



THE U.S. ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF'S

# PROFESSIONAL READING LIST



United States Army  
Center of Military History

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“This Professional Reading List is intended for all Army Soldiers, leaders and civilians. I’ve found these books to be thought-provoking about leadership, our Army and our history. Soldiers and civilians with a thirst for learning should consider using this list as a springboard for additional reading and study. I’d suggest you not limit yourselves to this or any other reading list you’ve been issued in the past. I just ask that you *read* and broaden your perspectives and develop your own passionate curiosity through reading and study.”

—Martin E. Dempsey, 37th Chief of Staff, Army



# ABOUT THE PROGRAM



The new U.S. Army Chief of Staff's Professional Reading List is divided into three sub-lists—history and heritage (including novels with a historical setting), leadership, and critical analysis and the global context—for a total of twenty-six recommended books. The readings provide a useful course of independent study in the origin of the profession of arms, valuable leadership techniques, and the use of our critical-thinking abilities to understand the world around us. Taken together, these readings will help Soldiers or Army civilians sharpen their intellects while preparing for their next level of responsibility. The books also complement materials currently used in the Army educational system and can help bridge the intervals between periods of formal instruction at Army schools. While intended for independent study, one could also use the list as the basis for establishing book clubs, discussion groups, and other professional development activities.



# HISTORY AND HERITAGE

## ***John M. Schofield and the Politics of Generalship***

Donald B. Connelly // Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006

John McAllister Schofield (1831–1906) rose in the course of a 46-year career from West Point cadet to Commanding General of the Army. Donald Connelly's carefully argued biography includes several campaign and battle studies arising from Schofield's Civil War experiences. The major theme of the book, however, is the interaction between the intensely partisan nineteenth-century American political environment and the efforts of the U.S. Army's officer corps to develop a professional identity that included both expertise and a measure of autonomy. Some officers argued for a complete divorce of the military from politics. Based on his own experiences, Schofield understood that politics determined policy and urged Army officers to execute policy in a nonpartisan, disinterested, and even-handed manner. His approach to civil-military relations became the model for most Army officers from the early twentieth century to the present.

## ***The Red Badge of Courage***

Stephen Crane // New York: Tor Classics, 1990

A classic of American literature, this Civil War novel depicts a Union Soldier's terrifying baptism of fire and his ensuing transformation from coward to hero. Originally published in 1895, its vivid evocation of battle remains unsurpassed.

## ***This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness***

T. R. Fehrenbach // Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2001

Regarded by many as one of the best books on the Korean War, *This Kind of War* captures the intensity and ferocity of combat at the platoon and company level. The book is written in a flowing, journalistic style that carries the reader along without having to pause to read footnotes or to check references. As his title implies, Fehrenbach emphasizes the lack of preparedness of those U.S. forces committed early in the war. He calls to account the Army, U.S. politicians, and the nature of

American society itself for the setbacks suffered by U.S. troops in their initial engagements with the North Koreans and the Chinese. He contrasts those shortcomings with the Army's later successes as the force gained experience and professionalism. His overriding lesson throughout the book is the disastrous consequences that a lack of training and readiness can have for Soldiers on the battlefield.

### ***America's First Battles: 1776–1965***

Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft, eds. //  
Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986

Eleven prominent American military historians assess the first battles of nine wars in which the U.S. Army has fought. Each essay is written within a similar framework, examining how the U.S. Army prepares during peacetime, mobilizes for war, fights its first battle, and subsequently adapts to the exigencies of the conflict. *America's First Battles* shows clearly the price of unpreparedness and the harsh adjustments that are often necessary when preconceived plans and doctrines meet reality on the ground.

### ***We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young: Ia Drang—the Battle That Changed the War in Vietnam***

Harold G. Moore and Joseph L. Galloway // New  
York: Presidio Press, 2004

This is a gripping firsthand account of the November 1965 Battle of the Ia Drang by the commander of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division. The Ia Drang was the first major combat test of the airmobile concept and the first major battle between U.S. forces and the North Vietnamese Army.

### ***Between War and Peace: How America Ends Its Wars***

Matthew Moten, ed. // New York: Simon and Schuster,  
2011

Fifteen prominent military historians offer in this book thoughtful new interpretations of the goals sought, strategies pursued, and outcomes achieved by the United States in a dozen major and less well-known conflicts from the American Revolution to the Iraq war. Roger J. Spiller states early on in the book that American military doctrine today lacks "any definition of *victory*." The subsequent essays illustrate that, throughout U.S. history, not only was the pursuit of military victory challenging but the results were often different and less decisive than initially anticipated.

## ***Once an Eagle***

Anton Myrer // New York: HarperTorch, 2001

An exciting historical novel, *Once an Eagle* traces the career of a fictitious Soldier from World War I to Vietnam. The book realistically portrays the confusion of combat, the bonds that form between fighting men, the tensions between line and staff officers, and the heavy responsibility of command. A great book for young leaders contemplating a career in the profession of arms and looking for a deeper understanding of Army culture.

## ***The Last Stand: Custer, Sitting Bull, and the Battle of the Little Bighorn***

Nathaniel Philbrick // New York: Viking Adult, 2010

Philbrick's account offers insight into the celebrated 1876 clash between Indian warriors and elements of the U.S. 7th Cavalry led by Lt. Col. George A. Custer. The author's recounting of personalities, leadership, tactics, weapons, and culture provides instructive examples of how the decisions of a company or battalion commander, even in defeat, can leave an indelible mark on U.S. national policy and history itself.

## ***Gates of Fire: An Epic Novel of Thermopylae***

Steven Pressfield // New York: Bantam Books, 1999

In the battle of Thermopylae (480 BC), a small group of Spartan soldiers with a few Greek allies confronted a vastly superior Persian invasion force. Due to better training, discipline, and good use of terrain, the Greeks held off the Persians for seven days. Told through the eyes of the (fictitious) lone Greek survivor Xeonos, *Gates of Fire* brings to life this epic battle while providing readers with insight into Spartan society and its military. Pressfield's focus on, and sympathy with, the ordeal of the common infantryman makes *Gates of Fire* a tale of timeless relevance to all Soldiers.

## ***The Killer Angels***

Michael Shaara // New York: Modern Library, 2004

This fictional account of the battle of Gettysburg accurately depicts not only the events of this particular battle, but the nature of war itself. Readers of this Pulitzer Prize-winning book will come to appreciate that war is a kaleidoscope of planning and confusion, fear and gallantry, all seasoned with a good deal of luck.

## ***The Art of War***

Sun Tzu // Boston: Shambhala, 2005

Written in China over two thousand years ago, Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* provides the first known attempt to formulate a rational basis for the planning and conduct of military operations. These wise, aphoristic essays contain timeless principles acted on by many twentieth-century commanders.

## ***April 1865: The Month That Saved America***

Jay Winik // New York: Harper Perennial, 2006

Written by a former government official with firsthand knowledge of several twentieth-century civil wars, this book recounts the pivotal events that occurred during the final month of the American Civil War and explains their significance. The momentous events included the fall of Richmond and the flight of the Confederate government, Confederate General Robert E. Lee's surrender to Union General in Chief Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House, and President Abraham Lincoln's assassination at Ford's Theater. Winik argues that Lee's stoic dignity at Appomattox, combined with Grant's quiet magnanimity, set in motion the healing process that reunified North and South and made the United States a stronger nation than it had been before the war.



# LEADERSHIP

## ***Click: The Forces Behind How We Fully Engage with People, Work, and Everything We Do***

Ori and Rom Brafman // New York: Crown, 2010

Interpersonal relationships lie at the core of most human endeavors. In this interesting and easy-to-read book, the authors use social psychology research to explain how and why people sometimes make instant connections with each other. Whether you are commanding a company, working on a staff, or trying to build rapport with indigenous leaders during a stability operation, you will find something in this study that will enhance your ability to accomplish your mission by building better personal relationships.

## ***The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations***

Ori and Rom Brafman // New York: Penguin Books, 2006

This succinct study explores how institutions react to change driven by the external environment. Written from the perspective of contemporary business, it offers examples of decentralized organizations, with their subordinate elements operating and growing independently, adapting faster than more centralized ones. Despite its focus on the civilian world, this model offers important insights for military leaders at the operational and tactical levels. The challenge that the authors extend is how to make decentralization work in today's military.

## ***Outliers: The Story of Success***

Malcolm Gladwell // New York: Little, Brown, 2011

In his work on success, the author examines why some people succeed, living remarkably productive and impactful lives, while so many more never reach their potential. He questions the belief of the self-made man, asserting that successful people do not arise from nowhere, propelled by genius and talent. "They are invariably the beneficiaries of hidden advantages and extraordinary opportunities and cultural legacies that allow them to learn and work hard and make sense of the world in ways others cannot." Examining the lives of outliers from Mozart to Bill Gates, Gladwell builds a convincing case for how successful people rise to the top on a tide of advantages, education, and hard work.

## ***Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard***

Chip and Dan Heath // New York: Random House, 2010

In a compelling, story-driven narrative, the Heaths assemble decades of counterintuitive research in psychology, sociology, and other fields to shed new light on how individuals can achieve transformative change. Using the model of the rational versus the emotional, *Switch* shows that successful change follows a pattern that leaders can use to inspire reform, whether in a staff, a unit, or even one's own personal habits.

## ***War***

Sebastian Junger // New York: Twelve, 2010

Between 2007 and 2008, the Korengal Valley in northeastern Afghanistan, a rugged mountainous region that skirts the border with Pakistan, was one of the most contested battlefronts in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization–led effort to dislodge the Taliban and stabilize the country. The men of Company B, 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment (Airborne), of the U.S. Army's storied 173d Airborne Brigade, held the valley for coalition forces, all while clinging to rugged mountainsides with little food, little sleep, the loss of numerous comrades, and little contact with the outside world. The valley, according to Sebastian Junger, was "the Afghanistan of Afghanistan: too remote to conquer, too poor to intimidate, [and] too autonomous to buy off." Instead of a strategic or geopolitical analysis, he focuses on chronicling the lives of the men of the 2d Platoon, with whom he was embedded during most of their two-year tours. The result is an intimate, provocative, and enlightening portrait of Soldiers under extremely difficult combat conditions and a deliberation on Soldiers' responses to the adversity of warfare.

## ***The Defence of Duffer's Drift***

E. D. Swinton // United States Infantry Association, 1916

First published in 1907, this essay in small-unit tactics was written by a veteran British officer whose service in the Boer War inspired the work. The book is organized into six "dreams" based on one scenario in which the protagonist, a young lieutenant in command of a detachment of fifty regulars, learns a total of twenty-two lessons about defending his position against a much larger guerrilla force. Related with humor and insight, this volume remains as instructive today as when it first appeared over a century ago.

***Managing the Unexpected: Resilient Performance in an Age of Uncertainty***

Karl E. Weick and Kathleen M. Sutcliffe // San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2007

This book offers principles and practices to manage the unexpected. The authors use examples from organizations or groups that deal with life or death situations, such as the flight deck crew of an aircraft carrier or firefighting teams, where there is a strong possibility of failure, unforeseen incidents are a regular occurrence, small things make a difference, and lives are on the line. Whether the unexpected comes to you at a forward operating base or in a staff meeting at headquarters, *Managing the Unexpected* provides a valuable template for dealing with unpredictable events and developing a resilient, highly reliable organization.





# CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

## ***On War***

Carl von Clausewitz // Ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret // 1832; repr. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989

This edition of *On War*, the third English version published, is easily the best. It is indexed and care has been taken to provide an accurate translation from the original 1832 edition. *On War* represents one of the greatest works on military thought and strategy ever written and contains ideas and concepts that apply at either the operational or national levels.

## ***The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century***

Thomas Friedman // New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005

Friedman, a *New York Times* foreign-affairs columnist and pundit, sees the globalization process entering an entirely new phase. Advances in information technologies, an intensified world division of labor, stepped-up competition, and economic practices such as outsourcing have joined with the political opening of the world following the collapse of communism to produce a progressive “flattening” of the world. Friedman believes that states and individuals have no option but to accept this dynamic and develop the skills to survive the flattened world.

## ***The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization***

Thomas Friedman // New York: Anchor Books, 2000

One day in 1992, Thomas Friedman toured a Lexus factory in Japan and marveled at the robots that put the luxury cars together. That evening, as he ate sushi on a Japanese bullet train, he read a story about yet another Middle East squabble between Palestinians and Israelis. And it hit him: half the world was lusting after those luxury cars or at least the brilliant technology that made them possible, and the other half was fighting over who owned which olive tree. Friedman, the

well-traveled *New York Times* foreign-affairs columnist, peppers *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* with stories that illustrate his central theme: that globalization—the Lexus—is the central organizing principle of the post-Cold War world, even though many individuals and nations resist by holding onto what has traditionally mattered to them—the olive tree.

***Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power***

Robert D. Kaplan // New York: Random House, 2010

In a book that knits together history, journalism, travel anecdotes, and strategic analysis, Robert Kaplan looks at the greater Indian Ocean region stretching from East Africa to Indonesia and argues that it will be the center of world geopolitics in the twenty-first century. Here, in particular, the interests of the United States, an energy-hungry China, and a rising India are increasingly converging. Kaplan's work illuminates factors American policymakers will need to take into account in evaluating and advancing the strategic interests of the United States in the years ahead.

***The Age of the Unthinkable: Why the New World Disorder Constantly Surprises Us and What We Can Do About It***

Joshua C. Ramo // New York: Little, Brown, 2009

The key metaphor in this book is of a towering sand pile, built up one grain at a time that suddenly collapses. The author argues that the world is an unstable collection of political, economic, and ecological sand piles. Stability, he says, is impossible. Therefore, America should strengthen its own internal resilience—improving its systems of transport, health, and education—rather than attempting to eradicate every discrete threat.

***Soldier's Heart: Reading Literature Through Peace and War at West Point***

Elizabeth D. Samet // New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007

The book chronicles Samet's decade as an English professor at the United States Military Academy. It suggests that an exposure to literature and poetry provides Soldiers, regardless of rank, with the mental flexibility to think deeply and critically about issues such as morality, duty, and ethics that are vital elements of a well-rounded military professional.

***The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need—and What We Can Do About It***

Tony Wagner // New York: Basic Books, 2008

American schools are not doing their jobs, contends higher-education advocate Tony Wagner in a story-driven and thought-provoking book. *The Global Achievement Gap* argues that secondary schools rely on multiple-choice tests and memorization while failing to produce students with the critical-thinking skills required in today's world. The book is highly recommended to Army leaders seeking a better understanding of their Soldiers' educational backgrounds and consequent challenges.





