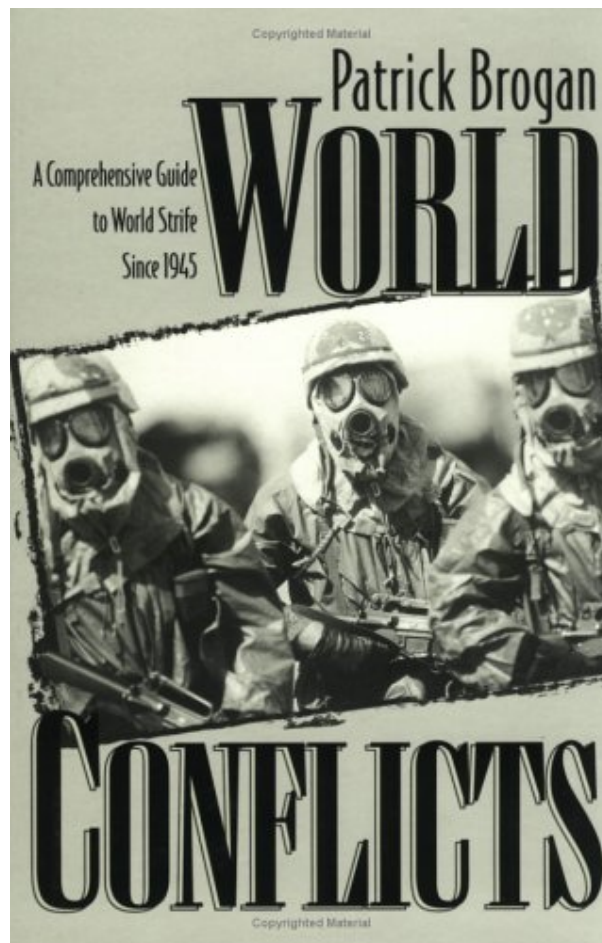
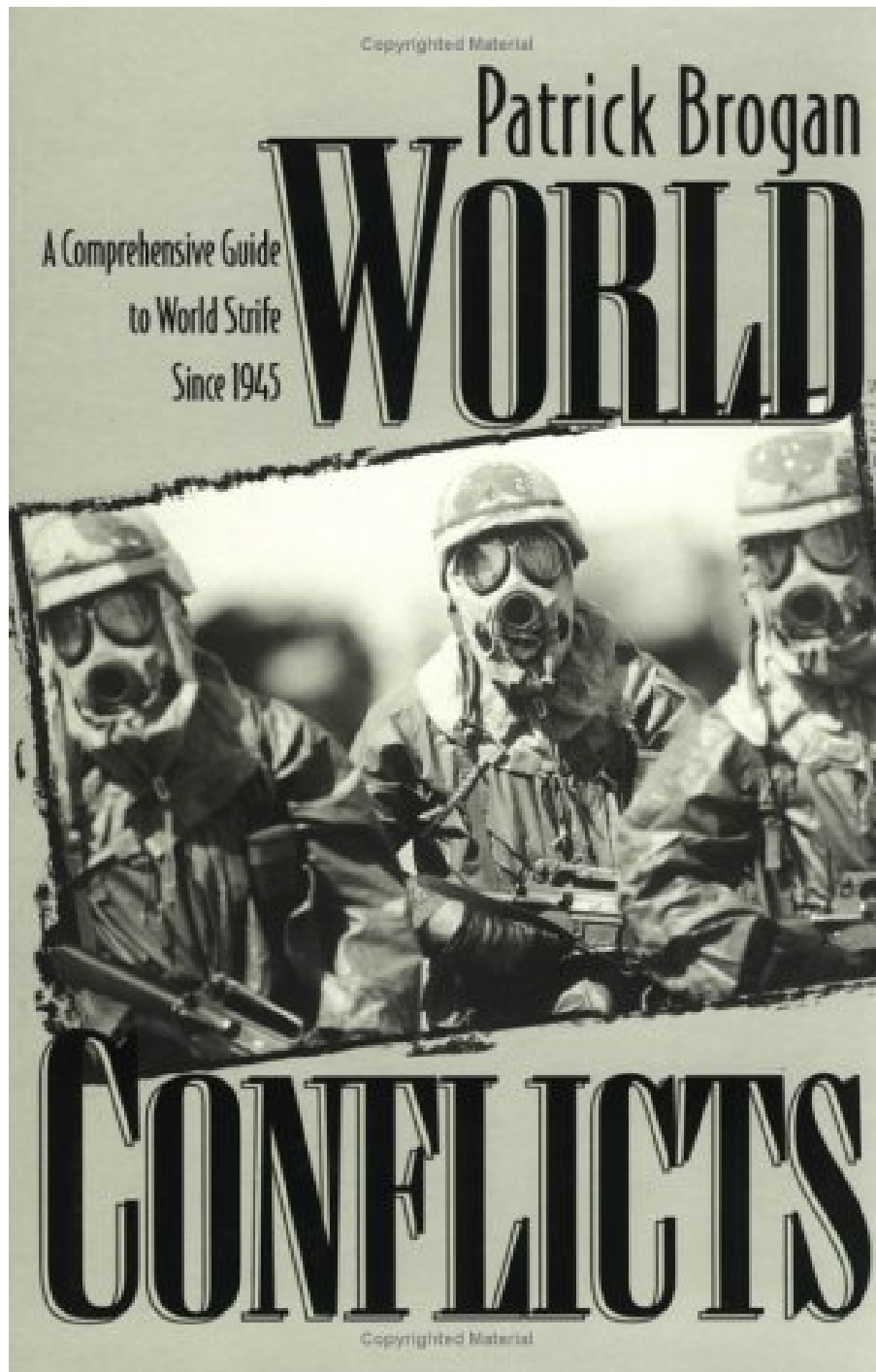


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Review

...essential...it deserves to be in every library. (New York Daily News)

Highly useful for undergraduates, graduate students, and general readers; recommended for undergraduate and public libraries and libraries supporting military studies. (Choice)

... strength of this book is its writing and organization. Brogan has a good understanding of the warring factions and personalities involved and shows a very good grasp of military operations. (Religious Studies Review)

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About the Author

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Most helpful customer reviews

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Flawed, Dull, Superficial, Indispensable

By L. Byron

Although flawed, WC is informative, almost comprehensive, and quite handy--it's a 682pp paperback you can read at the pool, but don't expect to make friends; the cover looks downright anti-social. His analyses are rather slanted in the expected, standard Anglo-English mode, i.e., he spends 20pp. on Northern Ireland (cf., only 8pp on all of Korea, and 13pp on China). And although he does bash America where it needs obvious bashing (eg., United Fruit, the CIA, etc.) his unabashedly liberal stance forces his hand into rather superficial, yet standard, conclusions concerning the nature of nation building, modernization, and repressive and totalitarian regimes. While endorsing the democracy/free-market system is hardly a bad thing, it does seem small minded to think of it as a panacea. There are functional reasons for countries to 'choose' other systems, especially when confronted with internal chaos and external threats (eg., Islamic Fundamentalism, extreme nationalism, Communism, Fascism, centralized economic systems, and totalitarianism may not be stupid mistakes made by crazy and evil men, but unpleasant yet necessary means to an end). But all books have their bias, and PB's is probably the most palatable to the most people. Also, this book is basically a micro-encyclopedia. It is not a profound treatise on the clash of peoples with historical necessity, whatever that may be. In fact, it's not profound at all, but it is informative. The prose is text-bookish, and he has a thing for using the same 1-2 cliches throughout the book (one of which is, 'to the tune of', as in, 'to the tune of 2 billion dollars'.) But this is beyond nit-picking. A more important flaw is the sporadic lack of explanation. Granted, he can't write everything, but it gets increasingly frustrating to read a series of 'whats' without any 'whys'. Eg., PB writes, correctly, that Thailand backed the Khmer Rouge and that Israel backed Somoza, but no reasons are given. This turns what should be interesting history into a confused and very boring shopping list of disjointed facts, free from both causation and meaning.

Admittedly, this is somewhat unfair. The book is over 600pp as it is, and one can't accuse PB for being prolix. If he included penetrating insights at every needed point, the book would be in volumes.

As the reviewer from Mexico discovered, the book is not perfect. If you know a lot about a particular area,

PB's thumbnail sketch may upset you. But again, this is unfair. The world is a big place, if PB were to make all distinctions and treat all conflicts to, let's say, 25pp, then the book would be roughly 1500pp long. Also, one of the beauties of the book is its inclusion of conflicts (and even countries) which most people don't know about or remember. WC provides the starting point for deeper analysis. (You can't look it up on the web or in the library if you don't know that it exists.) In sum: it's a great learning tool. It may not be as good as I had hoped, but it's well used, I have no regrets. At best and worst, WC will show even the most informed how little they know about many contemporary conflicts. Even if one doesn't learn much from WC--all this fact stuff doesn't 'stick' well--exposure to one's ignorance is very enlightening. And if the book creates more questions than it answers, all the better. Until something better comes along, WC is indispensable, and there is little point in waiting for that to happen.

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent Companion to Little Known world wars

By A Customer

This is a truly excellent book. I picked it up in England, started reading it on the plane back to the States, and couldn't put it down. The author manages to describe almost every important armed conflict since the end of World War II in breathtaking clarity. Through this book I found about wars that I never knew existed. As a bonus, the author also throws in a chapter about all of the different terrorist groups-fascinating reading.

5 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

Looks more like a tourist guide.

By A Customer

Brogan's title is a very ambitious one for a book in which he fails to separate the Colombian case (decades of violent guerrilla and terrorism) from the drug wars, who fails to note that there are five and not four Central Asia former USSR republics, who includes Mexico (situated in North America, a geographic area regardless of economic and cultural differences) in a broad and superfluous Central America chapter. The book can not be rated above a conventional tourist guide where you get a brief summary of the country's history and current situation. Waste of paper.

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