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Introduction by Barbara Zanchetta, Department of War Studies, King's College London

It is a great pleasure and privilege to provide this brief introduction to the roundtable review of Monica Duffy Toft and Sidita Kushi's *Dying by The Sword: The Militarization of US Foreign Policy.* The book tackles one of the fundamental questions that the scholars at the Department of War Studies at King's College London put at the center of our work: the role of the use of force as an instrument of statecraft. The reviewers all agree on the strength of the book as providing a vital contribution to advancing the debate on this topic, while at the same time, at different levels and at various degrees, raising some criticisms.

Of the reviews presented here, Frida Stranne's provides the most enthusiastic endorsement of the book, particularly of its empirical database, the Military Intervention Project (MIP). "It is a study," she writes, "that confirms the results of other studies by adding important empirical evidence and contains data that you knew would require such extensive work to find that you have put aside the idea of even trying." The review endorses the book's main conclusion, that with time US foreign policy has become more and more militarized, and underscores America's increased reliance on military means, particularly since the end of the Cold War.

Alexandra Stark's review is also supportive of the book, but her assessment is more balanced and nuanced. Interestingly, this review is critical of the methodology used by the authors, which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. Stark also questions the portrayal of the Cold War as a more "peaceful" era, and a period in which the US interventions were more justified, pointing to the numerous proxy wars of the Cold War and their dubious importance for American national security.

Jennifer Kavanagh's review also praises the Military Intervention Project dataset for being so expansive and for covering a wider range of activities and a longer time period than past quantitative work on the topic. "Their efforts'" she writes, "to build a more rigorous, empirical foundation for the discussion of military interventions should be commended." Her review highlights, however, that the breadth of the book is also its main weakness. She is critical of the definition of military intervention, which she finds to be too broad to provide an accurate picture of how interventions changed through time. The book's narrative history, which covers almost 250 years, is also deemed problematic, as the discussion necessarily remains on the surface of complex issues, overlooking details on specific interventions and of the decision-making process behind them. This, according to Kavanagh, leads to excessive generalizations and simplifications. Ultimately, this review raises a key question, one which is left unanswered in the book: when is the use of force justified and necessary?

Similarly, Melanie W. Sisson's review recognizes the value of the book's basic construct but is critical of the inclusion of narrative explanatory arguments that the book is not designed to test. Sisson also questions some of the conclusions made by the authors, which she considers "not substantiated by the manner in which the data are analyzed." The definition of military intervention that puts together the threat, display, and direct use of force by the United States is considered problematic. What constitutes a "threat" of force, she asks, and how is a "threat" different from a "display" of force? I would agree that these are not simple

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linguistic differences, as lumping them together seems to suggest, but fundamentally different tactics or strategies on how and when to use force that needed to be considered.

Jordan Tama's review shares the assessment of the other reviewers on the intrinsic value of the data set created by Toft and Kushi, which, he argues, "should be a valuable resource for many future studies of US foreign policy. The data set includes all US uses of force and threats of force from the establishment of the United States to the present, making it the most comprehensive data set on this topic."

However, in line with the above, he also questions the authors' choice to classify displays and threats of force as cases of military intervention. Moreover, while he commends the book's broad scope as providing an overview of US grand strategy and overseas engagements from the presidency of George Washington to the present, he is critical of the book's central argument, which, he argues, "at times seems overstated and inadequately supported by evidence." He provides examples, for instance, in which the United States employed non-military tools to address crises or issues of concern, rather than using force, that are not mentioned in the book. Moreover, he states that the claim that US's use of diplomacy has been "severely atrophied" is not backed by evidence. One can question how a dataset that aims to document the US reliance on the use of force can, alone, demonstrate that other instruments of statecraft, like diplomacy or economic tools, are disregarded.

The authors, in their response, address the criticisms raised on the book's methodology and its definition of military intervention by highlighting that their definitional choices "parallel the measurement choices applied across the political science literature in the past decades in an effort to better compare and utilize the MIP dataset alongside other existing valuable research on US intervention patterns."

Moreover, they point to both their introductory article on the data set, and additional online sources, as providing further details. Overall, they provide a compelling response to most of the criticisms raised by the reviewers. An acknowledgment of the inherent complexity of issues related to humanitarian intervention, for example, clearly emerges in the authors' response to criticisms of the treatment of the Bosnia and Kosovo interventions in the book. Interestingly, the authors also point to multiple areas of future research in which they are themselves engaged, thus agreeing that one book—already ambitious in scope and design—cannot, alone, tackle the multitude of issues raised by the reviewers.

As the only historian on this roundtable, my perspective is, for obvious reasons, very different from those of both the authors and the reviewers of the book.[1] The historian's work dives into the complexities and nuances that the book tends to set aside in favor of definitional coherence and a systematic overview. It is interesting to note, however, that most of the reviewers do highlight these elements as shortcomings of the book. I would like to add that the reasons as to why some chapters focus on decades of history, while the "America the Unipolar Hegemon" chapter examines only one decade, and the "America Unleashed"

[1] The editors have thus allowed some leeway for my comments in this introduction.

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chapter focuses on two decades, are not clear. The book's strength, in other words, is in the post-Cold War and post- 9/11 analysis of US interventions. It is on these grounds that the authors anchor their main conclusions. One wonders whether the authors' choice to embark on such a broad historical overview, which necessarily overlooks the complexity and specificity of each era and opens the potential for unwarranted criticisms, was a sound one.

Moreover, if—as the authors write in their response—the "book does not seek to fully answer why and to what ultimate effect the US has wielded military force across history" then how can one fully understand the phenomenon they put at the center of their analysis, namely the US's (in their view) excessive reliance on the use of military force?

In any case, as these reviews underscore, the importance and the value of the book are self-evident. A reflection on the extent to which the United States has relied on the use of force and on the downsides of relying too heavily on the military tool is sorely needed. I fully agree with Tama that US leaders should follow the authors' advice to strengthen other tools of statecraft as complements to the "sword."

However, I would also caution against taking the argument that the United States is over-reliant on the military instrument too far. If the US is seen—as suggested here—as a threat by the rest of the world, then why does the rest of the world continue to turn to the US for leadership in times of crisis? Ultimately, in a complex, increasingly multipolar, and rapidly changing world in which other great powers do not hesitate to blatantly use force, American leadership is desperately needed. And that leadership necessarily also entails the military component as a—albeit obviously *not* the only—tool of statecraft.

Contributors

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Project (MIP). She is the author of *Dying by the Sword* (2023, Oxford), the forthcoming book *From Kosovo to Darfur: Why Military Humanitarianism Favors the West* (Michigan) and articles on military interventions, humanitarian crises, and the gendered dynamics of economic crises. Sidita holds a PhD and MA in Political Science from Northeastern University and a BA in Economics and International Studies from St. John Fisher University.

Barbara Zanchetta is Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) in Diplomacy and Foreign Policy at the Department of War Studies at King's College London. She is the author of *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970s* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), the co-author of *Transatlantic Relations since 1945* (Routledge, 2012) and co-editor of *New Perspectives on the End of the Cold War: Unexpected Transformations?* (Routledge, 2018). Dr. Zanchetta has published articles or book reviews in *International Politics*, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *Diplomatic History*, *Cold War History*, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, *International Affairs* and for *H-Diplo*. She is currently working on a monograph tentatively titled *Arc of Crisis: Carter, Reagan and US Policy in Southwest Asia*.

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Review by Jennifer Kavanagh, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

The United States has long been an interventionist power, inserting itself into the affairs of states close to its borders and far from its shores, and it has often favored military force as a tool of first resort to achieve its foreign policy goals. US interventionism has not always served US or global interests, however.[1] Today, with wars in Ukraine and Israel and tensions in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait absorbing the attention of US policymakers, there is no more important question than how the United States should balance its use of military and non-military power with resource constraints in pursuit of US interests and security.

This is the starting point for Monica Duffy Toft and Sidita Kushi's ambitious book, *Dying by the Sword.* The book sets out to trace the evolution of the US use of force to achieve its economic and political ends, combining case studies with quantitative analysis of an original database of military interventions covering the period from 1776 through 2019.[2] Along the way the authors discuss how the empirical patterns they uncover fit in with competing visions of US grand strategy.

The core of the authors' argument is that over time, the United States' leaders have become increasingly willing to use military force to achieve its objectives, turning to military means—often covert and lethal actions—more often and more quickly than in the past. They call this US approach "kinetic diplomacy" and argue that as its use has spread, military power has come to subsume other levers of statecraft, including traditional diplomacy and economic aid (4). This shift towards greater use of force is dangerous, the authors argue, because it contributes to US casualties, creates new US adversaries, and legitimates the use of military means in ways that make conflict more likely globally (5-6).

The authors make several key points that are well supported by their analysis and evidence. The first is that the United States has over-relied on military power, especially since the end of World War II. The authors effectively use their quantitative analysis to show that the United States has consistently prioritized military means even where alternatives were available and even when the US interests at stake were narrow. They leverage their case studies well to highlight some of the dangers and costs of this approach for US interests, reputation, and influence abroad.

Second, the authors convincingly demonstrate that the US over-use of force has not made America safer or the world more stable but has instead created new demands for greater use of force. They describe a self-perpetuating but ultimately unsustainable cycle driven by a kind of inertia (6). This cycle emerged not only because US military interventions created new enemies, but also because sustaining the progress of one intervention often required additional interventions. Furthermore, each use of force lowered the barriers

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[1] Jennifer Kavanagh and Bryan Frederick, "Why Force Fails," *Foreign Affairs*, 30 March 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/us-military-why-force-fails.

[2] Sidita Kushi and Monica Duffy Toft, "Introducing the Military Intervention Project: A New Dataset on US Military Interventions, 1776–2019." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 67:4 (2023): 752-779.

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for the next.[3] Breaking this cycle will not be easy, as the authors acknowledge. It will require first and foremost a United States able to better prioritize the essential from the "nice to have" when it comes to foreign policy objectives.[4] But the authors also suggest that military restraint need not mean a United States that is uninvolved abroad, and instead recommend a greater use of other tools of US power, including traditional diplomacy and economic initiatives (6).

The book is at its best when it is describing how historical trends in US use of force track with the new nation's growing military and economic power. Its treatment of how some of America's earliest presidents approached the use of force is particularly valuable for students of contemporary US foreign policy for the similarities and differences with today (1). Quantifying these trends is a difficult challenge. The authors' Military Intervention Project dataset is much more expansive than previous intervention datasets, allowing them to cover a wider range of activities and longer time period than past quantitative work on the topic. They also provide a good deal of transparency about the interventions included in their analysis in appendices that are helpful to the reader (14-15).[5] While it has shortcomings, their effort to build a more rigorous, empirical foundation for the discussion of military interventions should be commended.

But while breadth is a strength of book, it is also its biggest weakness. This manifests in two ways.

First, the definition of military intervention is arguably too broad to provide a clear picture of how US interventionism has changed over time or the true implications of US use of force. The authors define intervention as any "the threat, display, or direct usage of force by the United States against another state or foreign actor/territory" (14). This wide range of activities means that the definition is comprehensive. Combining these very different types of activities into a single category, however, tends to complicate the discussion of historical trends and the interpretation of the quantitative results presented in each chapter.

Threats of force are very different in their costs and implications than uses of force.[6] The same is true of large and small interventions and interventions that involve combat operations and those focused on humanitarian goals.[7] However, much of the book's analysis relies on event counts that do not capture these

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[3] Kavanagh, "Are Military Interventions Contagious Over Time?" RAND Corporation, RR-192-A, 2013, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR192.html.

[4] Kavanagh and Frederick, "What Force Fails."

[5] Kavanagh, Frederick, et al., "Characteristics of Successful U.S. Military Interventions," RAND Corporation, RR-3062-A, 2019, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3062.html; Patricia Sullivan and Michael Koch, "Military Intervention by Powerful States," *Journal of Peace Research* 46:5 (September 2009): 707-718; Jeffrey Pickering and Emizet Kisangani, "The International Military Intervention Dataset: An Updated Resource for Conflict Scholars," *Journal of Peace Research*, 46:4 (July 2009): 589-599.

[6] Melanie W. Sisson, James A. Siebens, and Barry M. Blechman, *Military Coercion and US Foreign Policy: The Use of Force Short of War* (London: Routledge, 2020).

[7] Frederick, Kavanagh, et al., "Assessing Trade-Offs in U.S. Military Intervention Decisions," RAND Corporation, RR-4293-A, 2021,

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nuances. This is perhaps understandable, given that adding this information would have involved an even larger data collection undertaking in what is already an ambitious data enterprise. The lack of precision in the definition and resulting data analysis, however, makes it difficult to fully and accurately assess how extensive America's overreliance on military power has been, or to evaluate the implications of observed trends. The authors do break down interventions by levels of hostility, but even here the categories are quite broad, grouping together activities that may have little in common. For example, the category of "use of force" captures everything from limited military raids lasting a few hours and conducted by special forces, to major military campaigns involving thousands of troops deployed for many months, so long as the total casualties fall below the threshold of war (defined as 1,000 battle deaths in a calendar year [15-18]).

The lack of detail on intervention size and the types of forces involved (e.g., air, ground, and naval) are particularly problematic for the book's analysis. Naval and air interventions involve very different costs and levels of commitments than ground interventions, for instance, just as small interventions with hundreds of personnel have very different risks and demands than large ones that include thousands.[8] Without a way to describe how interventions have varied along these dimensions, it is difficult to provide a full accounting of how the United States has used military force over time or to fully assess the costs and benefits of military deployments for the United States over the longer term.

The omission of a fuller treatment of intervention size becomes most important when the authors discuss the shift over the past two decades away from large interventions often involving ground forces and toward smaller, shorter interventions involving airstrikes, drones, and special operations teams (215-217 & 225). The authors are critical of the increase in the frequency of these interventions, but without data on intervention size and types of forces used, the book's quantitative analysis is limited in its ability to consider the tradeoffs involved in this shift or assess the benefits of a more tactical approach to intervention. In fact, an approach that relies on more frequent, smaller interventions may come with advantages in terms of costs and success rates even if there are more discrete activities from an event count perspective.[9]

The second way that breadth interferes with the authors' analysis is in the case study discussions. Because these narratives must cover close to 250 years of US history, the discussions often remain at the surface level, lacking detail on the idiosyncrasies of specific interventions and depth on the decision-making behind the choice to use force. This lack of depth can be frustrating, and it also sometimes leads to broad generalizations and a tendency to attribute military interventions to a single root cause where many factors

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https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR4200/RR4293/RAND_RR4293.pdf; Patricia Sullivan and Michael Koch, "Military Intervention by Powerful States," 707-718.

[8] Frederick, Kavanagh, et al., *Assessing Trade-Offs in U.S. Military Intervention Decisions*; Sullivan and Koch, "Military Intervention by Powerful States," 707-718.

[9] Stephen Watts et al., "Limited Intervention: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Limited Stabilization, Limited Strike, and Containment Operations," RAND Corporation, RR-2037-A, 2017, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2000/RR2037/RAND_RR2037.pdf; Frederick, Kavanagh, et al., *Assessing Trade-Offs in U.S. Military Intervention Decisions*.

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are at work. The discussion of US involvement in the Vietnam War is one case in point, where a high-level treatment of the decision-making of presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon fails to capture the complexity of factors at play and, in Nixon's case, the overlapping objectives he was working toward (145-146, 158-160).[10]

As noted, as part of their analysis, the authors introduce the novel concept of "kinetic diplomacy," which aptly captures the US tendency to lean more heavily on military means than on political or diplomatic tools. However, additional specification is needed to make this concept analytically useful. The authors note that "in kinetic diplomacy, a state immediately turns to predominantly stealthy military resources, such as drone warfare, special operations, and covert missions, to violently coerce a rival in an attempt to prevent a costly escalation. In a word: it attempts to achieve its goals by killing (8)."

This explanation raises more questions than it answers. For example, what specific activities fit into this category of operations and where does the boundary lie? The authors indicate kinetic diplomacy is common today, but how is this type of activity different than the heavy use of covert operations during the Cold War? Moreover, that the concept is focused on covert and special-operations activities raises the question of whether the scope or frequency of kinetic diplomacy can be measured with enough precision in an unclassified environment to determine if it is or is not at the center of US foreign policy or if its use has changed over time.

As a result of these limitations, the book raises, but does not fully answer, two key questions which might guide future research on this topic.

First, when is the use of force justified and necessary? At the end of their book the authors outline a selective engagement approach which they characterize as demanding that "the United States should only intervene in regions that directly affect its security, leaving the United States to focus on its relationships with Europe, East Asia, and the Persian Gulf. Its main objectives would be to prevent war between great powers, prevent the rise of aggressive regional hegemons, and prevent nuclear proliferation (266)."

But many of the US interventions over the past 100 years could easily fall into one of these broad categories, and it is not clear how this approach differs from the one the authors have critiqued as too expansive (15-18).[11] Furthermore, throughout the book, the authors offer relatively limited discussion of which past uses of military force might be considered legitimate or justified and by what criteria, and which might be considered necessary in the future. While it is certainly the case that United States leaders have used military power too freely and often, there are cases where military force is the only option and where it has advanced US interests; World War II is the most common example.

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[10] John Farrell, *Richard Nixon: The Life*, (New York: Doubleday, 2017), chapters 19-24.
[11] Kavanagh, Frederick et al., *Characteristics of Successful U.S. Military Interventions*.

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To provide a compelling alternative to the current over-use of military force, future work will need to take on this question of legitimate uses of military power more directly. This might include additional assessment of how the relative costs, benefits, and risks of different types of military activities (e.g., sizes, goals, etc.) should be weighed and compared. The United States will continue to use its military power abroad in the future, so efforts to draw a clear line between appropriate uses of force and excessive reliance on military means will be essential as will the identification of specific metrics that policymakers can rely on to make this distinction.

Second, is the story of US interventionism one of continuity or change? The argument in this book seems to go back and forth. At times, it seems this is a story of a country that has always preferred to use military force and has only been limited at times by its means, be they available military strength or economic resources. At others, the argument is focused on the evolution of a nation whose ambition and willingness to use force grew and changed over time and in nonlinear ways, as a result of its material power, opportunism, and the intentional actions of specific policymakers (31, 63-66, 84-85, 180, chapter 7).

There may be elements of truth to both interpretations, but the difference between the two matters a lot for how we think about the future of military interventions. If the trend toward overreliance and preference for military force has evolved over time with changes in material power, institutional inertia, or the actions and preferences of bureaucrats and political actors, then there is reason to think that institutional and policy changes may help to reorient and realign the way the United States uses military force. If instead, an interventionist, military-first foreign policy is driven by a deeper national ambition that has always been part of the US identity, it may be much harder to course correct going forward.

Dying by the Sword may not provide full answers to either of these questions, but it makes substantial strides in building a quantitative foundation and comprehensive historical record for future studies of US military interventions to build on. Above all, its key message comes through clearly: the United States has over-relied on military force—sometimes to its own detriment and the detriment of other states—and urgently needs to adopt a more balanced and restrained foreign policy.

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Review by Melanie W. Sisson, Brookings Institution Strobe Talbott Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology

By all objective and subjective measures, the United States military is the most capable fighting force in the world. It is composed of well-trained, highly professionalized, combat-tested, and mission-driven volunteers. It is ostentatiously well-funded, with a budget that now reaches upwards of $900 billion annually—a quantity that surpasses, by far, the closest also-ran.[1] It retains a singularly large network of military bases, outposts, and access points worldwide.[2] It has the planet's most powerful blue water navy, operates more airborne assets than any other country, and maintains a nuclear arsenal in excess of 5,000 warheads.[3]

This abundance, however, does not seem to have proved sufficiently comforting. Policymakers today are more fretful than at any time since the 1980s that US prosperity and security are at grave risk. The question usefully asked by Monica Duffy Toft and Sidita Kushi in *Dying by the Sword: The Militarization of US Foreign Policy*, is whether policymakers will respond to these fears by both investing more in and doing more with the military, or not. The authors do not themselves take up the matter of whether the strategic environment as threatening to the United States as contemporary national security discourse contends. They do, however, clearly seek to caution that even if it is, military activism is unlikely to make the world safer for the United States or for the interests and values it seeks to promote.

Dying by the Sword thus joins a long and growing canon of works expressing dissatisfaction with post-Cold War US foreign policy broadly, and reservations about the role of force in it, specifically.[4] This argument,

[1] The 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) includes $866 billion in defense spending. Karoun Demirjian, "House Passes Defense Bill, Clearing It for Biden," *The New York Times*, 14 December 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/14/us/politics/defense-bill-congress.html. China was the second-largest spender on defense in 2023, at an estimated $224 billion. Jon Grevatt and Andrew MacDonald, "China Raises Defence Budget to USD225 Billion," *Janes*, 6 March 2023, https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/china-raises-defence-budget-to-usd225-billion.

[2] Mohammed Hussein and Mohammed Haddad, "Infographic: US Military Presence Around the World," *Al Jazeera*, 10 September 2021, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/10/infographic-us-military-presence-around-the-world-interactive.

[3] Sinead Baker, "The World's Most Powerful Navies in 2023, Ranked", *Business* Insider, 6 August 2023, https://www.businessinsider.com/most-powerful-navies-in-world-in-2023-ranked-ships-submarines-2023-8. See also: "How is China Modernizing its Navy?", CSIS: ChinaPower, accessed 18 December 2023, https://chinapower.csis.org/china-naval-modernization/; Sinead Baker, "The World's Most Powerful Air Forces in 2023, Ranked," *Business Insider*, 15 July 2023, https://www.businessinsider.com/most-powerful-air-forces-in-the-world-in-2023-ranked-2023-6; and "Nuclear Weapons: Who Has What at a Glance," *Arms Control Association*, June 2023, https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat.

[4] See, for example: Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Rosa Brooks, *How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything: Tales from*

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however, sits not at the heart of *Dying by the Sword*, but rather is somewhat adjacent to it. The book itself is not designed to measure the success or failure of military interventions to achieve policy goals relative to other instruments of national power, in the particular or in the aggregate. It is not designed to analyze the role of military interventions in causing US foreign policy to be relatively more or less successful in protecting vital national interests. It also is not designed to explain why military interventions succeed or fail, or why military interventionism has become an increasingly prominent feature of US foreign policy over time, a trend that the authors argue is clearly visible in the data they present throughout the book.

What is, in fact, at the heart of the book is a catalog of data that describe incidents of "all US military interventions since the country's founding" (14). These data—compiled by the authors' Military Intervention Project (MIP) at Tufts University—are then located within a narrative history of US foreign policy. This basic construct is itself a creditable contribution to the literature on US foreign policy. It is thus unfortunate that this value proposition is diluted by the inclusion of explanatory arguments that the book is not designed to test, and by conclusions that are not substantiated by the manner in which the data are analyzed. The authors' main line of argumentation is that trends in the US use of force are evidence of an "overreliance" on military interventionism relative to the use of other tools of national power and that this "has arguably made the United States, and indeed the world, less safe and prosperous" (preface, 1). This is not, however, self-evident from the data, and surprising omissions in what information is made available to the reader about the MIP dataset, and by the choices the authors make about how to structure their contextualization, make the argument less convincing than it might otherwise be.

The value of any dataset is that it imposes conceptual rigor on the riotous history of human action. It is a means through which to distinguish the phenomenon one wishes to study from all other phenomena, to define what that phenomenon is and is not and how, when surveying the landscape of history, to tell the difference between the two. Here, the authors are seeking to make a case based upon data on military interventions and about their various features. Yet their discussion about the choices the dataset makes to differentiate military interventions from other state actions, and from each other, is rather stingy. "Military interventions" the reader is told, "include the threat, display, or direct usage of force by the United States against another state or foreign actor/territory, including over 100 American Indian nations" (14). But what constitutes a "threat" of force, and how is a "threat" different from a "display"? What is the necessary threshold each different type of military intervention must meet to be considered a success? And why do the authors carve out and treat separately data on drone warfare—is it not a "direct usage of force"? There may be good reasons for this special treatment, but the authors do not make clear what their reasons are, either in their discussion of the dataset or in the section on drone warfare itself (225-229).

It is of course understandable for authors (and publishers) to wish to spare their audience the tedium of endless definitions, but this was a missed opportunity. Making available enough reference material at least

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the Pentagon (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016); Stephen M. Walt, *The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018).

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to surface the rationale for imposing cut-points, thresholds, and judgments that figure prominently in the authors' main line of argumentation is not a courtesy done for the data-minded, it is a necessity done to make transparent how the authors have arrived at their conclusions. Footnotes which state that "Our data set codebook and appendix are available upon request" (34) are neither standard nor satisfying for those who wish really to engage with the work and to assess the implications and conclusions derived from it.[5]

This difficulty is compounded by the authors' use of historical narrative, which is not constructed in such a way that it either demonstrates or explains the development of an "overreliance" on the use of force. The book begins with a nice section on grand strategy: what it is, why it matters, and which ones have directed US foreign policy over time. This section also includes the authors' observation that policymakers today are "hampered by an overreliance on force" and so are "struggling to craft a new grand strategy that will help guide [US] national security and foreign policies into the future" (14). This framing suggests a forthcoming examination of the relationship between how US policymakers, over the nation's history, have perceived the international environment, what they have sought to achieve in the world, and how those goals have shaped their decisions to use, or not to use, military intervention to do so. From that historical basis would then follow analysis of what present conditions might suggest for the role of force in grand strategy today. The authors do not, however, embed their analysis and interpretation of MIP data within eras of grand strategy, but rather align them to "distinct eras of US foreign policy...by significant historical and geopolitical events that shaped US military aspirations and capabilities" (27).

Locating MIP data within periods defined by events effectively untethers the selection of military intervention from strategic logic. This effect is especially pronounced, and misleading, in the book's treatment of the other instruments of national power, which is referred to as the "traditional statecraft trifecta of diplomacy, trade, and aid" (4). Although the authors argue that there has been a decline in the influence wielded by the US Department of State (DOS) over time, and that this decline "is directly connected to the rise of military interventionism in US foreign policy," (13) they provide no systematic evidence to either effect. Noting that "DOS spending, even at its peak, remains only 5.5 percent of total [Department of Defense] spending" (19 & 26) and highlighting the well-documented attrition rate for DOS employees under the administration of President Donald J. Trump is inadequate to that task.[6] Given the nature of diplomatic work, it is to be expected that measurements of changes in its use and assessment of its effects over time will be done more qualitatively than quantitatively. The same cannot be said for the use of economic statecraft. Here, there is unambiguous evidence of an increase in its use over time, with the US application of economic sanctions growing steadily after World War II and then again accelerating markedly after the end of the Cold War.[7] Neglect of this fact in particular makes it difficult both to accept

[5] The dataset itself is available here: https://sites.tufts.edu/css/mip-research/mip-dataset/.

[6] Ronan Farrow, *War on Peace: The End of Diplomacy and the Decline of American Influence* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018).

[7] See, for example: Robert D. Blackwill and Jennifer M. Harris, *War by Other Means* (Cambridge, MA and London, UK: Belknap Press, 2016); Nicholas Mulder, *The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022).

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the authors' contention that US militarism is rising not just in absolute but in relative terms, and to understand what theory, if not grand strategy, they would propose to explain the concurrence of these trend lines.

Dying by the Sword's reliance on the MIP data set does not enable it to offer an explanation for the causes of rising US militarism, most especially for the post-Cold War era. Yet the commentary that surrounds the book's presentation of data and its historical narrative makes clear the authors' argument that in the absence of various structural constraints—domestic politics, the international distribution of power, technological evolution—US interventionism during all periods would likely have been an even more frequent occurrence than their data indicate that it already was: "The impulse to be more forceful always existed across every era of US foreign policymaking, but structural forces and historical events sometimes serve to mute or embolden this impulse" (3). In the post-Cold War era, they contend, these constraints were at least lax, and at most lacking, and so "domestic structures and international events strengthened the American impulse towards forcefulness to unprecedented levels" (3) while "rising defense spending…propelled partially by the confluence of interest of congressional committees, US federal agencies, and special interest groups and defense industry lobbyists" (4) gave policymakers little reason to resist the "'force-first' mentality" (1). The result, the authors assert, has been decades of US foreign policy based on "addiction" (3, 5), "habit" (7), and path-dependence in which "[v]iolence begets violence" (preface, 5) and "the more force is resorted to, the more it has to be resorted to" (8).

It is difficult to reconcile these diagnoses of pathology and notes of fatalism with what the authors present as five lessons that emerge from analysis of the MIP data: about where the US intervened, why, and at what level of intensity, and about how its rivals, competitors, and antagonists responded.[8] If the militarization of US foreign policy is not after all the product of grand strategy, which can be mistaken in its assumptions and inept in its implementation, but rather from a combination of a collective attraction to the use of force, inadequate environmental constraints, and decades of inertia, then what are these lessons meant to inform? If the implication is that the agent of change, the catalyst for breaking the "force-first mentality," is evidence that military interventionism has not served US interests well, then a better case will need to be made.

This need not, however, be the measure against which the value of *Dying by the Sword* is wholly assessed. To the contrary, its contribution is perhaps better understood as simply laying bare the disconnect between just how much the United States has expended, and inflicted, by its use of force to pursue its own security, and

[8] The book presents "Five Key Lessons": 1.) The Countries That Are Framed as Contemporary Aggressors to the United States Are Often the Countries Most Targeted by US Military Intervention" 2.) US Foreign Policy Objectives Shifted From Territorial Gains to Regime Change Wars in Contemporary International Politics, with New Consequences 3.) America's Rivals Have Deescalated Armed Disputes, While the United States Has Escalated Them Since 2001 4.) The United States Now Uses Greater Military Force in Pursuit of Lesser National Interests 5.) As the United States Grew in Power, It Moved from Regional Militarism to Global Militarism, Driven by a Growing Military Budget and Fewer Restraints, 254-261.

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yet how very insecure it nonetheless perceives itself to be. This, alone, should be sufficient for readers to question, as the authors rightly do, why more of the same should be expected to do any better.

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Review by Alexandra Stark, RAND Corporation

Monica Duffy Toft and Sidita Kushi's book, *Dying by the Sword: The Militarization of US Foreign Policy*, is an important entry into the study of US military intervention. The book showcases the Military Intervention Project (MIP) dataset, a project of the Center for Strategic Studies at Tufts University's Fletcher School, where Toft is director and Kushi has served as research director.[1] The MIP dataset tracks the number of US military interventions since the founding of the United States, with a range of variables related to "key drivers and consequences of these interventions."[2] Alongside other recent studies of US military interventions, the MIP dataset is a very useful resource for exploring patterns in US intervention across time and space and building a greater understanding of the causes and consequences of intervention.[3] At a time when US forces are deployed to more than 170 countries around the world, and when building security partnerships is a key component of the United States' approach to the world, it is more important than ever to study US military interventions.

In their book, Toft and Kushi deploy the MIP dataset to explore how patterns of military intervention have shifted over various eras of US foreign policy, from 1776 through the present. Using interventions as an indicator, they argue that "[t]hroughout its history as a global actor, the United States has taken on many roles. It evolved from a relatively isolationist state to a hesitant intervener to a global policeman and defender of the liberal world order" (2). They note that "the impulse to be more forceful always existed across every era of US foreign policymaking, but structural forces and historical events sometimes serve to mute or embolden this impulse" (3).

Since 11 September 2001, however, Toft and Kushi argue that the United States has been quicker than ever "to use force abroad, with strong domestic and international backlash" (3). They characterize the United States' approach to the world over the past couple of decades as "kinetic diplomacy:" instead of drawing on the full range of diplomatic, economic, and military tools available, they argue, the United States tends to resort to what US military leaders have termed the "by, with, and through," approach.[4] Kinetic diplomacy, according to the book's authors, occurs when "a state immediately turns to predominantly stealthy military resources, such as drone warfare, special operations, and covert missions, to violently coerce a rival in an attempt to prevent a costly escalation" (8).

Dying by the Sword explores the history of US intervention through the lens of the MIP dataset, noting shifts in the number of interventions across time, as well as the regions that were targeted for intervention and the

[1] https://sites.tufts.edu/css/mip-research/mip-dataset/.

[2] Sidita Kushi and Monica Duffy Toft, "Introducing the Military Intervention Project: A New Dataset on US Military Interventions, 1777-2019," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 67:4 (April 2023): 754.

[3] For example, see Jennifer Kavanagh et al., *Characteristics of Successful US Military Interventions*, Washington, DC: RAND Corporation, 2019. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7249/RR3062.

[4] Linda Robinson, "SOF's Evolving Role: Warfare 'By, With, and Through' Local Forces," The RAND Blog, May 9, 2017. https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2017/05/sofs-evolving-role-warfare-by-with-and-through-local.html.

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objectives of intervening, providing a rich portrait of US military interventions. Additionally, the authors explore each era of US foreign policy from the country's founding through the present in empirical chapters which track the United States' foreign policy trajectory from "America the Expander" (37-74) at its founding through 1864, to its role as western hegemon, hesitant global intervener, "Leader of the Free World" (140-175) through the Cold War, and the unipolar hegemon at the end of the Cold War. Finally, the authors argue that in the post-9/11 period, the United States has completed its shift from a "diplomacy first, and force as a last resort" approach to one of "military force first" (31).

The book struck me as offering two important empirical projects: a quantitative exploration of patterns in US intervention across time, and a qualitative exposition of the arc of the history of US foreign policy with a focus on policy orientation of US leaders and debates about the United States' role in the world. While both projects are interesting and important, they sit somewhat uneasily beside one another in one respect: as a means of explaining the trajectory of US foreign policy, the quantitative approach of counting the number of interventions across eras somewhat flattens the rich qualitative empirical chapters. The book's qualitative chapters do an excellent job of illuminating how the United States has used military force across time, from its wars against and violent repression of Native Americans and its colonial history in the Philippines and US territories in the nineteenth century, to its frequent intervention in proxy wars during the Cold War.[5] But the focus on the number of US military interventions across time means that the book de-emphasizes these earlier historical periods in comparison with recent decades, especially 2001 through the present. The MIP dataset deliberately scopes out the US wars against Native Americans (and more recently, drone warfare) based upon its definition of "traditional" military intervention (14). This is a reasonable decision if the focus is specifically on a conception of formal military intervention in the modern state system in which one state intervenes in another, but these colonialist episodes are nevertheless a critical part of the United States' history of militarism.

The authors' argument that US interventionism accelerated particularly at the end of the Cold War and in the post-9/11 period also seems to be facilitated by the book's assumptions about national interests. The chapter on the Cold War period ably explores the United States' global interventions in proxy wars in the US confrontation with the Soviet Union. In the introduction, however, Toft and Kushi argue that interventions during the Cold War were driven largely by national interests, while during the post-Cold War period, in contrast, "the United States intervened in pursuit of less vital national interests as US geopolitical rivalries and vital threats to national security faded" (25). The MIP dataset uses an explicitly realist definition of national interest via a National Interests Index that includes measures of "contiguity, colonial history, alliances, and natural resources" (25). The argument that the post-9/11 period was the lynchpin for the shift to the kinetic diplomacy approach and this lens for national interests elides the violence of the Cold War's proxy wars. While the Cold War is sometimes depicted as a period of relative

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For example, see Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019); Julian Go and Anne L. Foster, eds., *The American Colonial State in the Philippines* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Ned Blackhawk, *The Rediscovery of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023), David Treur, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2019).

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calm during which the United States and the Soviet Union avoided a larger conflict by supporting proxy forces around the world, historian Paul Thomas Chamberlin has shown that collectively the Cold War proxy wars were part of a global deadly conflict that ultimately led to the deaths of millions.[6]

Ultimately, *Dying by the Sword* presents an impressive overview of US interventions across the nation's history and will add to our scholarly knowledge about military intervention and debates about the United States' role in the world and the direction of US foreign policy.[7]

[6] Paul Thomas Chamberlain, *The Cold War's Killing Fields* (New York: Harper Collins, 2018).
[7] E.g., see Kori Schake, "The Case for Conservative Internationalism," *Foreign Affairs* 103:1 (2024); Jake Sullivan, "The Sources of American Power," *Foreign Affairs* 102: 6 (2023); Richard Fontaine and Loren DeJonge Schulman, eds., *New Voices in Grand Strategy* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2019); and Emma Ashford, "Strategies of Restraint," *Foreign Affairs* 100:5 (2021).

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Review by Frida Stranne, University of Halmstad and Uppsala University

Every now and then, but not very often, a book appears that adds a crucial piece of the puzzle to something that you yourself and many other researchers have spent their lives describing and explaining. It is a study that confirms the results of other studies by adding important empirical evidence and contains data that you knew would require such extensive work to find that you have put aside the idea of even trying. Monica Duffy Toft and Sidika Kushi's *Dying by the Sword: The Militarization of US Foreign Policy* adds that kind of missing piece of the puzzle. With its large amount of empirical data, this study provides a set of findings that support the work of many scholars and research groups who are trying to understand and explain various aspects of how and why US leaders instinctively respond to almost all threats by military means and why the United States has become more militaristic over time.

This comprehensive study contributes to the rich literature that considers and analyzes different dimensions of US foreign policy and the consequences of the chosen path. Amongst many other things, they range from the pursuit by presidential administrations of absolute security via the core ideas that constitute Washington's foreign policy choices, such as exceptionalism and manifest destiny, to the economic interests that have driven the policies for many decades and have led to imperial overstretch. To mention just a few concrete examples, it adds knowledge to studies such as James Chace and Caleb Carr's *America Invulnerable: the Quest for Absolute Security from 1812 to Star Wars*, and David C. Unger and his book, *The Emergency State: America's Pursuit of Absolute Security at all Costs*, both of which emphasizes that Washington's narrow focus on how security should be understood has distorted its entire policy.[1] Christopher Layne's *Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* also did an excellent job of showing how American foreign policy has been characterized by a consistent open-door logic.[2] One can also add masterpieces like Norman Graebner's *Manifest Destiny* or A. K. Weinberg's *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* and William Appleman Williams *The Roots of the Modern American Empire* to the list of examples to which *Dying by the Sword* places itself in relation.[3]

The question the authors of these books ask, as do those of us who analyze various aspects of foreign- policy strategies, is why the United States decided to become such a militarized country. *Dying by the Sword* is particularly impressive and valuable because it provides a rich body of data that provides evidence for a wide range of research that has contributed various insights into American foreign policy. The book may not provide new answers as to why foreign policy has been shaped the way it has, but it adds important facts

[1] James Chace and Caleb Carr, *America Invulnerable: the Quest for Absolute Security from 1812 to Star Wars* (New York: Summit Books 1988); David C. Unger, *The Emergency State – America's Pursuit of Absolute Security at all Costs* (New York: Penguin Books 2012).

[2] Christopher Layne, *Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2006).

[3] Norman A. Graebner, *Manifest Destiny* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill 1968); Albert Katz Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American* History (New York: Times Books 1957); William Appleman Williams, *The Roots of the Modern American Empire* (New York: Random House 1969).

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about the extent of US interventionism and what this policy implies for international (in)stability and US (in)security. It provides legitimacy to the work of scholars who are trying to understand the consequences of America's increased militarization.

One of the book's most important contributions, the Military Intervention Project (MIP), reveals that when the unipolar moment occurred in the beginning of the 1990s, the United States increased the number of occasions when it used military means to interfere with the development of other countries. This means that after the Cold War ended, when the United States could have chosen to act with less violence, using primarily diplomacy and soft power, it instead used its position to try to dominate the world by military means.

Moreover, the MIP demonstrates that post-Cold War interventions have taken place in areas of the world where the US has had comparatively few national interests to defend. At the same time, most of the interventions undertaken by the US during this period have been counterproductive, contributing to greater insecurity and new wars. As other scholars such as Barry R. Posen and John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt put it: intervention has become a hyper-militarized failure that is often completely at odds with the US's own geopolitical interests.[4] This means that American lives have been lost and money wasted without leading to a strengthening of national security interests. This conclusion is supported, for example, by reports published by the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University.[5]

Additionally, with its data on military interventions in the post-Cold War era, Toft and Kushi's study confirms what has previously been shown by Stephen Kinzer in *Overthrow*, namely that US interventions almost never lead to democracy in the end. With the potential exception of Grenada in 1983, Kinzer argues that there are no successful examples of the United States using military means to create democracy and stability in foreign lands since the end of World War II,[6] and that most of these interventions weakened US security. The same findings result in Alexander Downes and Jonathan Monten's study from 2013.[7] Out of 28 cases of the regime-changing operations they study, only three can be said to have contributed to some form of democracy. Despite these dismal results, as *Dying by the Sword* reveals, Washington continued its policy of regime change and even intensified it after 1990.

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[4] Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2014); John Mersheimer and Stephen Walt, "The Case for Offshore Balancing" *Foreign Affairs* (July/Aug, 2016): 70-83.
[5] Lisa Graves, "Burdens of War: The Consequences of the U.S. Military Response to 9/11. The Costs to Civil Liberties and the Rule of Law in the U.S.," Watson Institut for International and Public Affairs, Brown University, 27 December 2010, https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2010; Neta C. Crawford, "The U.S. Budgetary Costs of the Post-9/11 Wars," Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University, 1 September 2021, https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/.
[6] Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*. (New York: Times Books, 2006).
[7] Alexander B. Downes and Jonathan Monten, "Forced to Be Free? Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization," *International Security* 37:4 (2013): 90-131.

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Another staggering fact revealed in *Dying by the Sword* is that the United States, in the post-Cold War era, in fact has intervened in more democracies than it did during the Cold War (224). This means that the idea that the US only wages war against authoritarian regimes is not valid. The argument that various military 'interventions' are aimed at democratization has, however, been used more often in the twenty-first century than during the Cold War (224). According to Toft and Kushi, there is much evidence that militarism and reliance on military intervention are so institutionalized in Washington that those in power find it difficult to relate to the world in any other way than by responding to problems with military solutions. In fact, it seems that there have been no clear alternatives for new presidential administrations who wish to resolve conflicts by other means. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the MIP project reveals that there is no difference in the statistics available from different administrations on interventions and what motivated them, regardless of whether there was a Republican or Democrat in the Oval Office. Andrew J. Bacevich made a similar argument in *The American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War*, where he brought clarity on how decision-makers in Washington believe that it is necessary to use military means to maintain American hegemony.[8]

In their concluding argument, Toft and Kushi underline five lessons that emerge from their analysis (254-261) which would, if considered by decisionmakers in Washington, contribute to more constructive policy. I have some doubts that Washington security elite will change direction and discuss these, but among the lessons of Toft and Kushi, there are a couple I consider more crucial than others if the world is to have a chance to evolve in a less conflictual direction and have a chance to address common threats such as the climate crisis through cooperation and the recognition of mutual needs.

One of the five lessons that the MIP project identifies as something the US security elite should consider is that an intensification of US militarism against actors such as China significantly risks escalating a situation that has already become confrontational and conflict-generating (254 ff). By confirming its adversaries' worst fears, the United States' actions push those countries to strengthen their military and their spheres of influence. The US must recognize that its reputation has been damaged, its legitimacy has been diminished, and that many in the global South see the US as a bully. In particular, the double standards that have characterized recent US actions in Ukraine and Gaza have dramatically eroded trust in Washington, even among its friends. The importance of understanding that the West can no longer dictate to the world without itself following international law cannot be overstated. In this sense, the now oft-stated "rules-based international order" is very provocative because it is an alternative to the UN Charter, simply an example of Western double standards. It provides flexible rules that allow US leaders to invoke rules for others, but then to ignore them when it suits US interests to do so.[9]

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[8] Andrew J. Bacevich. *The American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[9] John Dugard, "The Choice before Us: International Law or a 'Rules-Based International Order'?" *Journal of International Law* 36:2 (2023): 223-232.

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The second lesson of the five, which I agree is one of the most crucial aspects for Washington to realize, is that the significant increase in US military spending while not prioritizing domestic problems and reducing the budget for diplomacy (soft power) will risk further weakening the United States from within (259). It will also, as Toft and Kushi argue, increase the likelihood that Washington will take military action against all future threats for fear of losing control. Military means will soon be the only tool left. This will also increase domestic frustration that we are now witnessing. Increasing militarization and a growing military budget is an extremely dangerous strategy. According to recent research, if the government does not prioritize investments in infrastructure and social reforms the stability at home will be threatened. This is best shown by Barbara F. Walter in her book *How Civil Wars Start: And How to Stop Them.*[10]

I would like to further discuss two issues that I do not find fully convincing *in Dying by the Sword* and that are interrelated. When I read American history from its founding, I do not see an obvious variation between isolationism and expansionism. Instead, I see a system established at the nation's founding in which administrations in Washington always have continuously expanded US power and spheres of influence at times when important political and economic interests have coincided and there has been an opportunity to increase its influence in the world. My research shows that when the fundamental core of American politics— namely exceptionalism, manifest destiny and self-ownership —has coincided with different economic interests, it has led to a convergence of motives, making new expansionary endeavors both reasonable and "necessary." In such cases, these opportunities have been actively seized and exploited.[11] There is thus a "progressive continuity" in US foreign policy, a sort of "DNA of ideas" that motivates its leaders to expand and dominate. Also, the means for political administrations to resist the claims to dominance formulated by the most prominent and influential think tanks and economic interests within the military industrial Complex that have influenced policymaking seem limited. This phenomenon has been well described by William Hartung in several books and articles.[12] Because the quest for dominance is inherent in the system, it is logical that US leaders created an imperium America after the end of the Cold War.

What has been misinterpreted as a form of isolationism was originally, in the first part of the nineteenth century, about America creating development by limiting its foreign ambitions to the western hemisphere and preventing others from influencing that region. More specifically, this formed part of the core political idea formulated by President George Washington that America should rely solely on itself. With this he articulated part of the innermost nerve of American politics by linking exceptionality to the right to act in accordance with one's own interests without cooperation or consideration of others.[13] But "isolationism" in

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[10] Barbara F. Walter, *How Civil Wars Start: And How to Stop Them* (New York: Penguin Books/Random House, 2022).
[11] Frida Stranne *George. W. Bush: A (R)evolution in American Foreign Policy*? (Gothenburg: Itellecta Infolog, 2011).
[12] William D. Hartung, *Profits of War: Corporate Beneficiaries of the Post-9/11 Pentagon Spending Surge* (Rhode Island: Watson Institute & Center for International Policy, Sep 2021); and William D. Hartung, *Pathways to Pentagon Spending Reductions: Removing the Obstacles.* (Washington DC: Quincy Brief No 21, March 2022).
[13] Robert. Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America's Place in the World from its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Knopf, 2006).

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that context really meant the right for the US to define its own rules, not to isolate itself from the world. By contrast, isolationism never actually existed as an explicit idea and certainly not as a practical policy until (possibly and for a very short time) the 1930s and the period between the two world wars.[14] The strong desire to strengthen security, develop foreign trade, and gain access to increased resources has led the United States to frequently compromise on the idea of isolation.[15] Moreover, the settlers were characterized not by isolationism, but by aggressive expansion, materialism, and an ideology that encouraged and justified both. What was set in motion by the creation of the United States of America was in fact a borderless capitalism that itself required anything but isolation. The term is confused with what it really was, namely unilateralism,[16] and explains an early established skepticism of subordination to others. Unilateralism is delicately written about by Frederick Merk in his book *The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism, 1843-1849*.[17]

When Tuft and Kushi rightly describe how President George W. Bush inherited a grand strategy of liberal interventionism and was motivated by liberal ideas but relied heavily on military intervention (213), it is important to note that he was just part of a long pattern of progressive continuity of seizing opportunities to expand US power through the pursuit of dominance. Thus, his administration was an evolution of an ongoing process of expansion.

Whatever the driving forces behind the administrations in Washington to constantly confront various threats militarily and expand US power, *Dying by the Sword* confirms previous research on the rise and fall of empires, not least Paul Kennedy's classic 1989 study *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*.[18] Above all, the MIP project gives evidence to the historical pattern of which Kennedy spoke, whereby centers of power rise, peak, and finally fall often due to a combination of internal and external factors. It was Kennedy who introduced the concept of imperial overstretch, whereby imperial powers tend to expand their resources beyond sustainable levels, inevitably leading to a decline.

As a consequence, the second concern I have is the idea put forward by the authors that the security elite in Washington—if they are open to drawing lessons from this study—can "steer America's foreign policy

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[14] John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2005); Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1997); and Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Knopf, 2001).

[15] Thomas. R. Hietala, *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement inLlate Jacksonian America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

[16] Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, (New York: Basic Book, 2002); John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience, (*Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State*.

[17] Frederick Merk, *The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism, 1843-1849* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).

[18] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (Michigan: Random House, 1987).

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toward more effective paths for US national interests" (253). Of course, the recommendations would be useful if implemented. But, based on my interpretation that there is some kind of expansionist DNA that permeates the security elite, I am somewhat more pessimistic about the ability of the current and future administrations to abandon their instinctive tendency to respond to all threats by military means. I am also concerned that the US has abused its position over the last 30 years in a way that is now irreversibly putting it into a deeper decline than necessary. Additionally, decline has historically been a catalyst for even more violence from the dominant powers. However, in this transformative era from unipolarity towards multipolarity, we can hope that Washington realizes that a confrontational approach towards Beijing carries great risks of future wars that would be absolutely devastating for the world. And if policy advisors and pundits read and absorb all the knowledge channeled through MIP projects, there is certainly a good chance of creating a more sustainable future. Or, as Patrick Porter argues in his book, *The False Promise of Liberal Order*, the United States can only survive by confronting the delusion of (il)liberal order.[19]

As for scholars, while it will take many years to deal with all the data that has been revealed by Toft and Kushi's extensive work with the Military Intervention Project, it will be a delicate assignment for those of us who want to highlight the problems with the path the US has chosen, and the urgent need for change.

[19] Patrick Porter. *The False Promise of Liberal Order: Nostalgia, Delusion and the Rise of Trump* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020).

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Review by Jordan Tama, American University

In *Dying by the Sword*, Monica Duffy Toft and Sidita Kushi tackle one of the most important questions for US foreign policy: to what extent should the United States employ the military as the leading edge of its approach to world affairs? Drawing on an impressive new dataset and an array of historical examples, Toft and Kushi argue that the US turns too often to the military instrument, rather than to diplomacy or economic engagement, in order to address international challenges. Their data indicate that US leaders have employed the military more in recent decades than in earlier periods of history, and they assert that this more frequent use of the military reflects a severe underinvestment in the civilian tools of foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. They further argue that US interventionism has been harmful to populations overseas and to America's reputation, and that the United States would be better served by placing greater emphasis on diplomacy, trade, and multilateral cooperation.

There is much to praise about this book. The book's broad scope—covering the full history of US foreign policy—should make it of interest to all students of America's role in the world, and it offers a valuable overview of US grand strategy and overseas engagements from the presidency of George Washington to the present. More importantly, the authors' argument that US foreign policy is most effective when American leaders carefully balance the use of military and non-military instruments is compelling. Toft and Kushi are persuasive in arguing that relying too much on the military can be damaging to the United States and the world at large. They also are right to point out that the relative influence of civilian and military officials over US foreign policy decision making has shifted since the early Cold War years, with military leaders now driving policy decisions more often than they used to do.[1]

Beyond this book, the dataset created by Toft and Kushi should be a valuable resource for many future studies of US foreign policy. The dataset includes all US uses of force and threats of force from the establishment of the United States to the present, making it the most comprehensive dataset on this topic. What is more, the dataset includes not only quantitative measures but also case studies of each instance of intervention, which should make it even more useful for future researchers. Toft and Kushi's choice to classify displays and threats of force as cases of military intervention in their dataset is, however, questionable. Standard definitions of military intervention do not encompass a display or threat of force,[2]

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[1] For another thorough analysis of the militarization of US foreign policy, see Gordon Adams and Shoon Murray, eds., *Mission Creep: The Militarization of US Foreign Policy* (Georgetown University Press, 2014).

[2] For instance, Frederic Pearson and Robert Baumann define military intervention as the "movement of regular troops or forces (airborne, seaborne, shelling, etc.) of one country inside another, in the context of some political issue or dispute." Frederic S. Pearson and Robert A. Bauman, "International Military Intervention, 1946–1988," Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, Data Collection 6035, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (1993). See also Jeffrey Pickering and Emizet F. Kisangani, "The International Military Intervention Dataset: An Updated Resource for Conflict Scholars," *Journal of Peace Research* 46:4 (2009): 589-599, 593, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343309334634.

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and Toft and Kushi's argument would have been strengthened had they placed threats and displays in a different category than actual uses of force.

More generally, despite its many strengths, the book's argument at times seems overstated and inadequately supported by evidence. Toft and Kushi assert that the United States has a "force-first foreign policy" (1). Certainly, the United States has sometimes intervened militarily without first exhausting non-military options—the 2003 invasion of Iraq is a prime example of this—but there are many more examples of cases where the United States employed non-military tools to address crises or issues of concern, rather than using force. For instance, as North Korea expanded its arsenal of nuclear weapons and countries from Venezuela to Mali descended into authoritarianism in recent decades, the United States responded with diplomacy and economic coercion, rather than force.[3] Even when the United States has employed force, it has often done so after first attempting to exercise influence through other means. For instance, the administration of President Bill Clinton only intervened in Bosnia in 1995 after four years of trying unsuccessfully to stop Bosnian Serb aggression through diplomacy and economic pressure.[4] Given this track record, stating that the United States has a "force-first foreign policy" seems like a stretch.

Toft and Kushi also describe the United States as being in an era of "forever wars" (3). This claim seems a bit outdated at a time when the United States no longer has any troops deployed in Afghanistan and has only a few thousand troops deployed in Syria and Iraq. Toft and Kushi are right to underscore the overuse of the military in the post-9/11 era, but the military-led nation-building missions of that era were more a feature of President George W. Bush's administration and its legacy than an ongoing attribute of contemporary US foreign policy.[5] In an indication of the turn away from interventionism after the Bush years, the number of interventions by the United States was lower during the 2010s than it was during any of the previous three decades (20). While the United States does continue to engage in militarized counterterrorism missions against al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS) in a variety of countries, these missions are now quite small in scope.

Looking beyond the current era, it is not entirely clear that the United States is now relying more on the use of force relative to non-military tools than it did during earlier periods of US history. As Toft and Kushi show through a discussion of major episodes of US violence against Native Americans, the United States

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[3] Taehyung Ahn, "Politics at the Water's Edge: The Presidency, Congress, and US Policy toward North Korea," *Pacific Focus* 26:3 (2011): 336-359, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1976-5118.2011.01068.x; Michael J. Camilleri, "Evolution or Revolution? US Policy on Venezuela from Obama to Trump," *Pensamiento Propio* 47 (2018): 189-206, https://www.cries.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/012-CamilleriEdit.pdf; Congressional Research Service, "Crisis in Mali," CRS Report In Focus, 15 August 2023, https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF10116.pdf.
[4] Ivo H. Daalder, *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America's Bosnia Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999).
[5] Philip H. Gordon, *Losing the Long Game: The False Promise of Regime Change in the Middle East* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2020); Alan Greenblatt, "U.S. Easing Out of Nation-Building Business," *NPR*, 14 November 2011, https://www.npr.org/2011/11/23/142699506/u-s-easing-out-of-nation-building-business.

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used force extensively during the first century of its history to move Native Americans off their lands and expand the country westward,[6] though Toft and Kushi do not include these uses of force in their dataset. The United States also relied heavily on military power to expand its influence in Latin America through the early twentieth century. Although the dataset shows that the United States has engaged in military intervention more often in recent decades, this might mainly reflect the expansion of America's interests as it became a global superpower. In other words, the United States might have used the military more frequently in recent decades because it had more at stake in more parts of the world than it did before, not because the balance between military and non-military tools shifted more toward the military. A more thorough discussion of this alternative explanation would have strengthened the book.

Relatedly, Toft and Kushi do not provide much support for their claims that US diplomacy has severely atrophied. They assert that US diplomacy has become "a shell of its former self" (7), that the post-9/11 era saw the "waning of State Department funds, influence, and diplomatic capacity" (212), and that the United States has "shriveling foreign aid and diplomatic budgets" (241). However, they do not back up these claims with evidence, and the reality is more nuanced than alleged. While the balance of influence between the State Department and Defense Department did indeed move toward the Defense Department during the post-9/11 years, and the State Department was considerably weakened by the presidential administration of Donald Trump,[7] funding for diplomacy and foreign aid has not shriveled. Over the past 50 years, the share of discretionary US federal spending allocated to diplomacy and foreign assistance has remained roughly constant, at about 4 percent.[8] Even during the Trump administration, Congress repeatedly rejected the administration's proposals to cut the budget for the State Department and the US Agency for International Development.[9]

While the Trump administration did severely hollow out the State Department by leaving many important positions vacant, the Joe Biden administration has overseen a major reinvestment in the department's

[6] Michael L. Nunnally, *American Indian Wars: A Chronology of Confrontations between Native Peoples and Settlers and the United States Military, 1500s-1901* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007).

[7] Adams and Murray, *Mission Creep*; Daniel W. Drezner, "Present at the Destruction: The Trump Administration and the Foreign Policy Bureaucracy," *The Journal of Politics* 81:2 (2019): 723-730, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1086/702230; Robbie Gramer, Dan De Luce, and Colum Lynch, "How the Trump Administration Broke the State Department," *Foreign Policy*, 31 July 2017, https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/07/31/how-the-trump-administration-broke-the-state-department/.

[8] "How Much Does the Government Spend on International Affairs," Peter G. Peterson Foundation, 30 May 2023, https://www.pgpf.org/blog/2023/05/how-much-does-the-government-spend-on-international-affairs; Congressional Research Service, "Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs: FY2023 Budget and Appropriations," CRS Reports, updated 23 January 2023, https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47070; Congressional Research Service, "Foreign Policy Budget Trends: A Thirty-Year Review, " CRS Reports, 20 June 2006, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20060620_RL33262_45b840cdc5d3ca19fbfdd8d42e7a4066d2fe768b.pdf.

[9] Jordan Tama, *Bipartisanship and US Foreign Policy: Cooperation in a Polarized Age* (New York: Oxford University Press), 189-212.

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capacity, restoring the size of the department's workforce to its pre-Trump levels.[10] Moreover, the State Department is clearly playing a central role in the Biden administration's foreign policy. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is widely seen as Biden's most trusted foreign policy advisor, and he has been at the forefront of the administration's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the war between Israel and Hamas.[11] To be sure, the State Department still faces severe budget-cutting threats from Republicans who support Trump's "America First" foreign policy, and if Trump returns to the presidency, he might hollow it out even more than he did during his first term.[12] But if Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris is elected, the State Department will be well-positioned to continue to play a central role in US foreign policy. Put another way, the State Department remains capable of exercising a great deal of influence over foreign policy, but its role and importance depend greatly on who occupies the White House.

On another note, Toft and Kushi could profitably have devoted more attention to the key role of economic sanctions as an instrument of US foreign policy today. When discussing foreign policy tools, Toft and Kushi highlight the choice between war and diplomacy, or among war, trade, and diplomacy. Sanctions are largely left out of their framework of foreign-policy choices, even though the United States has relied increasingly on sanctions in recent decades to address issues including nuclear proliferation, human rights violations, drug trafficking, and military aggression.[13] Indeed, it would be more accurate to describe the contemporary United States as having a "sanctions-first foreign policy" than having a "force-first foreign

[10] Eric Katz, "Unfrozen: How the State Department Has Reversed Its 'Draconian' Cuts in Just Two Years," Government Executive, 7 March 2023, https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2023/03/unfrozen-how-state-department-reversed-draconian-cuts/383508/.

[11] David Montgomery, "Can Antony Blinken Update Liberal Foreign Policy for a World Gone Mad?" *Washington Post*, 22 April 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/magazine/2022/08/22/secretary-antony-blinken-foreign-policy/; Jonathan Allen, Peter Nicholas, Abigail Williams, Dan De Luce and Andrea Mitchell, "Meet the Man Tasked with Keeping a Lid on the Middle East," *NBC News*, 17 October 2023, https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/meet-antony-blinken-middle-east-secretary-of-state-israel-diplomacy-rcna120536.

[12] David Smith, "Polls Say Trump Has a Strong Chance of Winning Again in 2024. So How Might This Second Term Reshape the US Government?" *The Conversation*, 27 November 2023, https://theconversation.com/polls-say-trump-has-a-strong-chance-of-winning-again-in-2024-so-how-might-his-second-term-reshape-the-us-government-217664.

[13] Bruce W. Jentleson, *Sanctions: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023); Henry Farrell and Abe Newman, *Underground Empire: How America Weaponized the World Economy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2023); Nicholas Mulder, "How America Learned to Love (Ineffective) Sanctions," *Foreign Policy*, 30 January 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/30/us-sanctions-reliance-results/; Elizabeth Rosenberg and Jordan Tama, *Strengthening the Economic Arsenal: Bolstering the Deterrent and Signaling Effects of Sanctions*, Center for a New American Security, 16 December 2019, 2, https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/strengthening-the-economic-arsenal; Elizabeth Rosenberg, Daniel Drezner, Julia Solomon-Strauss, and Zachary K. Goldman, "The New Tools of Economic Warfare: Effects and Effectiveness of Contemporary U.S. Financial Sanctions", Center for a New American Security, 15 April 2016, https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/the-new-tools-of-economic-warfare-effects-and-effectiveness-of-contemporary-u-s-financial-sanctions.

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policy." Considering the role of sanctions as an intermediate choice between diplomacy and war would enhance the book's analysis.

Returning to those cases where the United States does use force, Toft and Kushi emphasize how US military interventions harm overseas populations and America's reputation. Many US interventions, from Vietnam to Iraq, have certainly had these damaging effects. But here, too, I think the reality is more nuanced than suggested. Some US interventions since the end of the Cold War, including the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the 1995 and 1999 interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo, and the intervention in Syria and Iraq against ISIS that began in 2014, have been worthwhile. These interventions, respectively, reversed military aggression, stopped ethnic cleansing, and greatly weakened a brutal terrorist group, and did so at acceptable cost.[14] The positive effects of these interventions may be outweighed by the tremendous costs of the Iraq War and other misguided US uses of force, but it is worth noting that US military power is sometimes an effective means of making the world a safer or more humane place.

The book includes some other questionable claims. Toft and Kushi assert that President Barack Obama promised as a presidential candidate to pull US troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan.[15] They then argue that Obama betrayed this campaign promise by ordering a surge of US troops to Afghanistan early in his presidency. But Obama did not say as a presidential candidate that he would pull troops out of both countries. Instead, he said he would withdraw troops from Iraq and increase the number of US troops deployed to Afghanistan.[16] Toft and Kushi further describe Obama's intervention against ISIS in 2014 "as yet another example of breaching his original promise" to "restrain US militarism."[17] But Obama's intervention against ISIS after the group beheaded two American journalists was fully consistent with his campaign statements. In 2007, in his first major foreign policy address as a presidential candidate, Obama had said, "I will not hesitate to use military force to take out terrorists who pose a direct threat to America."[18] Using force against ISIS after the group had killed Americans was wholly in line with that campaign position. More generally, there is little evidence that Obama became more militaristic as

[14] Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, "How Kuwait Was Won: Strategy in the Gulf War," *International Security* 16:2 (1991): 5-41, DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/2539059; Dana H. Allin, *NATO's Balkan Interventions* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Michael R. Gordon, *Degrade and Destroy: The inside Story of the War against the Islamic State, From Barack Obama to Donald Trump* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022).
[15] Toft and Kushi, *Dying by the Sword*, 131, 215, 231.
[16] Barack Obama, "The War We Need to Win," Woodrow Wilson Center, 1 August 2007, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-washington-dc-the-war-we-need-win; Paul D. Miller, "Setting the Record Straight on Obama's Afghanistan Promises," *Foreign Policy*, 29 March 2016, https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/29/setting-the-record-straight-on-obamas-afghanistan-promises/.
[17] Toft and Kushi, *Dying by the Sword*, 237.
[18] Obama, "The War We Need to Win."

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president. To the contrary, he was generally quite cautious as president regarding the use of force, as evidenced in his choice not to intervene in Syria's civil war prior to 2014.[19]

These shortcomings do not take away from the overall value of *Dying by the Sword*. Although Toft and Kushi push aspects of their argument too far, they provide a valuable public service in documenting the extent to which the United States has relied on the use of force over the course of its history and underscoring the downsides of relying so heavily on the military instrument. US leaders would be well advised to follow the authors' advice to strengthen the tools of diplomacy, economic engagement, and multilateral coordination as complements to the sword. The United States became the world's leading nation by pairing a strong military with strong civilian foreign policy tools. Maintaining robust military and non-military instruments will continue to be essential for America to thrive in a complex and rapidly changing world.

[19] For a thorough discussion of Obama's attitudes regarding the use of force, see Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic*, April 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/.

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Response by Monica Duffy Toft, Tufts University and Sidita Kushi, Bridgewater State University

We would first like to thank Seth Offenbach for organizing this roundtable review on our book *Dying by the Sword*, Diane Labrosse for her meticulous edits, Barbara Zanchetta for crafting the introduction, and our reviewers, Jennifer Kavanagh, Melanie Sisson, Alexandra Stark, Frida Stranne, and Jordan Tama for devoting their time to their reviews and for their valuable insights.

Nuno Monteiro argued in 2012 that "the United States has been at war for thirteen of the twenty-two years since the end of the Cold War."[1] Our book seeks to empirically dive deeper into such a prominent legacy of US military force, particularly the arc of the United States' usage of force abroad across different eras, regions, and national strategic visions.

We are glad to learn that all the reviewers found our book to be a useful and important contribution in this respect. As Kavanagh writes in her review, *Dying by the Sword* "makes substantial strides in building a quantitative foundation and comprehensive historical record for future studies of US military interventions to build on," while Stark concludes that the book "presents an impressive overview of US interventions across the nation's history." Although Tama offers a range of important critiques in his review, he concludes with a similar message that the book offers "a valuable public service in documenting the extent to which the United States has relied on the use of force over the course of its history and underscoring the downsides of relying so heavily on the military instrument."

Several of the reviewers' critiques relate to our dataset's scope and measurement choices, the trade-offs between the qualitative narratives and aggregated patterns introduced within the book, and the book's ultimate purpose. As Sisson highlights in her review, our book does not seek to fully answer why and to what ultimate effect the US has wielded military force across history. Instead, it aspires to provide a concise and descriptive arc of the United States' military interventions over the last two hundred years, applying both the new aggregated data and historical narratives along the way. Thus, the book's overarching purpose is to empirically trace how the US has wielded its military tools across time and space, highlighting several stark shifts that we find across eras and offering a set of policy implications for the future based on the uncovered patterns of kinetic diplomacy. As Stranne summarizes in her review, *Dying by the Sword* "provides a rich body of data that provides evidence for a wide range of research that has contributed various insights into American foreign policy…it adds important facts about the extent of US interventionism and what this policy implies for international (in)stability and US security."

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[1] Nuno Monteiro, "Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful," *International Security* 36:3 (2012): 11, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00064. In a direct rebuttal, William Wohlforth stated that the "claim that unipolarity is not peaceful runs into a problem: Unipolarity *is* peaceful. The Most Peaceful. Ever. Period" (3). See William Wohlforth review of "Nuno Monteiro, "Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity is Not Peaceful." *H-Diplo ISSF Article Review* 17 (2012): 1-5, https://issforum.org/articlereviews/17-unrest-assured.

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We concur with Kavanagh that "quantifying these trends is a difficult challenge" and with Stark's apt assessment that the book's quantitative explorations and the qualitative tracing of US foreign policy across history "sit somewhat uneasily beside one another." One of the biggest challenges lies in the definition of US military intervention itself across quantitative and qualitative measures. Kavanagh writes that our definition of US military intervention is too broad and does not capture the full nuance of the phenomenon, such as those US interventions that had clear humanitarian objectives and outcomes, smaller versus larger interventions, and different types of force applied as part of an intervention (naval, air, ground). Sisson offers a similar critique and laments the dearth of reference material on the dataset's methodological choices.

While we agree that there exists an inherent trade-off between breadth and nuance in the data trends and historical case narratives, we will also provide additional detail to this discussion to better capture the dataset's scope and situate its purpose within the book. Through the Military Intervention Project (MIP), we sought to create the broadest, most adaptable, and well-documented data source on US military interventions across history. Given this mission, we defined military interventions according to the range of definitions that are available in the literature, coding each case according to which definitional source it fit under. The broadest definition occurs in the Militarized Interstate Disputes (MID) dataset, which codes threats of force all the way to direct usage of force and war.[2] Our definitional choices, therefore, parallel the measurement choices applied across the political science literature in the past decades in an effort to better compare and utilize the MIP dataset alongside other existing valuable research on US intervention patterns. To further distinguish intervention types and intensities, the MIP also includes a variable on the highest military action taken by the dyadic actors as part of the military dispute, which appears in the book as well. In the full dataset and narratives, but not in the book itself, we further include measures of intervention size and intensity, such as: the maximum number of US air, ground, and sea troops deployed throughout the dispute; the maximum number of naval vessels; the number of airplanes, drones, and other aerial equipment; and a variable measuring intervention costs in US dollars. Those who seek additional details on MIP's measurements choices, sources, and full universe of historical narratives may obtain it via our introductory article of the dataset as well as the full case narratives, codebook, and templates that are available online for public use.[3]

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[2] See Daniel M. Jones, Stuart A. Bremer, and J. David Singer, "Militarized Disputes, 1816-1992: Rationale Coding Rules and Empirical Patterns," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15:2 (1996): 163-213, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/073889429601500203; Zeev Maoz, Paul L. Johnson, Jasper Kaplan, Fiona Ogunkoya, and Aaron Shreve, "The Dyadic Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) Dataset Version 3.0: Logic, Characteristics, and Comparisons to Alternative Datasets," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63:3 (2019): 811-835, 63(3), DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002718784158; Douglas M. Gibler, *International Conflicts, 1816-2010: Militarized Interstate Dispute Narratives* (Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018).

[3] Sidita Kushi and Monica Duffy Toft, "Introducing the Military Intervention Project: A New Dataset on US Military Interventions, 1776–2019," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 67:4 (2023): 752-779, DOI:

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Several reviewers, including Sisson and Tama, question why we chose to exclude drone warfare and the frontier wars from the dataset as they are clear instances of the US usage of force abroad. We did not exclude these components. Instead, we examine them separately within the respective historical chapters. We assess and illustrate the data related to the frontier wars within chapter 1 of the book (42-46), and we delve into data on drone warfare in chapter 6 (225-229). We made this choice because both drone and frontier wars data were isolated to a specific historical era of US foreign policy. Moreover, both the drone warfare and the frontier wars data arise from different sources and collection processes than the rest of the MIP dataset.[4] Ultimately, we firmly agree with Stark that the colonialist episodes of the frontier wars are a vital part of the United States' history of militarism, especially during an era that has incorrectly been labeled as isolationist, which is why we included them to begin with.[5] In a similar vein and supported by a range of scholarship, Stranne argues that

> what has been misinterpreted as a form of isolationism was originally, in the first part of the nineteenth century, about America creating development by limiting its foreign ambitions to the Western Hemisphere and preventing others from influencing that region… the settlers were characterized not by isolationism but by aggressive expansion, materialism, and an ideology that encouraged and justified both.[6]

We also concur with this assessment and are careful to delineate between US isolationist tendencies outside of the continent and US expansionist tendencies within the continent and the hemisphere.

The reviewers also wisely explore the nuanced objectives and diverse contexts of US military interventions, especially since the end of the Cold War. In particular, several reviewers raise the critique that a large number of US military interventions during the 1990s and 2000s occurred in response to grave humanitarian crises, such as in Bosnia and Kosovo, and had worthwhile goals. Indeed, many US military interventions in the 1990s and beyond occurred in response to violent humanitarian crises and fall within the phenomenon of humanitarian military intervention. The collapse of the USSR was followed by an escalation of civil conflicts to brutal civil wars, first in the Balkans and Chechnya, and later in Rwanda, the

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https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027221117546. The dataset and all case narratives may be found here: https://sites.tufts.edu/css/mip-research/mip-dataset/.

[4] The data source for the frontier wars comes from Jeffrey A. Friedman, "Using Power Laws to Estimate Conflict Size," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59:7 (2015): 1216-1241, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002714530430. The drone data arise from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism's Drone Warfare Database: https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/projects/drone-war.

[5] Charles A. Kupchan, *Isolationism: A History of America's Efforts to Shield Itself from the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[6] Thomas. R. Hietala, *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in late Jacksonian America*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); Max Boot *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, (New York: Basic Book 2002); John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience, (*Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2005).

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Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, and Sudan.[7] As Samantha Power termed it, the US and international community faced "a problem from hell." In each case, noncombatants were brutalized and murdered, and as the only superpower still standing, it seemed to many the height of irresponsibility for the US to "stand so idly by" and watch mass rape and murder when the US and its allies had the capabilities to halt the violence (504).[8]

Although the book does not center on humanitarian interventions, it does discuss this humanitarian component as part of chapter 5 (the US's unipolar era) and offers measures of US intervention objectives as well as intervention type (unilateral, multilateral, UN-based, etc.) across chapters. In chapter 5 in particular, the book traces the US response to the Kosovo crisis and highlights the humanitarian objectives and successful humanitarian outcome of this US-led NATO intervention (196).[9] In this case narrative on Kosovo, we make it very clear, as Tama also echoes, that the US had exhausted all other possible venues of involvement, including diplomacy and sanctions, before resorting to a hesitant usage of military force years later. This is similar to the earlier case of Bosnia. We argue that "it would be a mistake to assume that the United States was especially trigger-happy in its precedent-setting humanitarian intervention in 1999" and "the United States relied on its military as a last resort when employing them toward humanitarian objectives in the Balkans" as we trace the timeline of US intervention in the Balkans during its unipolar moment (198). Therefore, we do not dismiss instances where the US intervened as a last resort or instances where the US applied legitimate and successful force to end a humanitarian atrocity. In fact, one of the authors of *Dying by the Sword* directly researches the selectivity and timeline of humanitarian military interventions, specifically those in the Balkans, believing that there is a vital need to disentangle the varying nature and outcomes of military interventions by great powers.[10] These humanitarian interventions, however, point to an important trend shift for the purposes of our book: that the US expanded its national interests and military tools to encompass the pursuit of humanitarian objectives abroad, yet it did not hold to consistent standards on when to pursue such humanitarian objectives outside of its borders (for example,

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[7] See, Seung-Whan Choi and Patrick James, "Why Does the U.S. Intervene Abroad? Democracy, Human Rights Violations, and Terrorism," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60:5 (2016): 899–926, DOI: 10.1177/0022002714560350; Choi, Youngwan Kim, David Ebner, and James, "Human Rights Institutionalization and U.S. Humanitarian Intervention," *International Interactions* 46:4 (2020): 606–635, DOI: 10.1080/03050629.2020.1758694; Choi and James, "Are U.S. Foreign Policy Tools Effective in Improving Human Rights Conditions?" *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 10:3 (2017): 331–356, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pox010.

[8] Samantha Power, "*A Problem from Hell*": *America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

[9] See also, Agon Maliqi, "Remembering the US Intervention that Worked," *Washington Post*, 8 June 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/06/08/remembering-us-intervention-that-worked/.

[10] See Kushi, "Just Another Civil War? The Influence of Conflict Perceptions on Western Conflict Management in Kosovo and Beyond," *World Affairs* 186:2 (2023): 284–322, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/00438200231154296; Kushi, "Selective Humanitarians: How Region & Perception Drive Military Interventions in Domestic Crises," *International Relations* (2022), DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/00471178221104344.

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intervening in Kosovo, but not Darfur), nor did it formulate clear grand strategic objectives in the post-Cold War era overall.

Some of the reviewers note that the book would have benefited from a more direct and complete argument on how military intervention patterns impact US interests and what the main cause of these intervention trends are. Tama, for instance, discusses how increased interventionism might reflect the expansion of America's interests and sphere of influence as it grew into a global superpower. We agree that this is an important component of US interventionism and discuss it as part of our data analysis. For instance, we discuss how "the regional expansion of the usage of force parallels America's rise from a regional hegemon to a global hegemon" (21). But the book's scope does extend to a systematic causal review of all possible drivers of US interventions and paralleling interests.

The main drivers of US interventions trends, as well as the impact of such interventions on US power, interests, and global security, are vital questions that we hope future research will come closer to answering. For our part, we have begun to investigate some of the more causal claims in other research venues and as part of ongoing projects. For instance, in a recent *Foreign Affairs* piece, we delve into the causes of US intervention rates and hypothesize on how China's growing power might shift US intervention trends into the future, arguing that a move toward multipolarity might mute the United States' more interventionist impulses that arise from "unipolar inertia" and the "9/11" effect.[11] This is a line of thought that Stranne introduces in her review as well to explain the pessimism she carries regarding the ability of US leaders "to abandon their instinctive tendency to respond to all threats by military means." Like us, however, Stranne hopes that the shift to a multipolar order might offer some respite.

We are also working on additional quantitative research on the impact of unipolarity on the hegemon's rate and nature of militarism abroad. Three decades after the collapse of Cold War order, scholars and policymakers continue to debate the impact and the future of the US "unipolar moment."[12] Has the United States' unsurpassed military power after the Cold War ushered in an era of peace without great power rivalry or has it unleashed a period with growing conflict between the US and minor powers such as North Korea, Iran, Libya, and regional powers such as Russia and China? Have other great powers now managed to successfully balance against the US within their spheres of influence, effectively eroding or ending the unipolar reign of the US, as Christopher Layne has argued?[13] Ultimately, we seek to expand the MIP dataset into a comparative dataset of great power interventions, called Comparative Military Interventions (Co-

[11] Toft and Kushi, "The Roots of Washington's Addiction to Military Force," *Foreign Affairs*, 10 January 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/roots-washingtons-addiction-military-force.

[12] Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment Revisited," *The National Interest* 70: Winter (2002/03): 5-18, https://www.jstor.org/stable/42897438.

[13] Christopher Layne, "This Time It's Real: The End of Unipolarity and the 'Pax Americana'," *International Studies Quarterly* 56:1 (2012): 203-213, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41409832.

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MIP), where we can begin to better assess how US military trends abroad and power shifts parallel those of other great powers across history.

Kavanagh's important questions for future research speak to our joint research agenda well. She asks, "When is the use of force justified and necessary?" and "Which past uses of military force might be considered legitimate or justified and by what criteria, and which might be considered necessary in the future?" One of the authors of *Dying by the Sword* explores such questions of humanitarian legitimacy as part of her research on the selectivity of humanitarian military interventions, which will ultimately intersect with future iterations of the Military Intervention Project (MIP).[14] In *Dying by the Sword*, we hint at the tensions within this important debate as we discuss NATO's Kosovo intervention as a success story for the US (1999), the Bosnia intervention (1995), and more US foreign policy actions in the 1990s and 2000s. Kavanagh further asks, "Is the story of US interventionism one of continuity or change?" With respect to Kavanagh's last question, we concur with her assessment that there are elements of truth to both narratives. Throughout US history, the impulse toward more intervention and force has co-existed with more isolationist/restrained camps, and we would have done well to expand upon this aspect within the book.

Last, we would like to respond to Tama's series of important critiques, starting with the argument that US foreign policy priorities and patterns have changed during President Joseph Biden's administration and that these partisanship shifts have restored the influence of US diplomacy. It is true that the Biden administration pulled US troops out of Afghanistan, officially ending the United States' longest war and decreasing the US military footprint abroad. Yet in May 2022, the Biden administration began sending up to 500 troops to Somalia.[15] Since the defeat of former president Donald Trump in 2020, the US has committed additional troops and authorized airstrikes in Yemen, Iraq, and other parts of the Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa.[16] Therefore, as such data are incoming and incomplete, we believe that it is too soon to tell whether the US intervention footprint will lessen, grow, or remain steady in the next decades due to partisan shifts in the White House.

Tama also mentions that the Biden administration has since rescued the influence, personnel, and funding of the Department of State (DOS) from the Trumpian cuts discussed in our book. But we think that it is too

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[14] See, Kushi, "Just Another Civil War?"; Kushi, "Selective Humanitarians."

[15] Karoun Demirjian and Danielle Paquette, "Biden Sending Hundreds of U.S. Troops to Somalia, Reversing Trump," *Washington Post*, 16 May 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/05/16/biden-somalia-us-troops/.

[16] See here for a sample of US interventions until the end of 2023: "Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and President pro tempore of the Senate regarding the War Powers Report," *The White House Briefing Room*, 7 December 2023, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2023/12/07/letter-to-the-speaker-of-the-house-of-representatives-and-president-pro-tempore-of-the-senate-regarding-the-war-powers-report/#:~:text=As%20reported%20on%20October%2027,and%20IRGC%2Daffiliated%20groups%20for; Sam Cabral, "US launches more strikes against Houthis in Yemen," *BBC News*, 5 February 2024, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-68200488.

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soon to claim a clear long-term pattern here as well. In general, historical patterns show that both Department of Defense (DOD) and DOS outlays have increased since the 1960s and then again since 2001, with slightly lower DOD outlays beginning in 2013. But throughout this historical pattern, DOS spending at its peak was only 5.5 percent of total DOD spending, and this rate declined after 2016.[17]

It is also important to discuss the types of personnel that define DOS influence today. Across history, US presidents have rewarded some generous campaign donors with political ambassadorial appointments. In the past, the percentage of political ambassadorial appointments hovered at about 30 percent, while career diplomats filled 70 percent of the posts. These diplomats had years of on-the-ground local experience relative to their political appointees. But today, that trend is reversing across administrations, and with it, the influence of American diplomacy has grown more partisan and more connected to executive power.[18]

Tama further argues that given former president Barack Obama's delayed and limited intervention in Syria as part of the campaign to destroy direct terrorist threats to the US, his legacy on military force remained more restrained throughout his tenure in office. Indeed, he acted with restraint regarding Syria for years, even when faced with the crossing of his declared "red line," but this pattern is what made his shift in 2014 all the more significant.[19] When Obama did intervene in Syria, he did not simply use short-lived force against terrorist actors who posed a direct threat to the US homeland; he also armed and supported rebel factions that sought to overthrow a regime, and this campaign continued across administrations in some form. Here, we would be amiss not to mention his involvement in Libya in 2011, where Obama was quick to apply US military force despite the lack of a direct threat to the US homeland.[20] Such examples speak to the strong institutional impulses and path dependencies that may encourage US military force even when the personal ideologies and preferences of US leaders oppose such actions.

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[17] Office of Management and Budget, Historical Tables, *The White House*, https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/historical-tables.

[18] See Partnership for Public Service's Political Appointee Tracker across administrations, https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/. See here for a brief comparison of the data across administrations: Hans Nichols, "Biden's Nomination Scorecard," *Axios*, 21 January 2024, https://www.axios.com/2024/01/21/biden-confirmations-trump-obama-bush.

[19] The White House: Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by the President to the White House Press Corps," The Obama White House Archives, 20 August 2012, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/08/20/remarks-president-white-house-press-corps.

[20] Missy Ryan and Gillian Brockell, "A War Fought, A War Avoided: Libya and Syria Tested Obama's Core values," *Washington Post*, 3 June 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/obama-legacy/intervention-libya-and-syrian-crisis.html.

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