The bestselling author of The Limits of Power critically examines the Washington consensus on national security and why it must change.

For the last half century, as administrations have come and gone, the fundamental assumptions about America’s military policy have remained unchanged: American security requires the United States (and us alone) to maintain a permanent armed presence around the globe, to prepare our forces for military operations in far-flung regions, and to be ready to intervene anywhere at any time. In the Obama era, just as in the Bush years, these beliefs remain unquestioned gospel.

In a vivid, incisive analysis, Andrew J. Bacevich succinctly presents the origins of this consensus, forged at a moment when American power was at its height. He exposes the preconceptions, biases, and habits that underlie our pervasive faith in military might, especially the notion that overwhelming superiority will oblige others to accommodate America’s needs and desires—whether for cheap oil, cheap credit, or cheap consumer goods. And he challenges the usefulness of our militarism as it has become both unaffordable and increasingly dangerous.

Though our politicians deny it, American global might is faltering. This is the moment, Bacevich argues, to reconsider the principles which shape American policy in the world—to acknowledge that fixing Afghanistan should not take precedence over fixing Detroit. Replacing this Washington consensus is crucial to America’s future, and may yet offer the key to the country’s salvation.
Andrew Bacevich offers an explanation of what is putting our way of life at risk. If he is correct, the Afghan War has no end in sight as did the Iraq War (see Charles Ferguson's book: No End in Sight: Iraq's Descent into Chaos). In fact, the Afghan War is now the longest war in U.S. history.

Retired U.S. military and intelligence personnel have written prolifically about the current wars and what they mean for the U.S. They educate the public about connecting foreign policy to war strategy to what our young enlisted men and women do in the wars. Examples include books by Wesley Clark (A Time to Lead: For Duty, Honor and Country), Michael Scheuer (Marching Toward Hell: America and Islam After Iraq) and David Bellavia (HOUSE TO HOUSE: A TALE OF MODERN WAR). In the history of warfare, there has probably never been a population with as much access to information about their wars.

Washington Rules provides analysis of the considerations that President Obama faced when he made the decision to expand the military effort in Afghanistan. Whereas the consensus holds that this president grasps issues and is not primarily informed by ideology, there may have been a dominant domestic political calculation to this war decision. Bacevich identifies pressures imposed on our president by the military industrial complex and the national security apparatus. These loaded terms summarize privileged powers within the U.S. that seek global military engagement in part to maintain the status quo within. This is the Status Quo argument that has been used to explain some U.S. motives in the wars.

Andrew Bacevich has patriotic credentials to state the Status Quo argument. He has been doing this for some time. (See his previous book: The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism (American Empire Project)). His son was killed in Iraq while serving as a 1st Lt. in the Army. Andrew Bacevich is a veteran of the Vietnam War, a graduate of West Point and he taught at both West Point and Johns Hopkins. He earned his Ph.D. in history from Princeton University. He is a retired Army Colonel.

Bacevich is critical of George W. Bush and Barack Obama but for completely different reasons. Bacevich addresses the question debated from California to the New York Island, from the redwood forest to the gulf stream waters: which is worse, the president who sends young people into harms way due to misguided notions or the president who sends young people into harms way because of political calculation? Of course, this question is framed in a simple way in order to introduce debate. Bacevich is more appalled by the latter, however.

Washington Rules traces Americas overreliance on military power from the administration of Woodrow Wilson right up to that of Barack Obama. Over time the U.S. presidency morphed into an imperial presidency with a self-imposed mission to intervene in problems throughout the world irrespective
of long-term U.S. interests. An exaggerated sense of what the military can accomplish went unquestioned until recently. Bacevich makes history come alive with applications of the lessons of the Vietnam War along with several other wars.

Washington Rules addresses the following questions. What did we get out of Desert Storm? What should our role be with regard to the Islamic World? What happens if we back down in Afghanistan? Bacevich asks tough questions and that’s healthy. It’s taking me time to digest his solutions to these issues although I’m excited about changes to the status quo. With regard to the Middle East, Bacevich says our role should be to demonstrate that liberalism can coexist with religion.

Finally, Washington Rules is entertaining because it’s almost a horror story in real time. These issues affect our way of life right now. Teachers across the country are being laid off as the States struggle with their budgets, and I wonder how that might be related to federal debt accumulated to finance the wars. Bacevich is a Declinist in that he flatly states that the American Century is over and we have reached certain limits.

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Washington Rules: Americas Path to Permanent War (American Empire Project) by Andrew Bacevich - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!