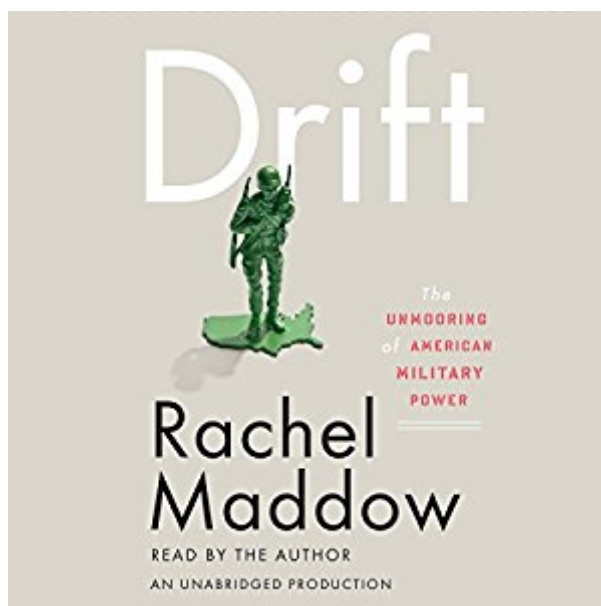


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# Drift: The Unmooring Of American Military Power



## Synopsis

"One of my favorite ideas is, never to keep an unnecessary soldier," Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1792. Neither Jefferson nor the other Founders could ever have envisioned the contemporary national security state, with its tens of thousands of "privateers"; its bloated Department of Homeland Security; its rusting nuclear weapons, ill-maintained and difficult to dismantle; and its strange fascination with an unproven counterinsurgency doctrine. Written with bracing wit and intelligence, Rachel Maddow's *Drift* argues that we've drifted away from America's original ideals and become a nation weirdly at peace with perpetual war, with all the financial and human costs that entails. To understand how we've arrived at such a dangerous place, Maddow takes us from the Vietnam War to today's war in Afghanistan, along the way exploring the disturbing rise of executive authority, the gradual outsourcing of our war-making capabilities to private companies, the plummeting percentage of American families whose children fight our constant wars for us, and even the changing fortunes of G.I. Joe. She offers up a fresh, unsparing appraisal of Reagan's radical presidency. Ultimately, she shows us just how much we stand to lose by allowing the priorities of the national security state to overpower our political discourse. Sensible yet provocative, dead serious yet seriously funny, *Drift* will reinvigorate a "loud and jangly" political debate about how, when, and where to apply America's strength and power - and who gets to make those decisions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Rarely do I give five stars. This one earned it. Maddow walks you through history showing how the US has gone from a people distrustful of conflict and war, to one where all the checks and balances have eroded to the point where we now have perpetual war. Drift is compelling, honest, with an unblinking eye toward the choices we have made as a nation.

Regardless of whether or not you like Rachel Maddow or agree with her politics, and I'm not generally much of a fan, you owe it to yourself to read this book. It should be required reading for anyone who cares about the U.S., our heritage, military policy, and future. You don't have to agree with her but you should at least consider what she has to say on the topic. This is a terrific book. I believe that Ms. Maddow has done a remarkable job of defending her argument. I saw her on Meet The Press and she said she saved this topic for a book because it required "a long argument". Reading her long argument felt like being on an island of common sense in a vast ocean of madness. This book is not partisan although many will see it that way. She reserves as much criticism for Obama's secret wars as she does those of other presidents. The bulk of the early part of the book is about Reagan's secret wars and the Iran-Contra scandal and then she traverses the next couple of decades, including the last decade of seemingly endless wars in the Middle East, and ends with Obama's secret CIA drone wars. Her wit is very sarcastic and scathing at times, but this can be overlooked as one considers the actual content of her arguments. I'm sure that to people who don't agree with her will find this part of her writing to be off-putting, but we can all be bigger than that. There is substance in this book and the substance is what should be considered. The tone is just part of being a passionate human and actually gives the writing some character and humor. She calls the military superstructure we have built a leviathan. It's a great beast that is out of control and has gained a life of its own that is disconnected from average Americans and control by Congress in ways the founders never intended. The President has way too much control to wage war without Congressional approval and the Congress is weak and fails to exercise what oversight it does retain. Americans are for the most part unaffected by the perpetual war with the exception of a tiny percentage of soldiers and their families. This is not the way it was supposed to be argues Maddow. She argues, quite persuasively, that the founding fathers never intended that we would be in a perpetual state war with a massive standing military for the President to use as he sees fit. There are parts of this book that are depressing and even downright scary. I think it hit bottom for me when she describes how there is some formula used to ignite hydrogen bombs that nobody knows how to make anymore. I guess they didn't write it down and all the people who knew how to

do it are now gone. Doesn't that give you a warm fuzzy? In any case I highly recommend this book to every thinking reader whether you think you will agree with the author or not. At the very least you will come away with better view of the other side, and that view is one that should make us all very uncomfortable.

Very interesting book about how America went from basically no standing army to a large, expensive military complex that originally required congressional permission to use and eventually became useable by presidential choice for virtually as long as the president wanted: A real study in political gamesmanship that has found a way around the constitutional protections our forefathers wanted to prevent wars like Iraq.

Maddow's book is a great review of American military history, politics, strategy and engagement over the last half century. The sweeping review of how the military's role has changed over time and how various administrations, both Republican and Democratic, have used the power of the military for geopolitical purposes is engaging and thought provoking. Perhaps the most unsettling of all is Maddow's chapter on the disintegrating state of America's nuclear arsenal. In it, she reveals the perilous status of our weapons and the internal military budget competition for conventional force funding which led to much of the disrepair. Her analysis of what could and should be done to help ensure our military's future sustainability is a thoughtful and politically challenging call to arms. For those who might be inclined to think of Maddow as a far left wing critic of Republican policies and initiatives, she is. But she is also highly critical of the Democratic administration's continued use of drone strikes without adequate Congressional oversight and accountability. I highly recommend this book as a starting point for a great discussion about the current and future role of the US military, as well as the starting point for some serious thinking about the relationship between the military and civilian life.

I don't watch cable news. Especially MSNBC or FOX. Both are, in my opinion, just plain awful. Amidst all the casual accusations of racism, political correctness, and Obama worship on the former network, and just plain political and religious wing-nuttery on the latter, I feel it best to stay far far away. Yet this book from Rachel Maddow, an MSNBC host, is actually quite good. I admittedly lean quite far to the left, especially on issues of national defense, so I can't say this argument was very new to me. Yet it was presented with excellent documentation, entertaining anecdotes that bring to mind Dr. Strangelove, and constructive suggestion for reform. Our post war military

apparatus is indeed drifting without any compass whatsoever, and if this book can awaken the citizenry to any extent it will be of great benefit both for our national security and that of the world. You should read it!

Disturbing and persuasive exploration of the evolution of the growth of the military, particularly related to the constitutional separation of powers and the divorcing of major decisions about military budget/projects/wars from the political process. I'd never thought about a lot of these developments in this detail before, but subcontracting so many defense functions and shifting so much of the decision-making to the executive branch does mean that the average American doesn't "feel" it when the country is at war. People aren't as affected by it, which is the opposite of what the founders wrote into the Constitution... I want to ask why we're not talking about this more, but that's also the answer.

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