

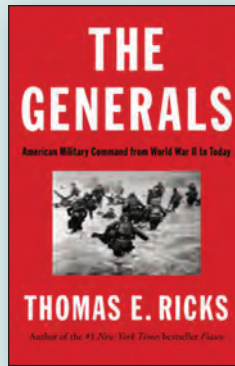
Ryan Crocker’s diplomatic savvy, and George Kennan’s strategic acumen—in other words, to approximate a fraction of the soul of George Marshall.

The Generals is a serious study of senior-level leadership that rivals H.R. McMaster’s *Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*, and Lewis Sorley’s *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America’s Last Years in Vietnam*. Ricks’s tone toward certain of his subjects eclipses censure and borders on vituperation, while others bask in the gentle glow of his prose. This may bother some readers, but not this reviewer—in fact, it is refreshing to read a commentator calling a spade a spade in terms of his unvarnished criticism of the shortfalls of certain generals (and their civilian counterparts and seniors) whose decisions unnecessarily cost American lives and strategic currency in Vietnam and Iraq. His warranted criticisms of the leadership failures of certain senior generals, insidious careerism, moral cowardice, and self-interest (Maxwell Taylor, MacArthur, the Vietnam Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom* Joint Chiefs of Staff), the policies that led to those failures, and the dysfunctional civil-military relationships (Harry Truman–MacArthur, Lyndon Johnson–the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Donald Rumsfeld–the U.S. military writ large) are underwritten by scholarly research and meticulous documentation. If the military truly is as reflective and self-critical as it likes to advertise, *The Generals* should land on the Chairman’s and Service chiefs’ reading lists soon. **JFQ**

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NOTE

¹ See Thomas Shanker, “Three Officers Face Reprimands Over 2008 Battle,” *The New York Times*, March 13, 2010, A8.



The Generals: American Military Command from World War II to Today

By Thomas E. Ricks
Penguin Press, 2012
576 pp. \$32.95
ISBN: 978-1-59420-404-3

Reviewed by
ALAN L. GROPMAN

Tom Ricks has done it again, producing an interesting and useful book. He has two major themes in *The Generals*. The first is with Army generals today: senior leaders are unable to remove inadequate generals. His second is more important: the costly incapability of the generals to think and act strategically. In every case of disaster Ricks cites, strategic thinking was absent.

The book contains 30 chapters (and an epilogue) covering World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the two Iraq wars. The author sketches portraits of U.S. Army (and one Marine Corps) general officers from World War II forward. There are heroes including George C. Marshall, Dwight D. Eisenhower, O.P. Smith, Matthew Ridgway, and David Petraeus (the book was published before Petraeus resigned from the Central Intelligence Agency). There are also villains including Maxwell Taylor, William Westmoreland, Tommy Franks, and Ricardo Sanchez.

The strategic debacle in Vietnam is exceptionally well treated. Ricks’s cogent analysis is a searing critique of errors that we must never make again, and it tells readers how to lose a war—and in doing so damaging America’s reputation, severely weakening the home country, provoking

runaway inflation, and, most importantly, wasting 58,000 American lives.

Ricks’s generalized portraits of the World War II generals will meet with broad acceptance. His model officer is Marshall, an Army chief of staff who was in the right, place at the right time. The main attribute Ricks cites is Marshall’s inclination to relieve officers he thought were inadequate to the task. He let hundreds go in his 6 years as chief, which became a lost art (except for Ridgway) after he left.

His number one antihero is Taylor. Ricks, unfortunately, gets carried away here: “Maxwell Taylor arguably was the most destructive general in American history. As Army Chief of Staff in the 1950s, he steered the U.S. military toward engaging in ‘brushfire wars.’” Also, “[H]e encouraged President John F. Kennedy to deepen American involvement in Vietnam. As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, he poisoned relations between the military and the civilian leadership. He was also key in picking Gen. William Westmoreland to command the war there.”

To begin with, Taylor steered neither the Army nor the *military* in any direction while he was chief of staff. Dwight Eisenhower was the President, and his grand strategy did not focus on “brushfire wars,” and certainly neither did the Air Force strategy. This was the era of strategic bombers, massive retaliation, and bomber-pilot generals put in command of Air Force fighter commands by bomber-pilot chiefs of staff. Secondly, Eisenhower was never the ultimate decisionmaker (certainly not in the 1950s), and in the next decade, he worked under a strong-willed Secretary of Defense and determined Presidents who were much more culpable for the Vietnam tragedy.

There is, therefore, a balanced shortcoming in this book. Ricks has abundant examples of senior officers failing in their missions because they were strategically inept, but all of them had civilian supervisors who, while not getting a complete pass from Ricks, are not nearly as appropriately condemned by the author. I realize the title is *The Generals*, but there are levels of authority above combat general officers.

Presidents Kennedy and Johnson did not have to follow Taylor into oblivion in Vietnam. Johnson was not required to let Westmoreland fight with a totally backward ground strategy while dropping more tons

of bombs on South Vietnam than were dropped on Germany and Japan combined in World War II. President George H.W. Bush and Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney did not have to let Norman Schwarzkopf stop Operation *Desert Storm* after 4 days of ground warfare, leaving Iraq's Republican Guard nearly intact and prolonging Saddam Hussein's murderous reign for more than a dozen years.

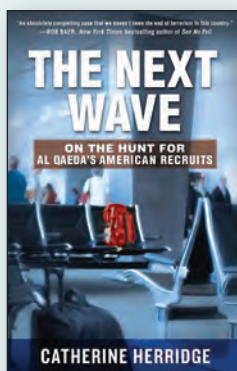
Regarding Operation *Iraqi Freedom*, Generals Tommy Franks and Ricardo Sanchez were tacticians when strategists were needed. The former rushed to Baghdad leaving his support forces to be mauled by bypassed mujahideen, and the latter permitted the inhumane treatment of Iraqi insurgents and rounded-up civilians as well as the atrocities at Abu Ghraib prison. These actions made enemies of the Iraqi population, and Ricks completely misappropriates the blame.

Finally, Ricks appears to believe counterinsurgency combat is a valid combat mission for the U.S. military. It is *not*. I do not understand why any political decision-maker, after costly failures in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, would advocate counterinsurgency. We go to war in places we do not understand—in order to save nondemocratic and often corrupt states that are open to attacks by insurgents—against adversaries who have greater knowledge than we do of the countries we fight.

We need to continue to study counterinsurgency art to advise states seeking our help, and who are worthy of our help, ever careful to avoid mission creep, but not sacrificing our people—58,000 in a losing effort in Vietnam, thousands more in Iraq—and our wealth, estimated to be \$1 trillion in Iraq. Tell me what we got for our money and our lost men and women.

That said, read Tom Ricks's *The Generals* to appreciate better the awful costs to the United States of failures in strategic thinking. **JFQ**

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The Next Wave: On the Hunt for Al Qaeda's American Recruits

By Catherine Herridge

Crown Forum, 2011

272 pp. \$25.00

ISBN: 978-0-30788-525-8

Reviewed by

GEORGE MICHAEL

In the final years of his life, Osama bin Laden served mainly as an inspirational figure rather than an actual commander. He counseled his faithful that jihad was an individual duty for every Muslim capable of going to war. Ominously, a small but notable number of Americans have answered his call. In fact, American recruits are highly valued by al Qaeda for their passports and abilities to blend in with American society. In her book *The Next Wave*, Catherine Herridge explores the travails of prominent American jihadists. She draws on her 10-year experience reporting on the war on terror and cites numerous military and intelligence officials and analysts.

The chief focus of her book is Anwar al-Awlaki, who played an important operational role for al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and reached out to several American jihadists. For instance, al-Awlaki exerted a strong influence over Major Nidal Malik Hasan, with whom he exchanged several emails. On November 5, 2009, the Virginia-born Muslim and U.S. Army psychiatrist went on a shooting rampage at Fort Hood, Texas, that killed 13 people and left 38 wounded. On Christmas day of that same year, a young Nigerian, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, attempted to ignite an explosive device that was sewn into his underwear while he traveled on Northwest Flight 253 from Amsterdam to Detroit.

According to Herridge's sources, al-Awlaki had coached the Nigerian on security and surveillance in Western countries and was the middleman between Abdulmutallab and the bombmaker. Al-Awlaki's sermons also inspired Faisal Shahzad, a seemingly upright and assimilated middle-class computer technician and U.S. citizen who lived in Connecticut but was born in Pakistan. Shahzad attempted to detonate three bombs in an SUV parked in the heart of Times Square in New York City in May 2010. Once characterized as the "bin Laden of the Internet," Al-Awlaki's pronouncements have been broadcast on jihadist Web sites and YouTube. Fluent in both Arabic and English, he had an encyclopedic knowledge of Islam and was regarded as a gifted speaker who was capable of moving his listeners to action.

Al-Awlaki was born in 1971 in New Mexico, where his father pursued his higher education. Sometime in 1977 or 1978, the family returned to Yemen, where the senior al-Awlaki went on to become a well-respected and well-connected government minister. In 1991, Anwar al-Awlaki returned to America to pursue a degree in engineering at Colorado State University. He misrepresented himself as foreign born, presumably to receive a \$20,000 scholarship from the U.S. State Department in a program intended for foreign students. On his Social Security application, he claimed that he was born in Yemen and was issued a new Social Security number. When he renewed his passport in 1993, however, he presented his birth certificate, which indicated that he was actually born in New Mexico, but he used his fraudulently obtained Social Security number.

After graduation, al-Awlaki moved to San Diego where he became the imam of the al-Rabat Mosque. While there in the late 1990s, he met regularly with Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Midhar, two of the 9/11 hijackers. Herridge avers that al-Awlaki was part of a support cell sent to the United States prior to 9/11. Sometime in 2001, he moved to Falls Church, Virginia, where he became the imam of the Dar al-Hijra Islamic Center and crossed paths with Hani Hanjour who, along with Hazmi and al-Midhar, hijacked American Airlines Flight 77, which slammed into the Pentagon. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents took an immediate interest in al-Awlaki