



This week, I released "Reining in the Imperial Presidency," a 486-page report detailing the abuses and excesses of the Bush administration and recommending steps to address them. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. popularized the term "imperial presidency" in the 1970s to describe an executive who had assumed more power than the Constitution allows and circumvented the checks and balances fundamental to our three-branch system of government.

Until recently, the Nixon administration seemed to represent a singular embodiment of the idea. Unfortunately, it is clear that the threat of the imperial presidency lives on and, indeed, reached new heights under George W. Bush.

As this report documents, there was the administration's contrived drive to a needless war of aggression with Iraq, based on manipulated intelligence and facts that were "fixed around the policy." There was its politicization of the Justice Department; unconscionable and possibly illegal policies on detention, interrogation and extraordinary rendition; warrantless wiretaps of American citizens; the ravaging of our regulatory system and the use of signing statements to override the laws of the land; and the intimidation and silencing of critics and whistle-blowers who dared to tell fellow citizens what was being done in their name. And all of this was hidden behind an unprecedented veil of secrecy and outlandish claims of privilege.

I understand that many feel we should just move on. They worry that addressing these actions by the Bush administration will divert precious energy from the serious challenges facing our nation. I understand the power of that impulse. Indeed, I want to move on as well -- there are so many things that I would rather work on than further review of Bush's presidency. But in my view it would not be responsible to start our journey forward without first knowing exactly where we are.

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