



Foreign Policy Is Still on Autopilot

By [Lucy Steigerwald](#)

November 06, 2014

The midterms are over, but the lingering distraction as to their great meaning will last a few more weeks. Ebola and the Islamic State (ISIS) were put on the backburner while everyone wrung their hands over the importance of the political process at home. Once again, in spite of the laughably low approval rate of Congress, [only a handful of incumbents](#) failed to retain their jobs. Republicans took back the Senate, and hawks like Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) kept their seats (but he's not in that "for revenge," as the [senator creepily tweeted](#) apropos of nothing).

Thankfully, gadfly of the surveillance state Rep. Justin Amash (R-Mich.) also kept his seat. And Washington DC, Oregon, and Alaska legalized recreational marijuana, putting several more substantial chinks in the armor of the militarized prison state at home.

All the same, these bright spots, and the warmongering habits of the Democrats are one thing, Republicans' control of the Senate is another – and it might be more dangerous than what we've had recently. No less than former Congressman Ron Paul [tweeted his concern](#) over the GOP's big win. Paul suggested that a Republican Senate means a true, boots on the ground conflict is more likely. Hopefully, Paul is wrong. Hopefully, the creeping sanity that comes with folks like Amash and (to a lesser, but still promising extent) Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) can spread over all of Congress. But Paul the elder is not alone in his pessimism on foreign policy here. As weak-willed as Congress is in terms of foreign policy now, a more hawk-dominant Senate may force President Barack Obama to be [more of one himself](#).

As frustrating as the Obama presidency has been for anyone who hoped that being against the War in Iraq at its outset meant something, it [could have been worse](#). And it could *get* worse if we have a Congress filled with the newly-invigorated urge to fight harder against ISIS – or Iran, finally – and to continue the out of control vehicle that is the US foreign policy.

After all, when there are groups of truly vile, violent theocrats who wish to hurt America, and hurt myriad innocent civilians throughout the the Middle East, how can you just stop fighting wars? Existing resentment towards the country and its people is cultivated and multiplied by each successive president. As the Cato Institute's [Gene Healy noted](#), War Powers Resolution violations did not begin with Obama in Libya or Pakistan. Even George W. Bush, who mostly paved the road for Obama's murderous executive actions didn't start that. We had Clinton

running amok in Kosovo first. We have had presidents going to war if they wanted war for a long, long time.

Make your choice: did American empire began in 1492, 1898, 1914, 1947, 1963, 2003? It doesn't matter. It is a perpetual motion machine that would take a superhuman effort to stop. And most politicians have no interest in even trying. Wars make more reasons for wars, and so on, and so forth.

Now, electoral politics do occasionally contain scope for change. [As Justin Raimondo observed](#), Ron Paul's 2008 and 2012 campaigns are a victory in the sense that they were educational. No anti-warrior could argue against the beauty of a flustered, ranting, amazing old dude saying "Hey! Over there, people are angry because of the way the US treats them – *and what's more, we would feel the same if China or some other nation treated us like that.*"

At the same time, it's very difficult not to look at the Republican control of the Senate, and to look at the weak, hawkish-but-not-admitting-it Democrats in Congress and wonder what, if anything, has changed? What can be done to stop the war machine?

How can the US stop intervening, when the system is set up to create monsters, and then to destroy them?

A damning picture of the impossibility of the corner the US painted itself into comes in a recent [Washington Post piece](#) on how ISIS was born in the Iraqi Camp Bucca prison. The whole article details how though many prisoners were already radical Islamists, the setup was perfect to school more folks for terrorism. A great way to learn to hate the US is to be stashed in a big, scary prison camp with other people who can give you the latest terrorism tips. Those who suggest that killing all these people would have been easier aren't entirely wrong. Of course, killing people means you might kill innocents, thereby committing a moral outrage, and bringing about more resentment. Caging innocents is just as wrong. Plus, it simply draws out the resentment – offering years during which there is nothing to do except survive the prison camp, and learn to hate America.

Another terrorism factory is the now-uninteresting drone attacks. America was busy with midterms, and busy with ISIS, and busy with healthcare, and drone strikes have not been major news in some time. But 30 people were just killed [by one in Yemen](#). They are reportedly all al-Qaeda affiliated, which may or may not be true, but it's unlikely we will know for sure. This distrust is perfectly reasonable, considering what we do know about drone casualty standards.

Fundamentally, even someone who is a foreign policy improvement, such as Rand Paul cannot be seen as entirely opposing American security. And thanks to America, there are an awful lot of (would-be, could-be) threats to American security. Or the security of its allies. You gotta bomb a little then. You can't just pull out everyone from everywhere.

For America to protect itself is for America to strike out against its various enemies, thereby assuring a fresh supply of them for all time. Bringing all the troops (and drones) home, and continuing to engage in the world only in a diplomatic way – or, best of all, through trade –

would not magically solve every ill. The past 100 years of intervention will not be undone, no matter if America changes its foreign policy by 180 degrees. But the only way to reverse the trend of hate towards the US is to stop interventions now, and to stop them permanently.