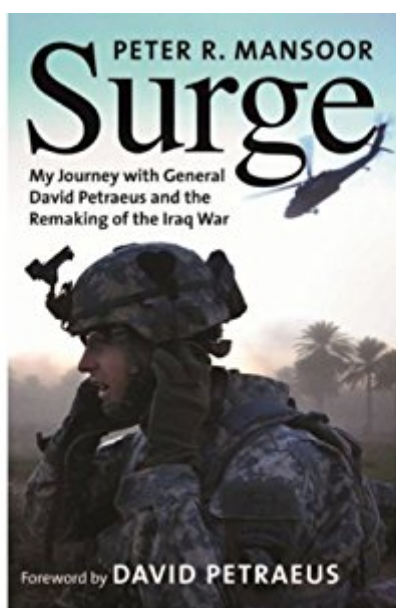


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Surge: My Journey With General David Petraeus And The Remaking Of The Iraq War



Synopsis

Surge is an insider's view of the most decisive phase of the Iraq War. After exploring the dynamics of the war during its first three years, the book takes the listener on a journey to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where the controversial new U.S. Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency doctrine was developed; to Washington, D.C., and the halls of the Pentagon, where the Joint Chiefs of Staff struggled to understand the conflict; to the streets of Baghdad, where soldiers worked to implement the surge and reenergize the flagging war effort before the Iraqi state splintered; and to the halls of Congress, where Ambassador Ryan Crocker and General David Petraeus testified in some of the most contentious hearings in recent memory. Using newly declassified documents, unpublished manuscripts, interviews, author notes, and published sources, Surge explains how President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Ambassador Crocker, General Petraeus, and other U.S. and Iraqi political and military leaders shaped the surge from the center of the maelstrom in Baghdad and Washington.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Professor Mansour's book is a meticulously written and comprehensive account of the Surge in Iraq. He was at GEN Petraeus's side for the action, and was close to the other key figures and the papers generated by the events. The Foreword by GEN Petraeus is also valuable. While other books may be written over the years about the Surge, I cannot imagine any being of more value than this. I have heard rumblings that GEN Petraeus in many books is treated like a savior, and PROF Mansour

certainly has mass respect for him. Perhaps the guy really IS that good - the right man at the right time with the right background. Maybe we should all just be grateful that he was around, and quit the whining. I would have liked a little more about the personalities involved, and a little dry humor would have been very welcome. For ex., PROF Mansour tells us tantalizingly that Saadi Othamn, the GEN's interpreter, was rather a wild man, apparently. A few more details, please? GEN Petraeus himself has a dry wit - let's see it, already! For that, however, one needs to read "In the Company of Soldiers" by Rick Atkinson, a completely different book.

It has often been said that journalism is the first draft of history. But what if that first draft was written not by a journalist but by a soldier-scholar and trained military historian? And what if that same individual had a position that was at the absolute center of the headquarters of the general (David Petraeus) that was, with a lot of help, turning a war around. That is what we, the American public, have the good fortune of having occurred because Peter Mansoor is that soldier-scholar (first in his class at West Point) and trained historian (doctorate in military history from Ohio State). And the fact that he later chose to retire from the Army to accept a position as Chair of the Military History Department at Ohio State rather than be considered for promotion to general officer allows us to read this now rather than ten or more years from now. I base that number on GEN. Eric Shinseki's estimate that the average general officer is a general for about ten years. Had Mansoor become a general he wouldn't be able to write this book until much later because he most likely would still be in the military. This book covers the period of the "surge" of the Iraq War. But unlike Professor Mansoor's earlier, superb book (Baghdad at Sunrise) this is not really a memoir. It is superb history. But I must caution potential readers. It is, by necessity, written in the first person which is not characteristic of most history and that takes a little adjustment. And if you are a political animal you could feel distracted by his calling-out of politicians that play to their political base during congressional hearings. Perhaps that is the soldier (with their almost pathological belief in individual accountability) coming out in the author. I happen to agree with him (for the most part) but others will not. And it is a relatively small part of the book. I address it because such hearings are about the only peek that most people ever get into the personalities of our military leaders. And because of that one can have a visceral reaction. What is important is the even-handed, detailed portrayal of the "Surge". If you are interested in military history and no matter where you fall on the "wisdom" of the Iraq War, you should read this. It details how strategy and policy are implemented into operational and tactical reality and covers all of the events and personalities, both famous and

obscure, that were involved. As an example, then-Colonel Mansoor relates the importance of managing the flow of information to a general in a war zone because there is just so much of it. How even he, as both gatekeeper and "hatchet-man" (General Petraeus' description) rarely had an opportunity to express his personal opinion. That is both a telling admission and explanation. I am tempted to compare it to Albert Speer's *Inside the Third Reich* but that would be misleading because Speer was never a military man and this is written much more "from the inside" of a military campaign rather than a man trying to justify the fact that he was an enabler of the Nazi War Machine. I purchased the audio book and then the hard cover and found them both terrific. - Don Middleton

There have been a few books out on the Surge now, mostly from the perspective of the NCO on the ground in a specific sector. These are good, gripping tales but leave the reader without the history from a macro perspective. In that sense this book is a refreshing chronicle of an obviously educated man who was also a soldier in the fight on two fronts: Iraq and Washington DC. Written with emotion, we get the facts nonetheless. The advantage of this chronicle is the proximity the author had to the men in charge and the politicians that could at any moment pull the plug on a supreme effort. What I will remember most about this book was how the author helped his superior, General Petraeus prepare a good argument for the Congress on how things were going and why we should continue with the Surge, then along with Ambassador Crocker then spent hours having to listen to members of Congress bash the policy of his Commander in Chief. I thought the conduct of Senator Clinton and Senator Obama were unforgivable, using all their time allotted to probe these men for answers to assist them in deciding what to do to instead declare the surge a failure. I came away with the sense these people did not really care what the soldiers and diplomats were trying to salvage in Iraq, but just wanted to use their presence to grandstand their own ideas. It was just pathetic to read about that conduct. Judging from what I see on C-Span I don't think it was inaccurate. I drop a star because I thought the book read a little like a Tom Clancy novel; all the soldiers are good, the marriages solid, the fight complex with some allies in unpredictable places. While it was refreshing to see an endorsement of President Bush and reflect on the courage he showed to correct the flawed decision to invade initially, events that have transpired for the other hero in the book, General Petraeus, that bring him back to mere mortal status. He is after all, just a man, but a remarkable man nonetheless.

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