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The General vs. the President: MacArthur and Truman at the Brink of Nuclear War, by H. W. Brands

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opponents is growing, so it takes less courage to go to war. Achilles had the courage to fight face-to-face, taking risks and facing danger directly. For many, distancing oneself from danger—even the risk of danger—by using technology imposes a fundamental weakness on the modern warrior amid the challenges he faces. Kaurin presents a detailed analysis of courage in an asymmetrical context, with a prescription for developing courageous warriors.

Another moral attribute that Kaurin sees as essential to the warrior ethos is loyalty. This loyalty is built on leadership and trust and is a foundation of the profession of arms. Referencing the *Illiad*, she compares the loyalty of Achilles, the traditional warrior, with that of Hector, the contemporary, professional warrior. A strategy for training warriors for loyalty is laid out. In addition to excellent military ethics literature references, Kaurin uses film to illustrate key ethical points.

The combatant/noncombatant distinction must be made clear for the soldier considering *jus in bello*. Kaurin proposes a five-level gradation of power and threat, from highest to lowest:

- uniformed combat personnel
- unconventional belligerents
- those provisionally hostile
- neutral or nonhostile noncombatants
- vulnerable noncombatants

Discerning the appropriate category of combatant/noncombatant would determine the appropriate level of force. Such a moral model of ascertaining the threat level would equip the soldier better in the ethics of *jus in bello*.

Kaurin's thoughts are a contribution to the literature on the higher level of

moral thinking for military leaders. She does not shy away from the conundrums the warrior faces. To maintain an ethical edge in asymmetrical warfare, military ethics must be embedded into the culture of the profession of arms.

THOMAS E. CREELY



The General vs. the President: MacArthur and Truman at the Brink of Nuclear War, by H. W. Brands. New York: Doubleday, 2016. 448 pages. \$30.

The relief of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur by President Harry S. Truman remains one of the most controversial and debated wartime command decisions made in the military history of the United States. By April 1951, Douglas MacArthur was at the peak of his game as a military leader. His public pressing to widen the war in Korea, in direct contradiction to the intent of his president, and his public statements to that end that led to his dismissal still fuel debate today.

H. W. Brands gives depth to the tale of MacArthur versus Truman by including the complexities that existed in the Korean conflict and its Cold War context, when a U.S.-led “free world” was engaged in a global struggle against Soviet-led Communism (and especially Soviet interest in Central Europe). As the fighting in Korea continued, official Washington, and the Pentagon in particular, worried that the war effort was tying down more and more U.S. military resources—worries that fueled further concerns that Moscow might see the United States stretched militarily and unable to defend Central Europe adequately.

Brands highlights another lesser-known aspect of the Korean War: MacArthur's desire to bring Chinese Nationalist forces into the fight. Truman and the Joint Chiefs, knowing how this could antagonize Mao's China and possibly widen the war, did not view the idea favorably. Truman and the Joint Chiefs were not convinced that Chiang Kai-shek's corrupt and recently defeated forces would prove more of an advantage than a burden to the fight in Korea. MacArthur also clearly chafed at what he perceived to be Truman's hesitancy in fighting Communism. Truman, in turn, remained focused on the Communist threat to Central Europe and U.S. commitments to its European allies, all the while trying to balance resisting Communist aggression in Korea against preventing the conflict from widening.

Yet the conflict in Korea did widen when Chinese forces entered the fray in November 1950—an escalation that caught MacArthur off guard. Only a month earlier, in his famous meeting with Truman at Wake Island, he categorically had dismissed Chinese intervention as a concern.

The central element of the MacArthur-Truman controversy proved to be the persona of Douglas MacArthur himself. Having lived and fought in the Pacific since 1937 (and not having returned to the United States until his relief in 1951), MacArthur had a self-described faith in his understanding of the "Asian mind." By 1951 MacArthur, then seventy-one, had lost touch with his country, which had changed considerably in the thirteen years since he had been there last. Believing he could speak for the American people, MacArthur allowed a draft effort to go forward for the 1952 Republican

presidential nomination. Yet, not desiring to campaign and growing ever more shrill in his speeches, MacArthur quickly doomed his potential candidacy to oblivion. His seeming advocacy for the use of nuclear weapons in Korea gave civilian and military leaders further pause, particularly when he suggested "sowing of fields of suitable radio-active material" in theater. Interestingly, it was President-elect Eisenhower who later broke the peace talk deadlock by intimating his openness to using nuclear weapons against the Chinese.

Perhaps the most damning part of the MacArthur story is the general's testimony before the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees upon his relief of command and forced return from Japan. The testimony, which Brands recounts in great detail, makes for some of the best reading. MacArthur tries to live up to his reputation, yet appears to be out of his league before inquisitive senators. He ultimately loses what support he had from Republicans, who, while no fans of Truman, in the end opted not to cast their lots with MacArthur.

A few aspects of the book did prove distracting. Detailed maps of the Korean Peninsula showing the many stages of the Korean War would have added to the reader's understanding of the conflict but are absent. Further, a glitch in binding resulted in the Korean Peninsula map that was included on the inside cover being upside down. The reviewer contacted the publisher via e-mail and, although acknowledged, was not responded to. And on page 329 the author's passage "MacArthur's prediction that by January 1950 the victory would be so complete" is clearly

a misprint, because North Korea did not invade South Korea until June 1950.

These items are minor and easily corrected in a future edition. What remains still is a powerful book that goes into great detail, benefiting from the storytelling ability of H. W. Brands. We hope that a civil-military conflict between a towering figure like MacArthur and a sitting U.S. president is unlikely to reoccur. Yet the story remains a valid one today, with its lessons on the reach of military power in a democracy, the role of the president in setting national policy, and the role of civilian oversight of military power.

DAVID L. TESKA



The Pacific War and Contingent Victory: Why Japanese Defeat Was Not Inevitable, by Michael W. Myers. Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 2015. 208 pages. \$34.95.

The Pacific War and Contingent Victory is “an exercise in the elucidation of terms”—an exercise necessary to determine whether the Empire of Japan could have avoided defeat at the hands of the United States and its allies. The focus on “terms” is important, as precision and clarity are vital to Professor Michael Myers’s effort to challenge the near-universal acceptance of the idea that Japanese defeat was inevitable. On the contrary, Myers argues that there were several points in the war where the arc of history was subject to change, given a different mix of luck, skill, will, or strategy. Myers’s book takes aim at British historian H. P. Willmott—a leading proponent of the inevitability school—and Willmott’s

assertion that since “the defeat of Japan was assured” no single battle or campaign can be considered “decisive.” *The Pacific War and Contingent Victory* challenges this conventional view that inherent industrial, financial, and demographic shortcomings all but guaranteed Japanese defeat.

Myers is also careful to argue that, while the Japanese could have avoided defeat, this does not mean necessarily that they ultimately could have gained victory. Rather, Japan might have realized outcomes short of actual defeat, such as an armistice preserving some of the gains made early in the war, a return to the *status quo ante bellum*, or even a negotiated surrender that left Japan more intact than it would be when it ultimately did surrender in 1945.

Myers’s challenge to Willmott and the rest of the proponents of inevitable Japanese defeat is built on an insistence on precise terms: as he explains, all that is required is to show that there was the *slightest* chance of a Japanese victory, however long the odds or improbable the required chain of events. If, even under the most remote of conditions, a different outcome *could* have occurred, then the inevitability argument is defeated. Myers then argues that if defeat was not a certainty, then one or more events—be they battles or campaigns or just a moment of good or ill fortune—had to be decisive. It is difficult, perhaps even impossible, to argue with Myers’s logic. His position is somewhat similar to that of a lawyer defending the owners of a carnival who offer a commonly found midway game involving tossing softballs into milk cans for prizes. All the lawyer has to do is show that it is *possible* for the softball to