



Worthy Fights: A Memoir of Leadership in War and Peace

Leon Panetta, Jim Newton

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The inspiring and revelatory autobiography of the defense secretary and CIA director who led the intelligence war that killed Bin Laden, among many important roles in a legendary career

It could be said that Leon Panetta has had two of the most consequential careers of any American public servant in the past fifty years. His first career, beginning as an army intelligence officer and including a distinguished run as one of Congress's most powerful and respected members, lasted thirty-five years and culminated in his transformational role as Clinton's budget czar and White House chief of staff. He then "retired" to establish the Panetta Institute with his wife of fifty years, Sylvia; to serve on the Iraq Study Group; and to protect his beloved California coastline. But in 2009, he accepted what many said was a thankless task: returning to public office as the director of the CIA, taking it from a state of turmoil after the Bush-era torture debates and moving it back to the vital center of America's war against Al Qaeda, including the campaign that led to the killing of Osama bin Laden. And then, in the wake of bin Laden's death, Panetta became the U.S. secretary of defense, inheriting two troubled wars in a time of austerity and painful choices.

Like his career, *Worthy Fights* is a reflection of Panetta's values. It is imbued with the frank, grounded, and often quite funny spirit of a man who never lost touch with where he came from: his family's walnut farm in beautiful Carmel Valley, California. It is also a testament to a lost kind of political leadership, which favors progress and duty to country over partisanship. Panetta is a Democrat who pushed for balanced budgets while also expanding care for the elderly and sick; a devout Catholic who opposes the death penalty but had to weigh every drone strike from 2009 through 2011. Throughout his career, Panetta's polestar has been his belief that a public servant's real choice is between leadership or crisis. Troubles always come about through no fault of one's own, but most can be prevented with courage and foresight.

As always, Panetta calls them as he sees them in *Worthy Fights*. Suffused with its author's decency and stubborn common sense, the book is an epic American success story, a great political memoir, and a revelatory view onto many of the great figures and events of our time.

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