

INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK MILITARY GEOGRAPHY

Mang, R & Häusler, H (Eds)

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591 Pages

Appendices, figures, maps, tables, photographs

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Although the relationship between Geography and the military is long-standing and well researched, books dealing with this applied sub-discipline of geography exclusively remain rare. As such, the *International handbook Military Geography* is both a welcome addition to a rather sparse collection of Military Geography literature, as well as a uniquely European perspective to an otherwise American-dominated body of literature.

Fifty-two contributions by authors from seven different European countries appear in this publication. The stated aim of the book is to “present selected activities and products of the military geographic community as well as important and relevant activities and products of institutions outside of this community” The authors describe the purpose of the book as “[to] show the plurality of activities and products to the [military geographic] community itself, and the armed forces in general, but also to the wider public for better understanding of what military geography deals with and what it can provide.”

International handbook Military Geography is divided into three thematic blocks, namely Basics and Tools, Tasks and Applications, and Perspectives and Horizons. In the first thematic block, Basics and Tools, 21 chapters are grouped together. The first chapter of the block introduces the authors’ perspective on the theory of Military Geography, and as such, forms the cornerstone on which the rest of the book is built. The rest of the chapters in this block deal with topics as diverse as Military Geographic research and development, maps and copyright, forestry, and earthquakes, all with a military geography application.

In the second block, Tasks and Applications, 23 chapters constitute the body of the block. Military Geography in operational planning, geographic support to combined operations, remote sensing for military applications, maps for disaster relief missions, protection of cultural property, and geology and water supply in international military missions are some of the chapters grouped together in this block.

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In the final block, Perspectives and

Horizons, only eight chapters were included. International boundary concepts, hyperspectral remote sensing of the earth's surface, proposal for a curriculum for military geographic education and training, and maps of artificial realities are some of the issues addressed in this block.

Each chapter in the book follows the same basic format: The name(s) of the author(s), title, a number of keywords and an abstract, followed by the body of the chapter, a glossary, bibliography, a (colour!) photo of the author(s) and a brief CV. A comprehensive glossary at the end of the book makes it easy to reference unknown concepts (especially for non-military readers) and gives further evidence of the wide scope of the field of Military Geography.

In *International handbook Military Geography*, the authors lavishly furbished the text with some 95 maps, numerous tables, aerial photographs, photographs and figures in support of the content, most of them in full colour. These useful figures, tables, maps and graphics create both structure and body for each topic.

One of the few points of critique against the book is the absence of a well-written introduction and conclusion to weave the different parts of the book into a coherent unit. Although the editorial strives to serve as an introduction, the absence of a conclusion is a definite gap in an otherwise excellent publication. Another, maybe trivial, point of critique is the fact that, although the title of the book, *International handbook Military Geography*, implies wide collaboration, all the authors are in fact from a few European countries. Although the wide range of topics addressed by the book might feel a bit bewildering to someone not familiar with the scope of Military Geography, it does make it accessible to a wide readership ranging from unformed military practitioners and military geographers to lay people, as was the stated intention of the book.

Even though differences in the use of language do occur between chapters, in general, *International handbook Military Geography* is written in simple, straightforward language, making it an excellent, highly informative read for military geographers, military planners and policy makers, as well as commanders and staff officers at all levels of all arms of service.

Cdr H.A.P. Smit, Department of Military Geography, School for Geospatial Studies and Information Systems, Faculty of Military Science, University of Stellenbosch