

The General vs. the President: MacArthur and Truman at the Brink of Nuclear War

H. W. Brands. New York: Doubleday, 2016. 448 pp. Notes. Photos. Illus. \$30.

Reviewed by D. M. Giangreco

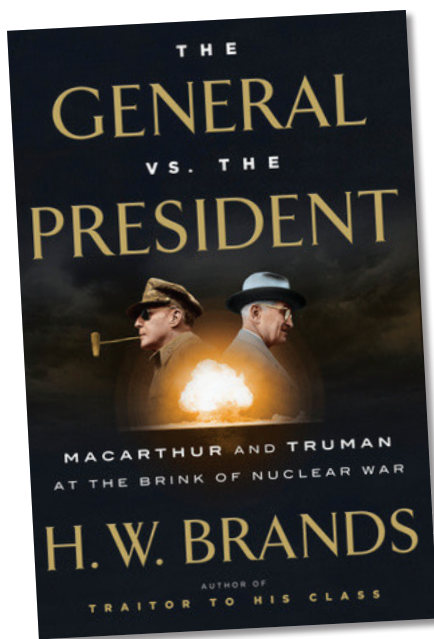
As 1950 dawned, both General Douglas MacArthur and President Harry S Truman were at the peak of their careers. Truman had won an upset victory in the previous election, while MacArthur

had successfully implemented a comprehensive policy of social, economic, and political reforms in Japan that was the envy of even some New Deal Democrats. Within six months, however, the outbreak of war on the Korean Peninsula would lead to a series of events that ultimately forced each of them from public service.

There were plenty of mistakes to be made that year, and just about everyone involved went out of their way to make their fair share. In January, for example, Secretary of State Dean Acheson inadvertently encouraged Communist aggression when he did not mention the Korean Peninsula in a speech describing the United States' "defense perimeter," leaving the impression that if South Korea were to be invaded, the United States would not come to its defense. Then there was the North Koreans' conviction that they could overrun the southern half of the peninsula before outside aid could stiffen its defense, and the Soviet Union's boycott of the U.N. Security Council, which prevented it from blocking formation of a U.N. military coalition led by General MacArthur himself. As for Brands' two protagonists, MacArthur firmly maintained during his Wake Island meeting with Truman that the Chinese would "face the greatest slaughter" if they intervened in Korea, and when that full-blooded intervention came, Truman intimated that nuclear weapons might be used against them—a misstep that almost threw the delicate U.N. coalition into chaos.

The General vs. the President gets off to a lumbering start, but the pace picks up with North Korean tanks rolling across the 38th Parallel, and Brands tells this story well. U.N. forces made a fighting withdrawal to a perimeter centering on the Port of Pusan (Busan), which was held at

great cost until MacArthur's amphibious assault at Inchon, far behind enemy lines, reversed the situation in a heartbeat. The Chinese army's massive and completely unexpected assault turned the tables on the general's drive north, and MacArthur reported that his men were up against an "overwhelming force." During this period, he pressed vigorously and publicly for an expansion of the war into China, arguing



that it was virtually impossible to win against an army operating from behind an inviolate frontier. He predicted that if the Communists could not be attacked in their "sanctuaries," U.N. forces would face a "savage slaughter."

Almost from the beginning of the new war in Korea, MacArthur had openly criticized Truman's policy—and gotten away with it. But MacArthur's defiance of his commander-in-chief finally cost him his job. He made a series of statements that undercut President Truman's peace initia-

tive and made it plain that he was in complete disagreement with the latter's handling of the war. With the full backing of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the President decided to strip MacArthur of all commands and send him home. The carefully chosen passages from the excised version of subsequent congressional hearings into this matter make some of the most interesting reading in Brands' book. While this material has appeared in numerous other works and venues since its declassification in the 1970s, it still will be new to most readers.

The book has its flaws. In an effort to add color to his narrative, the author has a tendency to make statements that are demonstrably inaccurate. These errors often are of little consequence, for example, when he states that Truman and Treasury Secretary John Snyder, whom he consulted on MacArthur's firing, "had served together in World War I" (in fact, the artillerymen first met at Fort Riley, Kansas, in 1928). Other mistakes are more significant, as when he comments that before Clement Attlee's December 1950 emergency meeting with the President, "the two men had never met"—to the contrary, Attlee had famously taken over at the Potsdam Conference when British voters booted Winston Churchill out of office in the midst of the proceedings.

Because "the events related here took place in the public view," much of Brands' book revolves around quotes by key contemporaneous figures culled from newspaper accounts. Readers are thus treated to an immediacy often lacking in similar works. While he relies on solid sources such as David McCullough's *Truman* and Omar Bradley's *A Soldier's Story* and cites Truman's *Memoirs* and MacArthur's *Reminiscences*, Brands could have made an even better book had he consulted more recent works, including Michael D. Pearlman's superb *Truman and MacArthur* (Indiana University Press, 2008) and especially the late George M. Elsey's *An Unplanned Life* (University of Missouri Press, 2005). The absence of Elsey's book is particularly unfortunate, because Brands makes excellent use of Elsey's papers held at the Harry S Truman Library in Independence, Missouri. He extensively covers the leaking of a secret transcription of the meeting between

MacArthur and Truman at Wake Island; but the absence of *An Unplanned Life* caused him to miss that Elsey himself was Truman's designated leaker. Elsey willingly became the affair's fall guy, and Truman personally arranged for a soft landing in Averell Harriman's office.

This and earlier caveats aside, H. W. Brands does a fine job with *The General vs. the President*. It is a good introduction to the opening days of the Korean War and the clash between these two larger-than-life figures.

Mr. Giangreco was an editor with *Military Review* for 20 years. He has written numerous books, including *War in Korea: 1950–1953* (Presidio Press, 2001) and *Hell to Pay: Operation Downfall and the Invasion of Japan, 1945–1947* (Naval Institute Press, 2009).

Arms and Influence: U.S. Technology Innovations and the Evolution of International Security Norms

Jeffrey S. Lantis. Stanford, CA: Stanford Security Studies, 2016. 270 pp. Notes. Biblio. Index. \$29.95.

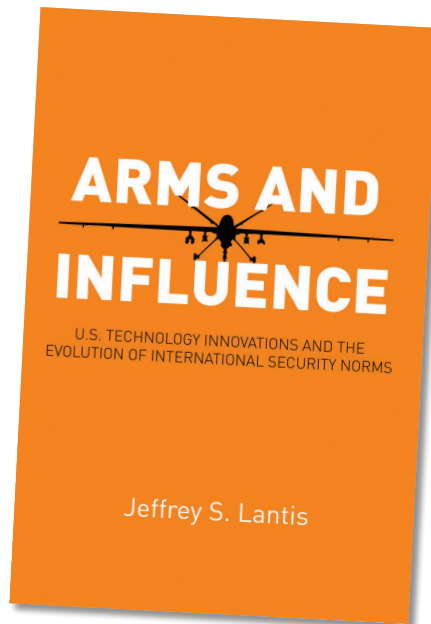
Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Brian Hanley, U.S. Air Force (Retired)

Arms and Influence takes a theoretical approach to a consideration of the impact of technology on policymaking and international security norms. Jeffrey Lantis examines historical events by the lights of data and ideas and concludes that, in general, major technological developments in weaponry challenge and sometimes lead to the modification of existing international standards of self-defense, preemption, and national sovereignty. *Arms and Influence* offers no laws, algorithms, or predictive formulae on international politics; rather, Lantis seeks to identify processes and stages that shape technology-driven norm shifts.

Lantis's book, the fruit of several years of field interviews and research as well as intense archival scrutiny, is organized around case studies—all of which are illuminating and reflect a rigorous scholarly standard. As is typical for works in the social sciences, *Arms and Influence* comes with an intricate academic infrastructure. Of the book's 270 pages, 33 are devoted to an explanation of theoretical method

and 90 to reference matter, which leaves a little more than one-half of the book for actual analysis.

Readers unused to the method and vocabulary of social science discourse may find *Arms and Influence* daunting, as the following summary of its argument suggests: "This study explores the fascinat-



ing dialectical relationship that emerges between the international normative order and endogenous technology advances. It highlights the ways tensions caused by hegemonies have altered the political landscape by catalyzing norm-change processes." I suppose an idiomatic rephrasing might go something like "The king with the best army makes the rules." Two quotations come to mind as well. Josef Stalin, in commenting on papal objections to his treatment of religious minorities in Soviet Russia, is alleged to have put the matter with great pith on the assumption that quantity has a quality of its own: "How many divisions has the Pope got?" And then there's Hillaire Belloc's 1898 poem "The Modern Traveller": "Whatever happens, we have got/The Maxim gun, and they have not."

Readers wary of academic jargon still will find plenty of thought-provoking material in the five case studies that illustrate the book's thesis: the atom bomb; export controls for nuclear technology; satellite-borne intelligence collection; armed unmanned aerial vehicles; and space weap-

onry. Lantis organizes each of his case studies into three sections: traditional norms (the prohibition against weapons of mass destruction), technological innovation (the atom bomb), and potential norm change (the development of nonproliferation norms).

A strong point of these studies is Lantis's impartiality. He always explains; never does he litigate. For example, in his discussion of satellite intelligence, Lantis observes that space-based imagery called worldwide attention to atrocities in Darfur, which in turn spurred international attempts to stop the carnage. This result would seem to have established the idea that technological development led directly to norm change, in which first-world nations felt obliged to intervene as a point of principle, even though no compelling self-interest commanded them to do so. Nevertheless, a shift in international norms, enshrined in treaties and agreements directing the major powers to accept responsibility to act every time atrocities were captured on satellite images, today remains only a possibility rather than a solemn commandment.

Arms and Influence offers a well-reasoned perspective on the interplay between breakthrough military technologies and international relations. Even so, readers of history—especially students of military history—may be tempted to reject or at least to sharply qualify the book's argument on the grounds that the book advances too narrow an understanding of how things come and go in international affairs. Nation-states wage war, develop advanced weaponry, join alliances, and sign mutual support treaties based on fear, honor, and interest. Technology derives from and is always the servant of human agency—it flows from an inventor or a succession of inventors and technicians struggling to solve a contemporary problem, or it springs from the application of a device or process to military ends imposed on a country by circumstance that was wholly unanticipated by its originators.

The revolver did not change the American West so much as it was invented by Samuel Colt to meet a growing demand among soldiers and pioneers who needed a weapon that would not leave them defenseless after firing one shot in an

environment that often proved to be unremittingly hostile. Had there been no European expansion in North America, the revolver's development probably would have occurred elsewhere, probably at a different time, and almost certainly in a different way. We're closer to the truth when we try to understand technology as an outgrowth and an expression of a culture and a historical moment rather than as a quasi-mechanical phenomenon.

All things considered, *Arms and Influence* meets the expectations it sets for itself. Anyone interested in international affairs from a closely argued theoretical standpoint should at least look into Professor Lantis's well-researched book.

Lieutenant Colonel Hanley is a lifetime member of the U.S. Naval Institute and a former member of its editorial board. He is a senior intelligence analyst in the national capital region.

I Will Hold: The Story of USMC Legend Clifton B. Cates, from Belleau Wood to Victory in the Great War

James Carl Nelson. New York: NAL/Caliber, 2016. 340 pp. Biblio. Index. \$28.

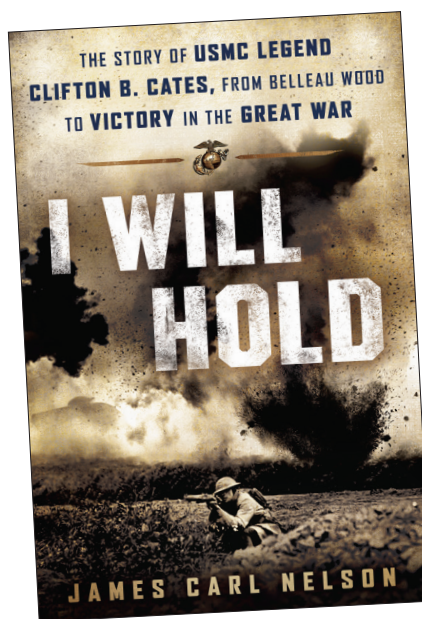
Reviewed by Colonel Dick Camp, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)

In *I Will Hold*, author James Nelson has penned an exceedingly detailed and gripping account of Lieutenant Clifton B. Cates (later 19th Commandant of the Marine Corps) in the bloody fields of France during the First World War. Nelson describes Cates as a man who survived the horrors of the bloodiest battles of the war—Belleau Wood, Soissons, Blanc Mont—to emerge unscathed from the carnage, earning him the moniker “Lucky Cates” in the process.

In this skillfully written history, Nelson has adeptly woven personal accounts and historical context into a narrative that transports the reader from the training fields of Quantico to the battlefields of France. It reads like a memoir. He expertly paints a brutally vivid picture of an untested Second Lieutenant Clifton B. Cates “going over the top” against the German killing machine. Determined to make his mark as a leader, Lucky Cates's courageous service in the “war to end all

wars” made him a legendary figure within the ranks of the Corps' battlefield leaders in the years following World War I.

Nelson wrote that Cates's first real test as a leader occurred on 6 June 1918 in the blood-drenched Belleau Woods, which the French renamed the “Bois de la Brigade de Marine” (“Marine Brigade's Woods”) to honor Marine bravery and sacrifice. On that day, “the single worst day in Marine Corps history,” Nelson writes, “thirty-one officers and 1,056 men became casualties.” Cates, however, according to the author, “was less haunted than beguiled—hell, energized—by all that had happened.” Cates himself noted, “At a certain time and signal we got up and swept over a ground literally covered with machine gun bullets. It was my first charge, and . . . it is a wonderful thrill to be out there in front of a bunch of men that will follow you to [the] death.”



Nelson notes that in his first charge across a bullet-swept field, Cates almost “came a cropper” when “a machine gun bullet clanged off his tin hat, and he fell forward into the wheat, unconscious.” Cates came to and staggered toward a ravine—falling two or three times—where four of his men had taken cover. One sergeant noted his condition and started pouring wine over his head to bring him around. Cates took exception to the sergeant's kindness. “Don't pour it on me—let me drink it,” he demanded before lead-

ing the remnants of his platoon in seizing the objective.

Nelson writes that Cates had learned to kill and not be bothered by it. “I now have two notches cut on my pistol grip,” he wrote in a letter, “and I hope to make it fifty. A man gets to be a hard hearted brute over here, but he has to be. . . .” Cates and his men were relieved and enjoyed a brief rest before being sent back into the cauldron at Soissons. Nelson's colorful description of the battle area is clear, concise, and replete with detail. “After a hot day, the skies let loose in the evening, and the great and ancient beeches and oaks shivered and shook high above as lines of exhausted, starving men stumbled and slithered through the pitch black toward some destination, each man holding on to the back of the man in front in order to stay with the column.”

Cates took over temporary command of the 96th Company when its commander was killed and its ranks decimated, but he was only slightly wounded crossing an open wheat field. “Some men died; that was war. Some men lived, and that was war also,” Nelson writes, describing Cates's inexplicable luck. After capturing a German trench, Cates sent back a scribbled message to his battalion commander: “I have only two men out of my company, and 20 out of some other company. We need support, but it is almost suicide to try to get it here as we are swept by machine gun fire, and a constant barrage is on us. I have no one on my left, and only a few on my right. I will hold.”

Nelson writes in a rich, evocative style typically found in a novel. He is particularly adept at incorporating soldiers' experiences that describe the horrors of war. “A burst of bullets smashed into a man's face beside me, carrying away the lower part of his face. A grenade fell on the other side, tearing a youngster's legs to shreds.” This is tough stuff for the average reader to stomach, but it is an accurate portrayal of infantry combat with which veterans will surely identify. *I Will Hold* is a wonderful addition to the history of the Marine Corps during the “war to end all wars.”

Colonel Camp is the author of 15 nonfiction and fiction books and more than 200 military articles. His professional resume also includes speaking on U.S. military history.

NEW & NOTEWORTHY BOOKS

The Mathews Men: Seven Brothers and the War against Hitler's U-Boats

William Geroux. New York: Viking, 2016. 390 pp. Illus. Notes. Biblio. Index. \$28.

During World War II, Mathews County, Virginia, sent a remarkable number of merchant mariners and sea captains to fight. Geroux tells the story of one family—the Hodges—who sent seven sons to the merchant marines, where they were joined by numerous other “Mathews Men,” many of whom faced Hitler’s U-boat wolf packs in U.S. waters and went on to help fuel the amphibious invasions that liberated Europe from the Nazis.

WW4: How Our Dangerous World May Lead to a New Global War

Captain Douglas Alan Cohn, U.S. Army (Retired). Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2016. 264 pp. Intro. Maps. Appen. Notes. Biblio. Index. \$24.95.

Cohn argues that 20th-century total-war theories will be rendered obsolete

by this century’s concept of nuclear-enforced, limited war. Leaders and war planners must be prepared not only for the unexpected but also for the improbable. He maps out nine future scenarios for a non-nuclear “World War 4.” The volume includes a foreword by General Harry E. Soyster, U.S. Army (Retired).

Into the Lion's Mouth: The True Story of Dusko Popov, World War II Spy, Patriot, and the Real-Life Inspiration for James Bond

Larry Loftis. New York: Berkley Caliber, 2016. 368 pp. Maps. Appen. Notes. Biblio. Index. \$27.

Loftis tells the story of Dusko Popov, ostensible Yugoslavian diplomat but also operative for the German Abwehr, MI5, MI6, and the FBI during World War II. He spoke five languages, was a crack shot, and was said to have inspired Ian Fleming to create James Bond. Popov’s life as a double agent for Britain encompassed espionage for multiple masters,

assassination, and a talent for seduction that Fleming’s fictional turn could not overmatch.

Asia-Pacific Security: An Introduction

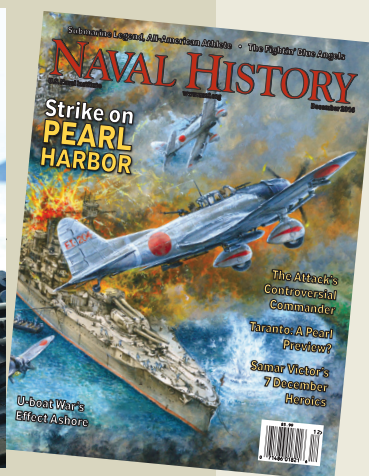
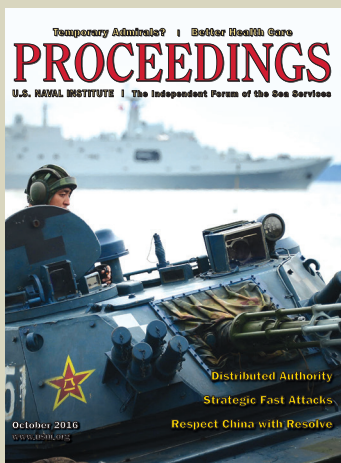
Joanne Wallis, Andrew Carr, eds. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016. 298 pp. Intro. Maps. Figures. Tables. Index. \$34.95.

With the Asia-Pacific region increasingly the focus of 21st-century international affairs, Wallis and Carr offer a collection of papers that gives an overview of the region’s contemporary security issues. Topics include the relationship between the United States and China; terrorism and insurgency; the region’s accelerating arms race and the potential for an Asian war; and the roles of multilateralism, security communities, and human security as part of solutions to regional problems.

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