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The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006–2008,

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BOOK REVIEWS

“A WAR NOT YET FINISHED”

Ricks, Thomas E. *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006–2008*. New York: Penguin, 2009. 394pp. \$27.95

Thomas Ricks begins his latest chronicle of the American strategic experience in Iraq where he left off in *Fiasco* (2006). In this account, Ricks uses his familiar journalistic approach to describe how the civilian and military leaders arrived at a change of policy and strategy, commonly known as “the surge,” in the war in Iraq. Ricks’s new book appears to be more even in its treatment of the leaders and the new strategy than was *Fiasco*, with its prosecutorial tone. In spite of his upbeat assessment of the American leaders, however, Ricks ends this volume with measured, if not pessimistic, projections for the future of Iraq.

Ricks covers familiar developments described in Bob Woodward’s *The War Within*, but he sheds new light on the role of General Ray Odierno in pushing for a change of strategy. Specifically, Ricks recounts how Odierno corresponded with his mentor and old boss, retired general Jack Keane, to change the “bridging strategy” then advocated by Generals George Casey and John Abizaid, and by the Pentagon leadership. Not wanting to lose this war on

his watch, Odierno relied on Keane and American Enterprise Institute strategist Fred Kagan to change the direction of the strategy in Iraq. They sought to change the strategy of transitioning power to corrupt and impotent Iraqi security forces into a new strategy of providing security for the Iraqi people. The most remarkable aspect of Ricks’s story is that this change in strategy developed outside the president’s designated National Security team and against the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs and the Iraq Study Group. According to Ricks, Keane and Kagan clearly led the way in the White House to get more American combat forces into Iraq.

Ricks describes in some detail how events in al Anbar province greatly influenced a key aspect of the new strategy. The Marines’ experience with the reconciliation movement, or “Sunni Awakening,” of tribal leaders in al Anbar in 2005 and 2006 was the pivotal instance showing how to turn former belligerents into potential allies. In effect, the American forces in al Anbar were already practicing the tactics and techniques of the new counterinsurgency (COIN) manual

recently published by General David Petraeus and a Fort Leavenworth team.

Ricks highlights how Odierno adopted this new COIN approach in the employment of the five surged combat brigades. Instead of putting all the additional forces into central Baghdad to “secure the people,” Odierno deployed them into the fractious “Baghdad belts.” During the surge, American troops would not only live among the Iraqi people in “joint security stations” and combat outposts but also target the insurgent lines of operations running from Syria and Iran into central Baghdad.

Overall, this appears to be a balanced narrative of a war not yet finished. In the last section Ricks considers the lasting effects of the “surge” strategy pursued in 2006–2008. He winds up with a discussion of that famous Petraeus question of 2003, “How does this end?” Ricks notes that perhaps this war does not end. Clausewitz declared, “Even the ultimate outcome of war is not always to be regarded as final”; in Ricks’s view, that will be true of the outcome of this war.

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Deudney, Daniel H. *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007. 391pp. \$17.96

Paradoxically, this is one of the most innovative yet least original books written in the past decade on the theory and practice of international relations. Daniel Deudney synthesizes a

broad understanding of the history of Western political theory with an equally broad study of contemporary world politics to recover what he calls “republican security theory.” He sees this theory as having developed from the Greek polis through the Italian Renaissance to the Enlightenment (in the thought of Montesquieu especially), to the American founding to the present, and as having important implications for nuclear proliferation and disarmament in the “global village” of our time. Deudney demonstrates conclusively that the leading schools of international relations today—realism and liberal internationalism—are both intellectual “fragments” of this older tradition, with the fragmentation often obstructing practical efforts to reconcile security from external threats to the liberty of public citizens and private individuals.

Such a reconciliation is the *raison d’être* of republican security theory and practice, though as Deudney shows, the viability of the endeavor depends on learning much from the school of hard knocks. Twenty-five hundred years ago, the members of the Delian League sought to secure their independence from Persia by following the leadership of Athens, but in so doing they jumped from the frying pan of external anarchy into the fire of Athenian imperialism. The Roman republic, if only because its more inclusive approach to citizenship enabled it to grow stronger as it expanded, proved more successful at uniting external security with internal liberty than had Athens or the Delian League, but ultimately it got too big. Generals like Caesar, Pompey, and Augustus were able to count on the private loyalty of soldiers to help them establish