

cautious credit; where others have been critical of Ike's generalship, Newton is complimentary; where others have indicted Eisenhower's relationship with wartime driver Kay Summersby, Newton is inclined to forgive. Despite these partialities to his subject, the book is well worth reading. It is suitable for scholars and senior members of the defense establishment. As a single volume treatment of the Eisenhower presidency, it is invaluable, especially for understanding the context of decisions made in both foreign relations and domestic policy.



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The Age of Airpower

by Martin Van Creveld

Reviewed by Richard L. DiNardo, Professor for National Security Affairs, United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College

Ever since the Wright brothers demonstrated the possibility of flight in a heavier-than-air aircraft, airpower has become a standard feature of military operations, especially those conducted by the United States. Any number of air forces have been the subject of numerous works, especially those of Germany in World War II and its American and British opponents. Noted military historian, critic, and professional controversialist Martin van Creveld has now tackled the subject in a broad way with his latest work, *The Age of Airpower*.

Van Creveld takes the long view in a largely chronological fashion, beginning with the first employment of aircraft in a military manner, starting with the Italians in the Italo-Turkish War of 1912. The first major test of the potential of airpower was a World War I (WWI) challenge that the air forces of all the major combatants passed. Once it became clear airpower was here to stay, the major military powers turned to the question of how to incorporate air forces into their existing military. In many cases, incorporation meant the creation of an independent air service, closely linked to the emerging theories regarding the criticality of command of the air proposed by such thinkers as Giulio Douhet.

To his credit, Van Creveld does not limit his discussion to regular air forces. He includes extensive narration and commentary on the development and expansion of naval-air and its most common expression, the aircraft carrier. Here the author concentrates the majority of his attention on the two preeminent powers in this arena—Japan and the United States.

Van Creveld provides a fairly conventional discussion of the conduct of World War II and the air warfare, including naval operations. He fails, however, to note one of the great ironies of airpower theory and practice. The original airpower theorists proposed the use of aircraft and strategic bombing to avoid a repeat of the costly attritional warfare that was a hallmark of WWI. In actual practice, though, air warfare became the ultimate example of attrition warfare. Germany and Japan both lost control of the air because the Allies were able

to kill or disable pilots and other aircrew faster than they could be replaced. Van Creveld points out the doctrine of strategic bombing in actual practice fell short of expectations, mainly due to the limitations of the aircraft used, at least until the advent of the Boeing B-29, which the author classifies as the first true strategic bomber.

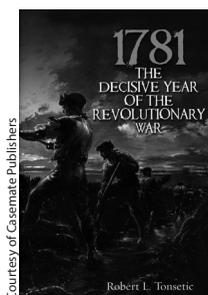
The emergence of atomic weapons is covered in depth. Van Creveld implies, correctly, that the development of atomic and later nuclear weapons did little to change the actual conduct of warfare. Rather, the specter of atomic and nuclear weapons had a greater impact on whether or not a country went to war.

Equally important was the advent of jet technology. The impact of jet propulsion over the long term, he suggests, has been deleterious to air forces. As time has passed, the expense involved in developing new generations of jet aircraft has become prohibitive. At the same time, the higher performance of jet aircraft, especially in terms of speed and endurance, poorly suits them to specific employment, especially close-air support and counterinsurgency—two missions air forces do not like anyway. The emergence of nuclear weapons reduced the likelihood that strategic bombers would be employed in a strategic attack role, given the possibility of escalation; this was especially true during the Cold War era. With the two major super powers veritably off limits because of the nuclear threat, bombers could not be used to any real effect in the proxy wars that were a hallmark of the Cold War, mainly due to a dearth of strategic targets. Thus, air forces found themselves facing situations like Vietnam, where strategic bombers were often utilized against tactical targets. This brings Van Creveld to the conclusion that airpower, especially jet-powered aircraft, has proven of limited utility in conflicts since World War II.

Aside from traditional kinetics, Van Creveld examines several other types of airpower, including helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft in transport and reconnaissance roles, and the later technology of missiles and drones. In regard to the latter, he sees drones as the future of airpower, since drones are cheaper than piloted aircraft, be they land or naval based. His comments will provide much grist for conversation in the Pentagon.

The book does have flaws. Van Creveld, for example, eschews any discussion of the German V weapons, stating they were the province of the army, an assertion that is only half true. While the V-2 was indeed the German army's program, the V-1 belonged to the Luftwaffe. While Van Creveld has an excellent grasp of the literature, there are times when he might have done better to acquaint himself with an archive or research library, as opposed to resorting to such dubious sources as Wikipedia®. Finally, there are times when the author falls into an old and unfortunate trap, making statements that are simply obnoxious or, at best, infelicitous, particularly with regard to women. Occasionally, Van Creveld tends toward sheer snarkiness, which undercuts the value of his argument. Finally, Van Creveld is too much a believer in the rational actor school of strategic decisionmaking. In the section on World War II, for example, Creveld states it was simply crazy that Germany and Japan ever thought they could win. That misses the point; Adolf Hitler and Hideki Tojo believed they could win and

that is why they went to war. Additionally, Van Creveld is too quick to minimize the danger of a nuclear armed Iran. Despite its flaws, this book should be read by those military professionals and historians who are interested in airpower and its future.



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258 pages

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1781: The Decisive Year of the Revolutionary War

by Robert L. Tonsetic

Reviewed by Dr. J. Boone Bartholomees Jr., Professor
of Military History, US Army War College

Robert Tonsetic offers an examination of the year 1781, which he calls the decisive year of the Revolutionary War. While one might debate whether that was the decisive year—as opposed to say 1776 that saw both the political transformation of the war and the all-important survival of Washington’s army—1781 was indisputably one of the most significant years of the war. Tonsetic covers both northern and southern theaters and examines strategic, operational, and tactical level events.

The year opened with a rebellion in the Pennsylvania line that might have been fatal to the cause of independence, however, it ended with the British defeated in all but the formal sense of a treaty. The strategic seat of the war moved from New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia to Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. The year 1781 opened with battles in the Carolina backcountry at Cowpens (17 January) and Guilford Courthouse (March 15). Although each side won a battle, the British winning the big one, the combination proved disastrous for the Crown. Cornwallis headed for the safety of the coast and ended up at Yorktown waiting for the Royal Navy. In an act of joint and combined cooperation, the Americans’ new ally France provided both an army and a navy to help isolate and besiege Yorktown. Meanwhile, the Americans managed to lose the battles but still recover control of the Carolinas and Georgia. The year ended with Cornwallis’ surrender and the Americans in control of their country, with the exceptions of New York City, Charleston, Savannah, and outposts on Lake Champlain and the Great Lakes. The political debate in London to end the war lasted into 1782, and the Treaty of Paris was not signed until 3 September 1783, but the war was over in all but the most formal sense by the end of 1781. That is a good story, and Tonsetic tells it well.

There is always tension in a survey like this about the ratio between generalities and details. Similarly, in a book about one year of a long war, there is also tension between providing or assuming background knowledge about the historical and strategic setting. Authors grapple with what needs explanation and what the audience should already know. Tonsetic handles these tensions ably. He moves the reader nimbly from broad brush to detailed descriptions,