



Quicklet on Paula Broadwell and Vernon Loeb's All In: The Education of General David Petraeus

Tom Oliver

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ABOUT THE BOOK

“The printing press is the greatest weapon in the armory of the modern commander” - T.E. Lawrence (“Lawrence of Arabia”)

Paula Broadwell is a West Point grad, former active-duty officer, current reservist, and a defense intellectual, who is conducting research at Harvard’s Center for Public Leadership, and pursuing a doctorate at King’s College London. Broadwell has spent over fifteen years working in the fields of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. She already holds two master’s degrees, is married with two children, and lives in North Carolina.

She met General Petraeus at a speaking engagement and dinner at Harvard, and the two hit it off, given Broadwell’s background as a soldier, and her interest in public policy. She decided to do a case study of Petraeus’s leadership for her doctoral thesis in that discipline, but when the general was given command of the Afghanistan theater, Broadwell decided to travel to Kabul with him, altering her thesis focus somewhat.

EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK

It’s sad to think that had the US not gotten involved in Iraq, a very different Afghan war might have been fought. The first thing that should have been done differently would have been to plan and execute the Battle of Tora Bora more effectively, using enough US troops, so that al-Qaeda fighters, including their leader Osama Bin Laden, could not escape into Pakistan. Petraeus believed that perhaps the US might have won in Vietnam if we had stayed for the ‘long haul’, and if we had had a ‘Vietnamese’ Jose Napoleon Duarte.

One wonders, first, what Petraeus might mean by a ‘long haul’, given that the US fought in

Vietnam for at least eight years. He also seems oblivious to the differences between these wars. The Salvadoran civil war was motivated in large part by inequitable land distribution; the Vietnam conflict traced back to a war of independence against the Japanese, and later, the French. Broadwell mentions “Operation Just Cause”, the American invasion of Panama in 1989.

While summarizing this invasion, which she paints as the effort to put the criminal Noriega in jail and protect the canal, democracy, and Panamanians (from an unnamed threat), the author leaves out the untidy facts of significant civilian casualties, and the chaos and economic hardship that existed for years after the military action.

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

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Shirley Akins:

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