

powerful understanding: that we need a global perspective” (p. 491).

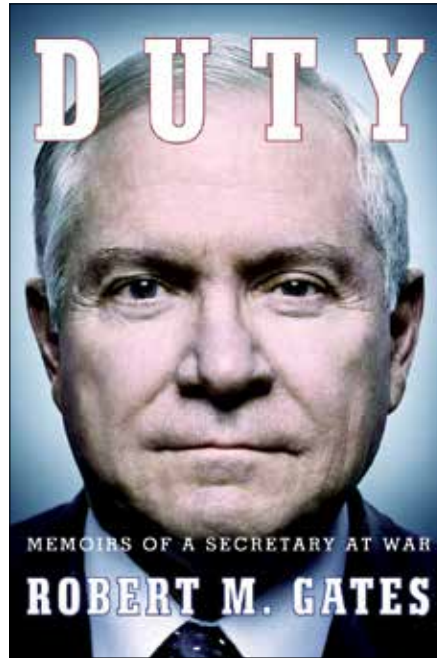
What accounts for Galvin’s success as a strategic leader? Having known him for some years, I am tempted to say that his most astounding trait was that he was a wonderful, thoughtful man, but there must be more. First, Galvin had that global perspective that he preached about. He saw local culture and individuals as very important. He found time to learn German and Spanish well, but with a hint of a Boston accent.

Second, he was a consummate military professional. He could talk tactics with the captains and discuss arms-control proposals with the experts and the eggheads. The details of operational art and the peculiarities of low-intensity conflict were subjects that he mastered. He knew when to stay at a high altitude and when to dive into the details, many of which were recorded on his omnipresent note cards.

Third, like the American eagle, Galvin did not flock. He was his own man. He understood and wrote about the requirements for low-intensity conflict when few in the Army cared about it. Galvin also wrote three books: two on the Revolutionary War and one on modern airmobile operations. Most generals do not have time to do this kind of in-depth intellectual work, but he did. Galvin studied the past for clues to the future, but he could also spot trends that were new factors for analysis. NATO was fortunate to have his leadership during the Mikhail Gorbachev years. Steeped in the Cold War for 40 years, Galvin also knew that change was a constant, even with the Soviet Union. Finally, Galvin saw his mission as including the need to learn from and to teach others, sometimes directly and other times so subtly that they did not notice that it was taking place.

*Fighting the Cold War* is a big book, but it is worth every minute that you invest in it, whether you are a historian, a student of leadership, a NATO-phile, a USSOUTHCOM staffer, or just interested in the Cold War as seen through the eyes of a general raised in Boston’s working class. JFQ

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### **Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War**

By Robert M. Gates  
Borzoi Books and Alfred A. Knopf, 2014  
640 pp. \$34.95  
ISBN 978-0307959478

Reviewed by Thomas F. Lynch III

**D**uty: *Memoirs of a Secretary at War* is a valuable work by a unique public figure. Former Secretary Robert M. Gates recounts his 4½ years at the helm of the Department of Defense overseeing two separate wars for first a Republican and then a Democratic President. In this regard, Bob Gates has no peer; he is the only Defense Secretary to serve for consecutive Presidents from opposing political parties.

Gates is no stranger to the business of scribing memoirs. He previously published *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider’s Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (Simon and Schuster, 2007), recounting his

years from 1969 to 1991 in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and on the National Security Council (NSC). While the chronological approach to storytelling is similar to that found in *Shadows*, *Duty* sustains an intense and passionate narrative unrivaled in Gates’s 1996 work. *Duty* is a conspicuously rich tome.

It came as little surprise that political passions were aroused by *Duty*’s early-2014 publication. With President Barack Obama still in office, Gates’s commentary on the inner workings of security decisionmaking in the final 2 years of the George H. Bush Presidency and the first 2½ years of the Obama administration was bound to generate a noisy and partisan clash. Even before *Duty* hit stores, some labeled it as harsh and highly critical of President Obama and claimed that it painted an antagonistic portrait of a sitting President while failing to note that Gates mainly chided White House counselors while applauding Obama’s decisionmaking style. A Republican former defense policy advisor and university scholar wrote that it was less Gates’s criticisms that were wrong than his timing.

The politically inspired reviews of *Duty* focused on the superficial and missed the substance. This included the deeply etched lessons of executive-level strategic leadership when engaged in a complex and costly undertaking such as counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations in two disparate countries with a domestic political dynamic that is anything but collaborative. As the lead agent for the conduct of that undertaking, Gates’s assessments tell us a great deal about how difficult an endeavor war is in general and how demanding counterinsurgency operations are in particular.

From the beginning of *Duty*, Gates reminds his reader that he was happily retired from government and ensconced as the president of Texas A&M University before coming to the Pentagon. He had declined an administration feeler about a return to Washington in 2005 to become the first Director of National Intelligence. He had grudgingly accepted a temporary appointment to serve on the Iraq Study Group (ISG) and was often surprised and irritated by what he saw

in Iraq, Kuwait, and elsewhere in that late-2006 venture. Thus, when called on by President Bush to succeed Secretary Donald Rumsfeld after the November 2006 elections, Gates tells us that he took the job largely to show faith with the young men and women in uniform he had met during his ISG travels. He also took the job under the conditions that he would have Presidential support to oversee a temporary troop surge in Iraq, to turn renewed attention to Afghanistan, to support an expanded Army and Marine Corps to properly resource these fights, and to push big-ticket procurement programs into the future to win the wars we were in.

True to Bob Komer's Vietnam narrative of bureaucratic resistance and inertia, the newly minted Gates confronted the challenges of a Pentagon largely running in place, constrained by outside forces and those deep within. Outside the building, he found personal working relationships among the Department of State, National Intelligence Directorate, CIA, and NSC severely strained and in need of serious repair. Gates tackled this challenge on instinct, working with Cabinet-level colleagues suffering from "Rumsfeld fatigue" in a manner that made it clear that the Defense Department would be part of an inter-agency team pulling together for success in the "wars we are in." Gates supported a full range of authorities for the new U.S. commander in Iraq, General David Petraeus, and encouraged Petraeus's close partnership with the new U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker. The Secretary quickly saw the need for a point of fusion for Washington interagency support to a holistic counterinsurgency program in Iraq, offering then-Joint Staff Operations officer Lieutenant General Douglas Lute to the NSC as master coordinator for the Iraq surge in military and civilian efforts. In these and other efforts, Gates was a galvanizing agent with Bush's strategic-level leaders, generating a spirit of collaboration never realized during Vietnam and not before seen during the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Inside the Pentagon, Gates confronted a badly bifurcated culture. In his

eyes, too many Air Force and Navy leaders saw the challenge of Iraq as an Army and Marine Corps issue and were satisfied to continue with business as usual. He also saw a labyrinth of procurement and operational bureaucracy lumbering along with historic programmatic concerns and largely unengaged with, if not downright ignorant of, the wars so many young Americans were busy fighting. Here the new Secretary was in for an even harder slog. So he resolved to use every tool at his disposal to change the Pentagon culture.

Gates tells us that he paddle-shocked the Pentagon toward inter-Service teamwork and counterinsurgency focus. Within 3 months, he fired Army Secretary Francis Harvey over a festering scandal over the treatment of wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. He hired Navy Admiral Michael Mullen as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in late 2007. It was Mullen, then the Chief of Naval Operations, who expressed his greatest leadership concern in early 2007 to be an astoundingly anti-parochial one: the health of the Army. The Secretary then lost confidence in Air Force Secretary Michael Wynne and Chief of Staff General Michael Moseley, who appeared committed to the procurement of an expensive fighter aircraft and seemingly without interest in the ever-deepening counterinsurgency fight. The decline in confidence on these issues was compounded in 2008 when an independent review of Air Force stewardship of its nuclear weapons arsenal revealed serious deficiencies. Gates relieved both.

Finally, the new Secretary grappled with the intransigence of Pentagon bureaucracy. Frustrated with the plodding nature of resource acquisition and planning processes, Gates insisted that newer, sharper programs focus directly on the needs of the troops in the fight. He accelerated funding and attention to the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization, which had been created in February 2006. Programs to improve explosive protection on Soldiers' wheeled vehicles and to use persistent aerial observation platforms to identify threatening

explosives caches followed. He also took aim at the most expensive and poorly performing procurement initiatives across the military Services, questioning their relevance and financial sense in public speeches. Gates reminds the reader that he was successful in a number of these procurement-busting endeavors, but success came at a cost to his relations with members of Congress. The Secretary grew increasingly weary of congressional parochialism and theatrics. It is in describing his dealings with Congress that Secretary Gates's memoir becomes most frustrated—if not disgusted—in tone.

In 2007–2008, Secretary Gates put into place the strategic and operational framework for fighting and winning Defense Department components of the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism fights we were in. That framework bore fruit in Iraq before the end of the Bush administration. But *Duty* reminds its reader that success is both relative and fleeting. The effort to extend progress from counterinsurgency in Iraq to the fight in Afghanistan began in 2008 but would await the arrival of a new senior leadership team in early 2009—an Obama administration team with its own personalities and coordination challenges.

Secretary Gates tells the reader that in this new White House, the debate over the way forward in what Presidential candidate Barack Obama had labeled "the good war in Afghanistan" would be unhelpfully bruising throughout 2009 despite its acceptable outcome late that year. While Gates commends President Obama's decisionmaking style in the high-level debate on Afghanistan-Pakistan policy and strategy that dominated 2009, he bridled at the manner in which he felt Vice President Joseph Biden and what he calls the White House "politicos" came to display a paranoid mistrust of the military. Gates recounts that this group of Obama political advisors consistently displayed aversion to any increase in military force growth in Afghanistan beyond that which had been authorized late in the Bush administration. They did not want Afghanistan to become Obama's war and doom the President's domestic agenda in the process. Thus they argued for a

revised American strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan focused mainly on counterterrorism in Pakistan, an effort to be accomplished exclusively from offshore so that the issues of American ground forces and a more vigorous effort at counterinsurgency in Afghanistan would be moot.

Gates recounts that he was never himself all in for full-up counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan, but he believed that some of it was necessary. The Secretary's comfort with Obama's late-2009 decision on Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy favoring the Gates approach—one that viewed limited counterinsurgency in Afghanistan as the means to the strategic end—ultimately proved unsatisfying, however. Gates uses *Duty* to call out Vice President Biden, NSC Afghan-Pakistan director Lieutenant General Douglas Lute, and other White House politicians for never accepting the President's decision and for working to sabotage it in the President's mind "before it even got off the ground." It is in this context that Gates writes that by early 2011, he was increasingly confronted with "[a] president [who] doesn't trust his commander, can't stand [Afghan President Hamid] Karzai, doesn't believe in his own strategy and doesn't consider the war to be his . . . a President who was expressing premature doubts about his own strategy."

Out of office for just over 2 years when he wrote it, Gates seems to have intended *Duty*, at least in part, as a vehicle of external caution to President Obama and his advisory team in early 2014. Gates's passion for American men and women in uniform and his belief that their role in Afghanistan deserved the President's continuous full attention—much as it had consumed Gates's attention as Defense Secretary—resonates strongly.

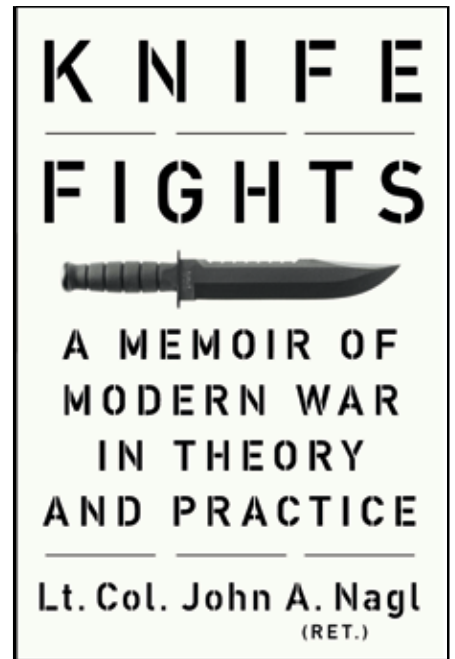
On another level, Gates offers a unique vantage point on the special challenges of executive leadership in both bureaucratic and counterinsurgency warfare. Far from dyspeptic, *Duty* delivers a tone of urgency and commitment that Secretary Gates rightly brought to a trying set of missions at a very trying time. He demonstrates to his reader that he

"got it" when it came to achieving results in complex and messy military operations. He got it that the culture of Washington bureaucracy must be energized at the highest levels to get beyond business as usual, for a counterinsurgency fight requires exceptionally detailed coordination that can too easily become passé. He got it that Pentagon culture will snap back into one of a procurement-acquisition-budgeting miasma unless corralled and spurred. Bob Gates also got that change is a difficult but worthy endeavor. He implores both his readers—and those remaining on the Obama security team—to stay the course in Afghanistan and Pakistan and not prematurely pull the plug. In this exhortation, Gates correctly anticipates the unabating worries about U.S. force posture and strategy in Afghanistan that continued to consume the Obama administration throughout 2014 and 2015.

*Duty* is an excellent memoir of a free-speaking and self-critical former Secretary of Defense. It lays bare the emotional and bureaucratic grit involved with spearheading a complex contingency operation in hostile parallel environments: at home and in the field. *Duty* is an important work and a great read. JFQ

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### Knife Fights: A Memoir of Modern War in Theory and Practice

By John A. Nagl

Penguin Press, 2014  
253 pp. \$27.95  
ISBN 978-1594204982

Reviewed by Richard McConnell

John Nagl, the author of *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, offers an intimate portrait of the education, experience, and practice that contributed to his emergence as one of the premier advocates of counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine during the past decade. In *Knife Fights* he provides an unvarnished description of what it is like to advocate doctrinal change to a nation at war.

Nagl begins his story by giving readers vivid and engaging accounts of his early formative experiences: undergraduate studies at West Point, his first combat action during Operation *Desert Storm*, and his graduate and doctoral studies at Oxford. These accounts depict a journey of experience combined with scholarship that laid the foundation for *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*. Although Nagl's