

# MILITARY HISTORY

newsletter

August 2009

Dear Reader,

I am pleased to share with you our second issue of the Palgrave Macmillan military history newsletter. As battle lines are redrawn and the politics of war continue to change everyday, it is more important than ever to learn from the leadership lessons provided by the legacies of each of history's Great Generals. This issue features a Q & A with series editor, General Wesley K. Clark, along with his take on what noteworthy lesson each "Great" gives to us, even today.

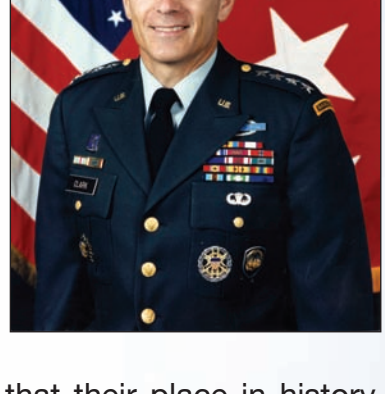
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*Michelle Fitzgerald*  
Senior Marketing Manager



## Q & A with Series Editor, General Wesley K. Clark

**Palgrave Macmillan:** Why do these particular Generals stand out more than others to you on the pages of history?



**General Wesley K. Clark:** All the men we wrote about are noteworthy in their own way. Generals' actions and reputations are shaped by forces beyond their control. No one knows what an Andrew Jackson might have made of the Civil War, or a Robert E. Lee commanding Allied forces at D-Day. Of course all these men were proud of their service, but most were also wise enough and humble enough to know that their place in history wasn't just a function of their intrinsic skill but also of the circumstances in which they found themselves.

**PM:** How important is it for today's aspiring military officers and politicians to learn about the triumphs and failures of the Great Generals?

**GWC:** Reading history and studying leadership in historical circumstances is a vital part of developing oneself as a military leader. History doesn't repeat, but experience counts, and it's much better to learn from someone else's experiences.

**PM:** What is one common lesson threaded throughout the Great Generals series that our new administration and high-ranking commanders can take with them and apply to our international affairs today?

**GWC:** Probably the most important aspect for the new Administration is to focus on the civilian guidance given to the generals. Military leaders need to be given clear mission, adequate resources, and a workable set of policies. Even the top leaders need leadership too.

Click **here** to see all the books in the series

## IN AFGHANISTAN

**"A loving and closely woven account."** —The Guardian  
**"A brilliant history book of Afghanistan's wars."** —New Statesman  
**"Excellent."** —The Times (London)



You can find the full version of this Q & A with David Loyn, author of *In Afghanistan*, **here**.

**Palgrave Macmillan:** How far back does the image of Afghanistan as an unconquerable country extend?

**David Loyn:** Alexander the Great, the most ambitious conqueror in the history of the world, got no further than the Hindu Kush, having conquered all of what is now modern Turkey and Iraq, and having come from Greece. No one has ever actually taken and held Afghanistan. People find it's not a difficult country to take, as the U.S. did in 2001 in a casualty-free war, from the U.S. point of view. But holding the country is very hard.

My book in particular goes back over the past 200 years. It's exactly 200 years since the first British envoy was sent to try to talk to the Afghans. The British wanted to secure their western border, but they never really succeeded in doing it, despite 150 years of bruising wars. The Russians had the same problem in the 1980s. They had far more forces and they lost. It does seem to be something about the country.

**PM:** You note in your book that the Taliban is "not just another Afghan guerrilla group." What makes them unique, and how much of a threat are they to the U.S., especially when compared to Al Qaeda?

**DL:** It's important to differentiate, and I think it's been a bit of a policy failure since 2001. 9/11 was such a shock to U.S. policy. The response to it, which was understandable in terms of attacking the country that was harboring Osama bin Laden, didn't make a distinction between Osama and the Taliban. The Taliban do not have a foreign policy. They are not interested in attacking America. They're interested in defending Afghanistan.

In 2006 I spent a few days with their then-military commander.... The thing that struck me talking to this really quite clever commander — he's not a fool, and he was killed a few months later in a British attack — is how much his worldview was about Afghanistan. This wasn't someone who wanted to blow up the Metro system, or blow people up in New York. He was someone who wanted an Islamic way of life in his country, and he didn't want anyone to get in the way of that. He saw Osama bin Laden as a distraction, and I said, "This is the reason the Americans came." And he said, "Yes, he was our guest." They shared an Islamic view but they didn't share a strategy internationally. There has been a problem since 2001 of the international community not quite seeing this difference.

The other thing about the Taliban is the way they have emerged since the 1990s — with a huge amount of international money, mostly from Saudi Arabia — through education in the Northwest Frontier Provinces. There are madrassas, religious schools, where there are 1.5 million students learning little else but how to read the Koran by rote. That's a huge problem. These schools are sort of Taliban factories. They're turning out a generation of men who see their duty as jihad, to fight a holy war, and every six months or every year, a new regiment comes into Afghanistan and they find a new class graduated from the madrassas. Without some very substantial change in policy, that's not going to change.

**PM:** Do you think Barack Obama's newly outlined strategy for the regime seems different enough from what we've been doing so far?

**DL:** I think it looks very different. I've been around Hillary Clinton and Richard Holbrooke at international summits since the new administration came into power. The language is different. The "if we outstretch our hand, can you unclench your fist" kind of language is completely different. I think it's a completely different strategy on the ground as well. There is a new kind of engagement. It's going to be very difficult to get it right.

I do have one big concern about U.S. policy at the moment. There's a desire to send lots of American civilians into Afghanistan. Barack Obama is very keen on mentoring the Afghans, which makes perfect sense in a theoretical way — having an American judge next to an Afghan judge means it's harder to corrupt that individual. But each one of those Americans will need supervision. The problem since 2001 has been what the World Bank derided as an aid juggernaut, a huge system built in Afghanistan outside the state — what's missing is an effort to build a competent Afghan government. The international community has failed Afghanistan since 2001. It has especially failed Afghan women. This was a war that was particularly popular in the West in part because of the way the Taliban treated women. I met an Afghan member of parliament who said rights for women in Afghanistan now are worse than they were under the Taliban. What she meant is because of the insecurity, they haven't thrown off their burqas and become equal to men. It's also a very traditional society. The Taliban worked with that, they didn't create it, and the international community hasn't worked enough to establish noncorrupt, competent government in Afghanistan. It would be better to spend money training middle-rank civil servants rather than having a clever idea of sending in mentors....

But God it's going to be hard, nobody's ever done it. The British Empire was incredibly strong and powerful in that region and fought pretty ruthless campaigns in Afghanistan, more ruthless in many ways than U.S. forces. The army in retribution in 1842 once burnt down the Kabul market, and in fact the whole city, and it didn't have the effect they wanted.

## MARCHING AHEAD...

Up next from the Great Generals Series:  
**NOAH ANDRE TRUDEAU**  
makes the South rise again...



**"For a century after the death of Robert E. Lee in 1870, his image achieved iconic status in the South—and beyond. In recent decades, however, historians have discovered a flesh and blood Lee who is far more complex and interesting than the marble man of yore. Trudeau's fast-paced biography offers a well-rounded portrait of the real Robert E. Lee."**

—James M. McPherson, bestselling author of *Battle Cry of Freedom*

Look for more great updates in the October issue as we follow Trudeau while he hosts heated discussions on Lee with Civil War experts around the country!

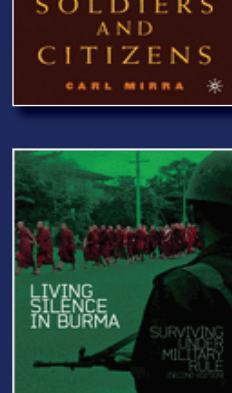
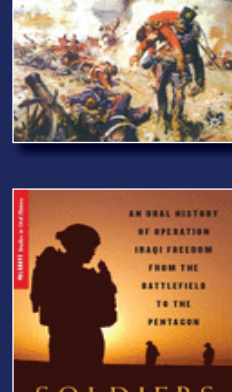
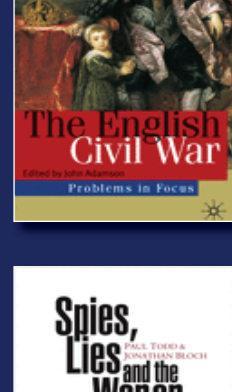
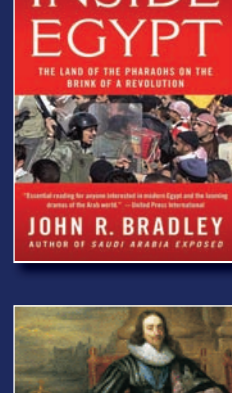
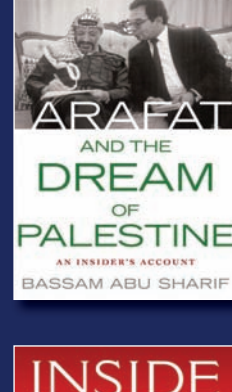
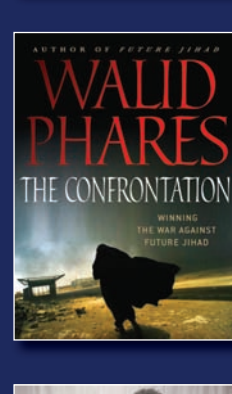
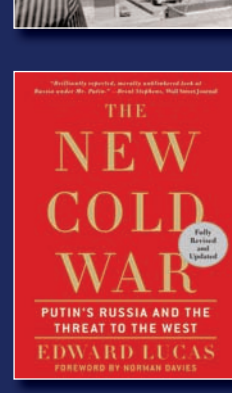
## THE WORLD GENERALS SERIES



Launched with a bang, the first book in this new series takes a closer look at Churchill's most respected enemy.

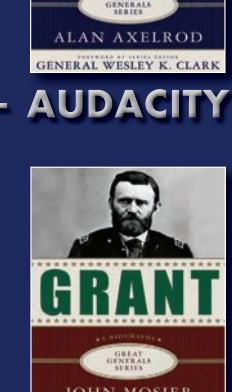
**"Charles Messenger tells the story of Germany's most famous Field Marshal with a verve and brio reminiscent of his subject."**

—Roger Moorhouse, author of *Killing Hitler*

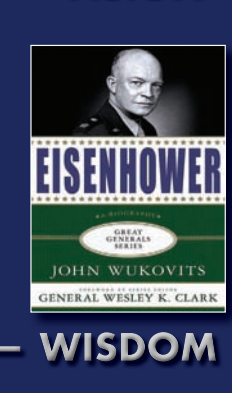


### GREAT GENERALS SERIES

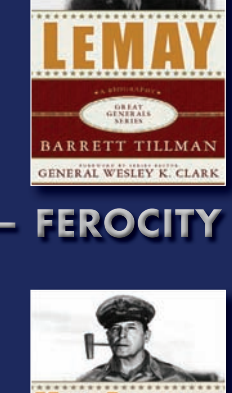
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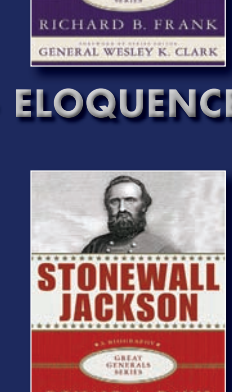
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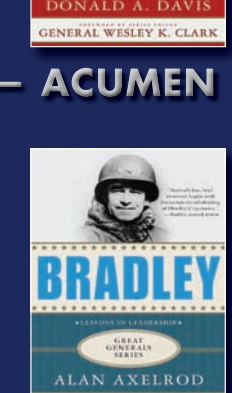
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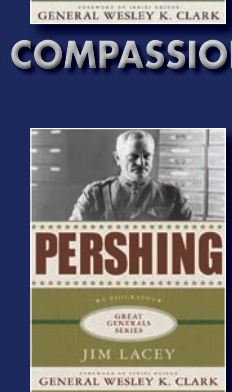
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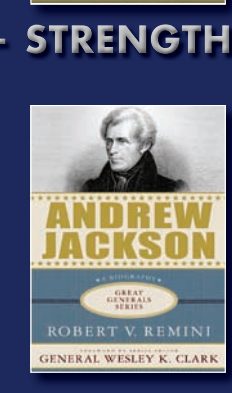
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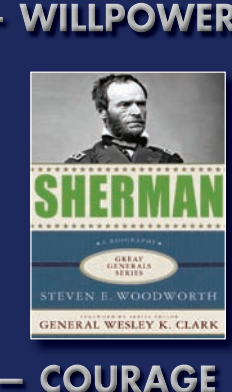
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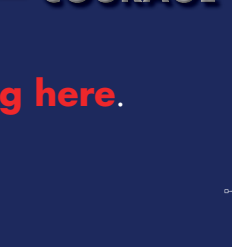
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— STRENGTH —



— WILLPOWER —



— COURAGE —

