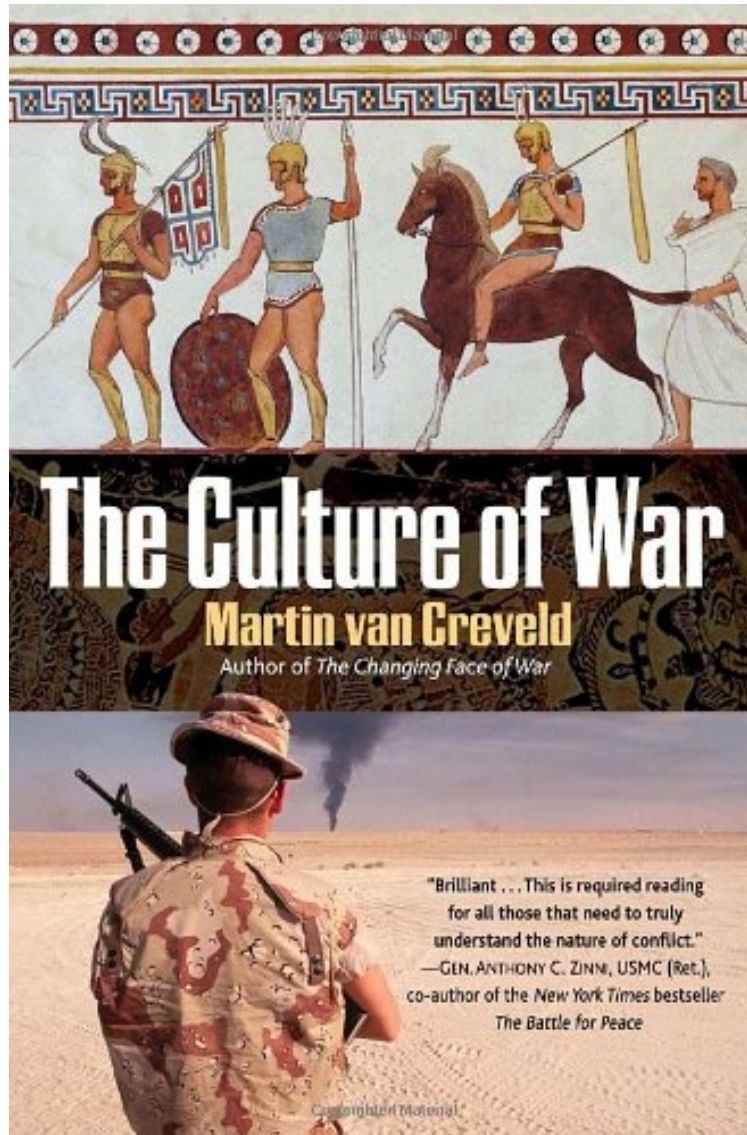


The Culture of War

Martin van Creveld

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Martin van Creveld : The Culture of War before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Culture of War:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By bierhausser excellent book. 19 of 21 people found the following review helpful. The Warrior's Way By Jason S. Taylor In Greek myth the jurisdiction over war is divided. Athena Nike, as governess over the arts, crafts, and sciences is in charge of victory as a corollary to being in charge of strategy and statecraft. Ares is in charge of war in itself-he likes the fury of war for it's own sake. And while many

historians, understandably prefer to study Athena Nike, this book is devoted to studying the ways of Ares. It has been said that war is an extension of politics. That is in a sense true, in so far as the one who gives the orders for the commencement of hostilities is usually a politician and therefore inspired by political motives. However it is less true that people fight for politics. People fight for more important things like duty, honor, country, faith, friends, family, comrades-in-arms and so on. And if these things are "delusions" as cynics say, it might be pointed out that much of cynicism is itself a delusion and not the most pleasant of them. The book gives an overview of the customs of warriors throughout history and the recurring themes. It shows how the culture of fighting men, the subtle (and not so subtle) ways in which they boast of their prowess and assert their right to be recognized as men-among-men is as much in common worldwide. It gives examples of such things as traditions, decorations, and what not, all designed to give the suspicion that people do to some degree like to fight. It shows how no matter how far apart cultures are in technology or customs, some things remain the same (this struck me in the movie Zulu when the Zulus were singing their war songs and the Welsh were singing "Men of Harlech" in reply). Much of the points in the book of course I take for granted, have been a member of the "civilian" part of the culture of war sense the first time I read a war-story or played my first wargame. The book by the way sheds some light on this, telling about reenactors, wargamers and the like. Some would deplore the "culture of war" and say it should be removed. But it is part of life and not the worst part. The disadvantage of the book from my point of view are twofold is that I desired cultural history and thus the authors personal opinions were an annoying distraction. Another disadvantage is that Crevald can be an annoying writer at times. One advantage it does have is it is lacking in cant. Crevald never states that he really, really hates war even though he makes a living off of it and writes about it with an obvious relish. In fact he gives a rather Pattonesque feeling which some might find irritating but is at least a change of pace. In any case his point is taken, that war has its own culture and aspects of it cross through time and space. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Way overthought
By Bruce Farcau I'm a big fan of Van Crevelde but this is not one of his best. Lots of random observations not brought together.

A respected scholar of military history and an expert on strategy, Martin van Crevelde recently explored the modern world's shifting method of combat in *The Changing Face of War*. Now, in *The Culture of War*, he argues that there is much more to war than just soldiers killing one another for whatever reason. War has always been a topic of deep intrigue. Fighting itself can be a source of great, perhaps even the greatest, joy; out of this joy and fascination an entire culture has grown—from the war paint of tribal warriors to today's "tiger suits," from Julius Caesar's red cloak to Douglas MacArthur's pipe, from the decorative shields of ancient Greece to today's nose art, and from the invention of chess around 600 A.D. to the most modern combat simulators. The culture of war has its own traditions, laws and customs, rituals, ceremonies, music, art, literature, and monuments since the beginning of civilization. Throughout the ages, the culture of war has usually been highly esteemed. Not so in today's advanced countries, which tend either to mock it ("military intelligence is to intelligence what military music is to music") or to denounce it as "militaristic." This provocative book, the first of its kind, sets out to show how wrongheaded, and even dangerous, such attitudes are. *The Culture of War* argues that men and women, contrary to the hopes of some, are just as fascinated by war today as they have been in the past. A military that has lost touch with the culture of war is doomed not merely to defeat but to disintegration. Innovative, authoritative, and riveting, this is a major work by one of the world's greatest and most insightful military historians.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . Hebrew University's van Crevelde remains unsurpassed as a scholar of war. In this provocative volume, he challenges perhaps the subject's single greatest shibboleth—at least in Western culture. Since the Enlightenment, war has been described as a means to an end, serving essentially rational interests. Nothing, van Crevelde asserts, could be further from the truth: war exercises a powerful fascination in its own right. To dismiss this is to overlook that war has generated a distinctive culture, from uniforms to war games to parades, that is despised and regularly denigrated as atavistic and irrational. Van Crevelde demonstrates that war is an essential element of history, rooted in psychology. In a tour de force of scholarship and insight, he takes readers through the processes of preparing for, waging and commemorating war. That culture makes men face death willingly, even enthusiastically, because it is an end in itself. [T]o be of any use, the culture of war must be useless. Its traditions and rules are not constructions, but part of the fighter's soul—and as such, for better and worse, part of the human condition. Illus. (Sept. 30) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist From a respected military historian comes this probing inquiry of military culture. Marshaling evidence for its constancy, ranging from remote human history to the televised present, van Crevelde asserts that group and societal reinforcements motivate soldiers to master fear and risk death. Van Crevelde covers aspects such as training, military decoration, and commemoration of the dead, all of which are thought to motivate men to fight. A martial cultural tradition is vital, van Crevelde argues, to cohesion at all levels; hence, the creation of martial music and war museums. But perhaps van Crevelde's most interesting discussions go against the derogation if not repudiation of martial values since World War II. Doubting that war will ever vanish from human experience, van Crevelde emphasizes the intensity of its emotions,

its centrality to the lives of those who endure and survive it, and the fascination it popularly exerts as reflected in war games, battle reenactments, collectibles, and military history and literature. A candid if uncomfortable appraisal of human nature, van Creveld's astute analysis is a must-have on the military shelves. --Gilbert Taylor Advance praise for *The Culture of War* "This splendid volume affirms what we already know: Martin van Creveld is the most creative, most insightful, and most important military historian writing in English today."--Andrew J. Bacevich, author of *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* "For more than thirty years Martin van Creveld has been one of the world's foremost military thinkers. In *The Culture of War*, van Creveld once more shows an exceptional mastery of his subject as he explores a vital but rarely acknowledged aspect of war, its deep-rooted culture. As he did in his provocative *The Transformation of War*, van Creveld argues against the premise that wars are fought only for political ends fails to recognize that war is also an end in itself. Van Creveld presents his case powerfully and convincingly with a rich mixture of historical and contemporary examples. Citizens and soldiers alike will find this book informative, novel, and thought-provoking."--Lt. Gen. Paul K. Van Riper, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired) "Martin van Creveld continues to give us insight into the many facets of war. Each time he adds another dimension, sharing his broad knowledge and brilliant analytical mind. *The Culture of War* brings us another step into understanding the underlying issues."--Dr. Joel P. Wyler, chairman, Granaria Holdings B.V.