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## Obama's Paralyzed Presidency and the Push for War

By Shamus Cooke

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*President Obama is breathing fresh life into the term “lame duck.” At home and abroad the president seems frozen, powerless to confront the most demanding political issues. From foreign wars to Ferguson the president’s lack of audacity seems destined to be his legacy. And while working class people in Ferguson are demanding justice at home, the U.S. establishment is insisting on war abroad.*

Who will Obama listen to? Based on his past actions Obama will continue to act for to the richest 1 percent, who’ve prospered under his presidency by devouring 95 percent of all new U.S. wealth.

The U.S. super rich are outraged by Obama’s hesitancy to wage war overseas. Republicans and Democrats alike are pouncing on Obama to “act boldly.” The Washington Post explains: “...key lawmakers from both parties criticized [Obama’s] reaction to international turmoil and suggested the administration should be more assertive in addressing conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine.”

Being “assertive” in this case simply means waging war.

But a different kind of war than the covert type Obama has been waging. Since being elected Obama has fought various covert wars around the world, as documented in Jeremy Scahill's excellent book and documentary, *Dirty Wars*.

Covert war was the strategy that Obama campaigned on, which fooled millions of Americans into believing he was the "peace candidate."

And while he succeeded in getting fewer boots on the ground, the skies overseas are filled with swarms of drones and fighter jets.

As long as Obama could prove to the U.S. establishment that covert warfare would successfully promote their interests abroad — referred to as "U.S. interests" by politicians and the media — he was given hefty corporate campaign donations.

His no-boots-on-the-ground approach had an initial string of "successes" — especially regime change in Libya and successfully hunting the "trophy" of Osama Bin Laden, Muammar Gaddafi, and many others that were assassinated without trial or evidence.

The 2400-plus civilians killed by these drones were dismissed as collateral damage in the U.S., though abroad they bred intense hatred and were successfully used by extremist groups like al-Qaeda to attract recruits.

Obama's covert strategy then hit a wall. His success in Libya is snowballing into an Iraq-sized disaster, having transformed the African nation with the highest standard of living into a living nightmare and a spawning ground for various regional conflicts.

As Libya was plunging into chaos, Obama and his Gulf state allies sought to replicate this "success" in Syria. And then things got predictably worse. Obama gave the green light for his regional allies — Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, Israel, Jordan, etc. — to send weapons, fighters, and bombing raids into Syria, which artificially extended a bloody war that otherwise would have ended long ago.

Not only did Obama fail to oust Assad in Syria, his policy of supporting the Syrian rebels helped create giant militias of Islamic extremists whom Obama happily tolerated — since they were attacking Assad — until they invaded the Kurdish region of Iraq, provoking Obama to react.

And when ISIS suddenly appeared on Obama's public radar, he recently announced, "We don't have a strategy" — a comment seized on by the right wing to highlight Obama's foreign policy paralysis.

Ukraine, too, has been an utter failure by any standard, and especially in the eyes of the U.S. establishment. Obama covertly helped usher in the fascist-led government in Ukraine in an attempt to weaken Russian influence.

But In both Ukraine and Syria Obama's allies are getting their teeth kicked in, and when these allies scream for U.S. direct military intervention — as happened in Syria and is now

happening in Ukraine — Obama has been hesitant to pull the trigger, reversing his decision to bomb Syria last year and wavering over what to do in Ukraine.

This “dithering” is what the U.S. establishment is fed up with. They want military victories abroad, by any means necessary. They’re tired of Obama’s failed covert wars; they’re ready for the real thing. In practice this means the Bush doctrine is coming back into style among U.S. politicians.

The liberal New York Times published an op-ed by John McCain and Lindsey Graham demanding military action in Syria against ISIS:

“...ISIS is a military force, and it must be confronted militarily. Mr. Obama has begun to take military actions against ISIS in Iraq, but they have been tactical and reactive half-measures...One of the hardest things a president must do is change, and history’s judgment is often kind to those who summon the courage to do so...ISIS has already forced [Obama] to begin changing course, albeit grudgingly. He should accept the necessity of further change and adopt a strategy to defeat this threat.”

Even Obama’s own advisers are breathing down his neck to act more “boldly” in Syria and Ukraine, according to a revealing article in The New York Times: “Despite pressure from within his own government for more assertive action [in Syria and Ukraine], he [Obama] tried to avoid inflaming passions as he sought new approaches.” This “pressure” from Democrats and Republicans won’t stop, and even if Obama were able to resist it, his successor won’t.

The Democratic front-runner in 2016, Hillary Clinton, has already come out in favor of a “stronger” military strategy. Clinton criticized Obama’s foreign policy weakness in an interview with the Atlantic magazine: “You know, when you’re down on yourself, and when you are hunkering down and pulling back, you’re not going to make any better decisions than when you were aggressively, belligerently putting yourself forward.”

If she wins in 2016 Hillary will be a war president, as will any potential Republican president. The establishment is united.

The logic behind this madness of the U.S. elite is based on profit. The establishment knows that if U.S.-backed allies in Syria and Ukraine win their regional conflicts, U.S. banks and other corporations will be invited in to make fat profits. And of course the trillions of dollars in oil wealth will not simply be allowed to fall into the lap of the Russians and Chinese. In a world of global economic stagnation, the U.S. 1 percent view foreign profits as a matter of life and death, and will kill with abandon to make sure corporate balance sheets are flush.

Obama already seems to be bowing to this establishment pressure. Recently, U.S.-dominated NATO announced that a “rapid response force” is in the works for Eastern Europe, as a direct result of the conflict in Ukraine. Such a move would again up the war ante against Russia.

The emerging bi-partisan war strategy hasn’t fully manifested yet, but its emergence is inevitable. The American public isn’t prepared for a return to the Bush Jr. war period, since most

Americans want nothing to do with the Ukrainian and Syrian conflicts. They are more than “war weary,” they are war sickened, and would rather the U.S. government spend the hundreds of billions of annual war money on job creation, education, health care, and other issues that are rapidly transforming the U.S. into a country of a two-class nation: the rich and everybody else, where everybody else is struggling to survive.