

H-Net Reviews

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Stephen Dedman. *May the Armed Forces Be with You: The Relationship between Science Fiction and the United States Military.* Jefferson: McFarland, 2015. 252 pp. \$35.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7864-9742-3.

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air War College)

With the buzz around the release of *Star Wars* movies and similar longevity in the *Star Trek* franchise, tying military to science fiction is a fresh and timely conversation. Stephen Dedman has authored a fantastic historical review of the reciprocity between the military and movies, books, and comics. It is not a recent phenomenon; he provides examples dating back to 1939. American strategy, he argues, is heavily influenced by American science fiction. Using extensive examples and documentation, Dedman makes a solid case that novels, comics, and movies feed the creative spirit of military innovation. While science fiction may be symbolic of historical, literary, and mythological characters and plots, the modern mimicking and application is abundantly present in modern warfare application.

What came first, the chicken or the egg? Dedman presents support to both sides of the argument: the military influence on science fiction and the adaptation of military technology inspired by science fiction. The title initially concerned me. I thought âgreat, this is going to be a trite opportunity to cash in on *Star Wars* resurgence.â I could not have been more wrong. While the

titleâs cleverness appeals to *Star Wars*, it is a truly holistic review of science fiction. The research is incredible. Who would have guessed that 25 percent of books sent to World War II service members were comic books, with *Superman* being a favorite? *Captain America* was equally an inspiration. The foreshadowing of atomic weapons is also documented in this well-organized book. Political conversations as well as technological application of ideas offered in science fiction are cataloged chronologically.

The value of this book is its historical documentation of creativity and innovation and its adaptation/inspiration for modern military systems. The sources are thorough, detailed, and plentiful. The organization is logical and weaves nearly eighty years of proof to the quid pro quo between science fiction interpretation of military technology capabilities and the implementation of many of these ideas into the warfighting force. This is a history of science fiction/military technology. Both are inspired and adapted from each other and Dedman articulates the connections with a plethora of documentation.

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