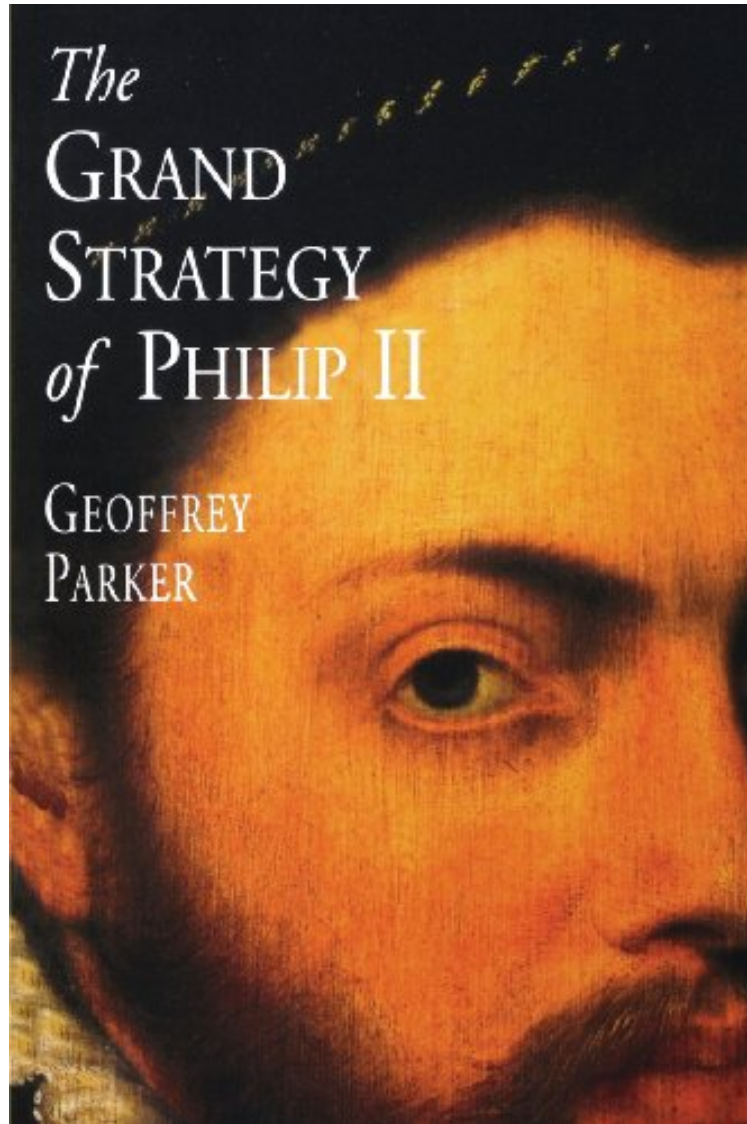


(Mobile book) The Grand Strategy of Philip II

The Grand Strategy of Philip II

Professor Geoffrey Parker, Geoffrey Parker
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Professor Geoffrey Parker, Geoffrey Parker : The Grand Strategy of Philip II before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Grand Strategy of Philip II:

31 of 31 people found the following review helpful. A rare book By T. Graczewski "The Grand Strategy of Philip II" is a rare book. On the one hand, it is a convincing scholarly reassessment of Spanish imperial policy during the pivotal late 16th century. In that sense, the book is written to the high standards of the academy: exhaustive primary research - much of it in the original Spanish, Latin, Italian and French - and close consideration of competing theories from previous, notable works on the period. On the other hand, the book is an exemplary work of modern strategic studies,

with a dash of business school case study analysis. This is a piece of academic history that cites such distinguished and diverse authorities as Peter Drucker, Carl von Clausewitz and John Lewis Gaddis and uses a broad range of historical analogies - from the Vietnam War, the Second World War and the US Civil War - to illuminate and contrast critical points. The end result is one of the more compelling works on strategy written in the past few decades. Geoffrey Parker very much wrote this book in response to Paul Kennedy's poor treatment of Philip II and the decline of the Spanish empire in Kennedy's enormously popular and influential 1987 book "The rise and fall of the Great Powers." On the surface, Parker seeks to refute the conventional academic wisdom that Philip II had no grand strategy in any sense of the term. While the issue of "grand strategy" is discussed throughout, the book really revolves around Philip's planned 1588 invasion of England, which featured the legendary Spanish Armada and ended in utter catastrophe before it really began. The book is broken into three more-or-less equal components. The first section offers a fascinating overview of the world Philip lived in and the unmanageable world of paperwork and decision-making that he created for himself. Parker is none too kind to Philip in this book. Most of the challenges and failures of Philip's half-century reign Parker attributes to Philip's insistence on the centralization and compartmentalization of all information and decision-making (Parker openly compares his style and system to that of Hitler). Parker suggests that if Philip had been born 500 years later in similarly privileged circumstances, he might have been an awful CEO of a family-owned business. One of his great faults, in Parker's estimation, was his "zero-defects mentality" - the fear of failure that so dominated his actions that it paralyzed his ability to act on anything but certain knowledge. Parker describes stunning scenes of Philip working 18-hours-a-day like some Wall Street attorney, hunched over a mountain of papers and embroiled in the most arcane details of imperial appointments and financial management (of which he had little understanding). Much has been made of the long time it took for messages to travel from place to place in the 16th century. Parker argues that it was more the uncertainty of communications that presented the truly vexing problem of the age, not necessarily the long time it took for information to travel. For instance, a message from Venice to Paris could take anywhere from one to six weeks to arrive. It was the unknown margin that led leaders to fits of despair and uncertainty. Finally, Parker raises an issue in this first section that forms a central part of his indictment against Philip II - his profound and unshakeable conviction that the mission of Spain and that of God were one in the same, and thus any obstacle or shortfall could be overcome by the miraculous intervention of the Lord himself, a phenomenon that Parker calls "messianic imperialism." The issue of religion - Catholic vs. Protestant - trumped all other considerations and Philip consistently and confidently undertook any effort that involved upholding or reclaiming the faith with the sincere expectation of a Moses-parting-the-Red-Sea style miracle to carry him to victory. The second section is a review of the situation in the Netherlands and foreign relations with England's Elizabeth Tudor. As background, these chapters are necessary and highly informative, but they aren't nearly as absorbing and exciting to the layman as the first and final sections. The third and final section offers a focused treatment of the question: "Why did the Armada fail?" For contemporary strategists, this section is by far the most compelling. He addresses in turn the three topics most often cited as the reasons for the failure of the Armada to link with the ground forces under the duke of Parma in the Netherlands and then to launch the cross channel conquest of England. First, Parker addresses the fact that the planned invasion of England was "the worst kept secret in Europe." Parker likens the intelligence situation facing Elizabeth to that of the US government before Pearl Harbor. Yes, much of the enemy's plan was compromised, but the high noise-to-signals ratio and the repeated false warnings of impending invasion meant that strategic surprise, especially the well-concealed intended landing site of Kent, was still achieved. Like the FDR administration in 1941, Elizabeth knew everything, and yet knew nothing. Second, and perhaps most dramatically given the generally sober and academic tone of the rest of the book, Parker vigorously defends the actions and preparations of the invasion forces commander in the Netherlands, the duke of Parma. He argues that Parma achieved unparalleled logistical feats to get his 27,000-man invasion force in place and ready to embark within a day-and-a-half, so any notion that the plan failed because Parma either intentionally sabotaged the invasion or was incompetent must be rejected, if one accepts Parker's reasoning. Finally, Parker concludes that the superior English naval capabilities - better ships, bigger guns, more effective leadership, better tactics, more experience in general - ultimately doomed the Armada and thus the invasion plans to failure. Everything hinged on the ability of the Spanish to establish sea control in the Channel to get Parma's forces to England, and the British naval superiority made that basic objective nearly impossible. The British advantage is very much described in terms that we today would refer to a "revolution in military affairs" (RMA). Indeed, Max Boot used the defeat of the Armada as one of his case studies in his recent, excellent review of the RMA argument in "War Made New." Parker writes that the Spanish fully anticipated English tactics and appreciated their advantages in long-range gunnery and maneuverability, and were simply unable to overcome them. Parker sums up the Armada's failure and Philip's direct role in causing the disaster this way: "Philip's flawed 'management style' frustrated the Armada's success far more than the loss of secrecy, the lack of communication between the two theater commanders, and the technical differences between the two fleets. His refusal to delegate, his 'zero-defects mentality', his self-generated information overload and his messianic outlook produced grave strategic errors that rendered operational success almost impossible." 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. 16th Century Decision-Making By JFB53 It will be difficult to imagine a more comprehensive book on the preparation of the Spanish Armada

for its attack on England in 1588. I specially liked the careful analysis of all the military and political angles. At times it feels like you are in Phillip's head. The use of argument and counter-argument in the analysis is excellent and gives the reader more insight into the personalities, their preferences and the conditions that forced their hand. Masterful!
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. SHORT REVIEW ON "THE GRAND STRATEGY OF PHILIP II" By CharlieBooksNYCTHE GRAND STRATEGY OF PHILIP II BY GEOFFREY PARKER SHOULD BE REQUIRED READING FOR ANYONE IN STRATEGIC POLICY MAKING POSITIONS OR FOR THAT MATTER ANYONE WHO JUST WANTS TO READ GREAT HISTORY. RICH IN DETAILS AND LARGE IN SCOPE. THIS BOOK IS TRULY A MASTERPIECE. EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE MUCH KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE ERA THE AUTHOR GUIDES THE READER THROUGH ONE OF THE MOST COMPLEX TIMES IN EUROPEAN HISTORY. THIS BOOK AND GEOFFREY PARKER'S ANALYTICAL WORK ON THIS SUBJECT WILL STAND AS THE MOST INFORMATIVE AND STIMULATING WORK FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

From 1556 until his death in 1598, Philip II of Spain ruled the first global empire in history, yet no one so far has analyzed precisely how he accomplished this feat. The author investigates the strengths and weaknesses of Philip's strategic vision, the priorities that underlay his policies, the practices and prejudices that influenced his decision-making, and the external factors that affected the achievement of his goals. Geoffrey Parker begins by defining the characteristics of Spain's strategic culture: the king's distinctive system of government, the "information overload" that threatened to engulf it, and the various strategic priorities and assumptions used to overcome the disparity between aims and means. He then explores the surviving documentation (from the Habsburgs, their allies, and their adversaries) on the formation of strategy in three crucial case studies: Philip's unsuccessful efforts to maintain his authority in the Netherlands, his defective peacetime management of foreign relations with Scotland and England, and his failed Armada campaign against England. Finally Parker examines the small but fatal flaws in the execution of Philip's Grand Strategy, assesses the response of the king and his ministers to their failures, and questions whether the outcome might have been different with other policy options, another ruler, or a different strategic culture. Pointing to modern parallels between Philip's problems of governance and those facing Hitler and Churchill, or Kennedy and Johnson, this powerfully argued book provides a fascinating commentary on the nature of empires and the decision-making process as practiced by great powers.

.com In the second half of the 16th century, Spain's Philip II ruled over the original empire on which the sun never set. In Europe alone, he held power over Portugal, the Netherlands, and about half of Italy (including Sicily, the Duchy of Milan, and the Kingdom of Naples). On the African shores of the Mediterranean, he controlled Tunis and Tangier; further south were Guinea and Angola. There were holdings in India and--well, naturally--the Philippines, and in the Western hemisphere, there were Florida, Cuba, Brazil, Peru, and "New Spain," which occupied the modern American Southwest and all of Mexico and Central America. Most historians have claimed that, in overseeing this empire, Philip had no "Grand Strategy," but instead occupied himself with perpetual reaction to events. But Geoffrey Parker believes that there was a "strategic culture" that influenced Philip's reign, and he makes extensive use of surviving correspondence from the period to demonstrate how that culture revealed itself in Spain's attempts to hang onto the Netherlands and in its relationship--diplomatic and martial--to England. The Grand Strategy of Philip II is a richly detailed history, which will reward any student of modern statecraft with its insights into geopolitical power. From Library Journal
Between 1556 and 1598, King Philip II of Spain was the ruler of the world's first global empire, controlling much of Europe and America. In this volume, Parker, a prolific author and noted historian of Europe and particularly Spain, examines the strategy behind the policy and the decisions leading to Philip's accumulation of power. Beyond a general examination of strategy, the author studies three aspects of Philip's reign: his efforts to maintain authority in the Netherlands, his management of foreign relations with Scotland and England, and his attempt to conquer England between 1585 and 1588. Parker concludes that Philip's failures resulted not from a lack of strategy but from small factors, including his own idiosyncrasies, that played a disproportionate part in frustrating his plans. This superb volume adds much to our understanding of European history and will be of interest to most academic libraries with collections in that area. A Mark L. Grover, Brigham Young Univ. Lib., Provo, UT Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist
Philip II inherited a massive global empire from his father, Charles V. In addition to its domination of the Iberian Peninsula and the Netherlands in Europe, Spain controlled most of Central and South America and used the Philippines as a base to control trade with China and the East Indies. Yet the reign of this ambitious, deeply religious monarch marked the beginning of the decline of Spain as a world power. In this well-researched and thorough study, Parker examines Philip's strategic vision, successes, and devastating failures. His analysis of Philip's blunders in attempting to tightly control the Netherlands is particularly instructive as an example of what not to do in ruling a subject population. Less ambitious general readers lacking a solid background in European history will struggle with this scholarly work, but students of European history should find it both informative and absorbing. Jay Freeman