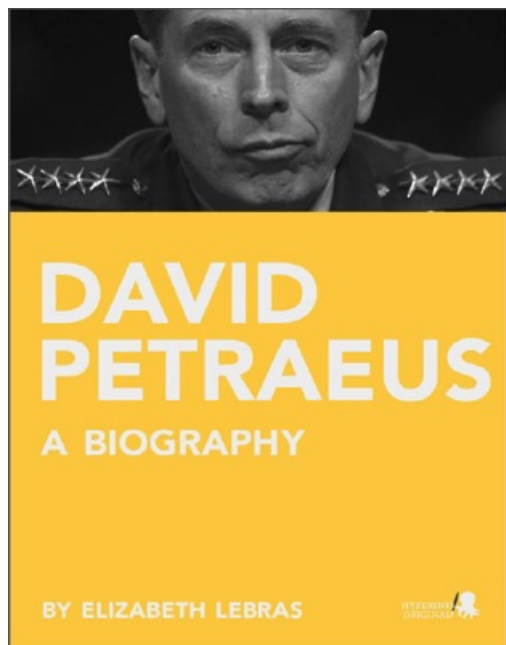


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## ABOUT THE BOOK

In late 2006, President George Bush concluded that the American strategy in Iraq had failed. US-led coalition forces were unable to suppress the Sunni and Shiite-led insurgencies, which had carried out hundreds of violent attacks throughout Iraq. In the face of persistent violence, General George Casey, then commander of coalition forces in Iraq, advocated a phased withdrawal of US troops and the handing over of authority to Iraqi security forces. But Bush perceived that the withdrawal of troops would signal the US was abandoning Iraq, leaving the fight unfinished. Iraqi security forces were, moreover, still too weak and few in number to halt the country's sectarian violence.

Bush had grown frustrated with Casey's determination to draft a rapid exit plan from Iraq. At a meeting with his generals at the Pentagon, he was quoted as saying: "What I want to hear from you is how we're going to win, not how we're going to leave."

The US strategy in Iraq, prior to 2007, had failed to anticipate the continued strength and growth of the country's insurgencies, according to experts quoted by the New York Times. The insurgencies had emerged in the aftermath of the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq and the toppling of the government of Saddam Hussein. Extremist clerics, like the Shiite Moktada al-Sadr, acted as catalysts for violence. A Sunni-led insurgency appeared in the months following the invasion, comprised of former members of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party, who had been fired from their government positions. As the war progressed, insurgencies splintered and more groups appeared, fueled by hatred of the occupying forces.

Experts say that Al Qaeda established a presence in Iraq after Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian militant and leader of the organization of One God and Jihad, swore obedience to Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in 2004. The group, which subsequently changed its name to Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, has been blamed for kidnappings, bombings, and beheadings throughout Iraq. After a US airstrike killed Zarqawi in 2006, his group broke into several offshoots that continued to carry out attacks.

In the face of continued violence in Iraq, Bush concluded in early 2007 that a new team and strategy were needed to achieve victory in the war. In January 2007, Bush named David Petraeus commander of coalition forces in Iraq, replacing General Casey. He also replaced General John Abizaid, head of Central Command, with Admiral William Fallon. Within a few months, Bush also appointed a new US Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, who replaced Zalmay Khalilzad.

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