



For the last two years, I've compiled a year-end reading list to share the books I've completed over a 12 month period. This is one of my favorite posts, because it forces me to reflect on a year's worth of books and take a holistic look at what I'm consuming.

As always, I never start out with a lock-step reading plan. Over the course of the year, my reading interests takes off in unexpected directions. This year I found myself diving into the world of fiction, leader biographies, and even war poetry. I also began reviewing books for professional journals which brought new books to my bookshelf.

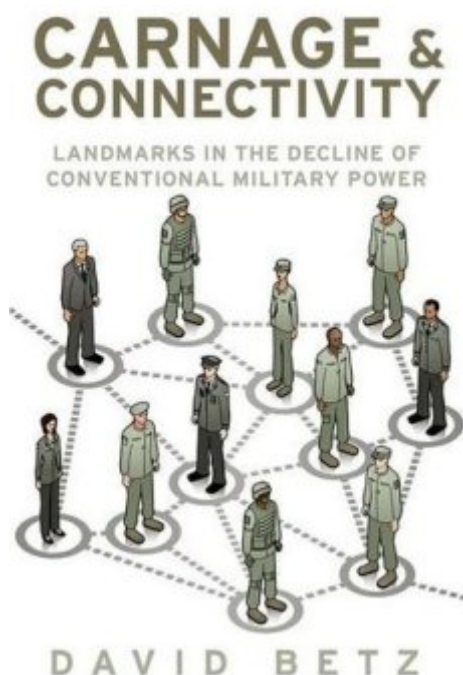
One of the many benefits of not having a reading plan is an openness to recommendations.

Many of the works on this list were either recommended to me from friends or titles I came across from you sharing what you're reading via social media.

While I've listed out my five favorite books of 2015, I can honestly say that I've enjoyed all of them and each proved invaluable to my personal development. After you read this post, please share your recommendations in the comments sections below.

My Top 5 Books of 2015

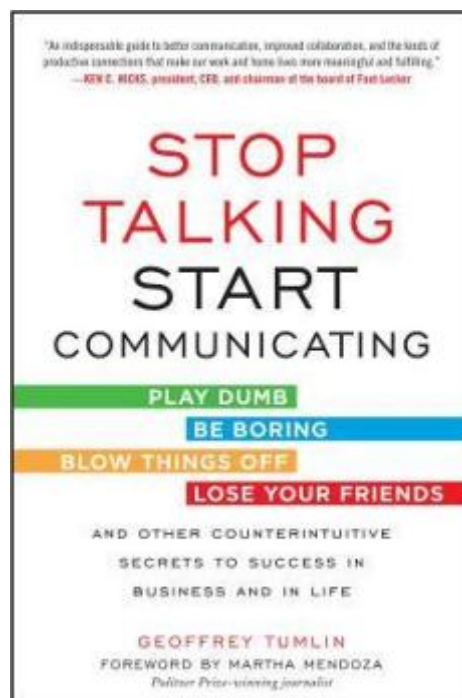
1. [Carnage and Connectivity: Landmarks in the Decline of Modern Military Power by Dr. David Betz](#)



If you read the Army Operating Concept and the Human Dimension White Paper, the authors create the perception that technology and connectivity are vastly changing the face of warfare. Dr. Betz presents some worthy arguments which counter this notion, forcing

readers to think deeply about the nature and character of warfare in modern times. This book is a quick read and ripe for highlights and notes.

2.) [Stop Talking and Start Communicating by Geoffrey Tumlín](#)



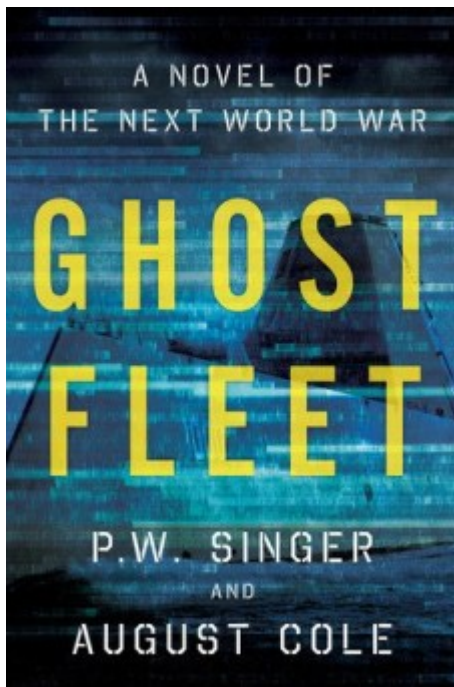
All too often we take the skill of communication for granted and spend a lot of time and wasted energy on Facebook updates, tweets, and talking, but not necessarily communicating. Dr. Tumlín offers readers some counter-intuitive approaches to improving our communication skills. Since finishing the book, I've adopted several of his approaches with great results.

3.) [War Stories from the Future by the Atlantic Council](#)



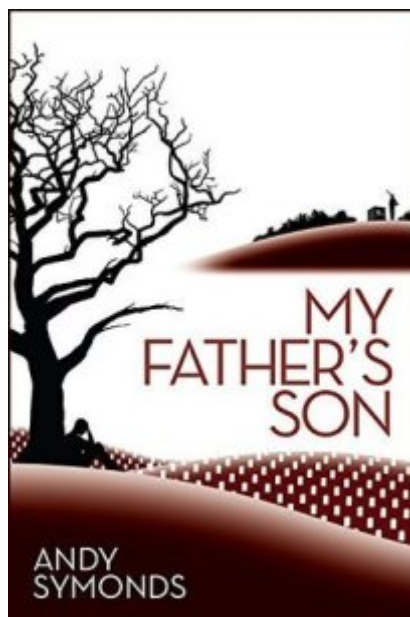
First, this book is free through the Atlantic Council's Art of Future Warfare Project, which automatically makes it awesome! Second, because it is a short story anthology, readers get multiple glimpses at various possible futures of war. This book, along with *Ghost Fleet*, have made me think differently about the [importance of fiction for professional development](#). War Stories from the Future is the perfect addition to unit professional reading programs, because it encourages the future senior leaders of our Army to think deeply about the context in which they might lead.

4.) [Ghost Fleet: A Novel of the Next World War by P.W. Singer and August Cole](#)



The novel, by P.W. Singer and August Cole, is an important work of fiction for Army leaders for several reasons. First, it helps us gain an appreciation for the importance of power projection in future wars. Second, we get a glimpse of how nascent technologies might be used to gain dominance on future battlefields. Finally, we see why the study of the Masters of War are still relevant and will be critical to winning tomorrow's wars. Read my book review [here](#).

5.) [My Father's Son by Andy Symonds](#)



In a recent War on the Rocks [article](#), BJ Armstrong discussed the importance of empathy in leadership and how we can strengthen it through reading fiction. This is one novel that proves to be a great workout for empathy. [My Father's Son](#), follows the life and the struggles of 13-year-old Nathan Butler and his family following the death of his father, a Navy SEAL, in Afghanistan. The book covers a five year period in which Nathan must work through the complications of being a teenager, without the support of his dad. With each page, the reader is pulled deeper into the Butlers' world. Symonds does an excellent job of bringing to life all of his characters and the lifestyle of a military family — from Steven Butler's closest teammates, who help raise Nathan, to Gayle Butler, Nathan's mom, who must deal with the unexpected loss of Steven, her husband, while continuing to raise her children. Read my book review [here](#).

Below are the remainder of the books I've read this year broken down by category.

Leadership

[Army Officer's Guide to Mentoring by Ray Kimball](#)

[Do the Work by Steven Pressfield](#)

[Stop Talking and Start Communicating by Geoffrey Tumin](#)

[Tribes We Need You to Lead Us by Seth Godin](#)

[21st Century Sims: Innovation, Education, and Leadership for the Modern Era by BJ Armstrong](#)

[Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die by Heath Brothers](#)

[Ask It: The Question that Will Revolutionize How You Make Decisions by Andy Stanley](#)

[Think Like a Freak by Levitt and Dubner](#)

[Changing Your Company from the Inside Out: A Guide for Social Intrapreneurs by Davis and White](#)

[The Art of Innovation: Lessons Creativity from IDEO by Tom Kelley](#)

Fiction

[The Lost Codex by Alan Jacobson](#)

[Syren's Song by Claude Berube](#)

[My Father's Son by Andy Symonds](#)

[War Stories from the Future by August Cole](#)

[Seveneves by Neal Stephenson](#)

[A Bell for Adano by John Hershey](#)

[Ghost Fleet: A Novel of the Next World War by Singer and Cole](#)

Technology, Doctrine, and Combat Development

[The Art of Maneuver Warfare: Maneuver Warfare Theory and AirLand Battle by Robert Leonhard](#)

[The Pursuit of Power by William H. McNeil](#)

[Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age by Victor Mayer-Schonberger](#)

Biography

[Tough As They Come by Travis Mills](#)

[Renegade Revolutionary: The Life of General Charles Lee by Phillip Pappas](#)

[Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander and Chief by James McPherson](#)

[Patton: A Genius for War by Carlo D'Este](#)

[The Accidental Admiral: A Sailor Takes Command at NATO by James Stavridis](#)

Nature and Character of War and Warfare

[Carnage and Connectivity: Landmarks in the Decline of Conventional Military Power by David Betz](#)

[Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power and Control by J.C. Wylie](#)

[Wiki at War: Conflict in a Socially Connected World by James Jay Carafano](#)

[Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat by Schultz and Dew](#)

Psychology:

[Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion by Jonathan Heidt](#)

[Head Strong: How Psychology is Revolutionizing War by Michael D. Matthews](#)

[Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and Gap Between Us and Them by Joshua Greene](#)

War Poetry

[Welcome to FOB Haiku: War Poetry from Inside the Wire by Randy Brown](#)

Foreign Affairs:

[Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific by Robert Kaplan](#)

Writing

[Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life by Anne Lamott](#)

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