

America's 'double government'

Who controls the country? Not the people we elect, says Tufts professor Michael Glennon.

INTERVIEW BY JORDAN MICHAEL SMITH

THE VOTERS WHO put Barack Obama in office expected some big changes. From the NSA's warrantless wiretapping to Guantanamo Bay to the Patriot Act, candidate Obama was a defender of civil liberties and privacy, promising a dramatically different approach from his predecessor.

But six years into his administration, the Obama version of national security looks almost indistinguishable from the one he inherited. Guantanamo Bay remains open. The NSA has, if anything, become more aggressive in monitoring Americans. Drone strikes have escalated. Most recently it was reported that the same president who won a Nobel Prize in part for promoting nuclear disarmament is spending up to \$1 trillion modernizing and revitalizing America's nuclear weapons.

Why did the face in the Oval Office change but the policies remain the same? Critics tend to focus on Obama himself, a leader who perhaps has shifted with politics to take a harder line. But Tufts University political scientist Michael J. Glennon has a more pessimistic answer: Obama couldn't have changed policies much even if he tried.

Though it's a bedrock American principle that citizens can steer their own government by electing new officials, Glennon suggests that in

►Michael Glennon will discuss his book "Double Government and National Security" at the Harvard Coop on Oct. 20, at 7 p.m.
►A review of the book appears on Page N29.

practice, much of our government no longer works that way. In a new book, "National Security and Double Government," he catalogs the ways that the defense and national security apparatus is effectively self-governing, with virtually no accountability, transparency, or checks and balances of any kind. He uses the term "double government": There's the one we elect, and then there's the one behind it, steering huge swaths of policy almost unchecked. Elected officials end up serving as mere cover for the real decisions made by the bureaucracy.

Glennon cites the example of Obama and his team being shocked and angry to discover upon taking office that the military gave them only two options for the war in Afghanistan: The United States could add more troops, or the United States could add a lot more troops. Hemmed in, Obama added 30,000 more troops.

Glennon's critique sounds like an outsider's take, even a radical one. In fact, he is the quintessential insider: He was legal counsel to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a consultant to various congressional committees, as well as to the State Department. "National Security and Double Government" comes favorably blurbed by former members of the Defense Department, State Department, White House, and even the CIA. And he's not a conspiracy theorist: Rather, he sees the problem as one of "smart, hard-working, public-spirited people acting in good faith who are responding to systemic incentives"—without any meaningful oversight to rein them in.

How exactly has double government taken hold? And what can be done about it? Glennon spoke with Ideas from his office at Tufts' Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. This interview



has been condensed and edited.

IDEAS: Where does the term "double government" come from?

GLENNON: It comes from Walter Bagehot's famous theory, unveiled in the 1860s. Bagehot was the scholar who presided over the birth of the Economist magazine—they still have a column named after him. Bagehot tried to explain in his book "The English Constitution" how the British government worked. He suggested that there are two sets of institutions. There are the "dignified institutions," the monarchy and the House of Lords, which people erroneously believed ran the government. But he suggested that there was in reality a second set of institutions, which he referred to as the "efficient institutions," that actually set governmental policy.

And those were the House of Commons, the prime minister, and the British cabinet.

IDEAS: What evidence exists for saying America has a double government?

GLENNON: I was curious why a president such as Barack Obama would embrace the very same national security and counterterrorism policies that he campaigned eloquently against. Why would that president continue those same policies in case after case after case? I initially wrote it based on my own experience and personal knowledge and conversations with dozens of individuals in the military, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies of our government, as well as, of course, officeholders on Capitol Hill and in the courts. And the documented evidence in

the book is substantial—there are 800 footnotes in the book.

IDEAS: Why would policy makers hand over the national-security keys to unelected officials?

GLENNON: It hasn't been a conscious decision....Members of Congress are generalists and need to defer to experts within the national security realm, as elsewhere. They are particularly concerned about being caught out on a limb having made a wrong judgment about national security and tend, therefore, to defer to experts, who tend to exaggerate threats. The courts similarly tend to defer to the expertise of the network that defines national security policy.

The presidency itself is not a top-down institution, as many people in the public believe, headed by a president who gives orders and causes the bureaucracy to click its heels and salute. National security policy actually bubbles up from within the bureaucracy. Many of the more controversial policies, from the mining of Nicaragua's harbors to the NSA surveillance program, originated within the bureaucracy. John Kerry was not exaggerating when he said that some of those programs are "on autopilot."

IDEAS: Isn't this just another way of saying that big bureaucracies are difficult to change?

GLENNON: It's much more serious than that. These particular bureaucracies don't set truck widths or determine railroad freight rates. They make nerve-center security decisions that in a democracy can be irreversible, that can close down the marketplace of ideas, and can result in some very dire consequences.

IDEAS: Couldn't Obama's national-security decisions just result from the difference in vantage point between being a campaigner and being the commander-in-chief, responsible for 320 million lives?

GLENNON: There is an element of what you described. There is not only one explanation or one cause for the amazing continuity of American national security policy. But obviously there is something else going on when policy after policy after policy all continue virtually the same way that they were in the George W. Bush administration.

IDEAS: This isn't how we're taught to think of the American political system.

GLENNON: I think the American people are deluded, as Bagehot explained about the British population, that the institutions that provide the public face actually set American national security policy. They believe that when they vote for a president or member of Congress or succeed in bringing a case before the courts, that policy is going to change. Now, there are many counter-examples in which these branches do affect policy, as Bagehot predicted there would be. But the larger picture is still true—policy by and large in the national security realm is made by the concealed institutions.

IDEAS: Do we have any hope of fixing the problem?

GLENNON: The ultimate problem is the pervasive political ignorance on the part of the American people. And indifference to the threat that is emerging from these concealed institutions. That is where the energy for reform has to come from: the American people. Not from government. Government is very much the problem here. The people have to take the bull by the horns. And that's a very difficult thing to do, because the ignorance is in many ways rational. There is very little profit to be had in learning about, and being active about, problems that you can't affect, policies that you can't change.

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Uncommon Knowledge

Surprising insights from the social sciences BY KEVIN LEWIS

Transparency brings pay cuts

SUNSHINE MAY BE a good disinfectant, but it can burn, too. After a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative report in the Los Angeles Times in 2010 about excessive municipal manager compensation, California required municipalities to disclose compensation online. A new analysis by a Princeton professor and former chief economist at the US Department of Labor and the Office of Management and Budget finds that municipalities that hadn't previously disclosed manager compensation cut it by approximately 8 percent after the disclosure mandate, relative to municipalities that had previously disclosed compensation. The cuts happened regardless of whether the compensation was particularly high given the qualities of the town or city, which suggests they were something of a hasty populist reaction, and led to a surge in managers quitting. Also, all the cuts fell on men, which the researcher speculates could be either because men are more likely to inflate pay in secret or because "city councils believed there to be a higher risk of a lawsuit by a female city manager."

Mas, A., "Does Transparency Lead to Pay Compression?" National Bureau of Economic Research (October 2014).

Black people are magical!

BACK IN MARCH 2007, David Ehrenstein wrote in the Los Angeles Times: "Like a comic-book superhero, Obama is there to help, out of the sheer goodness of a heart we need not know or understand. For as with all Magic Negroes, the less real he seems, the more desirable he becomes. If he were real, white America couldn't project all its fantasies of curative black benevolence on him." A new study suggests it's not just Obama; in general, white people are more likely to think of black people as magical and mysterious. In a series of experiments, psychologists show that white people were quicker to associate superhuman words (ghost, paranormal, spirit, wizard, supernatural, magic, and mystical) with black faces relative to white faces. Also, when explicitly asked, white people indicated that a black person was more capable of possessing superhuman qualities—and would need less medication to alleviate pain—than a white person.



Waytz, A. et al., "A Superhumanization Bias in Whites' Perceptions of Blacks," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* (forthcoming).

Belief in self-control makes it real

EVEN IF YOU'RE in a relationship, it can take a lot of self-control not to flirt with attractive alternatives. That's where faith—in yourself—comes in. Heterosexual men and women in relationships took a bogus test of self-control and were given bogus feedback about this test. Those who were told

that they had above-average self-control subsequently expressed less interest in attractive members of the opposite sex, compared to those who were told that they had below-average self-control, or those who got no feedback at all. There was no such effect for single participants.

Hamburg, M. & Pronk, T., "Believe You Can and You Will: The Belief in High Self-Control Decreases Interest in Attractive Alternatives," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (January 2015).

The unpopular rebel

DELINQUENT ADOLESCENTS ARE presumed to seem cool, like James Dean in "Rebel Without a Cause," compared to square kids who play by the rules. But data on adolescents living in small towns in Pennsylvania and Iowa reveals that delinquent adolescents are not consistently more popular than their less-delinquent peers, especially as they get older. In fact, delinquent girls become less popular.

Rulison, K. et al., "Delinquency and Peer Acceptance in Adolescence: A Within-Person Test of Moffitt's Hypotheses," *Developmental Psychology* (forthcoming).

A big healthy rainbow of feelings

EVEN "IF YOU FEEL like happiness is the truth" as Pharrell Williams sings in his hit song "Happy," an international team of psychologists has found that experiencing a variety of other emotions—even negative ones—is a good thing. A survey of thousands of French TV viewers found that experiencing a greater diversity of emotions, whether positive or negative, was associated with lower levels of depression, even controlling for average levels of positive and negative emotions, personality, age, and gender. Likewise, data from Belgian health insurance indicated that Belgians who experienced a greater diversity of emotions had lower health care usage and costs, and this correlation was at least as strong as the correlation between exercise, diet, or smoking and health care usage and costs.

Quoidbach, J. et al., "Emodiversity and the Emotional Ecosystem," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* (forthcoming).

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