Bibliography for “Crisis and Liberty”
Assembled by Robert Higgs


I. Introduction

This essay lists essential historical readings on wars (and related matters) which have involved or affected the United States, starting in 1776. The framework is a Rothbardian one, in which wars are not sealed off from domestic politics, the ambitions of state bureaucrats, economic life and motives, and ideological currents. The perspective chosen is broadly “revisionist,” although general works are included which will add to the reader’s overall knowledge of the subject. I begin with a chronological listing of works dealing with America’s wars—hot and cold—and go on to a thematic listing of works on statism and war, propaganda, and unconventional war. The goal is to present, in one place, a broad bibliography of works which go against conformist “liberal-internationalist”—and now one would have to add “neo-conservative”—readings of the history of U.S. foreign relations.

“Revisionism” is, simply put, part of an ongoing improvement of our historical knowledge. Any new interpretation, right or wrong, amounts to a revision of some previously accepted view. In the case of foreign affairs, revisionism is of critical importance. Each official reading of a war becomes an honored precedent to be referred to when debating any new situation which could give rise to war. Thus, U.S. policy-makers typically believe, or pretend to believe, that any new crisis comes down to a case of Fort Sumter, 1861, or Munich, 1938. It follows, then, that whatever was done at such times provides valuable guidance. Anyone who doubts this is invited to note the many references to World War II, Pearl Harbor, Lincoln, and so on, which have filled the press since September 11, 2001.

Official readings can even be arranged into a seamless series exhibiting the same causes and, therefore, demanding the same or analogous responses. Thus is created a sort of “myth of the eternal return” with respect to U.S. foreign relations. In this mythical world, the United States bumbles along amiably—and in utter conformity with international law and high-minded principles—for years at a time, when it is “suddenly and deliberately attacked” out of the blue, for no discernible reason, by forces of total evil. If the seamless web of U.S. innocent-bystanderhood is broken, however, things take on a far different look. This is all to the good, as it makes possible a genuine understanding of our situation and, at the same time, makes it possible to think of alternatives to officially offered policy options, which are usually limited to sanctions, bombing, more bombing, or invasion.

The late Murray Rothbard made a useful distinction between “narrow” and “broad” revisionism as regards U.S. foreign relations. Those of the former school concerned themselves with the causes of the two world wars. Without a broader
framework such writers fell prey to the Cold War, or any other cause or crusade, provided only that it was unconnected with European affairs from 1914–1945. Broad revisionists, by contrast, concerned themselves with wars and the causes of wars, generally, and were thus led to question much conventional wisdom about states, international relations, and the formation of public opinion.

Thus, it is no accident that libertarians—with their critical view of states and state behavior—should be among those interested in war and imperialism, both of which represent a widening of state power—first abroad, and then at home. War and empire, whatever immediate benefits they confer on those in position to enjoy such benefits, multiply the opportunities for a state to extend its power over its “own” citizens and their wealth. Libertarians and classical liberals have not had this field all to themselves, however. Old-line Progressives like Charles A. Beard and Harry Elmer Barnes, for example, became great critics of the drive to intervention in 1939–1941, and found themselves allied with right-wing Republicans with whom they previously had little in common.

Similarly, Leftists and Marxists sometimes ask very good questions about the interest and motivation of political actors and states and do very useful research on the basis of such questions. We may profit from their work, while disagreeing with their ultimate values. Here, we are interested in useful books and essays which shed light on war and peace. There is not enough space to analyze or quarrel with the politics of each item listed. The discerning reader will have to make allowance for such things.

The net has been cast fairly wide here, in the direction of the broadest possible revisionism. Useful “mainstream” works are also cited from time to time. No pretense is made of providing “balance”: the Court Intellectuals and the kept media dominate the discussion and finding their works is no hardship for readers unsympathetic with our purposes. The end product is, I hope, a politically varied but thematically focused list of readings on war, peace, and states.

II. General Histories and Diplomatic Histories


### III. The American Revolution, 1776–1783


### IV. The War for Southern Independence, 1861–1865


Finally, Charles Adams puts revenue issues on center stage in *When in the Course of Human Events: Arguing the Case for Southern Secession* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

For military aspects of the war, see R. Kerby, “Why the Confederacy Lost the Civil War,” *Review of Politics* 35, no. 3 (July 1973): 326–45, Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still, Jr., *Why the South Lost the Civil War*


Rise of Total War


V. Rounding Out the Continental Empire


VI. 1898 and U.S. Empire


VII. World War I and U.S. Intervention


**Conditions on the Home Front**


**Further Progress of Total War**


**VIII. Interwar Years and the Fight Against Intervention, 1939–1941**


Thomas E. Mahl, Desperate Deception: British Covert Operations in the United States, 1939–1944 (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 1998) deals with foreign agents of influence. For ideological currents of the period, see James J. Martin, American Liberalism and World Politics, 1931–1941, 2 volumes (New York: Devin Adair, 1964) and Justin Raimondo,
IX. World War II: Causes and Consequences


Pearl Harbor Debate


**Total War and World War II**


**U.S. Wartime Planning Foretells the Cold War Order**


**X. The Cold War As a System of Power and the American Empire**


**The Right-wing “Isolationist” Critique of the Cold War**


**Military, Industrial, University Complex**


Constitutional Issues


The “Peace Movement”


Case Studies of the Empire’s Client States


Total War, Nuclear and Cosmic


**XI. Korean War**


**XII. Vietnam War and After**

Critical accounts include Robert Scheer, *How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1965), and *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis*, Marvin E. Gettleman, ed. (Greenwood, Conn.: Fawcett, 1965).


XIII. Soviet Collapse and Renewed Debate


XIV. Gulf War


XV. Serbian War


XVI. War and Generic Statism: The Warfare State Against Civil Society


Interesting early discussions of the issue raised in the above works are found in Destutt de Tracy, A Treatise on Political Economy (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, [1817] 1970) and John Taylor of Caroline, Tyranny Unmasked (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, [1822] 1992).


An important addition to the literature is Murray N. Rothbard, “The Origins of the Federal Reserve,” Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics 2, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 3–51, which analyzes the connections between central banking and monetary (and other) forms of imperialism. Of a quite different character is Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, Leftism Revisited: From de Sade and Marx to Hitler and Pol Pot (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1990), which is unclassifiable, but abounds with insights into the various topics treated in this listing.


The essays in *Reassessing the Presidency: The Rise of the Executive State and the Decline of Freedom*, John V. Denson, ed. (Auburn, Ala.: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2001) treat critically—for the entire span of U.S. history—the political institution which became the main bulwark of the rising empire. It is the first scholarly collection to treat the office of president as a standing menace to the peace, freedom, and prosperity of the American people.

**XVII. Propaganda and Opinion-Management**


**XVIII. Unconventional Warfare and Alternate Models of Defense**


XIX. Just War Theory


XX. Other Bibliographies


XXI. The Debate over U.S. Empire in the Age of Bush II

The opportunity provided U.S. rulers by the criminal attacks of 9/11/01 has led to an outpouring of new works on the theme of American empire. On the pro-imperial side of the ledger stand those who see the U.S. Empire as a benign, essential upholder of world order on the model of the Athenian, Roman, or British empires. In general, the British example is the one most on offer, for obvious cultural-linguistic reasons.

That so many pro-imperial writers now use the actual E-word is a sign that they think they have won and that there really is no debate needed. On the other hand, the new state of affairs may be an improvement on earlier discussions taking the form of “first there is an empire, then there is no empire, then there is.”

Pride of place in pushing the shining example of the British Empire goes, naturally to our cousins across the water. Foremost among these is Niall Ferguson, whose book, *Empire: The Rise and Decline of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), draws the expected lessons.

Paul Johnson, “From the Evil Empire to the Empire for Liberty,” *The New Criterion* 21, no. 10 (June 2003) meditates on sovereignty and is glad it slipped from the hands of the Papacy and ended up where it belongs, with the British, and then the American state. Stanley Kurtz, “Democratic Imperialism: A Blueprint,” *Policy Review* 118 (April 2003), exhorts
Americans to look to the “liberal imperialism” developed at the India Office by such worthies as John Stuart Mill. (For a negative view of liberal imperialism, see Joseph R. Stromberg, “Kantians With Cruise Missiles,” Antiwar.com, December 23, 2003, and “John Stuart Mill and Liberal Imperialism,” Antiwar.com, May 18, 2002.)

Finally, for reason in the service of madness, nothing beats the many books and essays, widely available and too numerous to cite, by Victor Davis Hanson of *National Review*.

Given the sheer size of the Liberal and Conservative—and now Neo-Conservative—interventionist scholarly infrastructure that grew up during the long constitutional and intellectual coma known as the Cold War, there is far too much pro-imperial and “benign hegemonist” literature to discuss here. For a useful overview of the imperial “socialists of the chair,” see the website rightweb.irc-online.org/ind/index.php—a site that is perhaps unique in being able to distinguish libertarians and paleoconservatives from the now largely Neo-Colonized Right Wing.


We now turn to the critics of the current phase of empire building.


Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire* (London: Verso, 2003), is a *tour de force* by an Anglo-American sociologist who has long been interested in forms of power in human history. Here he argues that various ideological and structural faults will make the run of the U.S. Empire rather briefer than its advocates think.


Written before the recent excitement, Isabelle Grunberg, “Exploring the ‘myth’ of hegemonic stability,” *International Organization* 44, no. 4 (Autumn 1990): 431–77, usefully debunks, as a form of myth, the claim that a benevolent empire is necessary to an orderly world. Another pre-9/11 piece, Jeffry A. Frieden, “International Investment and Colonial Control: A New Interpretation,” *International Organization* 48, no. 4 (Autumn 1994): 559–93, suggests arguing that under certain circumstances a metropolitan power will intervene to secure control of physically immovable resources important to that power’s extractive industries. (Oil comes to mind.)


Several journalists have made hard-hitting contributions to the analysis of imperial doctrine and practice since 9/11, too many to list here; they include Eric Margolis, Robert Fisk, Jim Lobe, Justin Raimondo, Alan Bock, John Pilger, Karen Kwiatkowski (ex-military with an insider’s perspective), among others.

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