

2014

Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century

John B. Hattendorf

Geoffrey Till

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Hattendorf, John B. and Till, Geoffrey (2014) "Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 67 : No. 4 , Article 10.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol67/iss4/10>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

BOOK REVIEWS

NO EASY ANSWERS

Till, Geoffrey. *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, 2013. 412pp. \$52.95 (paperback)

At the Naval War College's Current Strategy Forum in June 2014, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jonathan Greenert, dramatically challenged members of the audience, including representatives of the officer corps of the U.S. Navy, to take off their jackets, roll up their sleeves, and think about naval strategy in the twenty-first century. For both the novice and the seasoned professional returning to the subject of maritime strategy after a lapse of time, Geoffrey Till's *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century* is just the book with which to focus on this subject, understand the broad principles involved, and learn of the challenges ahead. For more than three decades Geoffrey Till has been providing a series of such textbooks, beginning with his 1982 volume *Maritime Strategy and the Nuclear Age*. The book under review is the latest version, one that builds on its predecessors and at the same time brings the subject up to date. As this reviewer can attest from his own teaching and lecturing experience, Till's books have consistently been the best starting points for gaining a solid theoretical understanding of

maritime strategy and for linking theory to recent doctrine and the practice of naval operations around the globe.

Till masterfully ties his book together by focusing on five fundamental characteristics that modern naval professionals need to understand when thinking about strategy, factors around which maritime issues coalesce: the sea as a resource, the sea as a medium for transportation and exchange, the sea as a medium of information and the exchange of ideas, the sea as a medium for dominion, and the sea as an area of sovereignty. The work is carefully organized to examine these topics in a logical manner. After an insightful examination of the tendencies of navies both to compete and to collaborate in a globalizing world, Till summarizes succinctly the major insights of naval theorists in a chapter entitled "Who Said What and Why It Matters." From there, he turns to an analysis of the constituents of sea power and the fundamental issue of navies and changing technology before turning to discuss such categories of naval operations as sea control, command of the sea, power projection, control of communications,

diplomacy, expeditionary operations, and maritime security. In a penultimate chapter he takes the example of the issues currently surrounding the South China Sea as a case that simultaneously combines all five of his strategic viewpoints and requires an integrated and coordinated approach to its solution.

In conclusion, he emphasizes that naval strategists will find no easy answers—competitive and collaborative trends are important but will be impossible to predict as the importance of navies continues to rise in the twenty-first century. There are shifting attitudes to the global commons, while the range and diversity of naval tasks are both increasing.

JOHN B. HATTENDORF
Naval War College



van Creveld, Martin. *Wargames: From Gladiators to Gigabytes*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013. 341pp. \$27.99

This work attempts, in the author's own words, "to reintegrate wargames . . . with human culture as a whole." It succeeds admirably, providing a valuable addition to the knowledge base of the serious national-security war gamer, whose objective is to understand modern and future war as well as possible to plan and train for it and to educate national-security professionals.

Drawing on his established strengths as an expert in military history and strategy, the author traces the history and development of war games from earliest hunters up to modern times, setting war gaming within the context of the general topic of games. He addresses the narrow questions of

how war games are influenced by the experience of war and what they tell us about the conduct of war. More broadly, van Creveld examines the general topic of gaming, why we game, the types of game in which we engage, what these types of game tell us about our culture, and how our culture influences who games and which games are chosen.

In his sequential survey of the history and development of gaming and war games within gaming, the author establishes four basic human needs that gaming satisfies: religious (appease the gods or ascertain their wishes by combat), decision making without engaging the whole of society (duels, trial by combat), preparation for war (explore possible futures; plan, train, and educate), and entertainment. He also examines interactions and how they evolved. Over time games and war games have become bloodless, as weapons have become more lethal and reliable (modern weapons make a medieval tourney simply impractical as a method of training for war), and the first two needs have withered, leaving us with bloodless war games and entertainment.

Van Creveld makes the interesting point that the differences between real war and gaming about war are themselves of value and not simply artifacts to be removed. This is a critical point, given the lukewarm response to war gaming by some leaders. In the same way a single war game represents a single possible trajectory through a large space of possible sequences of decisions and outcomes, so does a historical event represent a single collection of decisions drawn from all those that could have been made—the reality of that moment could be "entirely atypical." The