



## Your Vote Doesn't Really Matter — Or So You're Led to Believe

The most remarkable of all news stories aren't the wars, scandals, crimes, and natural disasters that make up most reporting by the mainstream news media. They are the rare instances in which those media, which act as mouthpieces for the power elite, permit an admission against the interests of those same power elites to be published or broadcast. Jordan Michael Smith's October 19 piece in the *Boston Globe* is such an instance.

Entitled "Vote all you want: The secret government won't change," Smith's article is a candid interview with Tufts University political scientist Michael Glennon, in which Glennon explains why American foreign policy never seems to change, no matter who occupies the White House and Congress. Noting what many of us who follow current events predicted years ago — that Barack Obama, far from getting rid of Gitmo, ending the wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and scaling back the abuses of the Patriot Act and the post-9/11 Security State, as he promised to do while campaigning — has in fact dramatically expanded police-state powers domestically, continued and even escalated on all international fronts the wars in Afghanistan, Yemen, and Iraq (and now, Syria), and, of course, kept Gitmo open for business. In short though Washington's elected officials may change, and majority power seesaws back and forth between the Republicans and the Democrats, the policies that matter — in the case of Glennon's analysis, foreign policy — never do. Those with long enough memories must acknowledge, for example, that America's policies abroad have changed little over the past 25 years, under both presidents Bush, President Clinton, and



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President Obama; nor do we expect that they will change much after this fall's elections or those of 2016, no matter how the new partisan configurations in Congress and the White House turn out. Observes the *Globe*:

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

The same could be said for much of the federal government, which is why, despite the strident assurances of "right-wing" Republican celebrity congressmen and their mouthpieces on the radio talk shows that the welfare state will soon be dismantled, the Federal Reserve audited, the IRS and various other abusive alphabet soup agencies abolished, and Big Government in general defunded, none of these things ever come to pass. The IRS and the graduated income tax it levies is perhaps the most hated and feared of all federal agencies, and its political obituary has been written time and time again, yet today, it is more powerful than ever before, having only recently been given vast new powers to enforce the requirements of ObamaCare. Thanks to the tireless efforts of former Congressman Ron Paul, the abusive, inflationary, and despotic character of the Federal Reserve is now well understood by millions of Americans, and calls for it to be audited and eventually abolished are ubiquitous. Yet the Fed continues apace with the task of destroying the American dollar, enriching the few at the expense of the many — lately vested with a range of new powers to oversee and regulate the entire financial and para-financial sector, as well as a number of new tools to manipulate the money supply invented by former Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke in the wake of the 2008 economic collapse.

The problem, as Glennon (described in the article as a "quintessential insider" whose experience has included working as legal counsel to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee) appears to grasp, is that most of the federal government nowadays consists of unelected bureaucrats with the power to promulgate regulations and create policy, all of which have the force of law. Nearly all such bureaucrats belong to the executive, not the legislative branch of government, since they belong to regulatory agencies (such as the IRS, EPA, BATF, etc.) created by Congress but belonging to the various departments of the executive branch of government. The IRS, for example, operates within the Treasury Department, while the EPA is usually accorded Cabinet rank unto itself, with its administrator appointed by the president and approved by Congress, just like Cabinet heads. These two organizations together have about 105,000 employees, and have the power to collect revenue, pass law (regulations), and take legal action against individuals and organizations deemed not in compliance with the laws they pass. And while they are among the most high-profile regulatory bureaucracies in Washington, they are far from the only ones. Literally hundreds of thousands of people now make up this sprawling, unelected regulatory caste, all of them convinced of the rightness of their work and smugly impervious to the protestations of the voting public.



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As Glennon explains to the *Globe*, “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.... These particular bureaucracies ... 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.”

Glennon confines his analysis to unelected actors within government, but in fact, many policy determinations are driven by elite organizations outside government — most notably the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), which creates public policy with the help of its many members who are appointed to key positions within every presidential administration. Michael J. Glennon is himself a member of the CFR, which could explain the article’s reticence on the role of that organization in America’s “secret government.”

Not surprisingly, Glennon does not see America’s “secret government” as conspiratorial, but rather as “smart, hard-working, public-spirited people acting in good faith who are responding to systemic incentives” — incentives that should be reformed, though not abolished, to produce more sanitary results.

When asked for a remedy, Glennon had this to say:

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.

With this we can half agree: Only the American people can bring about change, and only by persistent effort. But Glennon appears also to believe that We the People are powerless to change most such policies. As a card-carrying member of the American policymaking establishment, Glennon does not perceive the overall evil of our system of secret, unaccountable government, but only that that government is incapable of self-reform. But the real problem is that such a system — of unelected bureaucrats and shadowy policymakers — exists at all, for such is antithetical to the free and open society we once enjoyed. The restoration of such can be accomplished, not only by electing good leadership, but also holding our elected leaders’ feet to the fire and insisting that they abide by their oaths of allegiance to the Constitution.



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