Converse Holds Model Arab League Reunion

by Joe P. Dunn

As part of Converse College’s 125 Year Alumnae Reunion Weekend, April 25-27, Converse Model Programs, held a 25th Model Arab League Reunion. Former Model participants from the full 25 years of the program were joined by members of the present delegation to reminisce over the history of the program. Although only a small number of the a little less than two hundred participants in the program over the years were able to attend, the group included a large number of former head delegates and some of the most distinguished former delegates. These included Sally Lee “Danneman” [married names in quotations], one of the six original delegates who ventured to American University in March 1988 with little idea what we were doing. Dr. Lisa Wimberly “Allen”, now a professor of religion at Gardner-Webb University, was a member of the second year delegation, Converse’s first council.
chair, and her performance was so outstanding that the National Council gave an award for the first time as Best Chair in her honor. The award was not given again until 1994 when again a Converse student received it and Converse took that award each year from 1994 through 2003 at the National Model. For three consecutive years Converse held every chair position at the National Model. A small sample of other notables among an entirely distinguished assembly included Casey Addis, foreign service officer who would leave within days to become a political officer in the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad; Valerie Brock “Naglich,” director for HIV/AIDS prevention for the Center for Disease Control International, who has worked extensively in southern Africa; Megan Madison, former Fulbright Scholar in Jordan, who has continued to live there, plays with and teaches for the Royal Jordanian National Symphony, and has formed her own NGO to work with Syrian refugees in Amman; Dr. Nitu Bagchi “Knox,” assistant professor of mathematics, at Chaplain University in Pennsylvania; Dr. Melanie Brown “Knox,” assistant professor of mathematics, at Chaplin College in Vermont.

Participants from the early years were amazed to see how the program has grown, developed, and professionalized over the years. Some traditions have remained for 25 years and other current practices were new and novel additions for the “oldtimers.” Delegates from the various decades told stories about the different venues and rivalries from the past. Converse’s first year in 1988 the Model was held at American University and delegates were housed several miles away at the Howard Johnson Hotel (which the next year became the Savoy Hotel) on Wisconsin Ave. across from the Russian Embassy. The six individuals the first year, selected from Dr. Joe Dunn’s course on Islamic and Middle East Politics, traveled in the family van of one of the delegates. An exploratory venture, the delegation had done virtually no preparation and had no idea what to expect. Nevertheless, the six delegate members and the group were hooked. The next year a delegation of ten members won more awards and held two of the five chair positions. In 1990, in its third year, the Converse delegation, representing Palestine, took the Best Delegation Award, and Converse was on its way to what would become the long record of achievement of the delegation. For most of the 1990s Converse had two delegations at the National Model and several times both delegations won delegation awards; the highpoint occurred in 2001 when both of the Converse delegations took the Outstanding Delegation Awards. Awarded 2002 Converse delegation needed to have more than one delegation. Traveling to DC was always an adventure. The trips to DC produced some memorable events and crises over the years. In 1993 a northeast snow storm, which deposited 17 inches of snow on the nation’s capital made it impossible for the team to leave on Sunday. Dr. Dunn spent an entire day digging the school bus out from the snow drifts before the team could depart on Tuesday. In 2009 the Georgetown Hotel moved the Converse rented bus without informing anyone and then did not know where it was located. The bus was reported stolen, which resulted in five hours of police reports, insurance paperwork, and arranging to rent two vans to get the students back to Spartanburg; the weary group finally made it home after 3:00 a.m. While on the return trip home, the hotel found the bus, but it was necessary to rent a return trip to Washington to reclaim the bus. The next year Dr. Dunn engaged a professional transportation company to deliver the delegation, but the bus broke down on M Street before reaching the hotel. The delegation, which had spent much of the night on the bus traveling to Washington, had a briefing scheduled at the U.S. Embassy on M Street. On one of the busiest streets in the city, the students unloaded their luggage from under the bus, changed clothes on the bus, walked a mile to the Embassy, and arrived on time for their briefing. These are only a few examples of the travel adventures.

In 1991 the National Model left the American University campus for Georgetown University, where it had actually begun back in 1982. In late 1990s the councils started being held in the host hotel rather than on the Georgetown campus. Over the years, the hotel venues moved to the Georgetown Holiday Inn, the Capitol Hill Hilton, the Sofitel Hotel at the Georgetown University, Washington Plaza Hotel, and the present location at the Georgetown Hotel on the Georgetown University campus. Each location had its merits and disadvantages.

The first Converse National Model Secretary General was “Missy” Stuart in 1995 and Katie Abbott served as ASG. Today Dr. Melissa Stuart “Dillmon” is one of the nation’s leading oncologist physicians and scholars. Others who followed in her footsteps as Secretary General include Wendy Rogers Johnson in 1999, Angie Brookhart in 2001, Maria Perry in 2002, Josie Fingerhut in 2005, Hillary Berry in 2012, and Kaylee Boalt in 2014. Converse also produced several ASG’s of the year. All of these women have pursued distinguished careers.

Converse started out at the National Model but began attending SERMAL Summit in 1999, Angie Brookhart held in Savannah, Georgia. In 1998 Converse agreed to run the Southeast Model on its campus for one year, and it became a permanent fixture there since then. Converse has taken the Outstanding Delegation Award every year during this tenure, and the Southeast Model has become the premier regional model in the nation, at times rivaling the National Model in number of participants. Attracting the top delegations in the country, the winning delegations at SERMAL usually reprise their success within the next two weeks at the National Model. In 2005 Converse expanded into participation in International Model NATO. In the second year of participation Converse was named the permanent Secretariat for International Model NATO and runs the event annually as well as being the award-winning delegation every year as well. In every respect, the 25th Model Arab Reunion was a great joy and success. Dr. Dunn expressed that he was overwhelmed by the outpouring of praise for the program in the lives of these women and for the personal tributes to his role in their development. He remarked that although past retirement age, he plans on being around for many more years to bask in the glory of continued Model Programs success. He stated, “It is the best thing that I have been able to do for my students in my 44 years as a classroom teacher at the college level, and we still have a lot to accomplish in the next decade.”

Converse Wins at Southeast Model

Once again Converse had a strong showing at the Southeast Model Arab League event, held at Converse College, March 14-16, 2013. The Converse delegation, comprised primarily of freshman finished in a tie for fourth-place. The three delegations judged Outstanding were Jordan (Converse), Qatar (Georgia State University), and Sudan (Northeastern University). The next three delegations, deemed Distinguished, were Lebanon (Converse), Bahrain (Mercer University), and Oman (Georgia Perimeter College). Other council winners which included Jacksonville State, Citadel, Spartanburg Community College, Virginia Tech, University of North Carolina-Charlotte, University of North Carolina-Pembroke, Guilford Technical Community College, and Kennesaw State. A distinctive feature at the conference was the participation of two premier secondary schools. Southside Christian Academy from Greenwood, South Carolina returned for a second year and represented Kuwait. The Spartanburg Day School, represented Somalia, in its first year. Both schools distinguished themselves and received notice by both the judges and their peers.

Victoria Ball presided as the Secretary-General and Mary Clare Johnson served as Assistant Secretary General. Kaylee Boalt (Converse) was voted the outstanding chair for her leadership in the Head of State Council (HOS). Kaylee, a sophomore, was named as distinguished chair for her work in the Political Council.
The largest National Model Arab League ever, almost 400 delegates, representing the 22 Arab League nations and two observer countries, India and Turkey, convened on the Georgetown University campus, March 28-30, 2014. The Keynote Speaker was His Excellency Mohammed Jaham Al Kuwari, the Qatar Ambassador to the U.S. Other special guests included Her Excellency Selwa “Lucky” Roosevelt and His Royal Highness Prince Abdulmajeed bin Abdulilah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

Secretary General Kaylee Boalt (Converse College) presided with able assistance from Assistant Secretary-Generals Victoria Ball (Converse College) and Tyler Swenson (University of Houston Honors College). Alongside the eight councils and the Arab Court of Justice, the new Joint Crisis Council convened at the National Model as participants devoted the three days to an ongoing series of diplomacy, negotiations, and conflict between the Bashir Assad regime in Syria and the Syrian Opposition Coalition.

Faculty advisers were treated to a breakfast discussion on regional issues by Dr. John Duke Anthony, President and CEO of the sponsoring National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations and a luncheon presentation and Q & A by Colonel David Des Roches of the Near East and South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, in Washington, DC. All delegates and faculty enjoyed a very nice banquet on Friday evening.

Converse delegation at SERMAL

Rickey Millwood, a retired social studies teacher with twenty years’ experience in high school Model United Nations, who has served as a judge at SERMAL for many years, was recognized with the Southeast Model Arab League Lifetime Service Award, for his excellent work and invaluable contributions to the success of the model.

A new venue at SERMAL was the Joint Crisis Council, in which two cabinets, one representing the Bashir Assad government and the other the Syrian Opposition Coalition, engaged in a series of diplomatic and international power play machinations during the entire weekend. Participants had a lively and enjoyable time as they interacted in real time in both serious diplomacy and in pure-fun fantasy.

The keynote speaker for the conference was Dr. Grace Bagwell Adams, assistant professor at the University of Georgia. Dr. Adams spoke about the skills acquired during in Model Arab League during her career at Converse and offered advice for delegates who aspired to pursue careers in whatever fields they might choose after graduation. Delegates again enjoyed an Arab banquet on Saturday evening.

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The 2015 Southeast Model Arab League will be held next year on March 13-15, 2014.

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Converse Winning Delegation at the Northeast Regional MAL in Boston.

Lifetime Service Award for Rickey Millwood

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Largest National Model on Record

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As someone who has repeatedly traveled to Tunisia many times over the years, with some seventy-five students, four family members and various friends in tow, it was with great eagerness and some trepidation that I left for Tunisia last October for the first time since the events of January 2011. The event was a two-day celebration of the life of Dr. Nabiha Jerad, an accomplished scholar and champion of human relations who worked indefatigably to encourage students as well as educators from North Africa, Europe and the U.S. to engage each other in conversation. Victim of a tragic car accident in her hometown on the islands of Kerkennah, scholars and friends from several continents were convening, one year later, to pay homage to her person and to her work.

The news from Tunisia since January 2011 had frequently been disquieting: two opposition leaders murdered in the light of day, police officers killed by militant clashes near the Algerian border and also south of Tunis, attacks by Salaftars on hotels and other sites serving alcohol, the imprisonment of cartoonists and journalists, the stormsing of the American Embassy and the ransacking of the American School, the rape of a young woman by three policemen, the defacement of artwork labeled sacrilegious, an unemployment rate of 15%, and, most recently, mass protests demanding that the Islamist party Ennahda step down. There were also, though, a number of triumphs frequently cited by observers domestic and foreign, including the formation of numerous political parties, the writing of a constitution, the proliferation of independent newspapers, peaceable demonstrations throughout Tunisia that blends fusha and derja, and French, and each exacts an influence on how one perceives the world.

What Nabiha noticed about the early mottoes of the revolution is that they came in several languages, including English. Although Mohammed Bouazizi’s suicide was scarcely an act sanctioned by Islam, society did not hesitate to express support for this man who urgently proclaimed his need for change in terms that were neither specifically Arab nor Muslim, but instead universal. His supporters used phrases that were variations on slogans from other countries, “Obama, yes we can: yes we do;” some emphasized both national pride and membership in a larger community, “Je suis 100% tunisien, ma langue officielle est la Derja. Comme dit ma grand-mère: google it/I am 100% Tunisian, my official language is Derja. As my grandmother says, ‘Google it.’” What characterized the mottoes was their multilingualism, and that they were uttered using the entire verbal repertory of Tunisians without ever referring to Western imperialism, to the ideology of pan-Arabism, to ultra orthodox Islam or to the Palestinian cause, all four of which often lend shape to political conversations in the Maghreb. Present were often short phrases in the imperative such as the command issued to Ben Ali and to his family that adopted Dégage/Get out!” formerly used by the French when addressing Tunisians.

Unfortunately, the multilingual and often playful nature of the slogans that reappropriated historically significant terms was lost as the country engaged in the political debates that led up to the elections for the Constitutional Assembly. As various entities competed for votes, forums
on television, the radio, Facebook and elsewhere began opposing two main groups: the secularists versus the Islamists. Because there is no word in Tunisian Arabic for “secular” that is commonly recognized, the original intention of words like “islamiste,” or Arabized form of the French “laïciste,” or “almunayzi,” “fusha” Arabic for “secularization” and originally used in the 19th century to designate adapting religion to the “alam” or world in which one currently found oneself, were easy to manipulate. Rarely understood outside circles schooled in fusha Arabic, “almunayzi,” in the social media, came to designate all which would pose limits to any expression of religious faith. Those more familiar with the spirit of the words as they are commonly recognized, the original connotations of words like “islamiste” to refer to someone for whom Islam became tied to extremism, politics, this when the original term can mean someone for whom Islam serves as a cultural referent only. By exploiting the negative connotations of words often mistranslated into other languages, each party courted votes by presenting Tunisians with an untenable dichotomy, either you felt respect for the nation’s age-old traditions or you were a friend of progress, a binary opposition present that trampled the universalism present in the opening days of the uprising.

With all this in mind, I wondered what I would notice about Tunisia in late October of 2013, just days after the protests that led Ennahda to agree to step down. I spent my first afternoon in the welcoming fold of Nabiha’s family and also, briefly, in the narrow streets of Tunisia’s lovely medina, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Accompanied by a good friend Hamadi Ben Saïd, a very talented collage artist whose works adorn the United Nations office in Tunis, as well as many other buildings in and near the medina, we head for the section where I can buy scarves for my friends. Hamadi stops to point out a building he has just been to, Sidi Saïd, the oldest school in the city. It once housed a school where nuns offered programs for the neighborhood children. "It looks like nothing,” this man who has frequently donated his time to working with street children in Tunisia and France laments. His dismay is somber in the car as Nabiha’s cousin drives from Tunis to Carthage. There had been three bomb scares the previous day. But recent and past events were only a vast expanse of varying shades of blue in its tribute to the woman who constantly journeyed across seas and oceans to learn from the world. Nabiha loved her country but she also refused to be defined by any identity specific to either the northern or southern rim of the Mediterranean. She navigated her way through Carthage, this historic villa is where the documents for Tunisia’s independence from France as well as the Declaration of the Rights of Women were signed. “Houses of wisdom” date back to the ninth century and appear to have been places that served as libraries, conference centers and places where scholarly works were translated and copied. Right across from the villa stands the Roman baths, an accomplishment that dates back to the fourth century BCE, remarkable in that in the heyday of this maritime power, it held one port ensconced within another, part of an ingenious system of self defense that allowed its fleet of some two hundred and twenty of the era’s most powerful warships to lure enemy boats into what looked like a peaceable, commercial harbor. In this city, Panic sites like the home of the Academy, Hannibal’s grandfather, neighbor Roman baths, which lie within a short walk of Christian basilicas where Saints Carthage and Amenin walked. The director tells me that he had discussed whether it was the office of the priest or the value of the incumbent that gave meaning to the sacredness. “Houses of wisdom” date back to the fourth century BCE, remarkable in that in the heyday of this maritime power, it held one port ensconced within another, part of an ingenious system of self defense that allowed its fleet of some two hundred and twenty of the era’s most powerful warships to lure enemy boats into what looked like a peaceable, commercial harbor. In this city, Panic sites like the home of the Academy, Hannibal’s grandfather, neighbor Roman baths, which lie within a short walk of Christian basilicas where Saints Carthage and Amenin walked. The director tells me that he had discussed whether it was the office of the priest or the value of the incumbent that gave meaning to the sacredness.

On the following day I make a pilgrimage to El Abdellia palace. Built at the end of the sixteenth century by Aboud Abdallah Mohamed, a Berber, and rare and elegant example of Hafsid architecture in Tunisia. Located on the site of the ancient port of La Marsa, this is where Salafis defaced several works during an art exhibit called the “Spring of the Arts,” an annual event that predated the “Arab Spring.” The director tells me that she is eager to avoid dichotomous ways of thinking that pit peoples against each other.

Although I spent the day with a person of Nabiha’s accomplishment collage artist Hamadi Ben Saïd, a very talented painter whose works have been displayed in a public park. Unlike much full-face veil that I had only seen once in Tunisia before 2011, from taking their final exams, they invaded his office and rasilmayed one. It of the women who claimed Professor Kazdaghli had slapped her, but several students witnessed the event, including the president of the film club, who shot a video of the truniper. The next morning, two hundred some men showed up bearing a banner demanding revenge against the man who had insulted their “sister,” this though he had simply been upholding what was a university-wide policy. The black-clad youth temporarily succeeded in flying their flag above the University, but a French major named Khaolsa Rachid climbed a wall and tore it down before being tossed to the ground. Other students, initially paralyzed by inaction, rushed forward, and ran the Tunisian flag back up the pole. The Dean, whose office had just been pelleted with stones, has claimed that the episode will not affect his university’s place in the world. The university quickly became a battleground between progressive students and ultra conservatives, and a trial against Kazdaghli dragged on for a year before his name was cleared. Closed for two months in the spring of 2012, the University of Manouba was the site of strikes and battles, and the discord launched a nation-wide debate on whether or not the university system’s policy of forbidding the niqab should be reversed, which Ennahda
favored doing.

Later that day when I’m walking down a street in Sidi Bou Said, a man walks toward us pulling his wife, I assume she is, by her arm. She is in the niqab, and the arm he holds at an upward angle while pulling on it is in a cast. He scowls as he walks toward us, “Ces gens sont venus ici pour nous casser la tête,” my friend says, his sadness evident. In a play on the French idiom “to break a person’s feet,” which means “to get on a person’s nerves,” my friend is letting me know that he feels that this newcomer in Tunisia is “breaking his head.” “He is ruining our tranquility,” he adds.

Sidi Bou Said is the first place Nabiha brought me to in Tunisia. I had just stepped off the plane and she wanted me to see something beautiful so that my first impression would be positive, as it was, and richly so. Sidi Bou Said houses the mausoleum of the Sufi saint who lent his name to the city. His resting place, which also houses rare manuscripts, was deliberately set on fire in 2013. The attack occurred before the second anniversary of the fall of Ben Ali. It was the twelfth attack on a Tunisian mausoleum, targets of the Wahhabis who consider the preservation of sacred mausoleums as a form of “shirk,” or association of other beings with Allah. Every other day in the street below Sidi Bou Said’s mausoleum except for a couple of shop owners and this sad duo.


One has the impression of sitting in front of a staging of the clash of civilizations.

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That our system works.

13

and you will become like them.

play with the best, model after the best,

no matter what your academic interests,

can be. We have been successful in

been developed through the Model

demonstrate, for me the great joy of

double majors. As the examples below

enter the program from fields as diverse

of majors at the institution. Many who

politics majors, but from the whole range

We don’t draw our team primarily from

college, that is a core component of my

is about leadership development.

peer-modeling, and mentoring.

consistency based on student leadership,

program. It is only one of our practices

Model Programs graduating seniors

in detail all the components of our

is music performance and she is an

an opera singer of exceptional talent who

will study in Italy this summer; but her

Model involvement touched her life and

she added a major in politics. Naturally,

the award as the outstanding politics

Graduation she joined the National

Council on U.S.-Arab Relations as a

Program Assistant.

Delegate #2, is in roommate of #1.

Quite an accomplished room one must

remark. Former music major, turned

historian, she has done it all—debater,

committee chair in both our programs,

Chief Justice of the Arab Court of

Justice, initial representative on the Joint

Crisis Council, Secretary-General of

both the Southeast MAL conference and

International Model NATO. She works in

a local law office, has won research

grants to study the impact of Bluegrass

music during the Great Depression, and

she has been a consultant and campaign

manager for several successful political

campaigns. Before going to graduate

school, she will be a campaign manager

during the Fall 2014 political cycle.

Delegate #3 ranks as possibly the second

best student writer in our program’s

history. A pure debater unsullied with

chair or other administrative roles, she
too won in virtually every model over four

years. I can remember only once when

she failed to take English literature.  I

was her Model involvement touched her

life and she added a major in politics.

Naturally, she won the award as the

outstanding politics graduate as well.

Upon graduation she joined the National

Council on U.S.-Arab Relations as a

Program Assistant.

Delegate #4, is a psychology and

theater major specializing in technical

arts with a political science minor and

she is one of the best classroom students

that I have found. A star debater, she

won award after award, was selected to

be an observer at the 2012 NATO

Summit in Chicago, and will be off to

graduate school in international affairs

at Northeastern University, our chief

Model rival. Very likely we will be

confronting her as a member of the

Northeasten delegation next year. In the

longer term, a policy career is probably

in her future.

Delegate #5 is an art therapy major,

Division II volleyball player, and the

Student Body President. Her athletic

efforts limited her participation. She

joined the delegation as a sophomore

where she established her stature as a
debater, but she gave the group

in her junior year with a serious athletic

injury and the need to attend to serious

health issues in her family. She returned

in her senior year as a first-rate chair

and award-winning debater. In the short

term, she will be an admissions office

recruiter next year before proceeding to

graduate school in art therapy.

Delegate #6 is the anomaly and my

greatest challenge in all my years in

our program. As a freshman, she was

arguably the most introverted student

that I had seen in my classroom. As a

talented two instrument musician with

an acute mind, she had obvious abilities,

but her social development was

inchoate and her life experience almost

nil. I thought that her chances of making

through college were slim. But this kind

of student touches something in me and

I determined to make her a project. It

took two years of reaching out to her

but the results finally started to manifest.

With her permission I started to

moderate, she showed up and excelled in

another of my classes and later declared

a history major. She had friends on our

delegation, and out of the blue, she asked

if she could be considered for the team.

I had always found her meek southern

charm intriguing and in a fit of total

arrogance, I determined to make her

into a successful competitor. I wasn’t

easy; indeed I have seldom taken on a

more frustrating task. She had very

little self-confidence, speaking in public

was actually painful for her, and she

knew almost nothing about international

issues. Beyond the confines of music

performance, she lived in a very

tightly circumscribed world. What

political thoughts she had were narrow

and archaic. But she is example

excellence that our system works.

With intensive peer mentoring from

just the right person and a combination

of encouragement and tough love, we

accomplished our goals. She tried to

quit numerous times, but I simply would

not allow it. As a personality, with a fine

sense of humor and disarming charm

in abundance, began to emerge from

her, my pride swelled and the level of

arrogance of what could be made of

her reached ridiculous proportions. Her

story could fill pages, but suffice it to say

that she and her partner won an

award at the National Model, she

learned to be an effective chair, and she

performed admirably as the Assistant

Secretary-General at the Southeast

Model. As if the stereotype wasn’t bad

enough, she aspires to be a librarian,

but I’m not done with her yet. In many

ways, she eclipses the achievements of

all her more high-powered peers and I

will continue to invoke her development

as testimony to our program.

We have a very good cadre of

underclassmen returning, so next year

I will have the same kinds of stories to

relate about the next graduating senior

class. For me, although well past

normative retirement age, I hope that I

can continue to keep doing this for many

more years. I have said it many times

before that this is the best educational

and developmental opportunity that I

have been able to offer my students in

my more than four decades as a college

professor.

Colonel Mansoor, first in his class at the U.S. Military Academy and Ph.D. historian, served as the executive officer to General David Petraeus during the Surge in Iraq, and he was intimately involved in every aspect of the process. In any earlier tour Mansoor was the commander of the Ready First Combat Team and authored the book *Baghdad at Sunrise: A Brigade Commander’s War in Iraq*. Retiring from the Army in 2008, Mansoor accepted the position as the General Raymond E. Mason, Jr. Chair of Military History at Ohio State. *Surge* is the product of the skills of a first-class academic historian who brings the advantage of an insider perspective during the decisive period of the conflict.

Despite the high attention on the Surge, a large amount of myth and misinformation about it exists, and Mansoor offers insightful correction. He emphasizes that it was the right strategy at the right time that saved the country from the disintegration seemingly inevitable in 2006. Moreover, he explains that this was not just a tactical adaptation based on greater troop employment but indeed a totally new comprehensive, multifaceted approach to the conflict that could not have occurred earlier because conditions were not ripe for it.

The rescue of the losing war in Iraq had three major components. First was the “Awakening” in Ramadi that spread throughout Anbar Province in 2006 when the Sunni tribes broke with the barbarism of Al Qaeda and joined forces with the U.S. military efforts. Mansoor argues that until this happened a change in strategy would not have yielded results. Second was the complete change in strategy from unilateral U.S. military operations to a ground-up counterinsurgency strategy with emphasis on security for the populace. As Mansoor addresses a surge of both military actions and strategic ideas, he affords significant attention to the development of doctrine in the preceding years and the rethinking of a new strategy, to which he contributed as a member of the Council of Colonels who assisted the Joint Chiefs of Staff in this effort in 2006. Finally, just as important as either of the above, according to Mansoor, was Nouri al-Maliki’s commitment to clear the militant Shia Muqtada al-Sadr forces out of Basra, Sadr City, and Amarah. Thus in operation “Charge of the Knights” the Shia Prime Minister unleashed a Shia Iraqi military against the Iranian-supported Shia militias and changed the dynamics of Iraqi politics for the longer term.

Mansoor’s conclusion is apt as he quotes from counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen, that “The Surge worked; but in the final analysis, it was an effort to save ourselves from the more desperate consequences of a situation we should never have gotten ourselves into.” Or in other words taken from Kilcullen, Mansoor agrees that “Just because you invade a place stupidly doesn’t mean you have to leave stupidly.”

This excellent book is a worthy contribution and an interesting read for those interested in the conduct and place of the war in Iraq.