The Obama Presidency and sudden efflorescence of extreme hatred for government by right-wing Republican Congress members have made the presidency seem weak and Congress strong. But these newsletters show circumstantially the long, gradual, increase of presidential power, particularly in foreign policy. Nothing the Tea Party has done during the past decade has changed any of that, while Snowden’s revelations have shown the continued growth of executive power during the Obama presidency.

OMNI NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL DAYS PROJECT
COMMODOIFICATION OF OUR NATIONAL DAYS

One foundation of the OMNI’s Days Project is dislike of the excessive commercialization of many national days. Nothing seems free from profit-making, including our national institutions, leaders, and heroes, resulting in reduced wallet and mind. Even love has become a profit-making tool of the Subaru Co.

Like Gandhi and King, we in OMNI must be determined to change oppressive conditions, but especially the causes—the political and social structures—of those conditions; otherwise we are endlessly correcting symptoms, the same old same old. We may not be able to achieve radical change, either in society or within ourselves, as did Gandhi and King, but at least we can cease choosing to deal only with symptoms, and cease too all the irrelevant distractions, or feeble, meaningless gestures, playing at protest. For we must take real, first, even if baby, steps, or we will never be able to understand the commitment to change of Gandhi and King. If we believe that certain things must not be allowed—increasing executive power, another war, more atmospheric warming—and that alternatives must be created, then we must grasp tangible reality and act upon the facts we know.

“Only if one subscribes to the cult of the strong Presidency... can one look with complacency on the growth of Presidential dictatorship in foreign affairs.” “. . .the totalitarianism toward which we are heading will be a home-grown product.” J. William Fulbright, *The Crippled Giant* (Chapter 7). [Fulbright preferred a parliamentary system, but while the separation of three powers existed he tried to keep it balanced.]

My blog: War Department/Peace Department

http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

Newsletters:

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

Index:

http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/


Presidents’ Day Newsletter #3  Feb.16, 2015

Veterans for Peace, **Oppose Obama’s request for Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) against ISIL**

Fred Branfman to Tulsa, Scholar of Presidents’ Secret Wars

FCNL, Repeal the 2011 Authorization for the Use of Military Force.
GLENN GREENWALD, NO PLACE TO HIDE, on Snowden, replete with examples of excessive presidential power fueled by public fear (fueled by official fear-mongering): “the post-9-11 veneration of security above all else has created a climate particularly conducive to abuses of power” (p. 2).

VFP Legislative Update: Dick, This President's Day, talk back to President Obama! Feb. 16, 2015
Dear Dick,

Take action this week to oppose Obama’s request for Authorization for use of Military Force (AUMF) against ISIL

We need a President whose actions match his words. Obama has said there is no military solution for the Middle East, yet this AUMF has no geographical boundaries, calls for the increased use of U.S. Special Forces on the ground, has a three-year renewable mandate and a broad definition of the "enemy.

We do not need a new Authorization for the Use of Military Force, we need to repeal the AUMF of 2001. Military ‘solutions’ created our current problems, they will not solve them.

The Senate will take up the issue this week.
Call your Senator through the Capitol Switchboard:
202-224-3121

Tell your Senator

- Make diplomacy the number one priority. Since it is clear there is no military solution, seriously engage with everyone in the region, including Iran who is needed to force the Iraqi government to be more inclusive with Sunni leaders. Without an inclusive government in Iraq they will not effectively confront ISIL.

- Initiate a new effort at building a broad diplomatic solution in the United Nations. Apply diplomatic and financial pressure to stop countries from financing and arming ISIL and other fighters in Syria. An arms embargo on all sides should be on the long-term agenda.

- Repeal the AUMF of 2001

View VFP’s most recent statement on ISIL and alternatives to a military response.

Please be attentive to other items of interest to the VFP Mission that will be before the Congress in the coming weeks:

- Netanjahu speaking to Congress on March 3: There is an ongoing campaign encouraging Members of Congress to be absent for Prime Minister Netanjahu of Israel’s address to Congress.

- Iran: Efforts to impose stiffer sanctions on Iran continue. The Kirk Menendez bill S 269 is one of them. Increasing sanctions will make a negotiated agreement more difficult to impossible.

Michael T. McPhearson
WHAT: SPEAKER Fred Branfman

LEADING EXPERT ON U.S. EXECUTIVE SECRET WAR ABROAD AND SURVEILLANCE AT HOME

WHEN: March 4 11:00 am. (TCC)
       March 5 at 7:00 pm (TU)

WHERE: TULSA
       Mar. 4 - Tulsa Community College 11:00 am
       Mar. 5 - University of Tulsa, Chapman Hall, Lecture Hall 7:00 pm

LEADING EXPERT ON U.S. EXECUTIVE SECRET WAR ABROAD AND SURVEILLANCE AT HOME

IN TULSA MARCH 4th AND 5th

Fred Branfman, one of the nation's leading experts on U.S. Executive Branch Secret War since revealing the U.S. Secret War in Laos to the world in 1969, will be speaking in Tulsa at the Tulsa Community College on March 4, 2014 at 11 A.M.. and at the University of Tulsa, Chapman Lecture Hall at 7 p.m. on March 5.

"Americans need to understand the phenomenon of 'U.S. Executive Secret War' both because
it is becoming the dominant mode of U.S. warmaking abroad, and our Executive Secret Government is coming home in the form of surveillance and a variety of other activities which create the potential for a domestic police state," he stated.

Branfman is the author of "Presidential War in Laos: 1964-70" and has published Voices From the Plain of Jars: Life Under An Air War, recently reissued by the University of Wisconsin Press. It is the only book to emerge from the Indochina War written by the peasants who comprised 95% of the population, suffered most, but were heard from least. His work has appeared in The New York Times, Washington Post, Harper's, The New Republic, Nation, and many other publications.

Most recently he has published over 20 articles on the Executive Branch's "National Counterterrorism Strategy" throughout the Muslim World, and Executive surveillance and other police activities in the United States.

"Although the U.S. Executive justifies its warmaking by claiming it does so to enhance national security, it has in fact weakened U.S. national security as never before. As a result of its drone and ground assassination strategy its foes have vastly gained in strength, most seriously in nuclear-armed Pakistan where U.S. policy has strengthened our enemies, weakened our allies and, according to the former U.S. Ambassador Anne Patterson, made it far more likely that nuclear materials will fall into U.S. foes' hands.

"The U.S. Executive Branch, without informing let alone obtaining the consent of Congress or the American people, dropped 2 million tons of bombs on Laos, as much as was dropped on all of Europe and the Pacific in WWII. But it still lost, just as it is losing in Iraq, Afghanistan and throughout the Muslim world after wasting $4 trillion that could have been used to create jobs at home," he stated. And the human cost - over 20 million civilians killed, wounded and made homeless by the U.S. Executive in Iraq and Indochina alone - has been staggering.

In addition to speaking at these two public events, Fred Branfman will be available for interviews.

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Dear Dick Bennett,

What a difference a week makes.

A week ago, we were concerned your representative wasn’t hearing support from constituents to end the endless war by repealing the Authorization for the Use of Military Force. Now we’re sure that message is getting through.
This week, more than 3,600 of you, from every state (plus Washington, DC, Puerto Rico and American Samoa) sent messages to your representatives. And nearly 40 delegations met with their representatives while they were home. That’s awesome!

Thank you for your lobbying...

Your social networking...

And, as always, your tireless work for peace.

**What’s Next to End the Endless War**

When Congress comes back to Washington next week, we’ll be following up with representatives and looking for new cosponsors to H.R. 2324, Adam Schiff’s legislation to repeal the Authorization for the Use of Military Force.

I hope you’ll follow up as well over the next few weeks—with a phone call or a note, asking for an update on your representative’s position. We’ll be sure to let you know if your representative adds his or her name as a cosponsor so you can send a thank you!

As we work towards a vote in the House in May or June, we know that representatives will continue to hear that ending the endless war is a priority. Next month, we’ll welcome some 200 young adults to Washington for our Spring Lobby Weekend, and they’re making this issue their top lobbying request.

We look forward to working with you on the next chapter of ending the endless war.

In peace,

Jim Cason
Associate Executive Secretary for Strategic Advocacy
J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT ON PRESIDENTIAL POWER, PERMANENT WAR FOR “FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY” LOSS OF FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY.

The Crippled Giant.

Part II, chapters 6 and 7, deplore the rise of excessive executive and the decline of congressional power in foreign affairs. The era of Cold War, of crisis after crisis (the “jurisprudence of crisis”), of successive US invasions or interventions has entrenched the unilateral power of the president for war and for treaties. The three main causes of the aggressive Imperial Presidency and congressional passivity are 1) three decades of war, 2) the public’s and their representatives’ loss of confidence in popular decision-making, and 3) executive secrecy (212-213). “Executive incursions upon Congress’s foreign-policy powers has had three main results”: 1) Constitutional authority to initiate war has passed from Congress to the executive. 2) Senate authority over treaties has been “reduced to near nullity.” 3) The Senate’s “advise and consent” function has been drastically diminished (208-209). -- Dick

FULBRIGHT AND TREATIES, GOOGLE SEARCH

1. **J. William Fulbright** Speaks - Digital Collections - University of...
   scipio.uark.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/Fulbright

James William Fulbright, Democratic Senator from Arkansas, was born in .... The Crippled Giant: American Foreign Policy and its Domestic Consequences. ... The Fulbright Premise: Senator J. William Fulbright's Views on Presidential Power.

   books.google.com/books?isbn=0838713580

Naomi B. Lynn, Arthur F. McClure - 1973 - Executive power claimed, the treaty-making power was perhaps the most urgent reason for ... the Constitutional Convention.8 Fulbright was not concerned about presidential ...

2. **J. William Fulbright** Speaks - Digital Collections - University of...
   scipio.uark.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/Fulbright

James William Fulbright, Democratic Senator from Arkansas, was born in ... Soon after entering Congress, he won recognition in the field of foreign affairs. .... The Fulbright Premise: Senator J. William Fulbright's Views on Presidential Power.

3. **Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty** - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
   en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partial_Nuclear_Test_Ban_Treaty

4. [PDF]

**sidestepping congress:** presidents acting under the - Louis Fisher

www.loufisher.org/docs/wp/424.pdf

probation of the Senate" the **power** of making **treaties**, the Senate. ) would have the ....A resolution introduced by Congressman J. **William Fulbright**. (D-Ark.) also ...

5. NYT Why the World is Better for Jesse Helms - University of Delaware

www.udel.edu/communication/COMM418/begleite/.../nythelms.htm

**Presidents** and secretaries of state court the powerful Senator Helms the way Harry ...of state, Dean Rusk, cursed Senator J. **William Fulbright** during the Vietnam War. ...and gave the Senate **power** to confirm ambassadors and ratify **treaties**.

6. [PDF]

**International Commitments in an Era of Unilateral Presidential** - Sara ...

www.saramitchell.org/ MarshallPrins.pdf

by BC Prins - Related articles

A Comparison of the **Treaties** and **Executive** Agreements Negotiated by the ... evident with the expansion of **presidential power** in the areas of foreign affairs and .....isolationists led by Senators J. **William Fulbright** (D-Ark.), Sam Ervin (D-NC), ...

7. [PDF]

**International Commitments in an Era of Unilateral Presidential Power**

ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1033&context=shambaugh

by BC Prins - 2006 - Related articles

-J. **William Fulbright**. The use of **executive** agreements has clearly changed over time. Initially employed for minor modifications to **treaties** already in existence, ...

8. The Pentagon Propaganda Machine by Senator J. **William Fulbright**

www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Pentagon.../Pentagon_Propaganda_JWF.ht..

The situation is such that last year Senator Allen J. Ellender of Louisiana, ... but it must invariably and immeasurably increase the **powers** of civil government; ..... from **treaties** than to those deriving from **executive** agreements and even simple, ...


www.law.berkeley.edu/faculty/yooj/courses/forrel/reserve/fisher.htm

If that were possible, the **President** and the Senate could rely on the **treaty** process to... He noted that the Senate's constitutional **power** in the past had been used ... by J.**William**
Fulbright (D., Ark.) to support the concept of a United Nations.

10. [PDF]

*Foreign Relations, Strategic Doctrine, and Presidential Power*

www.law.ua.edu/pubs/lrarticles/Volume%2063/Issue%203/Gartner.pdf

by D Gartner - Cited by 1 - Related articles

Feb 26, 2012 - World War II, treaty power was the central mechanism for the...... J. William Fulbright, Congress, the President and the War Power, ...

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**Hold Your labels**

By BY H.W. BRANDS, BLOOMBERG NEWS
February 3, 2011 at 3:28 a.m.

- Print item
- E-mail

Pity poor Woodrow Wilson. The man who tried to save the world from tyranny is now being excoriated as a liberal fascist by the likes of Glenn Beck, Jonah Goldberg, and other conservatives. This story is only available from the archives. Click here to contact the online desk. Editorial, Pages 14 on 02/03/2011

[Dick: Part of the article explains the increase of presidential/administrative power during WWI and during wars in general, but Wilson remained an internationalist and was no “liberal fascist” as he has been labeled by some.]

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**MILITARIZATION DURING AFGHAN AND IRAQ WARS**

Jonathan Stevenson. “Owned by the Army: Has the President Lost Control of His Generals?” *Harper’s Magazine (May 2011).* A quick history of the growing power of the Pentagon, presidents’ struggles with high officers, and the extraordinary power of General Petraeus: the “compromise of civilian control....the logical outcome of a national policy based on endless war.” The disaster to our democracy by the ascendancy of military power has resulted in “a civilian
leadership increasingly likely to internalize military priorities and attitudes.” --Dick [Stevenson’s defense of a civilian president’s control of the military seems undermined by his own argument.]


Regardless of the president or party, the basic edifice of the U.S. National Security State (NSS) has remained unchanged: 1) a worldwide military presence; 2) armed forces not for defense but for dominance; and 3) intervention in other nations from influencing elections to military invasion (over 40 since 1945 according to William Blum in *Killing Hope* and *Rogue State*). From Harry Truman to Barack Obama, these 3 principles have remained sacrosanct. The result has been over 60 years of war. What is most extraordinary is that the consensus has existed so long despite a record of recurring failure the consequences of which have been disastrous to the U.S. and to the world. A new national security policy is possible--that rejects militarism and foreign aggression and their enormous waste of lives and resources without producing “national security,”, and embraces a policy of helping humans in the U.S. and then abroad. Bacevich does not discuss climate change, but its certain global disruptions reinforce his arguments for seeking a new National Security before anarchy can commence. --Dick.

From Publishers Weekly

U.S. Army colonel turned academic, Bacevich (*The Limits of Power*) offers an unsparing, cogent, and important critique of assumptions guiding American military policy. These central tenets, the "Washington rules"--such as the belief that the world order depends on America maintaining a massive military capable of rapid and forceful interventions anywhere in the world--have dominated national security policy since the start of the cold war and have condemned the U.S. to "insolvency and perpetual war." Despite such disasters as America's defeat in Vietnam and the Cuban missile crisis, the self-perpetuating policy is so entrenched that no president or influential critic has been able to alter it. Bacevich argues that while the Washington rules found their most pernicious expression in the Bush doctrine of preventive war, Barack Obama’s expansion of the Afghan War is also cause for pessimism: "We should be grateful to him for making at least one thing unmistakably clear: to imagine that Washington will ever tolerate second thoughts about the Washington rules is to engage in willful self-deception. Washington itself has too much to lose."


From Publishers Weekly
Until recently, one could be forgiven for thinking that the present Congress is essentially an arm of the Bush administration, according to Mann and Ornstein, nationally renowned congressional scholars from the Brookings Institution and the American Enterprise Institute, respectively. Their book argues persuasively that relentless partisanship and a disregard for institutional procedures have led Congress to be more dysfunctional than at any time in recent memory. Looking back to the arbitrary and sometimes authoritarian leadership of Democratic speaker Jim Wright and the Abscam scandals of the 1980s, the authors demonstrate how they presage the much worse abuses of power committed by former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay and superlobbyist Jack Abramoff. In outlining more than 200 years of congressional history, Mann and Ornstein sometimes allow just a sentence or two to explain the policies and philosophies of an important politician or even an entire party, even as they catalogue deviations from obscure points of procedure in extensive detail. Their book may be useful and enjoyable to the specialist, though recent conservative pushback on issues from the Harriet Miers nomination to warrantless wiretapping and immigration will make some wish the authors had had the opportunity to add a postscript.


From Booklist

As envisioned by our founders, the office of chief executive was to exercise primarily a supervisory role, curbing the excesses of a popularly elected legislature. During wartime, of course, the powers of the executive were expected to increase. However, as Arthur Schlesinger indicated in *The Imperial Presidency* (1973), the powers of the presidency have vastly expanded, even in peacetime. Crenson and Ginsberg, both political science professors, explain the reasons and consequences. They convincingly assert that the decline in popular participation in our political life has led to a dangerous power vacuum, this manifesting itself most clearly in the diminished role of political parties in selecting presidential candidates. Instead, presidential candidates today are generally able to define themselves without being moored to the beliefs of their party; thus, if elected, they feel free to pursue their own agendas. At the same time, the public withdrawal from politics has undermined both the prestige and the power of Congress. The result is a great increase in the power of the presidency, abetted by an accelerating expansion of the bureaucratic state. *Jay Freeman*


*WP BOOKSTORE* Gary Wills begins his provocative account of the atomic bomb's impact on the republic with a high-detonation assertion. "The Bomb," he writes, "altered our subsequent history
down to its deepest constitutional roots," redefining the presidency in ways that the Constitution does not intend. "It fostered an anxiety of continuing crisis, so that society was pervasively militarized. It redefined the government as a National Security State, with an apparatus of secrecy and executive control. It redefined Congress, as an executor of the executive."  

Book review: 'Bomb Power' by Garry Wills

Fisher, Louis.  *In the Name of National Security: Unchecked Presidential Power and the “Reynolds” Case.* The Supreme Court upheld in *United States v. Reynolds* (1953) a new precedent, allowing the executive branch to assert an all-encompassing “state secret privilege” as a basis for withholding information from public scrutiny.

--Dick

From Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Garry Wills, a groundbreaking examination of how the atomic bomb profoundly altered the nature of American democracy and has left us in a state of war alert ever since.

In *Bomb Power*, Garry Wills reveals how the atomic bomb transformed our nation down to its deepest constitutional roots-by dramatically increasing the power of the modern presidency and redefining the government as a national security state—in ways still felt today. A masterful reckoning from one of America's preeminent historians, *Bomb*
Power draws a direct line from the Manhattan Project to the usurpations of George W. Bush.

The invention of the atomic bomb was a triumph of official secrecy and military discipline—the project was covertly funded at the behest of the president and, despite its massive scale, never discovered by Congress or the press. This concealment was perhaps to be expected in wartime, but Wills persuasively argues that the Manhattan Project then became a model for the covert operations and overt authority that have defined American government in the nuclear era. The wartime emergency put in place during World War II extended into the Cold War and finally the war on terror, leaving us in a state of continuous war alert for sixty-eight years and counting.

The bomb forever changed the institution of the presidency since only the president controls “the button” and, by extension, the fate of the world. Wills underscores how radical a break this was from the division of powers established by our founding fathers and how it in turn has enfeebled Congress and the courts. The bomb also placed new emphasis on the president's military role, creating a cult around the commander in chief. The tendency of modern presidents to flaunt military airs, Wills points out, is entirely a postbomb phenomenon. Finally, the Manhattan Project inspired the vast secretive apparatus of the national security state, including intelligence agencies such as the CIA and NSA, which remain largely unaccountable to Congress and the American people.

Wills recounts how, following World War II, presidential power increased decade by decade until reaching its stunning apogee with the Bush administration. Both provocative and illuminating, Bomb Power casts the history of the postwar period in a new light and sounds an alarm about the continued threat to our Constitution.
"Persuasive...elegantly argued."

"A powerful-and sobering-account of the step-by-step creation of government structures, unaccountable to Congress or the people, to conduct 'permanent war in peace.'"
-The Boston Globe

"Bomb Power is pungent, confident, fluid, steeped in learning."
-Vanity Fair

"Written in Wills' characteristically accessible style, Bomb Power is a well-argued denunciation of our constitutional gatekeepers that is as sad and fascinating as an account of the decline of the Roman republic. ... [Wills's] credentials as a historian are impeccable. His breadth of knowledge is awe inspiring, but he never goes over the reader's head: He is a scholar with the heart of a journalist."
-The Miami Herald

"Deeply thought-provoking... A prolific author of astonishing range, Wills...offers a forceful indictment of the 43rd president, and even more of his vice president, Dick Cheney."
-The San Francisco Chronicle

"Thought-provoking...compelling."
-The Los Angeles Times

"As usual with Wills, provocatively argued and elegantly written."
-Kirkus
Lawmakers want to see the ‘black budget’

By Julian Hattem

Dozens of House lawmakers want the Obama administration to release the secret “black budget” used to fund intelligence agencies.

A bipartisan group of 62 members of Congress wrote President Obama a letter on Wednesday asking him to release the fiscal 2015 spending levels for 16 federal spy agencies when he delivers the rest of his budget to Congress on March 4.

“The current practice of providing no specificity whatsoever regarding the overall budget requests for each intelligence agency falls woefully short of basic accountability requirements,” the legislators wrote.

“As you develop your fiscal year 2015 budget, we strongly urge you to take a simple step toward much needed transparency by including the total amount requested for each of the sixteen intelligence agencies. We believe the top line number for each agency should be made public, with no risk to national security, for comparative purposes across all federal government agencies.”

Wednesday’s request was led by Reps. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) and Cynthia Lummis (R-
Wyo.), who last month introduced the Intelligence Budget Transparency Act. The bill would require the administration to release basic details about the spy agencies’ budgets.

The federal government has disclosed the overall amount of money spent to fund the intelligence community since 2007, but has kept classified more specific details about the individual budgets of agencies like the CIA, FBI and National Security Agency (NSA).

Documents released by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden last year showed that the CIA has grown to eat up about 28 percent of the $52.6 billion spent in 2013. The $14.7 billion it received was about 50 percent more than the NSA’s funding.

The White House did not immediately respond to an inquiry from The Hill about the lawmakers' request.

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http://space4peace.blogspot.com/ (blog)
Treaties: Congress vs. President

International Commitments in an Era of Unilateral Presidential Power

A Comparison of the Treaties and Executive Agreements Negotiated by the Administrations of George W. Bush and Theodore Roosevelt by Brandon C. Prins, Texas Tech University & Bryan W. Marshall Miami University


ABSTRACT

Treaty-making involves the constitutional struggle for policy control. Both Congress and the president are defined as official actors in the making of international commitments, and both closely guard their constitutionally defined roles. Yet extant scholarship generally concludes Congress rarely matters in establishing U.S. formal commitments abroad. Indeed, it is frequently pointed out that only 21 treaties have been voted down by the U.S. Senate in its 230 year existence. While true, such a figure presents an incomplete picture of congressional influence. Presidents may covet greater institutional capacity to direct unilaterally U.S. foreign policy, but opposition in both the House and Senate frequently reins in an uncompromising White House. In this paper we compare the international commitments made by Presidents George W. Bush (2001-2004) and Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909). We find the Senate’s role in influencing and/or altering treaties has been under-estimated in most analyses. While the Senate rarely rejects a treaty negotiated by the president with a recorded floor vote, the Senate can and does attach amendments and reservations to treaties that affect U.S. obligations and responsibilities. More importantly, though, and even less recognized are treaties killed by the Senate through inaction. At least 21 treaties during Roosevelt’s administration were rejected by the Senate, none of them by a formal floor vote. By ignoring Senate influence before an official floor vote risks under-estimating the influence the Senate has on U.S. commitments abroad. This paper also explores the domestic political authority under which presidents negotiate international agreements. Most scholars conclude that international agreements signal unilateral presidential power. Yet, many are negotiated pursuant to congressional statutes or previously ratified treaties. In both cases, Congress maintains influence over the process.

Killing Machine: The American Presidency in the Age of Drone Warfare

by LLOYD C. GARDNER

FROM THE “DEVASTATINGLY EFFECTIVE” (ANDREW BACEVICH) CHRONICLER OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY, A SCATHING NEW ASSESSMENT OF THE
Thomas E. Donilon, the national security advisor, remarked that what surprised him the most about Obama in office was: “He’s a president who is quite comfortable with the use of force on behalf of the United States.” —
FROM KILLING MACHINE

With Obama’s election to the presidency in 2008, many believed the United States had entered a new era: Obama came into office with high expectations that he would end the war in Iraq and initiate a new foreign policy that would reestablish American values and the United States’ leadership role in the world.

In this shattering new assessment, historian Lloyd C. Gardner argues that, despite cosmetic changes, Obama has simply built on the expanding power base of presidential power that reaches back across decades and through multiple administrations. The new president ended the “enhanced interrogation” policy of the Bush administration but did not abandon the concept of preemption. Obama withdrew from Iraq but has institutionalized drone warfare—including the White House’s central role in selecting targets. What has come into view, Gardner argues, is the new face of American presidential power: high-tech, secretive, global, and lethal.

Killing Machine skillfully narrates the drawdown in Iraq, the counterinsurgency warfare in Afghanistan, the rise of the use of drones, and targeted assassinations from al-Awlaki to Bin Laden—drawing from the words of key players in these actions as well as their major public critics. With unparalleled historical perspective, Gardner’s book is the new touchstone for understanding not only the Obama administration but the American presidency itself.

Praise for Killing Machine:

“Gardner delivers an engrossing blow-by-blow account of a decade of fierce debates and painful events that offer excruciating parallels with the Vietnam War.”

—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY (STARRED REVIEW)

Lloyd C. Gardner is Professor Emeritus of History at Rutgers University and the author or editor of more than a dozen books, including The Long Road to Baghdad and Three Kings (both available from The New Press). He lives in Newtown, Pennsylvania.

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ISBN: 978-1-59558-918-7
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OMNI Forums on Presidential Power
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Dick Bennett

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