



The Strongest Tribe: War, Politics, and the Endgame in Iraq

By Bing West

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In Iraq, the United States made mistake after mistake. Many Americans gave up on the war. Then two generals—David Petraeus and Raymond Odierno—displayed the leadership America expected. Bringing the reader from the White House to the fighting in the streets, combat journalist and bestselling author Bing West explains this astounding turnaround by U.S. forces. In the course of fifteen extended trips over five years, West embedded with more than sixty front-line units, discussing strategy with generals and tactics with corporals. Disposing of myths, he provides an expert's account of the counterinsurgency. This is the definitive study of how American soldiers actually fought.

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Editorial Review

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This is West's third book about the war in Iraq; his previous one (*No True Glory*, 2005) is an account of the ferocious battle of Fallujah in 2004. This one pivots on the war's major strategic development since then, President George Bush's December 2006 decision to reinforce American troops; describing the so-called surge—its political origin, strategic concept, and tactical implementation—is West's purpose here. Subscribing to the general opinion that the initial occupation of Iraq was bungled, West briskly dispenses his critique of the years 2003–5 to intently examine the situation as of 2006. His inspection assumes the narrative form of accompanying American units on patrol, conveying a gritty sense of counterinsurgency war and the frustrations American officers have experienced conducting this one. West seems relieved to introduce the commanders of the surge in Iraq, Generals David Petraeus and Ray Odierno, and he unreservedly extols the courage of soldiers and marines who have carried it out. Arguing they have retrieved the situation, West encourages optimism about the outcome of America's war in Iraq. --Gilbert Taylor

Review

"Balanced, panoramic assessment of the Iraq War by former Marine and Reagan administration veteran West (*No True Glory*, 2005, etc.), who heralds American soldiers as its unsung heroes amid the "fog of Washington". . . A timely, eye-opening historical analysis that provides clarity around the difficult choices the next president faces." —*Kirkus*, **starred review**

"In this important new chronicle of the war in Iraq, Bing West reveals how America reached the brink of defeat in 2006 and then managed in 2007 to stage a stunning turnaround. With its vivid, on-the-ground reporting, his book is a fitting tribute to the honor, valor, and toughness of our soldiers. Notwithstanding numerous mistakes by their leaders, West shows that their sacrifices have made success possible—as long we do not withdraw prematurely."—**Senator John S. McCain**

"Sometimes the best way to support the troops is to criticize the generals. Bing West does both well in this book, showing a sympathy for our soldiers and Marines, but also a great ear for military truth and a determination to render events accurately. This is his third and most important book about the Iraq war. Read it."

—Thomas E. Ricks, author of *FIASCO: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*

"A brilliant exposition. Based on extensive experience in the war zone, Bing West recounts how Soldiers and Marines showed the President and the Pentagon the way to solve the Iraq insurgency problem. Echoing the admonition that "all politics are local", *The Strongest Tribe* convincingly argues that it was a grass roots strategy developed by on-scene officers who forged ties at the tribal level that brought stability to Iraq's turbulent Anbar Province and provided hope for all Iraq."

—Lt. Gen. Bernard E. Trainor USMC (Ret.) Co-author of *The Generals' War* and *COBRA II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*

"Some four decades ago I told Bing West that his book, *The Village*, would become a classic in counterinsurgency warfare. And so it did. "The Strongest Tribe" will surely be West's second classic—a moving and detailed account of almost six years of war in Iraq." —Dr. James R. Schlesinger, Director of Central Intelligence Agency, Nixon administration; Secretary of Defense, Ford administration; Chairman, The Mitre Corporation

"West calls it like he sees it, and there is probably no American not wearing a uniform who has seen more of this war." —*Washington Post Book World*

"An authoritative testament . . . full of eyewitness accounts . . . [Bing] West, who served in Vietnam as a Marine infantry officer, is more than a battlefield observer. He is a military analyst who wants to show how counterinsurgency works."—*Wall Street Journal*

About the Author

Bing West was assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs under President Ronald Reagan. He served in the Marine infantry in Vietnam. Later, as an analyst at the RAND Corporation, he wrote the Vietnam classic *The Village*, that war colleges use as a primer in counterinsurgency. As a correspondent for *The Atlantic Monthly*, West has covered the war for five years. His books on Iraq - *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah* and *The March Up: Taking Baghdad with the United States Marines* (co-authored with MajGen Ray Smith)—have won the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation's General Wallace M. Greene Jr. Award for nonfiction, the Colby Award for military nonfiction, and the Veteran of Foreign Wars Media Award. West is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations; his articles appear in *The New York Times*, *The Wall St. Journal*, and other major newspapers. He appears on National Public Radio and *The Newshour with Jim Lehrer*.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

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