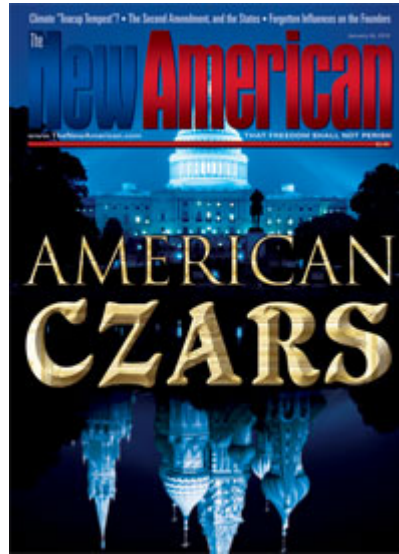




American Czars

It may be considered a strange case of “Back to the Future,” halfway around the world. Twenty years after the tearing down of the Berlin Wall and the apparent demise of Soviet communism, the United States appears to be emulating pre-Bolshevik Russia. Without knowing exactly how or why, America has become the land of the “czars,” men and women appointed by some undefined process, often of dubious legality, literally to rule over various segments and activities of our political, social, and economic life. America has a Science Czar, a School Safety Czar, a Car Czar, and even a Czars Czar.



It didn't start with President Barack Obama, but the tendency to appoint unelected officials, in many cases unconfirmed by any legislative process, to high-level positions of authority over the political and economic life of the nation has greatly accelerated in the past year, owing in part to the fact that the United States has taken over corporations in the financial and automotive sector that had previously been governed primarily by a private-sector free market. Thus we have an Automotive Recovery Czar, a Compensation Czar, and others.

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Some members of Congress, belatedly jealous of their political turf, have been grumbling about the number of new offices that the President has created without Senate approval. Congress, of course, has control over appropriations, and running all of these new offices costs something — though many czars have been appointed with salaries undisclosed. Those who remember our Republic's founding documents, those parchments preserved under glass in our nation's capital, may recall one of the charges leveled against the British King in our Declaration of Independence: “He has erected a Multitude of new Offices and sent hither Swarms of Officers to harass our People and eat out their Substance.”

Thomas Jefferson and his fellow patriots might not have imagined that the new Republic they had midwived would be the land of the (more or less) free and the home of the czars. But America in the age of Obama has made czar production a growth industry. House Minority Leader John Boehner has accused the President of circumventing and subverting the Constitution by appointing more than 30 “czars” to oversee government operations, most of them not subject to Senate confirmation. Many of the positions and responsibilities duplicate those of cabinet-level officials and their departments, he said.

“He clearly is circumventing the Constitution, in my view, and I think the heat continues to build on the administration to deal with this,” Boehner said last fall in an interview with Newsmax TV. “It's one thing to have domestic policy advisors or international policy advisors, but to have this many people at the White House who have really more control than the Cabinet secretaries, I think is a subversion of the



Constitution.”

Of course, the unconstitutionality entails not just the appointing of czars without Senate approval, but also includes much of what the czars are actually doing, from telling businesses how much they can compensate employees to regulating schools. We have, alas, reached a point in our history where subverting the Constitution is almost “as American as apple pie.” Indeed, though the Republicans may view it as an Obama phenomenon, czarist America goes back at least to the days of the New Deal and has been perpetuated by both Republican and Democratic administrations ever since.

Any list of so-called czars is to some extent subjective, since the word “czar” is not in any official title and which positions qualify for the designation may be debatable. According to Wikipedia, the current use of the term, once reserved for the rulers of pre-revolution Russia, started during the administration of Franklin Roosevelt, who had 12 such appointees. The number dropped to six under Truman and one in Eisenhower’s White House. Reagan had only one, the Director of the White House Drug Abuse Policy, and George H.W. Bush had two. The number increased to seven under Clinton, then ballooned to 31 under George W. Bush, according to the Wikipedia list. The 30-plus appointed by Obama is remarkable for an administration barely a year old.

The offices created by executive order of George W. Bush included the Chairman of the President’s Council on Bioethics, or the Bioethics Czar, and the Advisor to the President for Public Health Emergency Awareness, dubbed the Bird Flu Czar. The special counselors to the President included a Communications Czar. Bush created the Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives, headed by the Faith-Based Czar, and even gave the nation a Birth Control Czar, formally the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Population Affairs in the Department of Health and Human Services. Former Assistant Secretary of State Elliot Abrams was the Deputy National Security Advisor for Global Affairs, known incongruously as the Democracy Czar.

Obama’s additions include an Advisor to the President and the Vice President on Domestic Violence and Assault Issues, or the Domestic Violence Czar. The Green Jobs Czar is the Special Advisor for Green Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation. There is a Health Czar who is the Director of the White House Office of Health Reform and Counselor to the President. There is also a Car Czar for the auto industry, a Compensation Czar for companies receiving “ordeal money” under the Troubled Asset Relief Program, which has its own TARP Czar, the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Financial Stability. The White House has both a Science Czar, the Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, and a Chief Technology Officer known as the Technology Czar. The Director of the Office of Safe and Drug-free Schools is the Safe Schools Czar. There is even a Regulatory Czar, confirmed by the Senate, to regulate the regulators. The Director of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs is based within the Office of Management and Budget.

On the international scene, there is the Guantanamo Base Closure Czar, who is a special envoy of the Department of State. The United States has former UN Ambassador Richard Holbrooke as the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, or the Afghanistan Czar. Former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell has an even broader role as the Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, or Mid-East Peace Czar. The Sudan Czar is officially the Special Envoy to Sudan.

Even in the comparatively czar-free Clinton years, when there were only seven, the President had an advisor to oversee the efforts of the other domestic policy advisors. The chief domestic policy advisor and Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council was called, simply, the “Czar Czar.”



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on December 23, 2009

“I think this whole issue has gotten way out of control in terms of the number of czars that he has and advisors around him,” Boehner said about the reign of czars under Obama. Some Senate Democrats, including Dianne Feinstein of California and Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, also have expressed misgivings.

Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) wrote Obama a letter warning: “The rapid and easy accumulation of power by White House staff can threaten the constitutional system of checks and balances. At the worst, White House staff have taken direction and control of programmatic areas that are the statutory responsibility of Senate confirmed officials.”

Just who are these czars? Some are newcomers to the national political scene. Only a couple even come close to having what might be considered household names. They include, as I have mentioned, special envoys, and there have probably been special envoys in every administration, starting with George Washington’s. Obama has appointed diplomats to deal with particular areas, such as Holbrooke as the administration’s specialist in Afghanistan. As Boehner indicated, this kind of appointment has the potential for causing confusion both at home and abroad.

Is it possible, for example, that Holbrooke, the Afghan/Pakistan Czar, might, intentionally or otherwise, undercut the authority and influence of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Afghanistan and potentially elsewhere? Wars, as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said recently, are fraught with unintended consequences. The same is true with political wars. And it is not that long ago that Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton were locked in serious political combat. For political reasons, he could not leave her out of his administration altogether, and surely she had the knowledge and experience to take on the foreign policy issues the Secretary of State must confront. It may be unlikely that Obama would use Holbrooke or any other “czar” to deliberately undermine Clinton’s efforts abroad. But he might have in mind the possible advantage of having people, answerable only to the President, in Afghanistan and elsewhere to keep an eye on Secretary Clinton to be sure she is not undermining Obama’s efforts. He would not want her “going rogue,” after all.

And if Holbrooke is answerable only to the President, who makes sure that he and Secretary Clinton are on the same page, so to speak, and not sending “mixed messages”? And might his mission undermine the authority of the U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officials in both Afghanistan and Pakistan? Holbrooke is also authorized to work with Gen. David Petraeus, head of CENTCOM, to integrate civilian and military efforts in the region. Is there someone in Washington, below the office of the President, who is making sure all these efforts are in harmony with one another? Is there an opening for a Special Assistant for Coordinated Communications or a Synchronization Czar?

Holbrooke is a veteran diplomat who was ambassador to the United Nations from 1999-2001. He has long been a fixture in the foreign policy establishment of the Democratic Party, and like most, if not all, of the czars, he is a member in good standing of the Council on Foreign Relations cabal. He was Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific during the Carter administration (1976 to 1980). He began his work in Foreign Service under President John F. Kennedy in 1962 and remained employed therein through 1976. From 1972 through 1976, he was the editor of *Foreign Policy* magazine, the house organ of the Council on Foreign Relations. Holbrooke was useful on many fronts to President Bill Clinton. Prior to his appointment as UN ambassador, Holbrooke brokered the Dayton (Ohio) Peace Accords to end the fighting in Bosnia.

Another veteran of international politics and CFR member, George Mitchell, is also a veteran of the legislative chambers. The former U.S. Senator from Maine was Majority Leader from 1989-94 and was



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later Clinton's Special Envoy to Northern Ireland, where he was instrumental in bringing about an agreement to end the fratricide there. As Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, Mitchell's job is to maintain the very shaky cease-fire between Israel and Hamas. He is no stranger to the Middle East, having led a fact-finding mission in the year 2000 to study violence in the region. His 2001 Mitchell report formed the basis for the so-called road map for Middle East peace.

A multi-talented investigator and diplomat, Mitchell has also been the lead investigator into steroid use in Major League Baseball, making him perhaps baseball's first Juice Czar.

Other Czars

AIDS Czar: Jeffrey Crowley, Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy. No sane person is in favor of any disease, especially a deadly disease. But politically speaking, AIDS is a favored disease and has been favored with its own czar. There is yet no publicly announced czar for typhoid fever or other communicable diseases.

The AIDS Czar reports to the President as part of the Executive Office of the President's Domestic Policy Council. Crowley's qualifications appear bomb proof. He has a Master of Public Health Degree from the Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health. His credentials include his work as Senior Research Scholar at Georgetown University's Health Policy Institute and Senior Scholar at the O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law, part of the Georgetown University Law Center. He was Deputy Executive Director for Programs at the National Association of People with AIDS. In his czarist role, Crowley coordinates HIV/AIDS policy not just domestically but also internationally, since the United States provides billions of dollars in foreign aid to combat AIDS.

Auto Recovery Czar: Ed Montgomery, Director of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers. Montgomery was Deputy Secretary and Chief Economist at the Labor Department (1997 to 1998) and is Dean of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the University of Maryland (2003 to present). He has a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard, which should help him explain what he's doing to the man to whom he reports, Larry Summers, the former president of Harvard who is now President Obama's top economic advisor. Montgomery also had the advantage of being a donor of \$1,200 to Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. He is married to the granddaughter of a General Motors worker from Portland, Michigan.

His task is to "leverage government resources" to support the workers, communities, and regions that rely on the American auto industry. To "leverage government resources" sounds so much better than to "fleece the American taxpayers." If he needs a third job, Montgomery may be in line for Euphemisms Czar at the Ministry of Truthless Consequences.

Economic Czar: Paul Volcker, Chairman of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board. If the bad economic news becomes too much for the honchos from Harvard, former Federal Reserve Chairman Volcker will attempt to bring the markets back from the brink. Appointed Fed chairman by Jimmy Carter in 1979, Volcker helped wring the inflation out of the economy too late to help Carter, but just in time to help Reagan in the mid-1980s. He has reportedly taken on at no pay the task of offering independent, nonpartisan information, analysis, and advice to the President as he formulates and implements his plans for economic recovery. Perhaps Larry Summers thought that is what he had been doing because in the "eat or be eaten" world of Washington politics, there have been reports that Volcker has been marginalized by Summers. Of course, the advice from these two is essentially the same — spend more, create more money out of thin air, pile up more debt, etc



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Border Czar: Alan Bersin, Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and Special Representative for Border Affairs. A double Ivy man, Bersin is a graduate of Harvard and earned his law degree at Yale. He was chairman of the San Diego Regional Airport Authority (2006 to 2009), Secretary of Education for California (2005 to 2006), and Superintendent of San Diego Public Schools (1998 to 2005). He was U.S. Attorney for San Diego from 1993 to 1998, during which time he was also Attorney General Janet Reno's special representative on border issues. Now he reports to Homeland Security chief Janet Napolitano and is supposed to handle illegal immigration and drug violence along the Mexican border. His view of illegal immigration, however, may be troublesome, since he said during his days as Clinton's Border Czar that he wanted to focus on smugglers of both drugs and people and was not interested in prosecuting "economic migrants." He did, however, institute "Operation Gatekeeper," which led to an increased presence of border guards to deter illegal border crossings. However, when Bersin left the position in 1998, border arrests were on pace for an 18-year low of just more than 200,000.

Whatever the justification for the position — since the Department of Homeland Security has had from its beginning the mission of protecting our borders — Bersin appears eminently qualified for it. But the \$50,000 he has given to political campaigns in the past 10 years, nearly all of it to Democrats, may have ensured that his qualifications would not be overlooked. And his membership in the establishment Council on Foreign Relations doesn't hurt either.

Car Czar: Ron Bloom, Counselor to the Secretary of the Treasury. Not to be confused with the Auto Recovery Czar, a natural mistake. Another Harvard man, Bloom earned his MBA there. Prior to that he worked for the Service Employees International Union. He was an investment banker with Lazard Freres & Co. from 1985 to 1990. He co-founded the investment banking firm Keilin and Bloom. From 1996 to February 2009, he was special assistant to the president of United Steelworkers. He has negotiated restructuring deals for more than 50 companies, getting major concessions from both unions and corporations.

Bloom is a leader of the White House task force overseeing auto company bailouts. He reports to Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and Larry Summers, head of the National Economic Council.

Climate Czar: Todd Stern, Special Envoy for Climate Change. Another Harvard Law School grad, Stern was most recently a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress, where he focused on climate change and environmental issues. A top aide to President Bill Clinton, Stern was head of the Initiative on Global Climate Change (1997 to 1999) and Advisor to the Secretary of the Treasury from 1999 to 2001. He helped negotiate the Kyoto Treaty on climate change during the Clinton presidency, but the pact was not submitted to the Senate for ratification after the Senate, by a 95-0 vote, passed a resolution making it clear that the treaty would surely die there. He is responsible for developing international approaches to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases. He supports a national cap-and-trade system to limit carbon emissions and reduce our nation's dependency on foreign oil. He reports to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Science Czar: John Holdren, Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, and Co-chair of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. Holdren is the top advisor to Obama on science and technology issues. He has taught at both Harvard and Berkeley and studied aerospace engineering and plasma physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is an outspoken advocate of the need to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. In a 2008 *New York Times* op-ed, Holdren called climate-change skeptics "dangerous" members of a "denier fringe."



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In 1971, he co-authored a paper on “Global Ecology” suggesting “some form of ecocatastrophe, if not thermonuclear war, seems almost certain to overtake us before the end of the century.”

Conservative critics have quoted a statement in a book he co-authored in 1977, *Ecoscience: Population, Resources and Environment*. The controversial quotation says that “population-control laws, even including laws requiring compulsory abortion, could be sustained under the existing Constitution.” (James Madison, call your office!)

More troublesome, because it’s more recent than a 32-year-old book, is Holdren’s involvement in “Climategate,” the deliberate manipulation of scientific data, the stonewalling of Freedom of Information requests, and the overall propaganda efforts of scientists charged with studying the causes and effects of climate change. All of that, long suspected by skeptics of the climate crusade, was revealed and documented after a hacker tapped into the e-mails of the scientists working on the project and made public their communications. Those communications, said Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.) at a committee hearing, “show a pattern of suppression, manipulation and secrecy that was inspired by ideology, condescension and profit.” Sensenbrenner quoted Holdren from the e-mails and scolded him for “name-calling” of global-warming skeptics.

Stimulus Accountability Czar: Earl Devaney, Chair of the Recovery Act Transparency and Accountability Board. A former director of criminal enforcement at the Environmental Protection Agency, Devaney now leads the oversight board that monitors money distributed under the stimulus act. He reports to Vice President Joe Biden.

Green Jobs Czar: Van Jones, Special Advisor for Green Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation at the White House Council on Environmental Quality. Jones’s meteoric career rise has taken him from the Oakland, California, grass-roots organizing scene to the leader of a national movement to spur the “green economy.” He is the founder of Green for All, an organization focused on creating green jobs in impoverished areas, and co-founder of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and Color of Change, which includes Bay Area PoliceWatch, a group devoted to “protect[ing] the community from police misconduct.”

His 2008 book, *The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems*, made the *New York Times* bestseller list.

His job was to promote environmentally friendly employment within the administration and boost support for the idea nationwide. He reported to Nancy Sutley, head of the Council on Environmental Quality, or the Eco Quality Czar.

But Jones may be the first of the deposed czars; his “reign” lasting only six months. Hired in March, he apparently was not adequately vetted by White House staff, another reason why critics of “czarist” government say appointees should go through the Senate confirmation process. By early September he was the center of controversy and issued two apologies, one for signing a petition circulated by 911Truth.org that questioned whether Bush administration officials may have allowed the terrorist attacks of 9/11 to go forward, “perhaps as a pretext for war.” The other was for using a crude term to describe Republicans in a speech he gave before joining the administration. Jones had also been involved with a radical group in the San Francisco Bay area called Standing Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement, or STORM, a group with Marxist roots. As if that were not enough, Jones, who began his career as an advocate of prison reform, generated still more controversy by his pleas for clemency for death-row inmate Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was convicted of shooting a Philadelphia police



officer in 1981.

Safe Schools Czar: Kevin Jennings, Director of the Office of Safe and Drug-free Schools in the federal Department of Education. A former member of the homosexual activist group ACT UP, famous for disrupting church services and throwing condoms at worshippers, Jennings is said to have funded a pornographic ACT UP exhibition at Harvard University's art museum. He is also founder and long-time leader of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), a group that has condemned "heterosexism," along with racism, sexism, and homophobia, as "detrimental to a healthy school climate." Indeed, Jennings himself has accused American schools of "promoting heterosexuality" and "recruiting children to be heterosexuals" by assigning such literature as Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Worse still, Jennings claimed in a year 2000 speech that he encouraged a teenager who was in a homosexual relationship with an adult male. If the child was underage, as Jennings said at the time, then today's Safe Schools Czar may well have violated the law by not reporting the apparent statutory rape. Jennings later changed his story, saying the boy was past the legal age of consent.

But beyond the moral decadence lies another threat to American freedom in the form of an overgrown government. Even the best of public servants — and the roster of czars contains a number that do not fit that description — seek to expand their power and to coerce and control those who do not conform to the ideological blueprint. When Sen. Russ Feingold, (D-Wis.) objected to invasions of privacy and other abuses of civil liberty in the Bush administration, he was told that his thinking was "pre-9/11." The administration's, he replied, was "pre-1776."

Between foreign terrorists and domestic tyrants, the enemies without and the czars within, American liberty remains under siege in the Age of Obama.



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