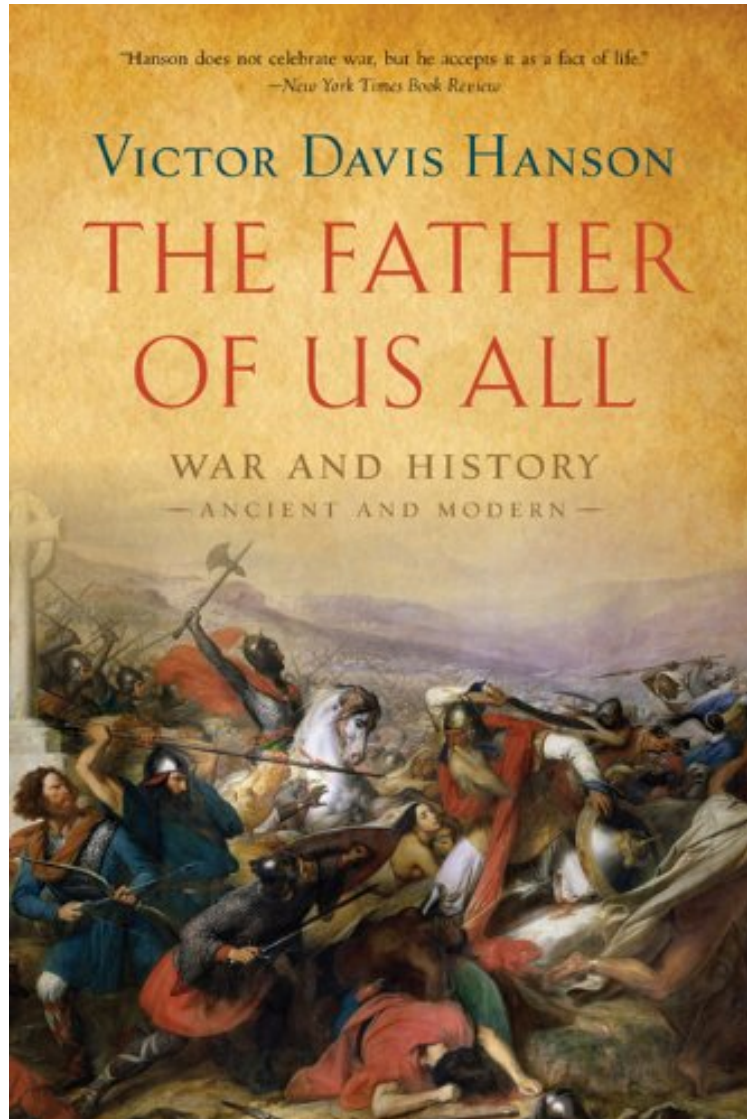


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The Father of Us All: War and History, Ancient and Modern

Victor Davis Hanson

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Victor Davis Hanson : The Father of Us All: War and History, Ancient and Modern before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Father of Us All: War and History, Ancient and Modern:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Thoughtful, Well-Written Collection of EssaysBy Kevin Scott OlsonThis collection of essays will probably be read only by students of history, but its wisdom would benefit us all.The author, a Stanford professor and renowned scholar, examines the question of why wars exist: Why did wars

occur in the past? The present? Most important, will they continue to exist in the future? With remarkable breadth of knowledge, Hanson reaches back to ancient times, to the Peloponnesian War between Greece and Sparta, then walks us through history: Caesar, Napoleon, the American Civil War, the World Wars of the twentieth century, the present-day war on terror and draws correlations that provide us the answers. There is far too much here to touch on in a blog post or review, but I can list a few select highlights: The field of military history itself is of vast importance, yet it is increasingly isolated and hard to find in today's college environment. As a formal academic discipline it is atrophied, shunned by political correctness that finds the subject distasteful. Yet only by objectively studying past military conflict can we prevent or minimize future conflict. The balance between war and democracy, freedom and security. Are dictatorships, with their command structure, innately superior in fighting wars? Fortunately, no. The political and economic freedoms of the United States, and the resulting innovation and dynamism, have produced the world's finest fighting forces. The rise of utopian pacifism. This is the belief that wars are the result of a misunderstanding, and that future wars can be eliminated through reason, education, and diplomacy. Such a myth has cycled throughout history, as it appeals to the romantic yearning for the perfectibility of human nature. Such beliefs are prevalent again today, despite the disconnect from reality. The truth is that war has always been a part of the human condition, and always will be. War should always be a last resort, but will always be necessary for the survival of civilization. As the author points out, the United States of America was born through war, reunited in war, and saved from destruction by war. Moreover, our freedom is not entirely our own, in some sense it is mortgaged by those who paid the ultimate price for its continuance. America today, with its prosperity and its principles of personal freedom, market capitalism, and constitutional government, is ipso facto envied and hated by the various warlords, dictators, and tribalists that litter the globe. For this reason, our continued existence is best assured by military preparedness, deterrence-based diplomacy, and the courage to fight and defeat our enemies.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The country's liberals should take him to heart. By Jonathan Smart I have studied the classics in their original languages, so Hanson's grounding in the classics has always appealed to me. I like his writing and I like his mindset. This book is full of fresh insights about war and about the importance of the study of classics to the modern world. I had difficulty putting it down. I think he is absolutely right.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The subject and the comments by Prof. Hanson are very interesting. By Antonio Ruiz de Elvira The subject and the comments by Prof. Hanson are very interesting. I was pleased by the way of studying the problem, and much more by the author comment that the people that best appreciated his lectures were the not so elitist students of Fresno, in the middle of California agricultural production valley, maybe kin to the old warriors that the author depicts. The book gives a lot of very useful information, and suggests other books that I have also bought. I write usually against war, but to be able to control war one needs to understand it, and this book goes far in that direction. The only drawback I find (4 instead of 5 stars) is that the book is a collection of short chapters unconnected with each other save for the common subject. But I heartily recommend its reading.

Victor Davis Hanson has long been acclaimed as one of our leading scholars of ancient history. In recent years he has also become a trenchant voice on current affairs, bringing a historian's deep knowledge of past conflicts to bear on the crises of the present, from 9/11 to Iran. "War," he writes, "is an entirely human enterprise." Ideologies change, technologies develop, new strategies are invented—but human nature is constant across time and space. The dynamics of warfare in the present age still remain comprehensible to us through careful study of the past. Though many have called the War on Terror unprecedented, its contours would have been quite familiar to Themistocles of Athens or William Tecumseh Sherman. And as we face the menace of a bin Laden or a Kim Jong-Il, we can prepare ourselves with knowledge of how such challenges have been met before. *The Father of Us All* brings together much of Hanson's finest writing on war and society, both ancient and modern. The author has gathered a range of essays, and combined and revised them into a richly textured new work that explores such topics as how technology shapes warfare, what constitutes the "American way of war," and why even those who abhor war need to study military history. "War is the father and king of us all," Heraclitus wrote in ancient Greece. And as Victor Davis Hanson shows, it is no less so today.

From Publishers Weekly Since 9/11, Davis, director of the Hoover Institution's group on military history and contemporary conflict, has emerged as a major commentator on war making and politics. This anthology brings together 13 of Hanson's essays and reviews, revised and re-edited. They have appeared over the past decade in periodicals from the *American Spectator* to the *New York Times*. Hanson's introductory generalization that war is a human enterprise that seems inseparable from the human condition structures such subjects as an eloquent answer to the question *Why Study War?* a defense of the historicity of the film *300*, about the Persian Wars, in a masterpiece of envelope pushing, and a comprehensive and dazzling analysis of why America fights as she does. He explains why, though a lesser historian than Thucydides, Xenophon retains a timeless attraction and analyzes war and democracy in light of America's decreasing willingness to intervene in places like Rwanda or Darfur. The pieces are well written, sometimes elegantly so, and closely reasoned. They address familiar material from original and stimulating perspectives. Hanson's arguments may not convince everyone, but cannot be dismissed. His critics and admirers will

be pleased to have these pieces available under one cover. (May) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From BooklistFolksinger Pete Seeger aint gonna study war no more, but classicist Hanson warns against skipping class in this set of essays reworked from his recent articles, book reviews, and book introductions. In Hansons estimation, amnesia about military history permeates Americas media, political, and intellectual leadership: out of fashion in the academy, military history was the specialty of just 1.9 percent of American history professors as of 2007. As he suggests reasons for this state of neglect, Hanson expatiates within specific essays, such as his preface to Donald Kagans *The Peloponnesian War* (2003), on the effects of historical forgetfulness. Hanson sees examples abounding in American leaders negative reactions to the Iraq War, responses that the author witheringly critiques for poor historical aptitude and poor understanding about the military and military operations. At bottom, Hanson argues that recoiling from learning about warfare ignores what he insists is its tragic nature: that war, inherent in human nature, can only be struggled against and not be wished away. Not a happy message to peace-studies idealists but one a balanced current-events collection should include. --Gilbert Taylor [A] lively collection the writing is always elegant and erudite. Foreign AffairsHanson has provided a thoughtful, wide-ranging look at the fundamental questions of war and peace. *MHQ, The Quarterly Journal of Military History*. A masterpiece of envelope pushing, and a comprehensive and dazzling analysis of why America fights as she does. Hanson's arguments may not convince everyone, but cannot be dismissed. Publishers WeeklyNot a happy message to peace-studies idealists but one a balanced current-events collection should include. BooklistI have never read another book which explains so well the truth that war lies in the dark hearts of us all' but that history offers hope. William Shawcross, author of *Allies and Deliver Us from Evil*Few writers cover both current events and history--and none with the brilliance and erudition of Victor Davis Hanson. In *The Father of Us All*, he uses his deep knowledge of military history to shed light on present-day controversies. Required reading for anyone interested in war, past or present. Max Boot, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow for National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and author of *The Savage Wars of Peace* and *War Made New*Victor Hanson brings to his writing a mixture of learning and reflection that is rare in any age, especially the ignorant one in which we live Dr. Larry Arnn, President of Hillsdale College