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## The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama

Jon Scott Logel

Michael R. Gordon

Bernard E. Trainor

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comprises about seventy pages, McHugh presents four chapters that delve into the mechanics and details of how games were organized and conducted. The concluding chapter introduces the reader to the computer system that revolutionized naval gaming in the late 1950s (since replaced by successive generations of more sophisticated machinery). Four appendixes provide greater detail on determining chance and probability, as well as a glossary of war-gaming terms. However, no index is included. Not necessarily geared toward a general reading audience, *Fundamentals of War Gaming* delivers a technically oriented war-gaming operator an essential handbook on the history and importance of the craft. It is a user's guide, and some of the techniques and methodologies for planning, executing, adjudicating, and analyzing war games are still in use today.

This is a reprint of the third edition of McHugh's book, which was originally published in 1966. If there is an heir to Frank McHugh—a nationally recognized gaming expert with the expertise that once set McHugh apart from his peers—perhaps he or she would consider updating the text by bringing the reader into the twenty-first century. This is a potential avenue for further inquiry, one that would be of great interest to those looking to what the future holds for the profession of gaming, or to the relationship in the twenty-first century between war games and curriculum at service schools. This additional insight would provide enough material for a useful fourth edition. However, as it stands, McHugh's book chronicles the history of gaming and describes the various techniques, procedures, and parameters employed by war gamers throughout the first half of the twentieth

century. It is an interesting and useful book, one that I highly recommend.

JEFF SHAW  
Naval War College



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At the end of *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (2007), Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor concluded that Americans and Iraqis had created an Iraq of “chaos, suffering, and a future that is still vexed.” Six years later that vexed future is realized in their latest book, *The Endgame*. Thoroughly researched, this book leverages not only documentary sources but interviews with American and Iraqi leaders who shaped the post-Saddam Iraq to give the most encompassing narrative to date of the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Nearly eight hundred pages in length, this is the best single-volume study of the American and Iraqi experiences in postinvasion Iraq from 2003 to the U.S. withdrawal in 2011. Any future histories of the Iraqi war will have to acknowledge this comprehensive research and account.

After retracing some territory familiar from *Cobra II*, Gordon and Trainor present a detailed account of the American occupation and effort to create a new Iraq. What becomes clear in this volume is that President George W. Bush, his administration, and the first team of military leaders failed to create an adequate policy and strategy to transform the fractious Iraqi people into a stable nation. Sectarian violence, internal

and external terrorism, and American myopia created a stew of insurgency, instability, and fear in Iraq while the United States focused on “transitioning” the nation to a new sovereign government. In many respects *Endgame* is the tragic story of ill-conceived policy and strategy followed by a succession of ill-fated and politically charged efforts to get out of the quagmire that Iraq had become after April 2003.

Gordon and Trainor divide their narrative into three parts. First they explore the descent into sectarian violence and the inability of the United States to shift the nation to Iraqi control between 2003 and 2006. Readers will recognize the all-too-familiar shortcomings of Donald Rumsfeld, Tommy Franks, Paul Bremer, and Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez in their attempt to end the occupation as quickly as possible. The second part is the core of the story, detailing the genesis of the “surge,” the “Awakening” movement, and the effects of David Petraeus’s counterinsurgency approach on an Iraq that was effectively transforming its religious demographics through violence and intimidation. In the third section, the authors describe the *fait accompli* of the American withdrawal under President Barack Obama, leaving an unsettled Iraq under a suspect coalition government led by Nuri Kamal al-Maliki and “a dysfunctional political system.”

While some may take issue with the authors’ liberal use of what they label simply “classified sources” and “authors’ notes” in their citations, for those of us who served in Iraq the prose is hauntingly accurate. As a veteran of the Iraq War, I find that my personal recollections of events do not differ from this book’s narrative, especially the account of the changeover from General George

Casey to General David Petraeus in the winter of 2006–2007. As Casey (and General John Abizaid) sought to end the war for the coalition by accelerating the transition of control to Iraqi security forces (ready or not), troops on the ground recognized that the strategy was a rush to failure. Gordon and Trainor deftly juxtapose Casey’s increasingly irrelevant assessments to Bush with the daily “SIGACTS,” reports of the increased military and civilian casualties from vehicle-borne improvised-explosive-device attacks across Iraq.

Petraeus certainly comes out better here than do the other American leaders, but he is not spared scrutiny entirely. The authors are careful to note that Petraeus was opportunistic in embracing the Anbar Awakening movement and that he was lucky to have Ryan Crocker and General Ray Odierno on board with his counterinsurgency approach in 2007 and 2008.

The real value of this book lies in the effort that Gordon and Trainor make to explain the dynamics of Iraqi politics and sectarian fractures. To be sure, they argue that Iraq is not now the democracy desired by the United States but remains a nation of “sectarian tensions and potential flashpoints.” Perhaps *Endgame* is the best attempt to understand the complex relationship of Maliki with other Shiite groups, the Iranians, the Sunnis, and the Kurds as they all competed in those years to stake out their interests in a post-Saddam Iraq. In this sense, this volume is the most complete of the three that Trainor and Gordon have written and should be read by anyone seeking to understand the ordeal of the United States in Iraq.

JON SCOTT LOGEL  
Naval War College