

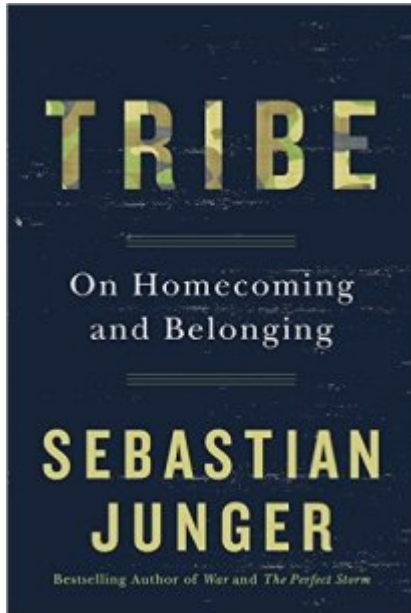


By [Joe Byerly](#)

Last summer, I wrote a [short article](#) about promoting reading by simply talking about it. I believe the best way to encourage leaders to pick up a book is through conversation, not mandatory reading assignments. So this year, I thought I would continue the tradition by asking folks from around the national security community to share what they are reading this summer.

I love this list because it's a mix of history, fiction, poetry, and current events. With vacations upon us, I encourage you to check out these books, and grab one for yourself as you prepare to hit the beach!

Also, feel free to share what you are reading in the comments section below!



“What soldiers returning from combat needs most is a living community to whom his or her experience matters. Sebastian Junger laments that Western societies lack the cohesion to reintegrate returning warriors. That is why to soldiers and those like Junger who experience the risks, hardships, and sacrifice of combat, war can feel “better than peace.” Tribe is more than a book about post-traumatic stress and the reintegration of combat veterans. It is a call to action for citizens in Western societies to restore a sense of belonging, connectedness, and loyalty to one another.”-**Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster, Director of ARCIC**

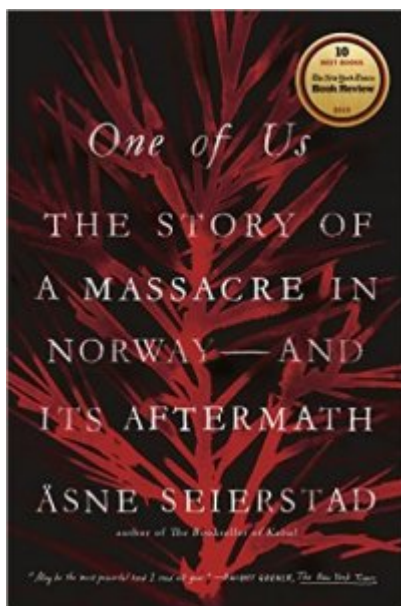
“Junger has hit the mark on why troops, diplomats and aid workers miss the war zone when they get back to the states — and it has nothing to do with being adrenaline junkies. It’s the sense of shared mission and community that used to be a standard part of existence, even survival, as Junger explains describing how American Indians (his phrase, for a reason) once lived and why their captives often refused to leave their tribes once exposed to their all-for-one, one-for-all culture. Modern society and even modern prosperity has left us chronically isolated from each other, with community and shared mission as casualty. We don’t miss war. We miss the brotherhood.”-**[Kim Dozier](#), Writer/Contributor Daily Beast, CNN,**

## CBS, and BBC



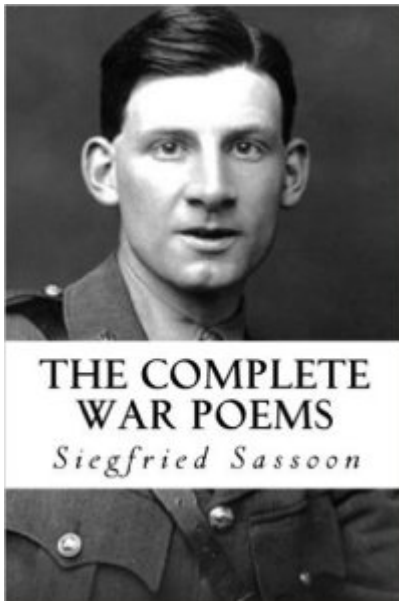
“One of my favorite moments in Paolo Bacigalupi’s *The Windup Girl* is when the inhabitants of a far future capital city in Thailand gawk at the passing of a combustion-engine car that’s carrying one of the novel’s most interesting characters to a do-or-die meeting with a crime lord. For the city’s inhabitants, bio-engineered elephants and massive airships are the norm in this post-petroleum world where the measures of wealth are the calorie and the kilojoule. Cars are magic, just a figment of imagination and memory. The story follows an American secret agent of sorts — a calorie man — in Thailand on the trail of one of the world’s most talented gene hackers. He’s also fallen in love with a hybrid human ‘windup’ girl who after being created to serve is discovering a new will to live free. America’s global power resides in its agricultural heartland and from there spreads around the world as corporate scientists work to stave off or even start the next global crop blight. It’s a grimly detailed and engrossing world, one that you would never want to live in but can’t get enough of. The genre is described by some as biopunk. That’s an apt label for fans of William Gibson’s cyberpunk stories and to me Bacigalupi is the first writer in a long time whose work made

me feel like I'm reading *Neuromancer* or *Count Zero* for the first time. For military readers, it's an invaluable story for its upturning of assumptions and expectations about what the future might hold. The book is a few years old now but even more relevant today." -[August Cole](#), Director of the Art of Future Warfare Project and Co-Author of *Ghost Fleet*

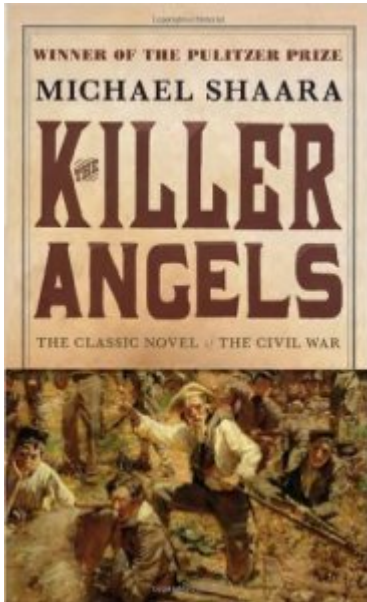


“Over the past six months I have been making my way through ‘My Struggle’ by Karl Ove Knausgaard. I’m about to start book five of six. My Struggle is a literary masterpiece. Most equate it to Proust, but to me it’s closer to Updike – simple, flowing, and yet restless commentary on decades of a society (in this case, Norwegian and Swedish.) I keep wanting to scream, Karl, Run! But this is not my book recommendation. While reading My Struggle, I realized that I know nothing of Norwegian literature and yet it seems so rich. My first Google search, brought me to the recently published ‘One of Us: The Story of Anders Breivik and the Massacre in Norway.’ This blog’s readers will find the story fascinating! One of Us is a master class in long-form journalism spanning the length of a novel. ‘One of us’ is written by Åsne Seierstad, a Norwegian journalist that spent years covering the Middle East, before events in Norway honed her attention home. Seierstad’s ability to tell facts in a manner that translates raw emotion without bias or distortion is unmatched. It is a story

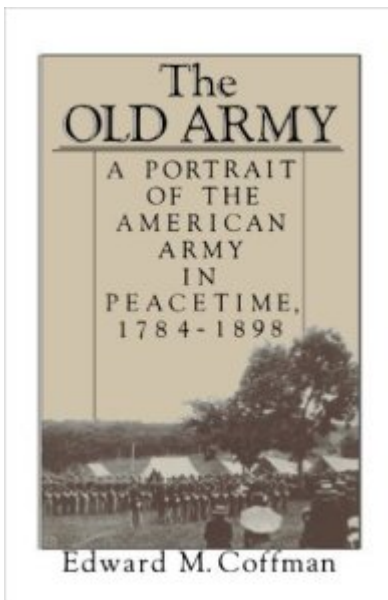
that also reminds us that radicalization can sometimes really be a lonely pursuit.”-[Mikhail Grinberg](#), aerospace & defense strategy and M&A consultant, Editor at the The Strategy Bridge, CFO at DEF



“As Mikhail Grinberg said some time back, “Poetry is our greatest monument. But war poetry has been on a decline. There is an abundance of literature about Afghanistan and Iraq and endless raw video footage. History has never been recorded more completely than today. In this world, however, no voice rises above the media-created noise to make us pause, breathe, think, or — for a moment — shiver. Imagine if one night, on prime-time, we got just two minutes to hear a poem such as Siegfried Sassoon’s “Suicide in the Trenches.”” This is especially trenchant, if you’ll forgive the pun, as we read a work such as Folsom’s Where Youth and Laughter Go. Poetry speaks to us as it spoke to Homer, Shakespeare, Sassoon and others, speaks of who we are and what we want. But we must read it.”-[Eric Michael Murphy](#), U.S. Air Force Officer and Editor at The Strategy Bridge



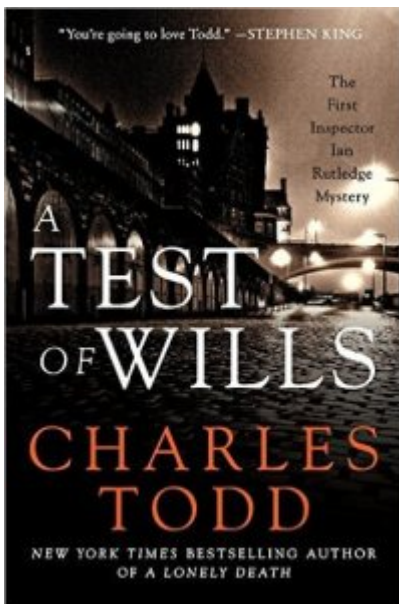
“Simply the best rendition of the thoughts of generals as field commanders when they think on an idealistic level.” -[Bing West](#), **Retired Marine and New York Times Bestselling Author**



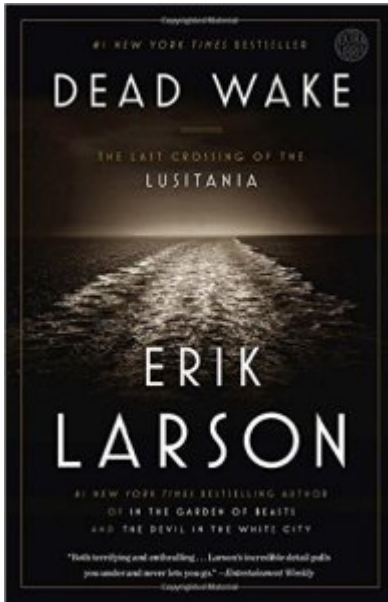
“I bought a used copy of this a few months back because it contains a few nuggets of data that I am going to use for an article I will (hopefully) one day finish. When I got around to



cracking it open the other day, I got sucked in. It's a fascinating and engrossing account of a very different U.S. Army from the one we know today. Unlike many works of military history I have come across, it offers a wealth of information on what every day military life was like in those days."-[Ryan Evans](#), **Founder and Editor-In-Chief of War on the Rocks**

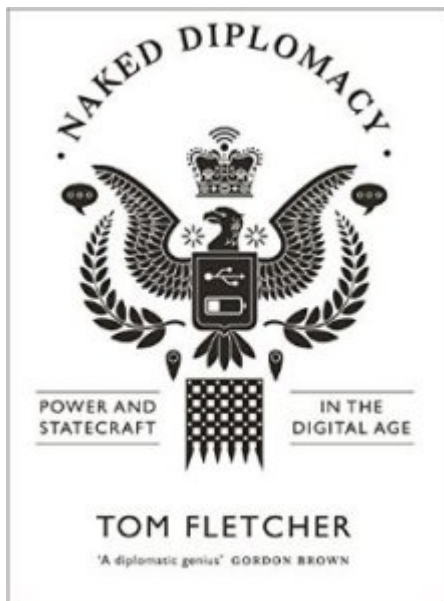


"In many ways a standard English murder mystery, Inspector Ian Rutledge of Scotland Yard is called to investigate a shocking murder in the countryside. But it's 1919 and Rutledge was a British Army officer and veteran of the Western Front. As Rutledge digs up the village's secrets, he's forced to confront his own terrors from the war and coax his shell-shocked self back into civilian life."-[Dr. Erin Simpson](#), **CEO of Cearus Associates**

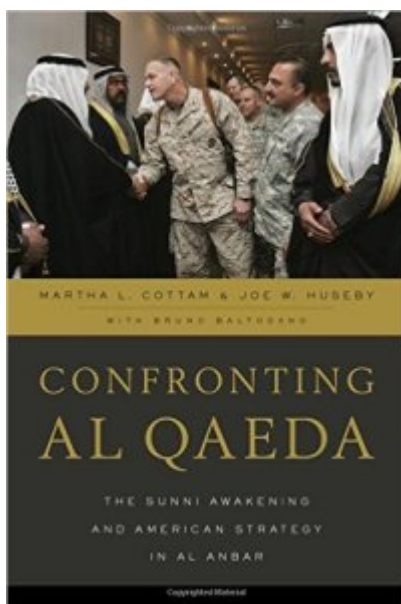


“It is a history book that reads like a thriller meets horror story. I love the way that Larson combines various story threads, from the life of the passengers on the doomed ship to the perspective of the U-Boat captain to Woodrow Wilson’s nascent romance with his soon to be wife. For people interested in contemporary war, it captures well the challenges that all the players have with understanding new technology, both the new users and the new targets. It also captures well the foibles of an age of war we won’t recognize, where for example the commander of one Navy was still writing friendly letters to the commander of the enemy fleet in the midst of war.” - [Peter W. Singer](#), **Senior Fellow at New America and co-author of *Ghost Fleet***



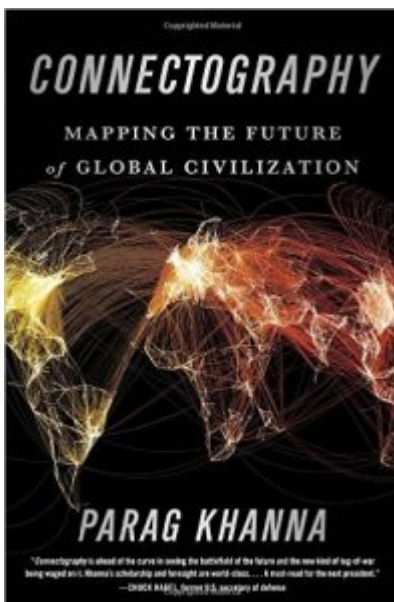


“After reading Tom Fletcher’s excellent [farewell blog](#) as the UK’s Ambassador to Lebanon last summer, I was intrigued by his story. Almost a year after leaving the post, Mr. Fletcher’s book looks to share great insights into modern diplomacy. I look forward to the concepts that move beyond the stuffy, limited traditions of statecraft to an engaging and transparent conversation between his embassy and the people of Lebanon.” -[Major Casey Dean](#), U.S. Army Officer

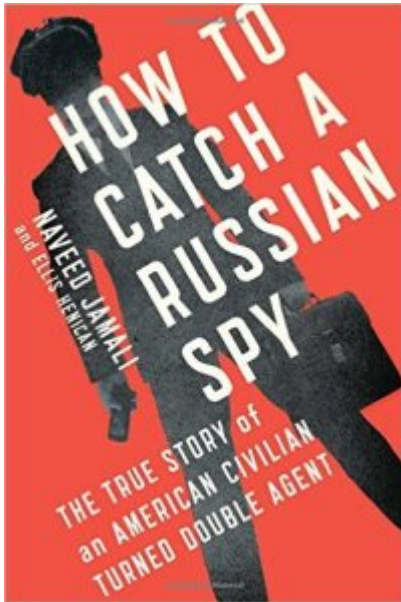


“I am interested in this book because of my own research on the Sunni Awakening in Baghdad and how people eventually switch sides during a conflict. My own research on the Baghdad awakening indicated this is a multi-phased process, often caveated with the emergence of a charismatic leader. I am hoping to gain more insight into the decision-making processes of people and how to convince others to accept a new social construct.”

-[Dr. Diane Maye](#), Professor at John Cabot University

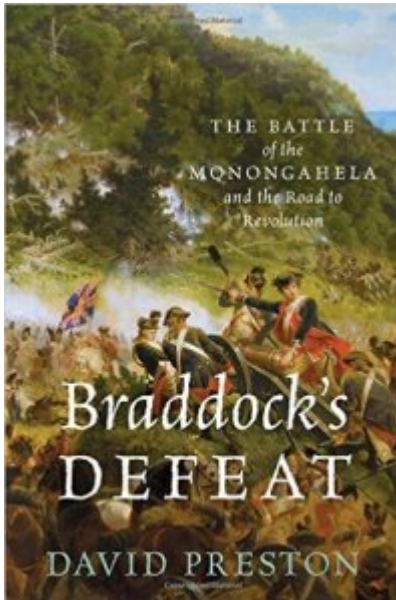


“The central idea in Parag Khanna’s book is that’s he maxim ‘geography is destiny’ is becoming obsolete, and that because of global transport, communications and energy infrastructures, the future has a new maxim - connectivity is destiny. This is a wonderfully optimistic book that looks at the world as it is and its future, not from a political or geographic lens, but through the framework of supply chains and connectedness. Global in scope with many maps and case studies to buttress his argument, Khanna’s book makes a great addition to any professional military education Summer reading list.”- [Brigadier Mick Ryan](#), Australian Defense Force

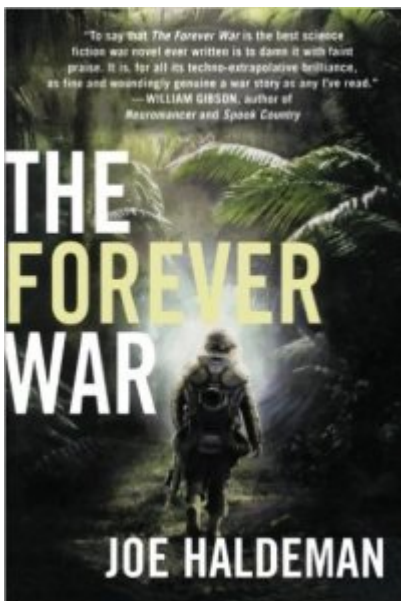


“Naveed Jamali, a self-proclaimed “slacker”, is the author of the spy thriller [How to Catch a Russian Spy](#) — a book that’s a lot less James Bond and a bit more Superbad. In what is without a doubt one of the most hilarious books I’ve ever read, Jamali explains how his cover as an FBI informant is blown within hours when his wife discovers that one of the female FBI agents left the wrapper to a feminine hygiene product in the bathroom trash. The Russians, to their credit, meet with Jamali in Hooters and force him to sign receipts for cash payments. Though the book is packed with laughs, the game was deadly serious for Jamali and the FBI, as they enticed the Russians into exposing their entire intelligence operation within the US.

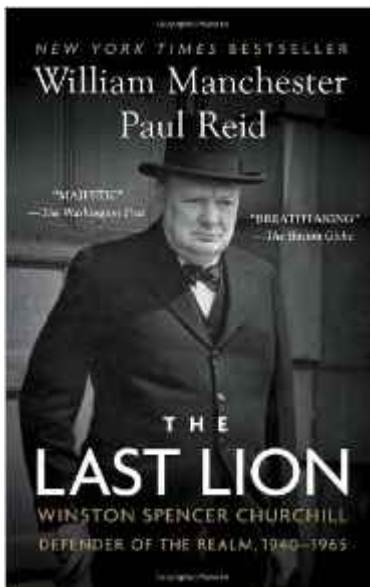
And best of all? It’s true. All of it.” - [Major Crispin Burke](#), U.S. Army Officer



“I am just finishing *Braddock’s Defeat*, a history by David Preston of probably the most underappreciated battle in North American history. Again and again, I am struck by how well the French worked with their Indian allies, to point that French officers wore Indian clothing into the fight. Can you image American officers donning Iraqi uniforms?— [Tom Ricks](#), Contributing Editor at Foreign Policy Magazine

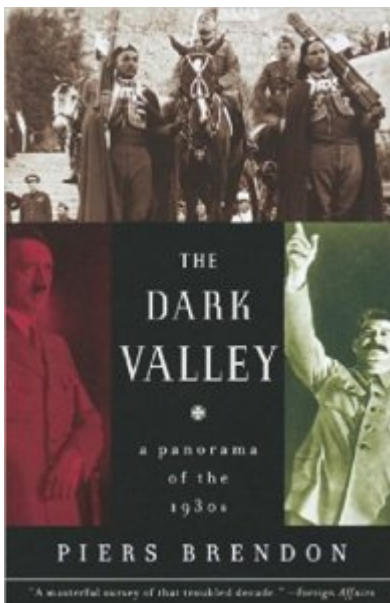


“While this book takes place in space and spans over 1146 years, it still captures timeless themes that derive from war, fiction or real. Written in the wake of the Vietnam War, *The Forever War* offers a very real look at the challenges service members face when they try to assimilate back into a culture completely detached from the battlefield. It’s also just a classic work of science fiction.” –[Lauren Katzenberg](#), **Cofounder and Managing Editor of Task and Purpose**

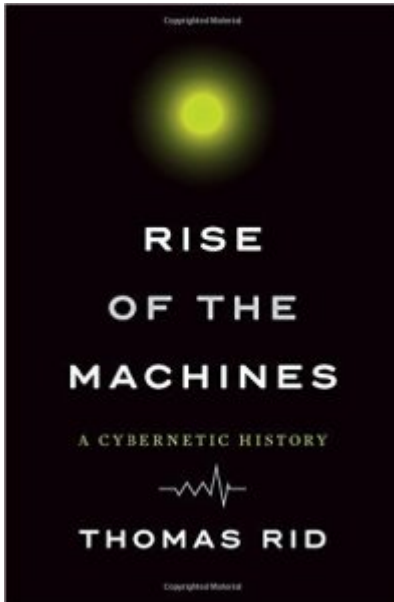


“Lucky enough to draw duties in the Pacific, I’ve been reading a lot about the historical role of the Army in this theater; books like [Guardians of Empire](#) by Linn, [An Army for Empire](#) by Cosmas, and [American Caesar](#) by Manchester. However, my most enjoyable summer read has been the [Last Lion trilogy](#), also by Manchester. These books masterfully cover the life and times of Winston Churchill, from his insecure youth through his dashing days as a cavalry officer and war correspondent, as well as his time in Parliament, World War I, World War II, and post-wars. What struck me about these books, aside from Manchester’s brilliant mix of intensive research and witty prose, was how singular a character Churchill was. He

was an intensely arrogant and self-centered person that also genuinely worked to better his nation and his people. He was also the consummate politician, mixing pragmatic political choices with deeply held beliefs in honor and loyalty. These latter characteristics seem rather poignant today...though I could be projecting.” - [Nathan Finney](#), U.S. Army Officer and Cofounder and Editor of the Strategy Bridge.



“The book details the turbulent geopolitical events that precipitated the Second World War, framing them against the diffuse economic and social crises that condensed and coalesced into the massive political and military storm that followed. The author focuses on the individual countries — the U.S., France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, and Spain — involved in the war and traces the “road to war” back through their particular experiences. The result is a fascinating study not just of the shaping of the war to come, but the complex geopolitical interactions that exist on any given day and how they can take an irreversible course with little or no warning.” - [Steve Ledonard](#) **Creator of Doctrine Man**

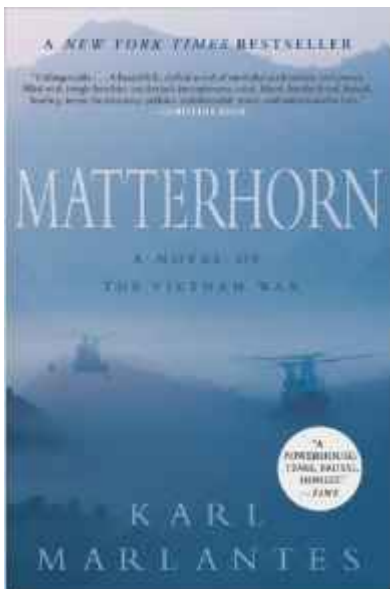


“Part history and part philosophy, Professor Rid from King’s College London explores the development of the cyber world and its implications. This book includes a lot of nerd history including Sci-Fi and not a lot of practical insights for today, but this book will probably be the standard for the history of cybernetics for years to come.” **-Dr. Frank Hoffman, Retired Marine Infantryman and Washington-based national security analyst.**



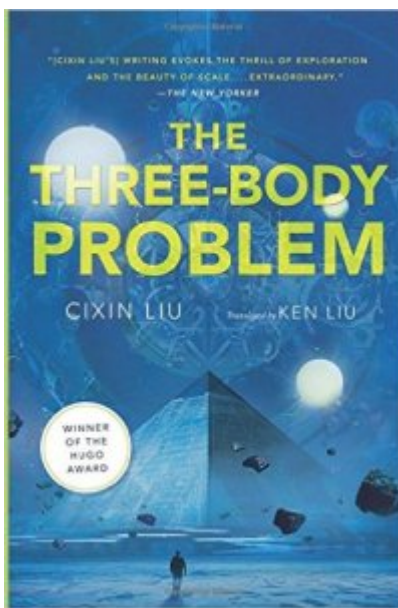


“Sullivan’s work uses a Clausewitzian basis for looking at the duration and outcome of war given some varied types of strategy. Now, I must admit that I’ve read the book once before, and while I will read it again and certainly recommend it to others, Sullivan’s work here seems to highlight an interesting thread in the literature of security studies’ use of strategy as a variable. In sum, its fairly limited, and seems to have a laser-like focus on the Delbruckian dichotomy. Colin Gray, a stalwart of strategic studies, suggests there are over 13 different ways to think about strategy in war, and to the best of my knowledge the research accomplished by the security studies community could be enhanced by a broadening beyond a single one. So, you might say I’m trying to build a bridge between strategic studies and security studies, and I think Sullivan’s “Who Wins?” will provide readers a lot of good ideas in detail for how to accomplish that.”- [Rich Ganske](#), **U.S. Air Force Officer and Co-Founder and Editor of the Strategy Bridge**



“You can only listen to friends recommend a book to you for so long before you take the hint. Having previously read *What It’s Like to go to War*, I had an appreciation for Karl

Marlantes’s talent as a writer, even so, I could not have anticipated how powerful of a story he would tell with *Matterhorn*. The story of Second Lieutenant Mellas and Bravo Company is humorous, infuriating, raw, and tragic – sometimes all at the same time. “ [Jack Curtis](#), contributor to *War on the Rocks*, *Strategy Bridge*, and *Ask Skipper*.



What am I reading?

I recently finished the first book in a sci-fi trilogy written by Chinese author, Cixin Liu and translated by Ken Liu. I love this book because it offers a glimpse into an Eastern view of warfare and the style in which it is written is very different than many of the books I’ve read from Western authors. It focuses on how an alien race shapes earth prior to it’s arrival. I look forward to reading the second book in this series later this summer.

I hope you found something worthwhile on this list and enjoy your summer vacation! I look forward to hearing from you and finding out what you’re reading!

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