

Drift: The Unmooring of American Military Power Study Guide

Drift: The Unmooring of American Military Power by Rachel Maddow

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Contents

Drift: The Unmooring of American Military Power Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Prologue and Chapter 1.....	5
Chapters 2-3.....	7
Chapters 4-6.....	9
Chapters 7-8.....	11
Chapter 8 and Epilogue.....	13
Characters.....	15
Objects/Places.....	18
Themes.....	20
Style.....	22
Quotes.....	24
Topics for Discussion.....	26

Plot Summary

"Drift: Unmooring of American Military Power" is a non-fiction book by Rachel Maddow. This book looks at how the use of the military has changed over the past fifty years, moving away from the intent of the Founding Fathers. Ms. Maddow examines the use of the military by presidents beginning with Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam and ending with Obama's use of private enterprise and the CIA to do what has been traditionally the military's job. Drift is an eye-opening look at the military and ways in which we, as a nation, can return to the peace inspired design of the Founding Fathers.

Ms. Maddow begins her book by describing how America adored the military in the years after World War II, going so far as to incorporating this love into action figures. However, the mood began to shift as America became involved in the conflict in Vietnam. President Johnson wanted to avoid going to Congress and declaring war on Vietnam, so he chose not to call up the reserves. This gave Johnson the ability to increase America's presence in Vietnam without handing over control to Congress. This led to a restructuring of the military to take away the President's ability to go into a conflict without calling up the reserves. It also changed laws that allow the President to commit the military to a conflict without discussing it with Congress if he could not remove the military within sixty days.

When Ronald Reagan opposed Ford in the Republican primaries in the late seventies, he used untruths about the Panama Canal to engage the American public and win more states than had previously been predicted. Although Reagan lost this particular election, he returned four years later with the memory of this win strong in his mind. Reagan continued to use the idea of beefing up the military and promoting America as a strong military presence to win his bid for the Presidency.

Once President, Reagan developed the opinion that the President alone should be allowed to declare war. With this attitude, Reagan ordered the invasion of Grenada, an action that was unnecessary and badly planned and executed. At the same time, Reagan became involved with the Contras in Nicaragua in an attempt to stop the spread of Communism. In an attempt to get around the laws that required him to inform Congress of his actions, Reagan sent in the CIA rather than the military and began to use private money to fund the effort. At the same time, Reagan became involved with the Iranians in a quiet attempt to rescue American hostages in Beirut. This would include the selling of weapons to Iran, but fail to release any hostages. In the end, Reagan and his staff faced hearings in front of Congress and potential jail time.

When Bush took office, conflict in Iraq began. Bush sent troops to Kuwait in order to force the Iraqi leader, Sadaam Hussein, out of Kuwait. Bush did this without the approval of Congress, but when faced with a deadline and the inevitability of conflict, Bush finally did as he was directed by the law, he presented his case to Congress and gained the permission he needed to lead the NATO forces against Hussein.



During Bush's administration, the Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney began making changes to the structure of the military. In doing this, Cheney created a way in which the military could hire private contractors to aid the military, such as using private contractors to provide food, laundry services, and day care to military installations all over the world. The use of private contractors spread to include the use of private industry to work on army vehicles and provide security in areas of conflict. Despite trouble controlling the behaviors of these private contractors, the use of these corporations grew in Clinton's administration and they became a large part of the wars in Iran and Afghanistan. Today private contractors are still used.

The use of the CIA has also expanded since Reagan's time. Like Reagan, presidents after him have begun to use the CIA in military situations. Obama is known to have used the CIA to pilot drones, aircraft used specifically to assassinate targets all over the world. This takes away the culpability placed on military personnel.

The author suggests multiple ways to return the military to the Founding Father's intentions at the end of the novel.



Prologue and Chapter 1

Prologue and Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

Prologue. Is It Too Late to Descope This? The author describes odd uses for Homeland Security grants in her hometown after September 11. The author also says that government spending in Afghanistan has gone off target. She describes a project in Afghanistan called Wazir Akbar Khan consists of dozens of mansion-like homes for local people who have bought the homes not to live in them, but to show off their social status and remain mostly empty. She also notes that a wastewater treatment facility in Fallujah, Anbar Province, Iraq has yet to come to fruition despite spending millions of American dollars to see it through. Then at home, the government has built a tax payer funded office space for the intelligence community that has created such a confusing tangle of red tape due to the complexity of the organization that things tend to get lost. The author suggests that none of this was what the Founding Fathers intended when they wrote the constitution, but it is all fixable.

Chapter 1. GI Joe, Ho Chi Minh, and the American Art of Fighting About Fighting. Thomas Jefferson believed that a standing army would only lead to war. This sentiment remained in America for over a century and a half. For this reason, each time America went to war, all of America went to war in the sense that Americans at home felt the pain of war as their husbands, son, and brothers went to war. This began to change with World War II. America enjoyed a robust period after this war and was able to treat the returning soldiers well. Americans loved their soldiers. This was reflected in the release of Hasbro's GI Joe doll in the mid-sixties. However, as America entered the conflict in Vietnam, this love of soldiers began to fade.

Although elected on the promise that he would not send American soldiers into a conflict that was not theirs to fight, he began steadily increasing the military presence in Vietnam as well as instituting the draft. To avoid going to Congress, and thus forcing a commitment to the conflict, Johnson refused to call up the reserves. The author has no opinion on whether this choice impacted the outcome of Vietnam, she does suggest that it did cause a negative opinion to develop in the country toward the returning soldiers and the military in general.

Toward the end of the conflict in Vietnam, Creighton Abrams, the Army chief of staff, reorganized the military in such a way that the President could no longer commit the military to a conflict without calling up the reserves. Abrams believed that should America go to war, all of America should feel it. This means that the families and employers of reservists should feel it when their reservists are sent to war. About the same time, Congress passed The War Powers Resolution of 1973 that made it impossible for the President to commit the military to a conflict without informing the Congress within thirty days or he would have to get the military out of the conflict within sixty days. Through these new rules, the Congress was able to stop President Ford from recommitting American troops to Vietnam in 1975.



In the prologue of this book, the author points out multiple ways in which the American government has improperly used money in an attempt to promote security and peace. The author uses several examples that make it seem almost amusing that the American government has wasted this money without gaining the result they had hoped for. The system is broken, the author says, but she knows how to fix things.

The American people once believed as Thomas Jefferson did that having a large standing army was useless, and often led to unnecessary conflicts and war. However, after World War II ended and the American government was able to take supreme care of her returning military, opinions about a standing military began to change. Unfortunately, this change in opinion would have influence on the use of military forces sent to Vietnam.

Johnson committed thousands of American military personnel to Vietnam despite his campaign promises that he would reduce the American presence in this foreign conflict. Johnson did not want the interference of Congress in his decisions about Vietnam, however, so he made the decision to not call of the reserves, an act that would require involving Congress. This became the first instance of a President attempting to wage war on his own despite the fact that the Constitution gives the right to declare war only to Congress. It also became the catalyst of multiple law changes that would attempt to restrict the President's power to involve the military in conflicts of any kind.



Chapters 2-3

Chapters 2-3 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 2. A Nation at Peace Everywhere in the World. In 1976, while running in the Republican primary against Gerald Ford, Reagan developed the opinion that Ford had made America look weak in the eyes of the world through the loss of the Vietnam conflict. To battle this idea, Reagan grabbed on to the idea that Ford was about to give up American rights to the Panama Canal under threat of the Panamanian leader General Omar Torrijos. Although his claims had no basis, Reagan won many states on the idea that he would not allow the world to believe Americans were weak. Not only did this argument, based on false information, allow Reagan to win multiple states in the primary, it caused the Panama treaty, which should have been ratified easily in Congress, to nearly be defeated. Not only this, but many political careers were ruined due to opposition to Reagan's claims.

About the time Reagan became president, a former director of the White House Military Office wrote a book in which he revealed the contents of the 'nuclear football', a valise that carried authentication codes to launch nuclear weapons. The men in charge of this valise spent a great deal of time with the President, leading one man to question Reagan's choice to salute military personnel. Told he had the right to do this as president, Reagan continued to do so as presidents after him have done. Reagan loved the military. As a soldier during World War II, Reagan was assigned to a special group charged with creating training films and recruiting films.

Chapter 3. Let 'Er Fly. In the seventies and eighties, a large advertising campaign was launched to seduce young men to join the military. While a campaign headed by a commercial advertising firm went badly, the military did all they could to make the military look appealing to young men, a difficult thing in peace time. Reagan changed that by making it seem that it was important to make American seem strong in the world view and suggesting a constant threat to America, giving the military something to increase the excitement of their advertising with. In his first few months in office, Reagan hugely increased the defense budget as he cut taxes.

At the same time, think tanks and outside experts seemed to support Reagan's claims of threats to American peace. One group, known as Team B, claimed that the Russians were threatened by America and were preparing to fight a war against them. In fact, Team B claimed that Russia had nuclear weapons capable of taking out American cities in a moment's notice. The truth was, however, that Russia's military expenditures were quickly falling and that the government itself was quietly collapsing on itself. Russia was no threat, but Team B and Reagan successfully convinced the American public they were. This fear of Russia spread, influencing movies in Hollywood as well as votes in Congress.



Russia had problems of her own. The increasing tensions with America caused great concern for Russia, who felt they needed to defend themselves should America launch an offensive against them. However, it was not this arms race that led to the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Soviet Union was already struggling before Reagan took office. Should Reagan have reached out to help Gorbachev develop a democratic government, things might have been different for the Soviet Union. At the same time, Reagan's increasing defense budget plunged America into a huge deficit.

These chapters show how one man's opinion resonated with America and changed the way Americans look at the military. After Vietnam, it was decided not to allow the standing military to fall into small numbers, but the ability to recruit new soldiers became difficult without the draft. For this reason, the military instituted an ad campaign designed to encourage young men to join. However, this campaign did not work well until Reagan took office and began suggesting that the world was filled of threats toward America. This helped.

Reagan learned from his experiences in the 1976 primary that suggesting that America should not appear weak to the world. For this reason, as President in 1980s America, he promotes the idea of power in the military. This helps with recruitment, but it also causes the President to be able to pass several increases in the defense budget that not only places America in a huge budget deficit at a time of peace.

Think tanks and expert groups have risen since World War II. One of these groups publishes a report on Russia that leaves Americans with the belief that nuclear war is imminent. However, the Soviet Union has problems of its own and will fall apart by 1991. The information being released by one group in particular, Team B, fails to research their conclusions. In fact, many of their conclusions are in direct conflict with information agencies such as the CIA and FBI have gathered. However, Reagan's government allows the release of this information, supporting his claims that America must be prepared for anything.



Chapters 4-6

Chapters 4-6 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 4. Isle of Spice. In October 1983, America invaded Grenada. This island was run by a government thought to be connected to Communism. However, it was also a member of the British Commonwealth. Reagan chose to invade the island in an attempt to rescue American students at an American university there during a revolt against the government. Without informing Margaret Thatcher, without doing research on the island or even learning where the American students lived, Reagan sent troops in. Four hundred American students were rescued, though they never felt as though their lives were in danger, while more than two hundred were left behind because the military did not know they did not live at the university. Nineteen soldiers were killed, as well as four servicemen who were lost at sea during the first attempt to land on Grenada. However, when video was taken of an American student kissing the ground upon returning to America, Reagan was able to turn the image into a huge success for the whole operation.

Just before the invasion of Grenada took place, a building in Lebanon housing American military was involved in an explosion that killed more than two hundred American soldiers. Reagan used the apparent success of Grenada to take the focus off the humiliation of Lebanon. Some in Congress saw Grenada for what it was, accusing Reagan of overreaching his powers.

Chapter 5. Stupid Regulations. Reagan saw the Sandinista rule in Nicaragua as a Communist reign and he promoted the use of force to remove the danger. Reagan thought that the spread of Communism would reach America if not stopped. For this reason, Reagan supported the Contras, the rebellion faction fighting the Sandinista government. However, the Congress, still upset about not being consulted about Grenada, stood against Reagan in regards to Nicaragua. In 1984, the Congress passed the Boland Amendment preventing the use of money intended for the military, the Department of Defense, or CIA in any military operation in Nicaragua. This severely limited Reagan's ability to help the Contras despite the fact that the amendment gave Reagan the opportunity to explain his point of view to the Congress. However, he found other ways.

While involved in an illegal deal with Iran to trade weapons for hostages being held in Beirut, Reagan received a million dollars of private money from Iran to help in the transport of these weapons. This gave Reagan the idea to raise private money and use that to support the Contras. Reagan thought he had found a way around the Boland Amendment, but in the end he and all those involved were called to answer for their actions in front of Congress. As a result, Attorney General Meese practically rewrote the Constitution in his attempt to prove that the President has the right to declare war on threats against America without the support of Congress. Never mind that this goes against the Constitution.



Chapter 6. Mylanta, 'Tis of Thee. In the fall of 1990, President Bush sent American troops into the Persian Gulf in an attempt to kick Iraqi ruler, Saddam Hussein, out of Kuwait and to protect the oil fields of nearby Saudi Arabia. Teamed up with NATO troops, Bush had convinced the Saudi king to allow America to protect Saudi Arabia, causing some tension for the Saudi government, and America, from Taliban leader Osama bin Laden who wanted this role. Congress became adamant that Bush should consult them before any military action in the Persian Gulf. Bush put off dealing with Congress for months, going ahead with a military buildup just across the border of Kuwait with other NATO troops. NATO gave Saddam until January 15, 1991 to move out of Kuwait before NATO troops, led by America, would forcibly move him out. Bush finally went to Congress on January 8, 1991, after much pressure from Congress, including a lawsuit filed by several Congressmen against Bush. Congress agreed to war in the Persian Gulf.

Reagan's invasion of Grenada was ill-advised, without clear purpose, and badly planned. The invasion could have, and should have, ended in disaster. However, thanks to a few photo ops and strong oration on the part of the President, the disaster turned into something less than disaster. The congress, who was not consulted on the invasion, remembered it when Reagan later wanted to help the Contra rebels in Nicaragua end the Communist rule of the Sandinista rule. Congress not only refused to support Reagan in that endeavor, but passed a flawed law that would prevent Reagan from continuing his attempts to aid the Contras through the CIA. This caused Reagan to find other means, eventually leading to the raising of private funds to provide support for the Contras.

In all rights, Reagan should have gone to jail, along with his fellow conspirators, for his role in the Iran-Contra scandal. Reagan pretended that he had the right to do whatever he felt like doing without asking permission from Congress. However, despite the flawed logic of the Attorney General at the time, public support remained behind Reagan. It did not help that Bush pardoned all those involved as soon as he took office. This left behind a sense of entitlement in the presidency that would influence later presidents.

When Bush came to power, he immediately was faced with a threat in the Middle East. Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and made it clear he was after the oil fields of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. This would place American oil in jeopardy. Bush moved in, making enemies in Saudi Arabia when he got the Saudi king to allow America to protect the oil fields over a local Taliban leader. Not only this, but Bush found himself at odds against the Congress when he refused at first to ask permission to commit troops to this action. Congress fought Bush in a way they had not done since Woodrow Wilson was in power until both sides found themselves following the letter of the law. Congress agreed to war in the Persian Gulf in the end.



Chapters 7-8

Chapters 7-8 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 7, *Doing More with Less (Hassle)*. Providing for soldiers and their families became expensive. Daycare costs alone became a problem. To fix this, the military began to look to outside resources. They thought that bringing in private companies to handle the problems might help them save money. This led to the first use of private contractors. When the military set up camp in Bosnia, it was private contractors who handled the construction of housing, the care of laundry, and food service. The soldiers were happy with this situation, but the contractors were inflating their bills to get more out of the government. It turned out that maintenance people working for private companies would replace parts that did not need replacing in order to make more money for the company or equipment cost would be inflated due to the cost of transporting it overseas. There were other problems as well. Some of the private employees of these companies were committing criminal acts against civilians, but it was overlooked because no one was quite sure who was responsible.

Former Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney was all for this change in the military. In fact, he reworked the military policy to make much of it possible and by helping to author the Logistics Civilian Augmentation Program. Then, after Bush left office, Dick Cheney became CEO of Halliburton, a company whose subsidiary had one of the largest private support contracts with the government. Clinton, who came into office after Bush, took full advantage of LOGCAP as well, expanding the project by bringing in more and more outside assistance to the military. However, there was no way to make sure the private contractors were delivering what they promised and no one to deal with the behaviors of these private employees once they arrived on site at military bases and conflict zones world wide. Not only this, but when Congress chose not to send military support into Croatia, the Croats military was trained by private corporations in America and successfully executed an American-like assault on the Serbs. Within a short time after this, Clinton sent American soldiers into Bosnia in what he said would be a short time but quickly became a years long mission. By using independent contractors, Clinton avoided bringing in reservists, keeping the American people vastly out of the conflict.

Chapter 8. *One Hell of a Killing Machine*. In 2011, Obama sent CIA operatives into Pakistan to find and exterminate Osama bin Laden. The operation was successful, but left the Pakistan government looking foolish. For this reason, the Afghanistan government ordered the Americans out of an airbase in Pakistan called Shasi in Balochistan. The base was being used by the CIA to pilot their remote drones. The Americans refused and it was soon proven that the base did not belong to Pakistan, but to the United Arab Emirates. This small detail allowed the Americans to stay and for Pakistan to save face. Six months later the CIA left the airbase and the rumors of the use of drones from that airbase were denied.



It turns out that not only the CIA use these drones to assassinate key people, but the military and the private contractors used them as well. The use of these drones by people outside the military took away culpability, allowing these assassinations to take place without explanation to anyone, even when there is collateral damage. This is all done under the president's say so and without consultation of the Congress or the American people based on legal justification done in the George W. Bush administration. By running the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in this fashion, the government has essentially kept the war from the American people. The people do not feel the impact of a country at war, therefore they have few opinions about the war. This is costing the country as it is necessary to funnel more and more money into the defense funds, leaving America carrying a fiscal deficit. Not only this, but the government no longer seems to feel the need to make excuses as to why the war is continuing. The idea of counterinsurgency has become something of a joke in Iraq and Afghanistan because it is neither practical nor effective. Yet this is the excuse for American military remaining in these places.

The cost of taking care of the families of American soldiers became so enormous that the American military had to look for other ways to provide the things needed. This led them to look to outside industry, inviting in private industry to do the things that the military felt were too expensive to handle themselves and hoped would be cheaper with these outside resources. This led to other uses of private industry, eventually allowing the American government to use private industry for everything from providing food for deployed soldiers to repairing military vehicles to training troops and foreign armies. It seems like a good idea, but in the end the author points out the difficulties of such an arrangement, like the fact that no one holds these companies accountable.

With the use of private industry in helping the military fight wars, the president has been handed the ability to fight multiple, long-term wars without disturbing the American people or being accountable to them. This has led to such things as the CIA team who worked out of Shasi airbase in Pakistan to use drones to kill people on the ground. This has been a progression from Johnson's decision not to ask Congress for help in the Vietnam conflict to Reagan using the CIA and private funds to help the Contras. It is a progression that the author sees as one that will lead America to perpetual war.



Chapter 8 and Epilogue

Chapter 8 and Epilogue Summary and Analysis

Chapter 9. An \$8 Trillion Fungus Among Us. In Minot, North Dakota there is an airbase where many of the American nuclear arms are stored. It is a boring job to work at this airbase as the work is mundane. However, these weapons are all still active nuclear bombs that need care. Each of these bombs is more than fifty years old, technology that was not meant to survive more than twenty years. Not only this, but the technology is so old that the fuzes cannot be worked on by modern technicians because they have no clue how they work. Scientists today cannot even reproduce the Fogbank, a part of hydrogen bombs that was designed to ensure that the hydrogen in the bomb reached a high enough energy level to explode on cue. Therefore, refurbishing the bombs has been a losing proposition.

During the height of the Cold War, in the sixties, the American military thought it best for fly B-52 bombers twenty four hours a day with nukes on board in order to fire the weapons at Russia should they fire on America and destroy her first. During this time period, several of these planes went down or were lost, causing the lost or detonation of multiple nuclear warheads. One that slipped off of a plane during a landing accident is still buried in a field in Faro, North Carolina. More recently, six live nuclear warheads were accidentally transported cross country from North Dakota to Louisiana when multiple military personnel failed to check that the warheads had been properly replaced with dummy weights before transport.

There has been arguments made that the nuclear weapons should be disposed of and the program ended. However, so many foreign governments have these weapons too that the American government feels it would be unwise to get rid of them, despite these obvious problems in storing and caring for them. Therefore, the government has decided to funnel millions into the nuclear program in order to keep it running.

Epilogue You Build It, You Own It. The author says that although there have been many missteps in recent history regarding the military, they are still the best fighting force in the world. All the problems with the military are fixable. The author suggests several things that might fix the current problems with the military. First, the American public should feel the pain of war every time our country goes to war. Second, the government should rid itself of the secret military, the actions of the CIA. Third, the military should not be involved in things the State Department, Peace Corps, or FEMA should be handling. Fourth, the Guard and Reserves should be treated as the Guard and Reserves. Fifth, stop using private contractors for military functions. Sixth, the government and the American people should stop believing the unsubstantiated claims of groups such as Team B. Seventh, the nuclear program should shrink. Eighth, the President of the United States needs to be true to the Constitution and remember that only Congress has the right to declare war.



The author claims that the nuclear weapons stored by the United States are in a dangerous state of decomposition and that no one truly possess the ability to repair or rebuild these weapons. Not only this, but at least eleven of these weapons have gone missing in the years since the program began. These weapons are not only a danger to our enemies, but to the American people as well. It is a program that is past its usefulness.

The author has used her book to point out problems she sees with the American military. All of these problems appear to go against the main intentions of the Founding Fathers. Among these problems, the author sees that recent American Presidents have used loopholes in the law to take the ability to wage war into their own hands. The author makes suggestions on how these problems can be repaired and bring the military back to the way they were intended to be used.

Characters

Lyndon B. Johnson

Lyndon Johnson took over the presidency when JFK was assassinated. Although JFK had already committed some troops to Vietnam, it was under Johnson that the number of troops involved in the conflict significantly increased. Johnson made the choice to not call up the National Guards or the military reserves in an attempt to avoid having to consult Congress on the continuing conflict in Vietnam. Instead, Johnson re-instituted the draft, calling up young American men to fight in the conflict.

Ronald Reagan

Ronald Reagan was an American actor who entered politics in the seventies. During World War II, Ronald Reagan was a soldier assigned to a special unit whose task it was to make training films. This was Reagan's only experience as a soldier. However, he developed a respect for soldiers that would be life long.

Reagan ran for the Republican nomination for President against Gerald Ford in 1976. During this race, Reagan had trouble catching the American public's attention or winning any races. Reagan then began to discuss the treaty with Panama that was pending, suggesting that Panama was trying to take the canal from the American people. Although much of what Reagan was saying was untrue, it helped him win many states he was predicted to lose and it made the passing of the treaty in Congress more difficult than it was predicted to be.

When Reagan became president four years later, he embraced the idea of making America appear stronger in the eyes of the world. The first thing Reagan did was increase the defense budget. Reagan then involved America in several conflicts overseas. One was the invasion of Grenada, which was badly planned and overwhelmingly unnecessary.

In Reagan's second term, he became involved in raising private money for the continuation of a secret war in Nicaragua where he had been running CIA operatives in support of the Contras against the Nicaraguan government. Reagan removed the CIA under orders of the Congress, but continued to run a secret war there. Reagan and his staff members were later investigated for this, and the trade of weapons for hostages, but pardoned by his successor, George H. W. Bush.

George Herbert Walker Bush

George H. W. Bush was vice-president under Reagan, and became president after his second term. During the first months of Bush's presidency, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Out of fear that Hussein would take over all the oil fields in that country and its



neighboring countries, Bush negotiated with the Saudi Arabian king to allow American forces to protect the oil fields in that country. This angered a rebel leader, Osama bin Laden, who would later plan the September 11, 2001 attacks against America.

Bush refused to speak with Congress about the planned attack against Hussein. However, Congress would not sit back and allow Bush to do as he planned. In fact, several Congressmen filed suit against Bush and won a verdict, but the judge refused to order Bush to ask Congress for permission to go to war. However, after much harassment, Bush finally went to Congress to discuss the situation a week before the deadline given to Hussein to leave Kuwait.

George Walker Bush

George Walker Bush is the son of George H. W. Bush, and forty-third President of the United States. The second George Bush made multiple tax cuts in the days before the attacks in New York and Washington D.C. that took place on September 11, 2001. After these attacks, Bush sent troops into Afghanistan to fight against the Taliban, the group believed responsible for the attacks. This war led to a war in Iraq where Bush finished what his father had started against Hussein. However, after the mission was accomplished, Bush did not remove his troops from Iraq, but continued the war for many years with multiple excuses as to why American troops needed to be there while trying to hide the impact of war from the American people.

Dick Cheney

Dick Cheney was Secretary of Defense during George H. W. Bush's presidency. During this time, Cheney restructured the military and helped author the Logistical Civilian Augmentation Program, LOGCAP, that allowed the American government to use private industry to augment the military. Dick Cheney would then benefit from these changes when he became CEO of Halliburton, a company with a subsidiary who was one of the first and most active corporations used by the government to augment the military. Cheney would later become vice-president under George W. Bush.

William Clinton

Bill Clinton was forty-second President of the United States after George H. W. Bush. Clinton would be the first president who was able to take full advantage of LOGCAP. Clinton used LOGCAP in the Balkans during the Bosnian war.

Gerald Ford

Gerald Ford was the thirty-ninth President of the United States. Ford took over the Presidency as the Vietnam Conflict was coming to a close. However, Ford felt that American troops needed to remain in Vietnam in 1975 and even considered sending



more troops to Vietnam to defend the fledgling government. However, in an unprecedented move, Congress visited with Ford and refused to allow him to send more troops. In fact, Congress advised Ford to remove the remaining American troops and local friendlies from the area and cut his proposed budget for the conflict in Vietnam.

David Petraeus

David Petraeus was a military commander when he was appointed head of the CIA, more than likely because of his military experience and ability to run covert operations. Prior to this, Petraeus wrote a field manual on counterinsurgency and this was adopted as the goal in both Iraq and Afghanistan despite being impractical and impossible to implement.

Oliver North

Oliver North was a military adviser to President Ronald Reagan. North became deeply involved in the raising of and distributing of private funds to aid the Contras in Nicaragua. When the Iran-Contra affair became public, North was one of the main players in the investigation, facing long interrogation by Congress during the hearings. North was later pardoned by President George H. W. Bush for his involvement in the Iran-Contra affair.

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson was a Founding Father of the United States. Jefferson believed that if there were a standing army and if the decision to make war was left in the hands of one man, the country would be perpetually at war. For this reason, Jefferson helped write a Constitution which removed these possibilities. The Constitution gives the right to declare war only to the Congress. However, many presidents have found a way around this.



Objects/Places

Nuclear Weapons

Nuclear weapons were stockpiled during the Cold War in order to protect America against possible nuclear war with Russia. However, this war never came to fruition and these bombs continue to grow old in bunkers around the country.

Drones

Drones are remote operated planes that are used to commit assassinations from a safe distance. This are commonly used by the CIA to avoid scrutiny under Congress or the American people.

LOGCAP

LOGCAP, or Logistic Civilian Augmentation Program, is a program that allows the American government to use private industry to augment the military. These private interests have been used to provide anything from food service, housing, to private security and vehicle maintenance.

Abram's Total Force Policy

Under Abram's Total Force Policy, no conflict involving the military could proceed without calling up the Reserves and Guard. This was put in place in the hopes of avoiding the situation Johnson created when he avoided calling up the Reserves and Guard to avoid going to Congress for a declaration of war during the Vietnam Conflict.

War Powers Resolution of 1973

The War Powers Resolution of 1973 reiterated what the Constitution already said, that only Congress could declare war.

Boland Amendment

The Boland Amendment prevented President Reagan from using government funding to support military operations in Nicaragua. This amendment also invited Reagan the opportunity to speak with Congress about his actions and plans in Nicaragua, implying they would lift the ban on funds if he were to speak with them, but he declined.



Grenada

Grenada is a small island that is a part of the British Commonwealth. This island was invaded by American soldiers during Reagan's presidency in an attempt to rescue American students during a rebellion against the government.

The Balkans

In the Balkans, there was war between Bosnia and Croatia and the Serbs. Clinton wanted to commit American troops to Bosnia and Croatia, but faced resistance in Congress. For this reason, private companies trained Croatian soldiers who won a victory over the Serbs using American tactics. Clinton was later able to send American troops to the area.

Kuwait

Kuwait is a small country in the Persian Gulf. The Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, invaded Kuwait in an attempt to get control of the oil fields there and to invade neighboring Saudi Arabia. Bush committed American troops to remove Hussein forcibly before gaining permission of the Congress.

Afghanistan

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, George W. Bush declared war, with Congress, on Afghanistan in an attempt to stop the Taliban leader, Osama bin Laden, and his followers from making similar attacks on American soil.

Themes

Misuse of Executive Power

The author reviews the actions of each president from the time of the Vietnam War to present day. In doing this, the author focuses on the actions of each president during times of conflict. She begins with Johnson, who chose not to call of Reservists and Guard during the Vietnam conflict, but rather enforce the draft, because calling up the Reservists and Guard would be too dramatic. It would also require a visit to Congress, which Johnson wanted to avoid. By doing this, Johnson was able to send thousands of American soldiers to Vietnam without actually declaring war.

Ford attempted to do the same, sending American troops back to Vietnam to support its fragile government, but changes to the structure of the military and laws in Congress prevented Ford from going forward. However, when Reagan became president he found ways around Congress as well. Reagan sent troops to invade the small island of Grenada without informing Congress. This backfired on him when he later wanted funding for CIA agents working with Contra rebels in Nicaragua. Congress passed an amendment keeping Reagan from using government money to support the rebels. Reagan moved the CIA out of Nicaragua, but he raised private funds and sent in private operatives to continue helping the Contras against the will of the Congress. This would lead to Reagan and his associates being investigated, but later pardoned.

After Reagan, forty-first president George H. W. Bush attempted to begin a war in the Persian Gulf without consulting the Congress, but they fought back. Eventually Bush and Congress came together to declare war on Saddam Hussein. Bush's presidency would also introduce America to LOGCAP, a new resolution that allowed the government to use private contractors to augment the military. This would lead to Clinton, George W. Bush, and Clinton using private contractors to help fight conflicts in the Balkans and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Overspending

As the book begins, the author points out multiple examples of poor use of government money in order to promote safety or peace in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. The author mentions her own hometown where a safety fence has been erected around a local water supply even though the only thing it keeps out is the mowers. The author also mentions a waste water project in Iraq that cost millions of dollars but was never satisfactorily completed.

As the book progresses, the author mentions other examples of overspending, especially in regards to the military. Reagan increased the defense budget by twenty percent in his first months in office even though there were no active conflicts at the time. Over the eight years of his presidency, Reagan continued to increase the defense



budget by using information that was unsubstantiated and provided by questionable sources. This would continue in other presidencies, most notably when George W. Bush would cut taxes and then turn around and increase the defense budget as America went to war.

The author talks about monies devoted to the nuclear project that is not being used for a clear, definable reason. Millions of dollars are being spent on old weapons that have become dangerous and obsolete.

Overspending on illogical or obsolete projects is one of the things the author mentions could be changed to undo the unmooring of the American military.

Over Militarization

One of the major themes of this book is the over militarization of America. The author suggests that recent presidents have been over eager to go to war. In this way, the American presidency has moved away from the desire of the American people. The author suggests that recent presidents have taken the declaration of war into their own hands rather than involve Congress, something that would place the decision to go to war in the hands of the American people.

The author quotes Thomas Jefferson in the beginning of the book. Jefferson was against the idea of a standing army and the power to declare war in the hands of one man. For this reason, the Founding Fathers gave the right to declare war to the Congress. Recent presidents have found ways around this. This is one of the things the author points out as a reason for the unmooring of the American military.

Style

Perspective

Rachel Maddow, the author of this book, is a political commentator with a television show on MSNBC. Ms. Maddow's perspective is one of an American citizen who is unhappy with what she sees as the unmooring of the American military. The perspective is subjective, an opinion that is objective to a point, but is not totally removed from the subject due to her experiences both in the political arena and as an American citizen.

Ms. Maddow is a well-educated woman who has great knowledge of the American government. Ms. Maddow uses this knowledge in this book, giving her readers a well-organized book filled with verifiable information. Ms. Maddow's perspective is clear. She believes that the American military has moved away from the intentions of the Founding Fathers, but that it is a problem that is easily repairable.

Tone

The tone of this book is filled with both humor and solemnity. The author presents her information with interjections, sometimes making commits such as interjecting an oops after describing a mistake the troops on Grenada made. This is humorous, but the subject is so serious that the reader can sense the sarcasm under the interjection. Therefore the tone may seem light at first, but when the reader begins to understand that true impact of Ms. Maddow's words, it is the heaviness of this sarcasm they are left with.

The tone fits the book well. The subject matter is of the utmost seriousness, but the author presents it in such a way that it can almost be amusing at certain points until the reader becomes aware of the sarcasm under the humor. This works with the book because it is something of a comedy of errors that the author is describing with her words, both sarcastic and humorous.

Structure

"Drift: The Unmooring of American Military Power" is divided into nine chapters, a prologue and epilogue. The prologue introduces the subject of the book by describing many projects that somehow went wrong in the post-September 11, 2001 world. The novel then goes on to describe how the military has changed in purpose and meaning since the Vietnam War, creating what now exists: a military at war, but augmented by private enterprise. The epilogue sums up what the author sees as the problem with America's military and several ideas of how it might be repaired.

The book is written in a linear time line in which the author takes the reader from the beginning of the perceived problem through to the current difficulties she sees with the

military. The author tells her story in a narration that includes snippets of dialogue she imagines, or has been told, took place at key moments during the time period she is examining. The author also gives examples of transcripts of investigations that are pertinent to her arguments.



Quotes

"In the little town where I live in Hampshire County, Massachusetts, we now have a 'Public Safety Complex' around the corner from what used to be our hokey Andy Griffithesque fire station." Prologue, paragraph 1

"Jefferson acted on his pet 'unnecessary soldier' idea when he became president in 1801. He cut the standing army by a third and left the defense against foreign invasion largely to a 'well-regulated militia' under the control of the various states and localities." Chapter 1, paragraph 4

"When Ronald Reagan spoke a thing aloud, he believed it forever and for always. By the time he started running for president, in 1976, he had already developed an unwavering and steadfast faith in the correctness of whatever came out of his mouth." Chapter 2, paragraph 1

"There really is nothing that approaches war's political potency." Chapter 2, paragraph 36

"The military marketers had started retooling their sales pitch when the unspooling Vietnam disaster had convinced politicians the time had come to end the draft." Chapter 3, paragraph 2

"Secrecy. That was the controlling force in the planning and execution of Operation Urgent Fury, the October 1983 invasion of the Caribbean island of Grenada." Chapter 4, paragraph 5

"The thing to do in Nicaragua seemed so glaringly obvious to President Reagan that it almost didn't need explaining ('It seems to me that the issue was so plain,' he was still saying years later. 'We were talking about preventing the presence of a Soviet satellite in the Americas!')" Chapter 5, paragraph 1

"Two hundred thousand additional troops minimum, nearly double what the president of the United States had already ordered into the hot desert of Saudi Arabia, was what it would take." Chapter 6, paragraph 1

"The demographics of our Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps had changed drastically since the Vietnam War." Chapter 7, paragraph 2

"Worse, word quickly leaked out that President Obama had not only ordered that the Pakistani military and its intelligence service be kept in the dark while the mission was being planned and executed, he had his team ready to do battle with an Pakistani military forces that tried to stop the operation once in progress." Chapter 8, paragraph 3

"While our nuclear-armed cruise missiles were growing leading-edge wing fungus in the subtropical moisture of Louisiana, other US military flying hardware was having rather



the opposite problem: in the words of Defense Industry Daily, they 'were about to fly their wings off—and not just as a figure of speech.'" Chapter 9, paragraph 9

"Decisions about national security are ours to make." Epilogue, paragraph 32



Topics for Discussion

According to the Constitution, who has the right to declare war? Why was the Constitution written in this way? How have several presidents managed to get around this part of the Constitution? Why would they want to do this? What is the Boland Amendment? How does this impact this part of the Constitution?

What is Vietnam? Why were American troops there? Why did Johnson never call up the Reserves or the Guard? Why is this significant? How did the Vietnam conflict end? How did the American public feel about Vietnam? How did this impact the American military at this point in time? How did it influence the military in latter years?

What is Abram's Total Force Policy? What does this policy require? Why was this enacted? What was it meant to prevent? Did it work? Explain. How was this policy eventually rendered essentially irrelevant according to the author?

Why did Ronald Reagan send troops to invade Grenada? What was his purpose there? How did this end? How did this impact Reagan's war in Nicaragua? Who are the Contras? Why did Reagan want to support the Contras? Why did he call himself a Contra? How did Congress force Reagan out of Nicaragua? What did Reagan do in order to continue supporting the Contras?

What is the Iran-Contra affair? What is the Iran part of this situation? Why would Reagan think he could trade weapons for hostages? Who was being held hostage? Who had them? How did Reagan plan to get them out? Why was Reagan unwilling to speak with Congress about his plan to help the hostages? Did Reagan know what he was doing was essentially illegal?

Why did George H. W. Bush resist going to Congress in regards to the Kuwait conflict? How did Congress respond to Bush's actions? Why is it required of a president to allow Congress to declare war? Why can a president not declare war on his own? What is the reason for this? What eventually happened with Bush and Kuwait?

What is LOGCAP? Who wrote it? When was it enacted? Which presidents have taken advantage of this? Why? How does LOGCAP help the American military? How does the author suggest LOGCAP harms the American military? What does the author suggest should be done with LOGCAP?