

The Puppet Masters: Is There Really a Deep State?

The danger posed by the Deep State is that it wields immense power but is unelected and unaccountable, Phil Giraldi writes.

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As a former intelligence officer, I find it amusing to read articles in the mainstream media that blithely report how the latest international outrages are undoubtedly the work of CIA and the rest of the U.S. government’s national security alphabet soup. The recurring claim that the CIA is somehow running the world by virtue of a vast conspiracy that includes the secret intelligence agencies of a number of countries, using blackmail and other inducements to corrupt vulnerable politicians and opinion makers, has entered into the DNA of journalists worldwide, frequently without any evidence that the current crop of spies is capable to doing anything more complicated than getting out of bed in the morning.

One problem with the theory about total global dominance through espionage is the sheer logistics of it all. Directing political and economic developments in two hundred nations simultaneously must require a lot of space and a large staff. Is there a huge office hidden in Langley? Or the Pentagon? Or in the White House West Wing itself? Or is it in one of the secure facilities that have been popping up like mushrooms just off of the Dulles Toll Road in Herndon Virginia?

To provide evidence that intelligence agencies extend their tentacles just about everywhere, the other claim that is nearly always made is that all former spooks are part of the conspiracy, as once you learn the secret handshake to join CIA, NSA or the FBI you never stop being “one of them.” Well, that might be true in some cases but the majority of former spooks are quite happy to be “former,” and one might also observe that many voices in the anti-war movement, such as it is, come from intelligence, law enforcement or military backgrounds. Of course, the conspiracy theorists will explain that away by claiming that it is a conspiracy within a conspiracy, making the dissidents little better than double agents or gatekeepers who are put in place to make sure that the opposition doesn’t become too effective.

Given the fact that how the so-called American “Deep State” actually gets together and plots is unknown, one would have to concede that it is an organization without much structure, unlike the original Turkish Deep State (Derin Devlet), which coined the phrase, that actually met and had centralized planning. I would suggest that the problem is one of definitions and it also helps to know how the national security state is structured and what its legitimate mission is. The CIA, for example, employs about 20,000 people, nearly all of

whom work in various divisions that collect information (spying), analysis, technology and also are divided into staffs that work transnationally on issues like terrorism, narcotics, and nuclear proliferation. The overwhelming majority of those employees have political views and vote but there is a consensus that what their work entails is apolitical. The actual politics of how policy comes out the other end is confined to a very small group at the top, some of whom are themselves political appointees.

To be sure, one can and probably should oppose the policies of regime change that the Agency is engaged in worldwide but there is one important consideration that has to be understood. Those policies are set by the country's civilian leadership (president, secretary of state and national security council) and they are imposed on CIA by its own political leadership. The Agency does not hold referenda among its employees to determine which foreign policy option is preferable any more than soldiers in the 101st Airborne are consulted when they receive orders to deploy.

Nearly all current and former intelligence officers that I know are, in fact, opposed to the politics of U.S. global dominance that have been pretty much in place since 9/11, most particularly as evidenced by the continued conflict with Russia, the ramping up of aggression with China, and the regime change policies relating to Syria, Iran and Venezuela. Those officers often consider the invasions and exercise of "maximum pressure" to have been failures. Those policies were supported by truculent language, sanctions and displays of military readiness by the Trump Administration but it now appears clear that they will all be continued in one form or another under President Joe Biden, likely to include even more aggression against Russia through proxies in Ukraine and Georgia.

The officers engaged in such operations also observe that regime change has basically come out of the closet since 2001. George W. Bush announced that there was a "new sheriff in town" and the gloves would be coming off. Things that the intelligence agencies used to do are now done right out in the open, using military resources against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria while the biggest change of all, in Ukraine in 2014, was largely engineered by Victoria Nuland at the State Department. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) was also active in Russia supporting opposition parties until the Kremlin forced them to leave the country.

So, it is fair to say that the Deep State is not a function of either the CIA or the FBI, but at the same time the involvement of John Brennan, James Clapper and James Comey in the plot to destroy Donald Trump is disturbing, as the three men headed the Agency, the Office of National Intelligence and Bureau. They appear to have played critical leadership roles in carrying out this conspiracy and they may not have operated on their own. Almost certainly what they may have done would have been either explicitly or implicitly authorized by the former President of the United States, Barack Obama, and others in his national security team.



It is [now known](#) that President Barack Obama's CIA Director John Brennan created a secret interagency Trump Task Force in early 2016. Rather than working against genuine foreign threats, this Task Force played a critical role in creating and feeding the meme that Donald Trump was a tool of the Russians and a puppet of President Vladimir Putin, a claim that still surfaces regularly to this day. Working with Clapper, Brennan fabricated the narrative that "Russia had interfered in the 2016 election." Brennan and Clapper promoted that tale even though they knew very well that Russia and the United States have carried out a broad array of covert actions against each other, including information operations, for the past seventy years, but they pretended that what happened in 2016 was qualitatively and substantively different even though the "evidence" produced to support that claim is weak to nonexistent.

I would, nevertheless, argue that their behavior, though it exploited intelligence resources, was not intrinsic to the organizations that they led, that the three of them were part and parcel of the real Deep State, which consists of a consensus view on running the country that is held by nearly all of the elements that together make up the American Establishment, with its political power focused in Washington and its financial center in New York City. It should come as no surprise that those government officials who are complicit in the process are often personally rewarded with highly paid sinecure jobs in financial services, which they know nothing about, when they "retire."

The danger posed by the Deep State, or, if you choose, the Establishment, is that it wields immense power but is unelected and unaccountable. Even though it does not actually meet in secret, it does operate through relationships that are not transparent and as the media is part of it, there is little chance that its activity will be exposed. One notes that while the Deep State is mentioned frequently in the national media there has been little effort to identify its components and how it operates.

Viewed in that fashion, the argument that there exists a cohesive group of power brokers who really run the country and are even able to coopt those who are ostensibly dedicated to keeping the country safe becomes much more plausible without denigrating the many honest people who are employed by the national security agencies. The Deep State conspirators don't have to meet to plot as they all understand very well what has to be done to maintain their supremacy. That is the real danger. The Biden Administration will surely demonstrate over the next several months that the Deep State is still with us and more powerful than ever as it operates both inside and outside the government itself. And the real danger comes from the Democrats now in charge, who are if anything more given to playing with consensus politics that involve phony threats than were the Republicans.

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