



Douglas MacArthur: American Warrior

Arthur Herman

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A new, definitive life of an American icon, the visionary general who led American forces through three wars and foresaw his nation's great geopolitical shift toward the Pacific Rim—from the Pulitzer Prize finalist and bestselling author of *Gandhi & Churchill*

Douglas MacArthur was arguably the last American public figure to be worshipped unreservedly as a national hero, the last military figure to conjure up the romantic stirrings once evoked by George Armstrong Custer and Robert E. Lee. But he was also one of America's most divisive figures, a man whose entire career was steeped in controversy. Was he an avatar or an anachronism, a brilliant strategist or a vainglorious mountebank? Drawing on a wealth of new sources, Arthur Herman delivers a powerhouse biography that peels back the layers of myth—both good and bad—and exposes the marrow of the man beneath.

MacArthur's life spans the emergence of the United States Army as a global fighting force. Its history is to a great degree *his* story. The son of a Civil War hero, he led American troops in three monumental conflicts—World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. Born four years after Little Big Horn, he died just as American forces began deploying in Vietnam. Herman's magisterial book spans the full arc of MacArthur's journey, from his elevation to major general at thirty-eight through his tenure as superintendent of West Point, field marshall of the Philippines, supreme ruler of postwar Japan, and beyond. More than any previous biographer, Herman shows how MacArthur's strategic vision helped shape several decades of U.S. foreign policy. Alone among his peers, he foresaw the shift away from Europe, becoming the prophet of America's destiny in the Pacific Rim.

Here, too, is a vivid portrait of a man whose grandiose vision of his own destiny won him enemies as well as acolytes. MacArthur was one of the first military heroes to cultivate his own public persona—the swashbuckling commander outfitted with Ray-Ban sunglasses, riding crop, and corncob pipe. Repeatedly spared from being killed in battle—his soldiers nicknamed him “Bullet Proof”—he had a strong sense of divine mission. “Mac” was a man possessed, in the words of one of his contemporaries, of a “supreme and almost mystical faith that he could not fail.” Yet when he did, it was on an epic scale. His willingness to defy both civilian and military authority was, Herman shows, a lifelong trait—and it would become his undoing. Tellingly, MacArthur once observed, “Sometimes it's the order you don't obey that makes you famous.”

To capture the life of such an outsize figure in one volume is no small achievement. With *MacArthur* Arthur Herman has set a new standard for grappling with the legacy of this American legend.

Douglas MacArthur: American Warrior Details

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From Reader Review Douglas MacArthur: American Warrior for online ebook

Pei-jean Lu says

A well written in depth view into the life and times of arguably the most famous American military figure of the 20th Century. Many biographies I have read often barely get past the idea that ego was what drove MacArthur. Herman delves deeper providing a much more insightful look into his life and his famed military career

Andrew Careaga says

A dense tome, thoroughly researched and well-written, about one of the 20th century's most complex and controversial public figures. Before reading Herman's book, most of what I knew about MacArthur centered on his defeats -- namely, his loss of the Philippines to the Japanese during the early stages of World War II and his firing by President Truman during the Korean War -- and on his public image (the Ray-Ban sunglasses and ever-present corn cob pipe). This book sheds greater light on events and circumstances surrounding both events, as well as the factors that shaped MacArthur's life, from his father's military career to his mother's influence, his studies at West Point, World War I service, leadership as West Point president and roles in the Philippines. Herman's book seems to be an even-handed presentation of MacArthur, and it digs below the surface of a military leader perceived as both vainglorious and a warmonger to shed greater light on the man's humanity. But it is a long, dense read.

Adam Yoshida says

Comprehensive and Compelling

Arthur Herman's new biography of General MacArthur is a long-overdue modern examination of the General's life and deeds. Herman makes a conscious and successful effort to chart a middle ground between the almost-worshipful tone of some works on MacArthur and the often-overheated criticism of later years. Instead, he presents a straightforward and honest picture of a man whose fighting career spanned the first half of the 20th Century and who managed to be at the center of the storm through some of the most dramatic moments in American history.

Matthew Bolam says

I have to consciously limit myself when praising Arthur Herman. I've 'friended' him on Facebook, and have sent him a few private messages. We don't know each other therefore I run the risk of getting issued a restraining order for being a rabid and fawning sycophant, so I'll feign sanity here by bridling somewhat my animation over Herman's latest book. This biography titled "Douglas MacArthur: American Warrior" is the 4th book I've read by Herman and the 3rd book of his I've studied this year. "The Cave and The Light" remains my favorite work by this professor of history, and a book which has vaulted my psyche into the

Annie Wilkes region of irrational exuberance for Herman. However, in terms of setting the record straight regarding politically motivated fabrications, ideologically driven canards, or outright mistaken historical memes surrounding the life and events of General Douglas MacArthur; this book may rank for others as Herman's most outstanding work yet. I derived an opinion about Douglas MacArthur from books and documentaries on the broader subjects of WWII and Korea. I had maintained an image of the General as a glory hound, who carelessly risked the lives of his men while fleeing to safety in preservation of his own. Drive-by criticisms for sure. I had not until now invested in reading a biography about MacArthur although, I have read biographies on Eisenhower, Bradley, Patton, Rommel, even Ridgeway among others. Kubrick's fictional General Buck Turgidson and MacArthur would have been kindred spirits in my imagination, at least prior to reading this detailed and honest biography. Herman sweeps away these gross caricatures of General MacArthur and presents us with an extraordinarily authentic examination of the very human individual behind those stars. We learn how General MacArthur perceived, reacted to, and led people through exceptionally tumultuous times in history. Herman's biography is not an *apologia* for MacArthur's most glaring character defects or errors in generalship. Over such a long career miscalculations are made, and Herman gives these lapses proper hearing and context.

One of the first ahistorical fabrications Herman corrects though, comes as a digression pertaining to the life of Douglas MacArthur's father, Arthur MacArthur. The setting is the Philippines during The Spanish-American War, and subsequent occupation for which Arthur MacArthur will fight as General and serve as military governor for some time. My professors, their textbooks, Chris Matthews and various political ideologues of one stripe or another, have always attempted to enculturate me into the idea which insists U.S. motives for going to war with Spain and occupying the Philippines, were purely of racist imperialism. In the wake of a "moribund Spanish Empire", Herman points out "motives for going to war were more complicated" than the Chris Matthews of the world care to remember. Herman states, "If the United States didn't use this chance...some other European power, such as Germany, likely would". Considering the fact after Admiral Dewey's victory, and as General Arthur MacArthur's troop transports were approaching Manila, there "Fifty warships of four other nations—Britain, France, Germany, and Russia—filled the harbor". It was not an easy decision for President McKinley to annex the Philippines, but the message from his military advisors was lucid and frank according to Herman, "If the Americans failed to fill the vacuum left by the defeat of the Spanish colonial rule in the Philippines, others would fill it for them". Sometimes hard decisions with no easy answer have to be made by adults who live in the real world. This decision regarding the Philippines set in play a series of future events entangling Asia and General Douglas MacArthur so profound in importance—and coincidence—it is hard not ascribe Divine Providence to them.

Douglas was like his father, and far more enlightened about the prospect of Philippine independence than the civilian powers of either political party. Arthur MacArthur's views on the future of Asia—which would inform his son's outlook—were beyond prescient. We could use the leadership of a MacArthur today with China and Japan's relationship failing due to China's aggressive posture. (Read: *China Makes It's Latest power Play in The East China Sea*; NRO Aug 10,2016 by Herman)

Here are some other things Herman has taught me about Douglas MacArthur. He was the real deal; the bravery he displayed in The Great War is unquestioned. MacArthur went on night raids into enemy trench lines and led his men in a manner exposing him to danger which went above and beyond on a regular basis. He left that theater of operations the most highly decorated officer in the Army, and deservedly so.

MacArthur was retired when things heated up between the Japanese and the United States! He was basically a civilian contractor working for a sort of interim Philippine government and was attempting to establish a functional independent Army in the Philippines. He could have walked away from the archipelago a relatively wealthy man and did the "I told you so" circuit of speeches and press conferences like a General

Allen or Wesley Clark. Instead, he relished his reentry to the Army and didn't bat an eye when his Commander in Chief ordered him to fight to the death on the Philippines once the Japanese invaded, and for what clearly was a hopeless cause. A similar order given by Hitler to General Paulus has been deemed unwise and cruel by many historians. MacArthur—unlike Wesley Clark—was a viable political opposition party opponent! He could have run against, and had a reasonable chance of beating, FDR. It was MacArthur's political clout which saved his ass. Fearing public criticism from Republicans if MacArthur were killed or captured, Roosevelt rescinded his suicidal order and instead gave MacArthur command of all Army forces in the Pacific. A direct order MacArthur struggled with, and was tempted to disobey, because he had to leave the Philippines for Australia. You all know the rest, "I shall return", and all that. There was no better qualified human being on the planet to govern the occupation of the defeated Japanese.

Korean occupation forces post World War II fell outside of jurisdiction as MacArthur's command. At least until events went totally buggered. Inchon was brilliant, and it hardly had a supporter at the time of conception. If MacArthur would have compromised, coalition forces would have been much further south when the Chinese invaded. That's the last canard: Mao had made a decision to intervene during the summer of 1950. MacArthur's push north to the Yalu did not "trigger" a Chinese response.

I was excited to see this big book of almost 900 pages. Some may believe this elation betrays my mental pathology, and as such could be admissible at the hearing for a restraining order. It's extremely well written, just as everything else I've read by Herman has been. I learned so much more than I can I relay in a review. Thanks to Arthur Herman, the 'old soldier' General Douglas MacArthur will not 'fade away' without having an accurate telling of his heroism and personhood. I look forward to more from this author. I'm his number one fan!

Josiah Chin-A-Young says

Phenomenal read! Arthur Herman has a great way of leaving you constantly on the edge of your chair, waiting to find out what happens next. MacArthur is a man to be honored and remembered. There is a lot about his life that is instructive for aspiring leaders. There is also a lot of political and military history that is quite riveting and enlightening, considering the current state of world politics.

Andrew Dockrill says

Douglas MacArthur is one of my favorite WW1 & WW2 officers and leaders. He was one of the main faces of World War I with his Rainbow Division and is famously remembered walking up no mans land with his men and directing them where to go with no metal helmet on just his boots and a riding crop, daring the enemy to shoot at him. It could definitely be argued that it was stupid and foolhardy of him to do so but it cannot be argued that it inspired his men and was an extreme act of bravery which would carry the Americans to help the allies win the war.

I loved Herman's take on MacArthur, I found it to be very balanced, he was not afraid to show MacArthur's errors - as like most humans on this planet he was not without them, go figure. But he also showed his ability to lead and lead well. MacArthur I find, is often criticized for leaving his men on Bataan and Manila and the famous nickname "Dugout Doug" which I find is quite unfair from what I have read. Given the

circumstances of his situation on the Philippines and America's attitude toward the Philippines. FDR wished for MacArthur to defend the islands but he was willing to do extremely little to help him, which can be explained, given the fact that the US made WW2 in Europe as their main priority and therefore, MacArthur had to make due with the resources he had at his disposal with little to no help from America. I did find that it made you feel disgruntled towards George Marshall and Eisenhower and FDR. I found FDR to be quite unlikable as he would basically treat MacArthur as a political puppet which he made to play on his strings, using him for his political purposes. The only reason that MacArthur had not died on Manila was simply because FDR knew that the people of America saw MacArthur as an American hero, so for political purposes, FDR knew he had to survive for the sake of his presidency (could be argued that is an unfair statement). Had that not happened FDR was prepared to let MacArthur die on the island. but when I do come to read about Marshall and Eisenhower in due time I am sure my opinion will change as I will see the situation from their perspective.

All in all, I would say this book is as good as William Manchester's but not better. I find it to be as easily readable and accessible to almost anyone, be it academic or laymen. The only thing for me that did not tip the scales was I found that Herman did not include as much about MacArthur and his habits or his personality nearly as much as William Manchester had done. It wasn't a big deal, but if I was to nitpick, I would say that it was one thing that I did miss from his book.

I found definitely recommend this book to anyone wanting to read about MacArthur and become familiar with him, you do not have to have any prior background on the time or people who were actors on this periods stage to enjoy it.

Zach says

This book was a tour de force about an American hero that can be misunderstood. Herman's book brings to life MacArthur the man as well as the military and strategic genius. Herman is exceptional in his ability to use MacArthur's military career and understanding of geopolitics to show his foresightedness in the importance of Asia to U.S. foreign policy and grand strategy. Really a wonderful and informative work by a thoughtful and exceptional military historian.

Frank Kohl says

An amazing book that I could barely put it down. So many new insights into America's greatest and most decorated warrior. Five-Star General MacArthur wanted to annihilate North Korea when they attacked South Korea and, if necessary, Communist China. Truman and his advisors were afraid the Soviet Union would retaliate in Europe, but what they didn't know was that Stalin could not have cared less about China.

SIDE BAR: At the end of World War II General Patton wanted to kick the Soviets out of all of Berlin and all of Eastern Europe, but again the politicians and Eisenhower would not let him. In short, Patton and MacArthur could have eliminated the resulting Cold War and completely changed two decades of world history.

I would highly recommend that anyone interested in the first fifty years of United States' twentieth century history MUST read this biography.

Chris says

This is a biography every bit as grand as the subject matter. General Douglas MacArthur was arguably one of the greatest figures of the 20th Century. Arguably because as a controversial figure he is either greatly admired or greatly despised. MacArthur's admirers have much to point to. As the son of a Civil War hero he chose a life in the Army and was one of the most decorated soldiers in the Great War. Remaining in the military during the intervening years between the two wars he built an incredible resume for a soldier during peacetime. As Superintendent at West Point he modernized Academy rules and built a strong curriculum. He became the head of the US Olympic Committee and guided the US team to a strong showing in the 1928 Olympics. He was head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and, because of the Great depression, massaged a declining defense budget to prevent erosion of the military capabilities of the different branches and, in fact, oversaw the expansion of the burgeoning Air Force. His execution of the war in the Pacific during World War II was astonishing considering the Pacific war effort was secondary to the effort in Europe. He won the war using Australia as a base and retaking the Pacific one island at a time with less men, equipment and money than his counterparts in Europe. After the war he transformed Japan from a vicious enemy into a close ally by rebuilding the country from a wartime to a peacetime economy. And he led the American forces in the Korean War and prevented a takeover of South Korea by the North.

MacArthur's detractors point to his arrogant demeanor and self-promotional tendencies to try to diminish him. His time as head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was tainted by his actions against the Bonus Marchers. During the war he was accused of abandoning his army in the Philippines to the treacheries of the Japanese (He was actually ordered to leave by FDR). And his insubordinate activities in the Korean War that ultimately got him relieved of command are well documented here. In short, this is an even-handed study of a great figure in American history. Both sides have their views aired. His contributions will continue to be argued as long as we study his life and this book will be one of the major references.

Leah says

Duty, Honor, Country...

In his preface, Herman discusses previous biographies of General Douglas MacArthur, some sycophantic in their admiration, others dismissing him as everything from vain to incompetent. His hope is that by the end of the book the reader will be able to decide which description is the true one. Herman has ranged widely in his search for accurate source material, including China, Japan and Russia; and has also had access to newly opened archives within the US.

I start by saying that, prior to reading this book, I knew absolutely nothing about Douglas MacArthur and very little about the events in which he was involved. I am, therefore, in no position to judge the accuracy of either the history or the portrait Herman paints of this clearly divisive American hero. I decided to read it because I have greatly enjoyed several other of Herman's books, finding him a great storyteller who brings history vividly to life. And from the prologue of this one, where he gives a dramatic description of the events at Inchon and then leaves those of us who don't know our history on a cliffhanger, foreshadowing MacArthur's future downfall, I knew he was going to achieve the remarkable, I might even have said impossible, feat of making me enjoy over 800 pages of the history of a soldier fighting the various American wars of the first half of the twentieth century.

In his conclusion, Herman suggests there are three main aspects that are crucial to understanding Douglas MacArthur – the degree to which he was influenced by his father's life; the relationships with the various women in his life, his mother and his second wife Jean in particular; and his “*brilliance as a grand strategist – perhaps the most incisive the American military has ever produced.*” This serves as a fair summary of how Herman approaches his subject throughout the book.

To explain how influential Arthur MacArthur was on his son's life, Herman gives the reader a mini-biography of the elder man – his early career as a Unionist hero of the Civil War, and his later fascination with the East, becoming convinced that the Pacific rim would be of more importance to the future America than its old attachments to Europe. So interesting does Herman make this story that I was left hoping that perhaps his next task will be to do a full biography of Arthur, a man whose life sounds as eventful and interesting as his son's.

Herman goes into Douglas MacArthur's relationship with his mother in some depth, suggesting that she was something of a driving force behind her son's career not just in his youth but right through till his late thirties and forties. A late bloomer in the romance stakes, MacArthur's first marriage failed quite quickly. His second marriage to Jean, however, brought him the kind of support his mother had provided and Herman shows how important this domestic stability was to MacArthur when dealing with the various military crises of his life.

While talking about MacArthur's career between the two world wars, Herman praises MacArthur's achievements both as head of the US Olympic committee and for forcing the Army to face up to the need to modernise the training of its young officers while he was in charge of West Point. He also discusses in depth the apparently infamous breaking up of the Bonus Army camps, when MacArthur used troops to drive out army veterans who were protesting over the government's refusal to bring forward payment of their promised bonuses. Since this was an episode I had never heard of, I was totally reliant on Herman's version. It seemed to me that he very much took MacArthur's side, perhaps too much so, almost absolving him of all responsibility for the matter.

However, he also put the opposite case clearly enough for me to consider the question of bias at all, and that's one of the main reasons I like Herman. In the past, I have always found him to be sympathetic to his subjects, and so he is in this one. But although he can come across as biased in his conclusions, it seems to me he always presents the other side of the argument, leaving the reader to follow his bias or argue against it. Since it is a rare author indeed who can write without bias, my preference is for open bias of the Herman kind, rather than the kind where only one story is told with no indication that there may be another version.

But the real meat of the book is, as it should be, MacArthur's military career. So involved was MacArthur in most of the important events of the time, so well told are the various episodes, so clearly does Herman lay out the background and consequences of each, that the book is as much history as biography. From MacArthur's leadership of the Rainbow Division in WW1, through the often horrific story of the Pacific arena in WW2, and on to MacArthur's successes and failures in Korea, Herman thoroughly explains the politics, domestic and foreign, that impacted on each campaign, and provides clear and often very moving stories of the military battles, while also showing how narrow is the dividing line between heroic success and tragic failure. Herman also delves into the period after WW2 when MacArthur spent some years as the 'American Shogun' ruling almost monarchically over a defeated Japan, and paints him as someone who chose not to exact revenge, but rather to try to change the culture and structure of the society to prevent future wars. Herman in fact gives MacArthur credit for sowing the seeds of the Japanese economic miracle of the latter part of the century.

Throughout all this, Herman doesn't shy away from criticising MacArthur's decisions on occasion, but

always puts his mistakes into context. The picture that emerges is of a true military hero, a man of great personal courage, with a huge ego and a desire for public recognition and even glory, but with a driving ambition to see his nation provide a shining example to the rest of the world. A flawed hero perhaps, but I sometimes think we as a society expect a level of perfection that our heroes cannot possibly achieve, and in general I prefer sympathetic biographies that recognise and allow for human fallibility. So from my perspective, this is another great biography from Herman, thoroughly researched and immensely readable. I shall leave it to the MacArthur buffs on both sides to argue over its bias or otherwise.

NB This book was provided for review by the publisher, Random House.

www.fictionfanblog.wordpress.com

L Craig says

I was very excited to read this book as the subject of General MacArthur and his firing has been of great interest to me and my studies and research for quite a while. I would also like to point out that the review copy I was given did not include pictures or maps, so I am sure those additions will make the book an even better visual experience for the reader. I guess I should also point out that I have done quite a bit of research back in the day on MacArthur's firing and have read many of the primary and secondary sources on those events and have looked at the issue from both MacArthur's and Truman's point of view.

First let me talk about what was really good about this book. Arthur Herman can write and this book was a pleasure to read. At times, especially talking about the early defense of the Philippines reads like a novel. Even though you know how the story ends, it was very exciting. This was a fast read despite being over 800 pages. So kudos to the author for writing a very readable book.

Another important aspect of this book is that it provides balance to the story. So many of the books about MacArthur or military leadership during WW2, or biographies of Truman, lately have been over the top anti-MacArthur. 15 Stars by Stanley Weintraub was the most recent book on WW2 Generals that I have read, and that is a good example of the popular bashing of MacArthur that takes place these days. So with that said, I appreciated, even though I do not necessarily agree, that the book was pro-MacArthur. That side of the story is not really being told anymore and the positives of MacArthur, and there were many positives, need to be told. So I liked, though not agreed, with Herman taking and strongly defending an unpopular historical view.

So while I enjoyed reading the book, and enjoyed the unpolitical correctness of the author's thesis, on many issues I just was not convinced. In my opinion the greatest biography of MacArthur, and personally probably the best biography of any historical figure I have read is American Caesar by William Manchester. What I so love about that book is that as someone who came into reading the book not a fan of MacArthur, I came away still not a fan of MacArthur but at the same time learned to appreciate him much more than I had before reading the book. What I mean is American Caesar confirmed why I didn't like MacArthur while at the same time strongly showing and giving me an appreciation of the many good things he did. I also feel that if you read American Caesar as a fan of MacArthur you will walk away from the book still a fan of MacArthur but with a greater appreciation of why some people don't like him. I have never read a biography before or after that can do that. Manchester did a great job discussing the paradox of MacArthur and how for every good trait he had an equal negative trait or vice versa. I did not get this from American Warrior. It was very pro-MacArthur, which is fine, but it really did not dwell and at many times excused the negative. I just did not find the book balanced, I don't think its intentions were to be balanced and that is the author's thesis,

but to me is why Manchester's book is better.

I don't think the author did good enough job proving MacArthur was not wrong in say how he handled the Bonus Army or on why he did not immediately retreat to Corregidor. The author seems to glance over the fact that MacArthur left so many needed supplies, supplies that could have helped defend Corregidor longer to rot on docks or fall into the hands of the Japanese. The author becomes slightly critical of MacArthur on the issue of the Chinese in Korea and his firing, but again in my opinion leaves too much out and seems to again not dwell on the fact that MacArthur somehow missed hundreds of thousands of Chinese who were involved in the Korean War from the beginning. We now know from more recent studies of Mao that the Chinese were involved in the Korean War from day one, there would not have been a Korean War without Mao and yet somehow MacArthur missed all of that.

Which takes me to my final point. As good as this book was to read, I did not learn anything new. The author mentions in the beginning that this bio would use new sources now that the cold war was over, but I did not see these sources used in the book nor listed in the works cited. There have been tremendous uses of new information in recent studies of the Cold War, Korea, or Mao Zedong sources from the Soviet and Chinese, but I did not find these used here. Jung Chang's book on Mao told a lot of new information about Korea, information that would have been useful here, I just did not see it in the final product. I would have like better use of primary sources beyond the usual. In my opinion this book broke no new ground.

To sum up, this was a great read, and needed re-evaluation of MacArthur, but in my opinion it just did not prove anything new nor make a strong enough case for its strong defense of MacArthur in some of the more controversial areas. I highly recommend the book, but would like to have seen better use of new primary and secondary sources. American Caesar is still the best book on MacArthur.

Fred Lombardo says

Finally, a biography that peals back the vale of bias and pretentiousness that have clouded the history of this great man. While certainly flawed, Mac Arthur was one of America's greatest, if not the greatest military leader and statesman. Historians have followed the old stories of downgrading his contributions to this country and that has been nothing short of tragic. This biography does justice to Mac Arthur as a man and a hero. Would that this country could find such a noble soul these days. This is without doubt, one of the best biographies I have ever read.

V.F. Gutierrez says

Finally the truth is fairly written

A must read to learn the true story of a remarkable leader who at the end many have tried and succeeded in tarnishing a great man's character.

Fascinating reading the strategies of his war encounters from WW1 to Korea. Incredibly predicting events leading to modern day issues.

Tom says

Very well researched and documented biography of one of America's heroes and citizen. Mac was just a remarkable man, brilliant, brave, etc. The highest compliment I can give is "Yes, I want you in my foxhole!" and yes I do want Mac in my foxhole.

I was troubled a bit by the author's criticisms of all prior MacArthur biographies and his arrogant and egotistical claim that his work was going to straighten the whole mess out. This book was remarkable but above reproach, I doubt it.

Gordon says

5 stars. A brilliant biography. Superbly researched and written. Includes new insights from primary sources and benefits from a certain distance from the controversy surrounding MacArthur's removal during the Korean War. The Goodreads description of this book is a superb summary. Military and political leaders as well as historians and practitioners of international relations and grand strategy would all enjoy this book.
