



## Reason.tv: The President's War – How Foreign Policy Became One Man's Prerogative

by [Reason TV](#)

As Barack Obama announces the beginning of [troop withdrawal](#) from Afghanistan, a far bigger issue – one that goes to the heart of American history and government – remains unaddressed.

“That the President has the right to start a war at his pleasure is just completely divorced from the original meaning of the Constitution,” says constitutional scholar [Gene Healy](#).

President Bush declared a war on terror that could theoretically extend into any country accused of harboring terrorists, [including the United States itself](#). President Obama not only expanded the war in Afghanistan soon after taking office, he decided to bomb Libya without consulting Congress.

Healy, author of [The Cult of the Presidency](#) and an analyst at the Cato Institute, offers a forceful critique of the increasingly expansive role of the president in not only conducting wars but in declaring them. While the Constitution [delegates the declaration of war to Congress](#), Healy stresses that its members are usually more interested in “handing out the bacon and getting re-elected” than in being held accountable for the success and failure of military interventions.

[Michael Ramsey](#), a constitutional scholar and law professor at the University of San Diego, believes that the Constitution grants the president fairly broad war powers, especially in response to attacks, but even he argues that President Obama's recent Libya intervention has no Constitutional justification.

Is this any way to run a country's foreign policy and military might?

Ramsey and Healy sat down with Reason.tv to discuss how presidential war powers have expanded over time – and whether that's a good thing for the United States and the rest of the world.

Produced and Edited by Zach Weissmueller; shot by Paul Feine, Josh Swain, and Jim Epstein.

About 9 minutes.

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