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Editor's Shelf

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Editor's Shelf

Over the years this feature has provided readers with the knowledge of various works that for one reason or another have not found their way into the formal review process. It also affords our staff the opportunity to bring recent editions to the public's attention in a timely manner. To those who, as this reader does, enjoy the characterization of bibliophile, I apologize for the limitations associated with the publication of a quarterly journal, primarily length. In this issue we are again fortunate to share an eclectic array of books with readers, demonstrating a broad diversity of theses and authorship.



As America and the world once again turn their attention to operations in Afghanistan, the Center of Military History has provided readers with a powerful oral history of America's earlier efforts in this hostile and uncertain region, *Enduring Voices: Oral Histories of the U.S. Army Experience in Afghanistan, 2003-2005*. Christopher N. Koontz has performed a masterful job as the General Editor of a work containing 16 oral histories chronicling the establishment of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan and its regional operations. Of special interest is the extensive interview with Lieutenant General David W. Barno, the first commander for the new headquarters. Other interviews provide insight into how an international staff organized and executed the daily operations of the command. At the tactical level, interviews with field commanders capture their planning, training, and execution for counterinsurgency operations. Also, detailed discussions with individuals responsible for the actions of the provincial reconstruction teams provide readers with an understanding of the many challenges associated with day-to-day operations. This is a must read for any member of a force preparing for deployment to Afghanistan and for senior leaders charged with the design and execution of a new military strategy for the region.

Often great works are the result of conferences and symposia, as is the case with *The US Army and the Interagency Process: Historical Perspectives*. A product derived from the Proceedings of the Combat Studies Institute 2008 Military History Symposium, the book is a compendium of panel presentations and addresses on the subject of interagency operations throughout history. Kendall Gott, Managing Editor for the project, with the able assistance of Michael Brooks (General Editor), has performed a superb job in synthesizing and organizing rather diverse presentations into a concise and relevant product. The book is the sixth volume to be published as a result of the Combat Studies Institute's annual Military History Symposium. This particular volume contains the papers and presentations of 17 panelists. What gives this book value are the highlighted interactions between the US Army and government agencies in attaining national goals and objectives in peace and war. Although presented in a historical context, the lessons learned and analogies are applicable to current issues, dilemmas, challenges, and trends associated with today's military operations requiring interagency cooperation.

Reference books and guides represent another genre that never quite conforms to the traditional reviews provided in our journal. There is, however, one new entry that we feel compelled to bring to readers' attention. The 2009 edition of *The Military Advantage: The Military.com Guide to Military and Veterans Benefits* is an invaluable reference for

anyone associated with the military community. Christopher P. Michel and Terry Howell present readers with a current and complete guide to military and veteran's benefits. It is based on the research and resources of Military.com and serves as a guide for making the most of the military experience, whether one is active duty, a veteran, retiree, or family member. Benefits indexed include scholarships, educational programs, Department of Veterans Affairs loans, thrift savings, life insurance, allotments, retired and disability pay, and military discounts. Of course, the guide would not be complete without addressing such topics as loans, health care, professional development, travel and lodging, resources for spouses, and transition information. A valuable reference for anyone associated with the military.

Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience is another of those special reports that does not fit neatly into the review format. Prepared by the Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, the book is a compilation of the oversight exercised by the Inspector General's office from mid-2002 through 2008. The announced intent of the report was to respond to a congressional mandate to provide "advice and recommendations on policies to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness" in programs created for the relief and reconstruction of Iraq. Drawing on hundreds of interviews with US and Iraqi leaders and the review of thousands of documents, the report highlights a number of themes: the enormous challenges created by a lack of security; dramatic and frequent changes in reconstruction strategy; turbulence as a result of personnel turnover; waste resultant of inadequate contracting and management programs; and the poor integration of interagency efforts. As the report demonstrates, the US government was neither prepared for nor able to respond to the ever-changing demands associated with the contingency relief and reconstruction missions in Iraq. If America is to be successful in its projection and management of civil-military power into such hostile environments, the President and the Congress need to take the necessary steps required to provide the time and resources for the development of a sound doctrine for contingency relief and reconstruction operations.

Mark Grandstaff and Georgia Sorenson, former members of the US Army War College faculty, have joined forces to edit *Strategic Leadership: The General's Art*. They provide readers with a series of contributions by leaders from across the military and industry, covering such topics as transformational leadership and critical and historical thinking. The work is targeted at an audience of mid-level managers striving to become senior-level executives. The editors draw on the vast experience and expertise of a number of Army War College faculty to provide readers with the ways, means, and ends to becoming better strategic thinkers and leaders. The particular expertise of the Department of Command, Leadership, and Management is presented in an effort to help senior military leaders and their civilian equivalents transition from mid-level leaders and managers into the strategic realm of leadership. It is always difficult when one finds themselves in the position of endorsing or advocating on behalf of professional acquaintances, possibly due to fear of a lack of objectivity. In this case, however, the quality of the work quickly overcomes any supposed loss of perspective. This book is a necessity for those transitioning to senior positions in today's armed forces and their counterparts in the civilian sector.

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) continues to provide readers with insight on the peaceful resolution of international conflicts. Michael Semple's latest work, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*, is the most recent product in the "Perspectives Series." Following the collapse of the Taliban regime in December of 2001, the leaders of Afghanistan met in Bonn, Germany, to determine the best means for restoring governance

and creating a durable peace. The reasons behind the failure of the “Bonn Accords” and specific recommendations related to reconciliation efforts form the basis for the author’s thesis. The fact that the accords called for the inclusion of various factions into the new political system, and the lack of commitment on the part of the new Afghan government and its international partners to see that such reconciliation actually took place, was the genesis, from the author’s perspective, for the insurgency of 2003. Semple contends that if there is to be any hope for peace in Afghanistan, incremental steps need to be taken that will encourage estranged groups and networks to again join the political process. What makes Semple’s work valuable and distinct from the plethora of books about Afghanistan are his specific recommendations for reconciliation and inclusion. The author bases his recommendations on more than 200 interviews with Afghans who were directly or indirectly involved in the insurgency. These interviews reveal a sustained lack of commitment on the part of the Afghan government and its western backers as the major reason why opportunities for reconciliation have been wasted. This book and its accompanying list of recommendations for the Afghan government and the international community should be part of the predeployment training for every individual, military and civilian, deploying to Afghanistan. It certainly would not hurt if a few members of the US Congress, which happens to fund USIP, gave it more than a fleeting glance.—RHT □

We must admit to an editorial oversight in the Spring 2009 issue of *Parameters*. Dr. Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr., author of *Red Rogue: The Persistent Challenge of North Korea*, was misidentified.

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