders of the

various powers brought to the crisis their "assumptions about honor and prestige, the past and the future" and, on the basis of these, made fateful decisions. Martel reminds us: "Blind 'historical forces' did not devise ultimatums or mobilize millions: men of flesh and blood did."

Martel's book is a refreshing challenge to historians with its emphasis on human agency and contingency. As he points out repeatedly, even at the last possible moment, as late as the very end of July 1914, it seemed to the men involved that a solution to the crisis could be found. Diplomacy continued until the very last moment. There was nothing inevitable about World War I. If this is so, then the lesson for our time to be found in this epic narrative is straightforward. War is always a choice, consciously made. The moral, then, is that in war we must choose wisely, making our best effort to understand the potential consequences of a given course of action.

This is an outstanding work and a significant contribution to our understanding of the origins of that terrible war.

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*Philip F. Napoli is an assistant professor of U.S. social and public history at Brooklyn College, City University of New York. He is the author of Bringing It All Back Home: An Oral History of New York City's Vietnam Veterans. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from McGill University and received his master's and doctorate degrees from Columbia University.*

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## Stories of Unsung Heroes

**Resolve: From the Jungles of WWII Bataan, the Epic Story of a Soldier, a Flag, and a Promise Kept.** Bob Welch. Berkley Books. 314 pages. \$26.95.

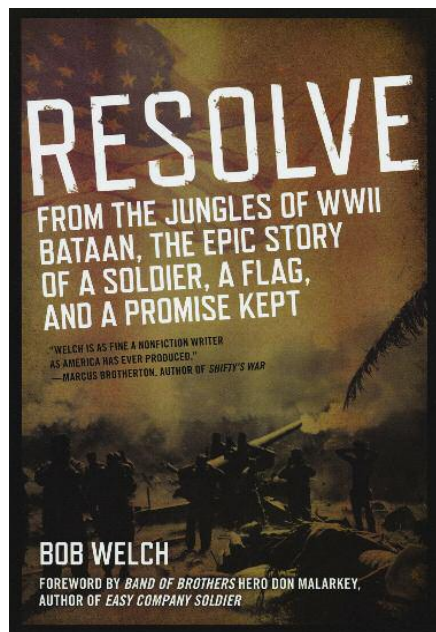
**By Col. Kevin C.M. Benson**  
U.S. Army retired

**T**his is a superb book that contains multiple stories. Author Bob Welch assisted the sons of Clay Conner Jr. in keeping a promise to tell their father's story—and what a story it is.

Conner, a newly minted second lieutenant of communications in the U.S. Army Air Corps, arrived in the Philippines with the 27th Bombardment Group in November 1941, just before the start of the U.S. war in the Pacific. During the few days before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Conner, like most young American officers, found the rhythm of duty in the islands very easy. "Last Post" was the start of cocktail hour. There was time for golf. While war raged elsewhere,

members of the unit fell into the illusion of a peaceful routine—until Japanese bombs landed on Clark Field and shattered that illusion.

Conner did his duty in the opening days of the fighting. He worked hard to keep his communications section safe,



fed and on the air. On April 9, 1942, Army forces on Bataan surrendered. The same day, Conner, along with six other men, escaped into the jungle. A self-described “concrete New York cliff dweller,” he began a harrowing adventure of survival and resistance. His captain told him, “Your chances are one in a million.”

The story of Connor’s jungle survival is not one of combat against the Japanese; rather, it is mainly about what he did to survive multiple bouts of malaria and how he kept up his morale and those of other Americans he met during the course of his movement around Bataan and central Luzon. Conner, unlike many Americans, made great efforts to learn the language of the region. He adapted his manner of living to the way the natives lived. By simply surviving from 1942 until 1944, he contributed to the American war effort by making the Japanese tie down forces in the hinterlands of Luzon. He collected information on Japanese units, although it was not until later on in 1944 that he could pass this intelligence on to a growing network of

American-Filipino guerilla units in contact with Gen. Douglas MacArthur’s headquarters.

Another part of Conner’s story involves Sgt. Gaetano Bato, who served in the 26th Cavalry. Bato recovered the 26th Cavalry’s national colors after the color bearer was killed, and he resolved to protect the colors and return them to U.S. control when he was able. Bato handed over the colors to Conner, a self-promoted major now, in May 1944. Conner promised the colors would fly once more over Fort Stotsenburg, a U.S. installation held by the Japanese. He held a flag-raising ceremony every day until he returned the colors to U.S. forces on February 2, 1945, to Lt. Gen. Oscar Griswold, commanding general of XIV Corps.

Conner and his men survived and conquered for 34 months and 21 days. Sadly, the flag itself was lost in the aftermath of World War II after Griswold gave it to MacArthur. Perhaps it is gathering dust in some storage locker in the corner of a depot.

Books like this one ensure that the history of the war in the Pacific is enriched by telling the stories of individual soldiers—the personal side of that vast conflict—and this one does an especially good job. Conner and the others mentioned in the book were unsung heroes, save within their own families, and even then the full story was not known. This book changes that. For example, Welch closes his book by acknowledging the passing of one of Conner’s “war pals,” Frank Gyovai, in 1984. When Gyovai died, his obituary had no mention of his long ordeal on Luzon. He is an unsung hero no longer, thanks to *Resolve*.

Welch captures the valor of persistence and spirit in this book, and it is a story well told.

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*School of Advanced Military Studies. He has a doctorate in history from the University of Kansas, writes for a wide range of professional journals and has contributed chapters to two books.*

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