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## Understanding Naval Warfare, 3rd ed.

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in the ethical and moral issues related to increasingly remote-enabling and weaponized emerging technologies and the character of future warfare, especially its effects on the warfighter at the tactical level of war, Chapa's book is an indispensable contribution to the field.

JONATHAN ALEXANDER



*Understanding Naval Warfare*, by Ian Speller. 3rd ed. Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge, 2023. 273 pages. \$44.

The third edition of Ian Speller's *Understanding Naval Warfare* is a welcome update to the original work published in 2014. The author is a professor of military history and director of the Centre for Military History and Strategic Studies at Maynooth University, Ireland. He also teaches at the Irish Military College and previously was a senior lecturer at King's College London and the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom.

Although the book's overall structure remains unchanged, Speller has given new attention to novel technologies, doctrines, and emerging ideas in the field of naval warfare in his analysis. His overarching objective is to examine the role and activity of navies and the conduct of naval warfare, and he unfolds the challenges that encompass modern naval warfare, which differs substantially from what admirals confronted in the past. The book is divided into two parts. The first deals with the conceptualization of naval warfare through the lenses of legendary naval strategists such as Alfred T. Mahan and Sir Julian Corbett. The second part is a substantially updated examination on naval roles and activities in the contemporary world.

Speller admonishes naval officers on the relevance of studying both naval history and theory as it enhances a sailor's critical acumen. He also contributes valuable terminological clarity between "sea power" and "maritime power," as attempts to distinguish them have generated confusion among academics in the field. Despite the use of different terms by different authors, Speller is convinced that all such terms focus on essentially the same thing: the ability to exert power at and from the sea in pursuit of national (and multinational) policy goals.

The first chapter is a lucid account of the maritime environment and its related issues. While tracing the robust development of the law of the sea, which culminated in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982, Speller fails to acknowledge how the North-South division came to the fore regarding the delimitation of the sea.

The second chapter is an eye-opener for those who are interested in understanding the evolution of traditional naval strategy. Speller has not confined his chapter to discussing the canonical works of Mahan and Corbett; he also tries to elucidate how non-European strategists, including the Chinese and Arabs, contributed to naval strategy. Nonetheless, his analysis of non-Western strategists in the chapter remains peripheral, as Speller has failed to mention the naval strategies adopted by Admiral Zheng He under the Ming dynasty of China in the fifteenth century or the naval strategy of the Cholas of southern India.

Chapter 10, "Contemporary Challenges and Naval Policy," attempts to discuss the current challenges looming before navies, such as newly emerged complexities including hybrid warfare and gray-zone activities. Considering Russia's

invasion of Ukraine, the author suggests that what is required is a maritime approach, integrating all relevant assets and agencies into a policy that fits broader national objectives. Speller pays significant attention to the challenges posed to the naval world by the ongoing rivalry between the United States and China. While tracing the rise of China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) from a mediocre force in the 1970s to its present greatness, Speller pays much attention to the development of its aircraft carrier program. In Speller's view, China has made great strides to develop an aircraft carrier with indigenous technology. He further discusses the U.S. response to the robust growth of China's naval presence by highlighting the new edition of U.S. naval doctrine published in 2020 and entitled *Advantage at Sea*.

Speller's last chapters in this compelling work unveil more about the future of naval warfare. He examines the contemporary security environment in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, showing how mutual threat perceptions led to changes in naval doctrines, such as the latest edition of Russia's maritime doctrine and the European Union's Strategic Compass, both published in 2022. He rejects popular arguments in comparing China's robust growth with imperial Germany's naval expansion, which set the path to the Great War. Speller argues that China is aware of the repercussions of falling into the trap of building big navies: "The PLAN can give China a tool with global reach and forward presence that may give Beijing influence in regions where it might otherwise be ignored" (p. 222).

All in all, *Understanding Naval Warfare* is a very readable book not only for

strategists but also for general readers. His discussion of key naval theorists and their strategies should motivate readers to examine them in depth on their own. Notwithstanding the changing character of war, this book emphasizes that naval warfare remains a fascinating topic and not one likely to become irrelevant anytime soon.

PUNSARA AMARASINGHE



*Tactical Air Power and the Vietnam War: Explaining Effectiveness in Modern Air Warfare*, by Phil Haun. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2024. 312 pages. \$105.

In his latest book, *Tactical Air Power and the Vietnam War*, Phil Haun offers a practical and theoretical model for assessing and employing airpower. Using the Vietnam War as his primary case-study vehicle, Haun presents his tactical airpower (TAP) theory formulation. Through analysis of the American air campaigns during the Vietnam War, Haun argues that airpower is most effective on the modern battlefield when used in direct attack against enemy fielded forces. The result is, arguably, the most complete and practical presentation of why and how airpower contributes to victory both politically and on the battlefield.

Tactical airpower is a familiar subject to Haun. As a practitioner, he flew the venerable A-10 in the U.S. Air Force and saw combat in Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. As an academic, Haun has written multiple books and articles about airpower application and theory, among other subjects. His most recent works include *Air Power in the Age of Primacy: Air Warfare since the Cold*