

The United States of War: A Global History of America's Endless Conflicts, from Columbus to the Islamic State

David Vine

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The threat of war has long been the most persuasive tool of statesmanship, made the better if you occasionally back it up on the battlefield. Diplomacy has a place, yes, but the laws of the jungle are often the only rules that really matter.

From Revolutionary War days onward, the United States has proven to be exceptionally skilled at using war as a means to an end, beginning with the brutal seizures of the sovereign lands of North America's many Native American tribes. The bloodthirstiness of those campaigns, often against noncombatants, was standard military practice. Look no further than the period between 1890 and the 1920s alone, when nearly half of US Army commanders were implicated in colonial massacres.

In *The United States of War: A Global History of America's Endless Conflicts, from Columbus to the Islamic State*, David Vine documents how US leaders embraced the use of military bases around the world to advance US interests. Today, in eighty countries, the US government maintains some eight hundred military bases—American exceptionalism indeed. Vine points to the

deeply held belief among most US leaders, in their right to deploy military power into and seize the lands of others. Given the patterns of who invaded whom, this belief was clearly shaped by ideas of white, male, Christian, US American supremacy and a socially constructed idea of masculinity tied to the infliction of violence.

Military expansion, war without end, and the pervasiveness of violence in American lives: Vine offers countless insights into this uniquely American way.

MATT SUTHERLAND (September / October 2020)

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