



Introduction

How To Use This Book

The history of the Americas is fraught with conflict, from the great empires of the Aztecs and the Incas to the arrival of gun-carrying Europeans and their new way of making war, continuing on to the creation of the United States in the crucible of revolution, and on into its many wars, both foreign and domestic. Over more than five hundred years of recorded history, the scale of warfare in the Americas has grown exponentially, from skirmishes fought with flint axes and matchlock arquebuses all the way to atomic warfare—the United States being, to date, the only country to use nuclear weapons in war—and a military powerful enough to project its strength and influence around the globe.

Although virtually every corner of the Americas, from the Aleutian Islands to the Falklands, has been touched by conflict, the *Encyclopedia of U.S. History: War* focuses on the military history of the United States specifically, as it is that nation that has come to dominate both the theory and the execution of the wars of the last century. As dramatic as the last hundred years have been, this book also spends as much time focusing on the conflicts of the United States in previous centuries, as it grew from a colonial frontier populated by independent-minded sharpshooters and scouts to a power on par with Europe with armies that marched and fought in the European styles of the times.

In-depth coverage is also given to the evolving nature of conflicts and encounters between the growing United States and the native nations of North America. From the early skirmishes all the way through to the watershed events of the nineteenth century, the role and scope of the “Indian Wars” is examined over the course of several chapters.

Organization

Each chapter is arranged in such a way as to assist the student and generalist reader in gaining an in-depth appreciation of one phase of American warfare. Arranged chronologically, the chapters all follow the same structure, beginning with a short

overview of the chapter and an examination of the causes that paved the path to war. The *Encyclopedia of U.S. History: War* then uses both biographies and descriptions of key battles to further illuminate the overarching nature of the phase or conflict under consideration. It is in the personal stories of the generals, leaders, soldiers, and innovators, and their role, for good or ill, on the battlefield that the true drama of America at war comes into play. Each chapter then concludes with an examination of the war's aftermath and its impact on the bigger picture of U.S. and world history.

The bigger picture is also examined in the "Homefront" and "International Context" sections. Perhaps more than any other nation, the United States' military policies have been strongly and consistently driven by events on both the domestic and international scenes. From the Great Awakening to Women's Suffrage to the Anti-War Movement of the 1960s and beyond, the Homefront articles detail the impact of non-military events at home on America's wars. Similarly, despite efforts in the past to make it so, our country has never been able to isolate itself from world politics; the United States' wars have been intrinsically linked to global events since the Seven Years War touched off the French and Indian War in colonial America.

What's Inside

The French and Indian War was but one facet of a greater conflict that is the subject of the first chapter, which focuses on conflicts with the Northeastern tribes of Native Americans. This often-overlooked period of the Indian Wars was also, demographically speaking, one of America's bloodiest conflicts.

The American Revolution, that great turning point in history, comprises the next chapter. A time of legendary leaders and battles, the epic sweep of this conflict is balanced by a focus on the simple human drama that resulted in the birth of a new kind of government and a nation quite unlike any seen before.

The focus shifts back to Native American matters with the next chapter, which examines conflicts with the tribes of the West and South as the newly-born United States began to expand westward. A crucial time in early American history, some of the country's first post-Revolutionary heroes were made in these wars, as well as some of the first enduring symbols of Native American resistance and disenfranchisement.

America once again found itself at war with Britain in 1812. A sideshow of the Napoleonic Wars then raging in Europe, the conflict was the United States' first official international war and witnessed the dramatic burning of Washington, D.C. and the equally dramatic American victory at the Battle of New Orleans, which was a tremendous morale boost for the young country even though it had no bearing on the outcome of the war, which had already concluded!

The greatest war-related territorial acquisition in U.S. history came with the subject of the next chapter, the Mexican-American War. Manifest Destiny in action, the war brought the boundaries of the United States to the Pacific Ocean (just in time for the California Gold Rush) and launched the military careers of many future Civil War generals.

The Civil War almost spelled the end of the Union a mere "four score and seven years" after its foundation. The costliest of American wars receives full coverage, from

the generals and politicians who shaped the conflict on both sides to the monumental battles that determined the fate of a nation and the freedom of a people.

With the Civil War over, America turned to pacifying the last native tribes. The last phase of the Indian Wars, the conflicts with the Western tribes, is also the best known. The names and battles—Custer, Little Big Horn, Geronimo, Sitting Bull, Wounded Knee—quickly became part of the growing American mythology as the longest, and one of the most tragic, conflicts in the nation's history came to a close.

The Spanish-American War, the subject of the next chapter, marked America's true emergence onto the world stage and the country's first encounter with the complex issue of imperialism. The war was also the first great "media war", drummed up largely by competing newspaper interests. By war's end, Theodore Roosevelt had gained national notoriety and America had gained its first overseas possessions, along with the many problems that go with such acquisitions.

If the Spanish-American War constituted America's first small entry into the global scene, the two World Wars heralded its arrival in a big way. Each gets its own chapter, and each chapter examines the relevant conflict in exhaustive detail, covering not just the American soldiers and battles, but every facet of these massive wars, as well as their complex causes and the vast changes that came in their aftermath.

From the muddy fields of the Somme to the sinking of the *Lusitania* to the Russian Revolution and the Treaty of Versailles, from the rise of fascism in Europe and the Japanese invasion of China to the specter of the Holocaust and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the tremendous scope and sweep of these two global conflicts, the costliest and deadliest in the history of the world, are captured. The immense changes brought about in America by these wars are also examined, including the rise of the first civil rights organizations, the tremendous gains made by women in political and economic arenas, and the sad legacy of Japanese internment in the Second World War.

Having become a superpower in the wake of World War II, America's subsequent wars were fought in the shadow of the Cold War, which gets its own chapter. This section covers the politicians and high-ranking generals who played out a deadly game of move and countermove for fifty years, as well as the times when the Cold War nearly became "hot", most notably during the early 1960s with such dramatic events as the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Bay of Pigs invasion, and the raising of the Berlin Wall.

The two big American wars of the Cold War era, Korea and Vietnam, are covered in two separate chapters. Both conflicts were part of much greater social and political upheavals—the de-colonialization of Asia and the burgeoning Peace Movement, for example—and these are covered in detail, as is the nuclear escalation and Cold War brinkmanship that formed the backdrop to the wars.

In the wake of the Cold War, America's military interests turned increasingly towards the Middle East starting with the Gulf War, which is covered in its own chapter. The War on Terrorism chapter is broken down into two sections: the first

covers the invasion of Afghanistan which followed in the wake of the September 11 attacks; the second covers the ongoing conflict in Iraq.

The book wraps up with a five-section look at America's relations with the rest of the world, both past and present, covering covert operations, proxy wars, and U.S. political involvement in various regimes and movements.

Conclusion

The objective of this book is to take the reader on a journey through the history of the United States and the military conflicts that have shaped it and the world. Through studying America's wars and the people who have waged them, the impact history has on our lives today will hopefully become apparent to the reader.

At the very least, it is hoped that the reader will appreciate the great drama and sacrifice contained within the following chapters and will come to recognize the tremendous cost of war for those who wage it.