

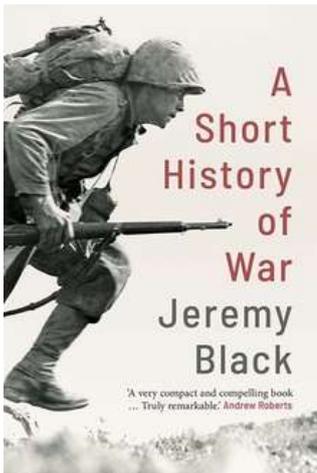
BOOK REVIEW

A Short History of War

Jeremy Black

New Haven, Connecticut, US: Yale University Press, 2021
Hardback 272pp RRP \$30.95

Reviewer: Rob Ellis, May 2022



Professor Black's book lives up to its title. It is a broad yet concise history of a many-faceted issue, and it is short – only 272 pages. Yet, it is easily read, and remarkable informative to come to an understanding of conflict in all its many forms. The author covers all these forms of armed conflict that have existed in many structured human environments, since the first humans appeared on Earth, and still do.

There are many facets to warfare. These are both behavioural, physical and environmental. They appear consistently, and to varying degrees in all conflicts. Each is an influence on, interactive with or an outcome of some other facet. They are not listed here in any particular order, but include, among others, human motivation and psychological desires, leadership and the acceptance of being led, support of others, geography, terrain and climate, resources and skills, ethical standards, culture and its symbols, religious and other beliefs, and communication between groups and individuals, in varying degrees of interaction. Professor. Black has woven these patterns of interaction which have occurred in different situations and in different places and times during the pre-history and history of humankind and shown how they affect or influence human interactions in what we know as 'warfare'. He has done this skilfully, with clarity and in a clear and easily understood time-frame.

He makes the point that no two wars are the same. Each has its individual characteristics, but there are similarities that are frequent, just as there are inconsistencies that show in the various interactions that exist in warfare over all six habitable continents, and in all cultures, throughout the span of sapient humanity on this world. Perhaps surprisingly, Professor Black has cited only 20 sources in his bibliography, yet these cover a wide panorama of countries, cultures and wars of all types and sizes.

This book should be a 'must read' for people entering into a study of military history. It will also be a valuable resource for those who already have some broader knowledge in the field or are already possessed of some expertise. This is a book well worth reading more than once, keeping as a reference, and as a start-point for future study.

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