

The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan. By Ronald E. Neumann. Washington: Potomac Books, 2009. 245 pages. \$27.50. **Reviewed by Colonel Richard A. Lacquement, Jr.**, Director of Military History and Strategy, US Army War College, and author of *Shaping American Military Capabilities after the Cold War*.

This is an excellent book. Ambassador Neumann has produced an engaging and valuable memoir of the experiences of an ambassador at war. *The Other War* is a fascinating compilation of key events, policy analysis, and enduring themes that should command the attention of foreign policy and national security practitioners and scholars. It is a highly relevant book both for informing the continuing and immediate challenges of Afghanistan and for enriching the study of broad and timeless themes at the heart of diplomacy and war.

This is a story of a US ambassador posted to a major front in the United States' most significant military campaign of the young millennium. Ambassador Neumann presents an authoritative account of major events of the US enterprise in Afghanistan while he was Chief of Mission from July 2005 to April 2007.

The author's account highlights American choices regarding policy and strategy toward Afghanistan and its place as a theater in a larger conflict—sometimes the main effort but other times not (as was the case during Ambassador Neumann's tenure). He weaves together threads of his work with military leaders (especially then-Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry), Afghan leaders (especially President Hamid Karzai), other Coalition partners, and, most extensively, his participation in the processes to shape policy and ensure that it is coupled with effective policy implementation (particularly the resourcing of military forces and funding). The book also provides an accessible account of strategic leadership. Ambassador Neumann describes his choices in running the embassy, working with Washington, taking care of his people, getting out in the field, and leading by example (with vignettes ranging from high-level diplomacy to participation in staff volleyball games).

Ambassador Neumann's perspective on Afghanistan should be of profound interest to national security professionals in the United States and other countries. The book powerfully illuminates an event worthy of study for both present-day policy relevance and for lessons learned that can inform refinement of US national security processes, programs, and education for years to come.

Although explicitly mentioned only a few times in the body of the book, the backdrop of the entire account is highlighted in the title. Afghanistan is the other war, the war other than Iraq. Although the ambassador's efforts unrelentingly focused on trying to win in Afghanistan, a key subtext is the degree to which the Iraq War sucked much of the oxygen out of the room for policy consideration, and most of the resources. This context accounts for many of the frustrations that dog his attempts to help obtain the necessary resources for policy implementation.

There are few senior leaders who can offer such a rich and relevant background in rendering an important account of diplomacy and war. Ambassador Neumann's personal authority derives from his expertise as a diplomat and his extensive experience in nations facing insurgency (Vietnam as a junior Army officer and Algeria, Iraq, and Afghanistan as a diplomat). An interesting part of his personal connection to Afghanistan is that his father was US Ambassador there from 1966-73. Ambassador Neumann's book, with its perceptive analysis, is yet another laudable contribution in a long career of valuable service to the nation.

The book does not just offer a description or history of the author's tenure in Afghanistan. He is mindful of continuing American and international efforts to win the war in Afghanistan. The book's description of bureaucratic struggles concerning policy and strategy in Afghanistan feed what the author knew were ongoing debates as the book hit the street (and is given credence by the May 2009 preface penned by Bruce Riedel, an important leader of President Obama's initial review of Afghanistan policy). These debates still have great currency today, almost a year after the book was published, but will likely affect the book's contemporary relevance. The vignettes that support themes such as the inadequacy of financial and military resourcing have immediacy to contemporary policy debates in which Ambassador Neumann clearly takes sides. He makes a compelling argument that has to be taken seriously. Quoting his closing paragraph, "I still believe that success is possible if we have the vision to persevere and the will to resource our vision. America can lead the international effort if it does so with patience, an understanding that it cannot make all the decisions come out our way, and a willingness to fill the gaps that allies will not cover. We will need the honesty to report accurately what is happening, the good and the bad, if we are to maintain credibility over the long-run. And it will be a long-run, but it can be done."

This book is the 32d volume in the Diplomats and Diplomacy book series of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and Diplomatic and Consular Officers, Retired, Inc. "The series seeks to demystify diplomacy by telling the story of those who have conducted our foreign relations, as they lived, influenced, and reported them." Ambassador Neumann fulfills this charter splendidly.