



The Savage Wars Of Peace: Small Wars And The Rise Of American Power

Max Boot

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Max Boot's new book is a history of those smaller, undeclared wars that, he argues, have always played a key role in American international affairs. This story, he shows, has special relevance to the current "war on terrorism" and the future of American conflicts around the world. Written with a rare eye for both political nuance and real humor, this book introduces us to heroes and exploits from the forgotten side of America's military history. We meet Stephen Decatur, who destroyed a captured American warship under the Pasha of Tripoli's nose, Army Lieutenant George S. Patton, who shot it out, ivory-handled pistol in hand, with Mexican banditos at an isolated hacienda in 1916, and many other fascinating characters. Boot locates America's failure to win the Vietnam War in the American military's failure to heed the lessons of "small wars" of the past, and warns against repeating this mistake in the future. Reminding us that the small wars of the Clinton presidency--Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo --fit squarely in an established military tradition, *The Savage Wars of Peace* is a compelling read that also delivers an important new argument about the future of American intervention abroad. Among the Marines, it was said that Smedley [Butler] was dispatched to the National Palace to obtain [Haitian President] Dartiguenave's signature. The president tried to hide in his bathroom. The Marine waited outside the door for an hour... Growing impatient, Butler walked outside, grabbed a ladder, propped it against the palace wall, and climbed up to the window of the bathroom to discover Dartiguenave sitting on a porcelain commode, fully dressed in pinstriped trousers, morning coat and top hat, smoking a cigar and reading a copy of *Petit Parisien*. Wasting no time, Butler supposedly leaped through the window to present the treaty and a fountain pen to the startled president. 'Sign here,' he commanded, and the president did. There is no sense inquiring whether this 'gorgeous legend' is literally true;...it gives an accurate flavor of how the U.S.-Haiti Treaty of 1915 came into being.

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