

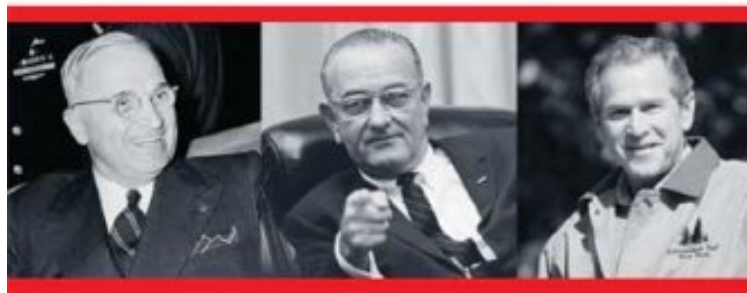
(Mobile pdf) Commander in Chief: How Truman, Johnson, and Bush Turned a Presidential Power into a Threat to America's Future

# Commander in Chief: How Truman, Johnson, and Bush Turned a Presidential Power into a Threat to America's Future

*Geoffrey Perret*

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## Commander in Chief



How Truman, Johnson, and Bush  
Turned a Presidential Power into a  
Threat to America's Future

Geoffrey Perret

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**Geoffrey Perret : Commander in Chief: How Truman, Johnson, and Bush Turned a Presidential Power into a Threat to America's Future** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Commander in Chief: How Truman, Johnson, and Bush Turned a Presidential Power into a Threat to America's Future:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Glad My Kindle Has A DictionaryBy anonymousWhile I admit I am no genius, I feel I read enough to have some grasp of words. I had to keep pausing and looking up words in the dictionary so I could follow what was going on. A few examples: sedulously, fictive, limned, febrile, mendacious, apothegm, ratiocination, hagrid, frisson, threnody, abasing, suppurating, semiotics, anodyne, empyrean, ineluctably, lachrymose, parlous, wastrel, serried. These are only the few I started to keep track of after about 1/2 of the book. Other than this being tedious to read I found it very interesting. Also learned quite a few interesting facts and backstory about each subject that I wasn't aware of.10 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Red Hot Anger Harms Strength of MessageBy T. McCormickI've just about finished a very uneven diatribe against American presidential power called "Commander-in-Chief," by Geoffrey Perret, an historian who wrote a good bio of U. S. Grant about 10 years ago. The basic premise of the new book is that Truman, Johnson, and Bush Two extended presidential power in unconstitutional ways to pursue wrongheaded wars, and they had help from Nixon, Reagan, Clinton and Bush One. JFK, Ford, and Carter get somewhat of a pass, but not JFK's advisors, and certainly not his generals. Much of Perret's prose is so vitriolic and sarcastic that it takes away from the strength of the arguments he's trying to put forward. His footnoting of his research is also uneven; a claim that a Kuwaiti diplomat's daughter gave perjured testimony to the U.S. Congress about butchered babies in the Iraqi attack on Kuwait, and that this testimony helped persuade Congress to vote for war powers to attack Iraq in Gulf One, is unsupported by any footnotes. The hell of it is that he's basically on the money in his assessments. I'm too old and fixed in habit to stop reading and listening to historical and political pundits, but I would solemnly advise you not to bother to do so, and just simply vote against any politician (such as Rudi Giuliani) who suggests that going to war is going to solve our problems. As Perret points out, the U.S. must reassess the limits of its power, find alternative energy sources other than in the Mideast, and stop parading around as the toughest guy on the block. Otherwise, the chaos and anarchy created by our unwise actions will ultimately combine to make us defeat ourselves.1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Essential reading.By Midwest Book ReviewCOMMANDER IN CHIEF: HOW TRUMAN, JOHNSON, AND BUSH TURNED A PRESIDENTIAL POWER INTO A THREAT TO AMERICA'S FUTURE is a powerful history linking expanding presidential powers to unwinnable wars. The three selected presidents profiled here each share the attribute of confronting wars that no American force could win. How they reacted would change the shape of politics, executive powers and freedoms in America, making COMMANDER IN CHIEF a top recommendation above the usual military library. Public libraries also will find the blend of military history and biography, with its focus on civil liberties, to be essential reading.

This is a story of ever-expanding presidential powers in an age of unwinnable wars. Harry Truman and Korea, Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam, George W. Bush and Iraq: three presidents, three ever broader interpretations of the commander in chief clause of the Constitution, three unwinnable wars, and three presidential secrets. Award-winning presidential biographer and military historian Geoffrey Perret places these men and events in the larger context of the post-World War II world to establish their collective legacy: a presidency so powerful it undermines the checks and balances built into the Constitution, thereby creating a permanent threat to the Constitution itself. In choosing to fight in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq, Truman, Johnson, and Bush alike took counsel of their fears, ignored the advice of the professional military and major allies, and were influenced by facts kept from public view. Convinced that an ever-more powerful commander in chief was the key to victory, they misread the moment. Since World War II wars have become tests of stamina rather than strength, and more likely than not they sow the seeds of future wars. Yet recent American presidents have chosen to place their country in the forefront of fighting them. In the course of doing so, however, they gave away the secret of American power—for all its might, the United States can be defeated by chaos and anarchy.

From Publishers WeeklyFew presidents have taken on the title of commander-in-chief of the armed forces with such enthusiasm as George W. Bush, who has advanced a wartime executive power unfettered by judicial or legislative oversight on far-ranging topics like the Geneva Conventions, intelligence gathering methods and targeted assassinations. Presidential and military historian Perret (Winged Victory, etc.) explores how wars like Korea, Vietnam and Iraq have been used to consolidate power in the hands of a single man. Charting Truman's anti-intellectualism and fetishization of the military, Johnson's shortsighted escalation of the Vietnam conflict and the current administration's hubris, Perret reveals the steps by which presidential power widened. (Inexplicably, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who created Japanese internment camps during WWII and attempted a coup against the Supreme Court, gets a pass.) While readers at all levels will benefit from Perret's analysis, some sections may be too specialized for nonexperts. The book ends with a thesis that deserves more attention in the body of the work: "China is the only country to have gained strategic advantages from America's three unwinnable wars. The United States has gained nothing, not even the gratitude of South Korea.... Iraq will break American power. Hello, China." (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "A military historian examines how post-WWII presidents have drained American power by waging three unwinnable wars. Asked about the importance and consequences of the French Revolution, former Chinese Premier Chou En-lai responded, "It's too soon to tell." No

such timidity from Perret (Lincoln's War, 2004, etc.), who looks at the last 60 years and concludes that Iraq will break American power, that war between nation states is virtually over, that within a decade, fears about global warming will dwarf the War on Terror, that India, China and the EU will challenge a failing America "to leave regional matters to the people who live there." We've reached this pass, Perret insists, because three American presidents, aided and abetted by fawning, half-bright advisors, a pliant Congress and a deceived public, have run away with their powers and recklessly inserted the nation into armed conflicts in Korea, Vietnam and Iraq. Furthermore, Perret argues, Truman, with his "little-guy" complex, perhaps complicated by mood-enhancing drugs, Johnson and his inferiority complex with regard to predecessor JFK, and G.W. Bush with his Daddy complex, appear to have used war, no matter the consequences to the nation, to work out their own pathologies. Surely it's too soon to tell whether America's last three difficult wars will produce the remarkable turning point Perret sees, and certainly "Presidents Gone Wild" is too glib an explanation for our involvement. But while it's easy to reject the author's judgment, it's impossible to resist his storytelling. He writes in the in-the-room brand of history, full of anecdotes, trivia and acidic portraits of presidential courtiers. Indeed, the chief delight here is the serial takedown of such sacred Washington cows as Clark Clifford ("a little too smooth, a little too pleased with himself") and Paul Wolfowitz ("a graying vulgarian"). A fast-moving, sharply told history that arrives at controversial conclusions." --Kirkus s