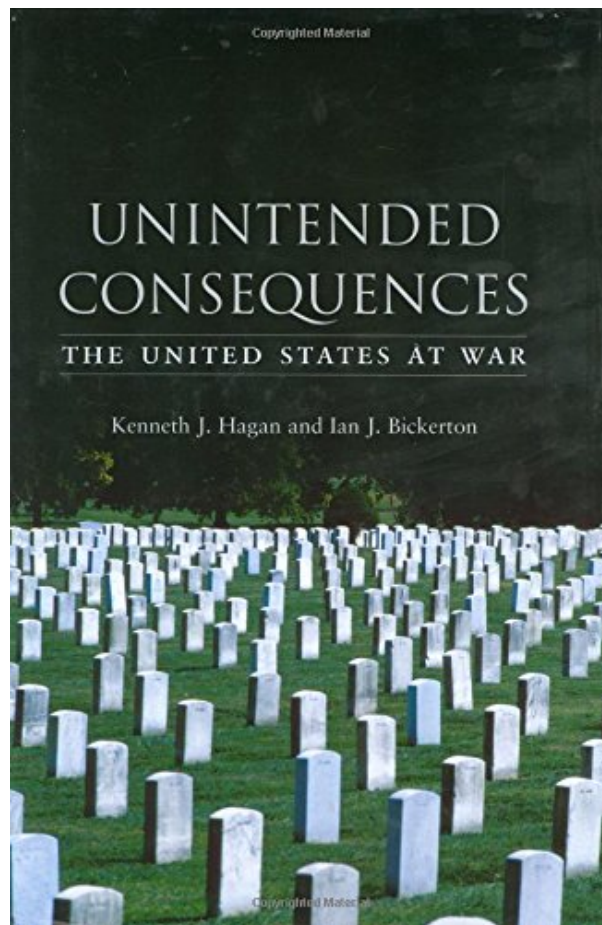


**UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES: THE
UNITED STATES AT WAR BY KENNETH J.
HAGAN, IAN J. BICKERTON**



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About the Author

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“The United States does not do nation building,” claimed Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld three years ago. Yet what are we to make of the American military bases in Korea? Why do American warships patrol the Somali coastline? And perhaps most significantly, why are fourteen “enduring bases” being built in Iraq? In every major foreign war fought by United States in the last century, the repercussions of the American presence have been felt long after the last Marine has left. Kenneth J. Hagan and Ian J. Bickerton argue here that, despite adamant protests from the military and government alike, nation building and occupation are indeed hallmarks—and unintended consequences—of American warmaking.

In this timely, groundbreaking study, the authors examine ten major wars fought by the United States, from the Revolutionary War to the ongoing Iraq War, and analyze the conflicts’ unintended consequences. These unexpected outcomes, *Unintended Consequences* persuasively demonstrates, stemmed from ill-informed decisions made at critical junctures and the surprisingly similar crises that emerged at the end of formal fighting. As a result, war did not end with treaties or withdrawn troops. Instead, time after time, the United States became inextricably involved in the issues of the defeated country, committing itself to the chaotic aftermath that often completely subverted the intended purposes of war.

Stunningly, *Unintended Consequences* contends that the vast majority of wars launched by the United States were unnecessary, avoidable, and catastrophically unpredictable. In a stark challenge to accepted scholarship, the authors show that the wars’ unintended consequences far outweighed the initial calculated goals, and thus forced cataclysmic shifts in American domestic and foreign policy.

A must-read for anyone concerned with the past, present, or future of American defense, *Unintended Consequences* offers a provocative perspective on the current predicament in Iraq and the conflicts sure to loom ahead of us.

- Sales Rank: #2517226 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Reaktion Books
- Published on: 2007-03-14
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .90" w x 6.00" l, 1.09 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 224 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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Why we do silly, sad things

By J. Czarnecki

The timing of this book is exceptional. In the policy making malaise of the "Long War," people look for scapegoats, for blame, for excuses, and sometimes for real reasons why "things" - my jargon for foreign and national security policy escapades - go awry, particularly for the United States and particularly in current times. Whether it be Somalia or Haiti, Afghanistan or Iraq, US foreign and national security policies and actions have fallen far short of achieving their estimable goals. Bickerton and Hagan now demonstrate to us that this always has been the way of foreign and national security policy with the US.

Their book uses historical analysis in the most classic of ways to prove their point, that point being that every - yes, every - American war has had unintended consequences that far outweigh the intended purposes of the war. Beginning with their superb analysis of the Revolutionary War, they point out that this enduring aspect of American foreign and national security policy is a result of our structural form of government, a representative democracy, coupled with the political behavior that has political leaders oversell the goals and demonize the would-be opponents.

This book is controversial. Readers looking for comfortable, pat answers to our current problems will find none. In fact, Bickerton and Hagan always recommend diplomacy over the military instrument of national power. However, that may indeed prove antithetical to the American character that demands decisive action immediately. And therein lies the true tragedy described in their book: paraphrasing the old Greek dramatist, Aeschylus, the American eagle ends up being shot with arrows made of its own feathers.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

A must buy--a tour de force

By B. Little

Unintended Consequences challenges neoconservative strategic thinking that posits war is a manageable and constructive element of U.S. foreign policy. It further subjects the often-rosy public memory of many of America's "good" wars to critical scrutiny, and compels their reevaluation. Unintended Consequences is a timely book that is well written, thought provoking, and exceptionally useful because of its historical treatment of all major American wars.

Authors Hagan and Bickerton, noted historians of U.S. foreign and military policy, elected not to focus on merely the 20th century but to succinctly evaluate all wars from the American Revolution to the present Iraqi morass. Their treatment of each war provides an exceptionally useful and concise analysis of the foreign and domestic factors that led to the United States' entry into war, a focused assessment of the conflict's pivotal military dimensions--especially their strategic turning points, and an evaluation of the unforeseen and often undesirable consequences attendant with war. Many of their findings will surprise and likely disturb readers long-inoculated by "good war" mythology.

All legislators, strategists, commentators, and educated citizens should study this superb book. Unintended Consequences also lends itself readily for university-level classroom adoption as primer for foreign policy and military history courses.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

A thought provoking book! A must read for students of history!

By J. Jones

Unintended Consequences is brilliantly written; it is a very concise yet surprisingly detailed book. In less than 200 pages, the authors reviewed the policies surrounding ten wars in U.S. history, and the consequences that resulted from the wars, in a very thought-provoking way. Not a moment of the readers time is wasted wading through information to get to the "meat of the argument". The book is a well-crafted story portrayed in a familiar way - I didn't want to put the book down. The authors challenged me as a reader to think of historical and current events differently. I enjoyed the arguments offered in this book and recommend it to students of U.S. military history and U.S. policy as a research reference and catalyst to analyze U.S. policy in a different way.

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