

BOOK REVIEWS

To Boldly Go: Leadership, Strategy, and Conflict in the 21st Century and Beyond by Jonathan P. Klug and Steve Leonard, editors; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2021; 304 pages; \$15.99 Kindle, \$17.06 hardcover.

To Boldly Go is a fascinating collection of short essays that explore a variety of science-fiction movies, books and television programs from the recent era to highlight what leaders can learn about strategy and leadership, and to interrogate the very idea of futurology.



Steve Leonard (aka Doctrine Man) and Jonathan Klug have assembled a diverse array of authors who collectively weave a tapestry of insights through their examinations of fictional worlds that deepen our understanding of the dilemmas and challenges faced by leaders charged with the defense of liberal democracies today. Leaders in every Army branch will find at least some of the essays useful not just for ideas about tomorrow's technology but for what a thoughtful reading or viewing of a fictional world removed from our own can reveal about how to lead with wisdom when faced with the unfamiliar or the unexpected.

The strongest essays in this collection examine science fiction – not to dwell on specific plot points or characters but to analyze the genre itself as a place where authors use the possibilities of space and advanced technology to probe reality and to reveal truths about how humans behave individually or in groups. The essays that address the stories of science fiction are interesting in their analysis of narrative but not nearly as thought-provoking as the essays that probe why the settings, themes and tropes of works of sci-fi are revealing about the very contemporary problems facing leaders and strategists.

This is most evident in the book's stand-out essay, "You're Not Ender Wiggin, and That's Okay" by MAJ Will Meddings of the British army. Meddings, who led the British army's Long-Range Recon Group in an environment not dissimilar to that of the deserts of Arrakis or Tatooine, reminds readers that they are not a hero of a fictional story, but they can still gather leadership lessons from any genre means if they embrace their own very human limitations.

Several of the essays embrace this more holistic view of their source material that deepens their analysis. Jacqueline Whitt's essay neatly combines explorations of theme, narrative and philosophy that reveals the possible new ways of seeing the world that the best science fiction makes possible. Also, those essays that explore the very near term by asking questions about the challenges of the technology of today and tomorrow such as murderbots or space debris are equally satisfying in demanding leaders squarely face the challenges of what war next year might entail.

Several essays on **The Expanse**, a book series turned Amazon television program, cover both areas of inquiry by describing the dangers of worlds where the untrammelled power of corporations has exceeded that of governments, while noting that both the books and the television show are distributed by a private company that can already reach into space. A clever essay by Dan Ward draws more useful details on the dynamics of toxic leadership from the antics of Dark Helmet than from then menacing tactics of Darth Vader.

The idea of fiction as a medium for learning about the real world also points to the project's limits. Quite often the reader is presented with the elements of a story without any examination of the values of the author or artists behind the story. George Lucas' reflection of Joseph Campbell's monomyth through the prism of the America counterculture or Frank Herbert's deep ecology are essential

frameworks to understand and appreciate their works if the time spent reading is meant to be more than entertainment.

With the increasing weaponization of space, cyber and even the very ways people perceive reality and each other, looking to fiction about insights about the future is still powerful and provocative. In particular, the best dystopian sci-fi combines warnings about the future while embracing the tropes of entertainment. The mass use of pharmacology as a method of social control in **Brave New World**; the corporatization of cities and the use of machines in policing in **Robo-Cop**; as well as the cheeriness of news that showed horrific scenes of war that punctuated the movie version of **Starship Troopers** all were warnings about what a version of the future might look like that the works' creators did not wish to see come to pass.

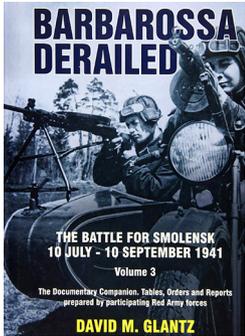
Despite these warnings, the problem with novelty is that it becomes normalcy in very short order. Science fiction may not be predictive enough. Because neither professional futurologists nor storytellers can be guaranteed to get the future right, leaders need to think for themselves about how they as well as their superiors, peers and subordinates in the very futuristic year of 2023 will act when confronted with "what if." **To Boldly Go** is a fantastic tool for beginning this journey of exploration.

LTC ANDY WHITFORD

Barbarossa Derailed: The Battle for Smolensk 10 July-10 September 1941 (Vol. 3: The Documentary Companion) by David M. Glantz; Warwick, United Kingdom: Helion and Company; reprinted 2022; 628 pages; \$2.99 Kindle, \$68.35 hardcover, \$47.26 paperback.

Indispensable. Indispensable. Furthermore, **Barbarossa Derailed: The Battle for Smolensk 10 July-10 September 1941** Vol. 3 by David Glantz is simply indispensable to understanding the Smolensk battles on the Army Group Center axis of attack in the summer and early fall of 1941. Paradoxically, it

was the publication of *Panzergruppe Guderian*, a simulation of the Smolensk encirclement battles by Simulation Publications that gave new context to this early phase of Operation Barbarossa to both then-military leaders and upcoming future armor leaders.



This volume is the documentary companion; it sets forth tables, orders and reports prepared by the Red Army during the Smolensk battle July-September

1941. Glantz's companion books to his other studies are never a disappointment. For example, his *Companion to Colossus Reborn: Key Documents and Statistics* published through the Modern War Studies is a boon to grasping the enormity contained within the earlier works *Stumbling Colossus* and *Colossus Reborn: The Red Army at War*. *Barbarossa Derailed* Vol. 3 follows in that vein, adding far greater fidelity for the reader through the actual word of the participants.

What will strike the reader as odd at first is that once you get past the list of abbreviations and preface, the rest of the book is a series of appendices. Many of the appendices contain either a further directive or an Oberkommando des Heeres staff order. In general, Glantz doesn't try and force the material into an unnatural cookie-cutter approach because as you get deeper into these appendices, you see the material lends itself poorly to doing so. You may not notice this lack of standardization due to the incredibly fascinating material. Glantz allows the material to do the talking, with no

commentary from him.

What we get is an almost-intimate look at an Army as it is struggling to survive and learn in the crucible of combat. Across the span of documents Glantz uses are a mixture of strategic, operational and even tactical snippets to give the reader a sense of the myriad of factors facing the Russians, who have been rocked back hard on their heels by the Wehrmacht. One can feel the desperation in some of the early reports with comments such as "get your command-and-control right" (Pg. 32) or "[s]top panic and cowardice on the spot" (Pg. 36). More telling is the comment – surprising in its bitter truthfulness – that "[o]ur forces are unstable owing to the protracted withdrawals [and] the recent sustained fighting, as well as the carelessness in bringing them up to strength and the great losses of weapons" (Pg. 39).

The last report segment betrays that hard and brutal truths were not being reported at times up the Soviet chain of command. Yet there are begrudging notes of admiration to their German enemy such as noting the Luftwaffe's pressure, which was operating in an "extraordinarily impudent" manner (Pg. 57).

One also senses the intense pressure being put on all levels of command to achieve something positive, no matter the cost. Yet even within that, we read time and time again of chastisement of commanders and units that failed to attack on time or coordinate their flanks, or who poorly employed armor without infantry support. The recorded transcriptions with "the Boss" when Stalin called down to commanders is quite interesting, as with each week that goes by, there is a greater sense that Stalin is perhaps relying a bit more upon their battlefield judgment, but that isn't true in all cases here. Lest we forget, there was always

a chilling aspect to failure in the Soviet system as when Zhukov asks Stalin, "I request you permit me to arrest and condemn all of the scaremongers to which you refer," to which Stalin simply replies, "We gladly permit you to judge them with full severity" (Pg. 472).

The biggest weakness of *Barbarossa Derailed* Vol. 3? It is the same weakness of every Glantz book: maps that are in black and white, making them hard to read due to being dark and plagued with tiny font. Yes, they are "archival" maps. So why not either include them as an appendix for the hard-core Ost Front person and put in readable and usable maps for the reader? Helion and Company should know better, but editors and such no longer focus on that type of capacity. It feels like annoying smugness, as every work of Glantz's bears this same burden. In an era when technology could easily make these maps more accessible, why not get an artist or a smart information-technology type and lessen the burden on your reader, and engage them with colorful, friendly and readable maps to enhance their overall understanding, reading and learning experience?

In the interim, we recommend *Atlas of the Eastern Front 1941-1945* by Robert Kirchubel; though lacking in the microfidelity for Smolensk, it is still useful.

We started off the review with the word "indispensable," and Volume 3 bring this trilogy of the Smolensk battles full circle. With this volume, Glantz supplies the missing pieces that made it an enthralling read. Without hesitation, it is a must for any East-Front aficionado, as well as those wanting to see and understand the interplay between the state and the military in totalitarian states.

DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH