



Obama at War: Congress and the Imperial Presidency (Studies In Conflict Diplomacy Peace)

By Ryan C. Hendrickson

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During President Barack Obama's first term in office, the United States expanded its military presence in Afghanistan and increased drone missile strikes across Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. The administration also deployed the military to combat piracy in the Indian Ocean, engaged in a sustained bombing operation in Libya, and deployed U.S. Special Forces in Central Africa to capture or kill Joseph Kony. In these cases, President Obama decided to use force without congressional approval. Yet, this increased executive power has not been achieved simply by the presidential assertion of such powers. It has also been supported by a group of senators and representatives who, for political reasons that stem from constant campaigning, seek to avoid responsibility for military action abroad.

In this revealing book, Ryan C. Hendrickson examines President Obama's use of force in his first term with four major case studies. He demonstrates that, much like his predecessors, Obama has protected the executive branch's right not only to command, but also to determine when and where American forces are deployed. He also considers the voting records of Democrat John Kerry and Republican John McCain in the Senate, detailing how both men have played leading roles in empowering the commander-in-chief while limiting Congress's influence on military decision-making.

Obama at War establishes that the imperial presidency poses significant foreign policy risks, and concludes with possible solutions to restore a more meaningful balance of power. The first book on the constitutional and political relationship between President Obama and the U.S. Congress and the use of military force, this timely reassessment of war powers provides a lucid examination of executive privilege and legislative deference in the modern American republic.

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Review

"This book is notable for its focus not only on President Obama but also on Congress. Its care in tracing interbranch politics regarding the use of force renders it a substantial scholarly contribution."?Mariah Zeisberg, author of *War Powers: The Politics of Constitutional Authority*

"Ryan Hendrickson has once again written a perceptive analysis of the war power, explaining how this basic constitutional authority has shifted from Congress to the President and undermined the basic principle of republican government, leading to costly, ill-considered military initiatives. A significant and effective contribution to our understanding, blessed with clear and direct writing."?Louis Fisher, author of *Presidential War Power*

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"A text that is [. . .] well-written, richly documented, and extremely readable, which in itself is a testament to Professor Hendrickson's ability to produce a piece of academic literature that is both instructive and enjoyable to read."?Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society

About the Author

Ryan C. Hendrickson is professor of political science at Eastern Illinois University. He is the author of *Diplomacy and War at NATO: The Secretary General and Military Action after the Cold War* and *The Clinton Wars: The Constitution, Congress, and War Powers*.

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