

The Shadow Government of the Obama Administration

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While the media goes through a never ending cycle of adoring adulation toward the new President, there are many inconvenient stories that they simply refuse to answer. One of those stories is the immense number of newly created advisors and envoys. These advisors appear to have no clear role. That's because there are already entire cabinets created specifically for what they are supposed to do. The two latest are George Mitchell and Richard Holbrooke. Beyond these two envoys, Obama has named an enormous amount of czars as well as a few other folks simply called advisors.

Obama is not the first to have czars, advisors, and certainly not the first to have envoys. What makes the Obama administration different is first the sheer numbers of these folks, and second the scope that some of these folks will have. In the case of both Holbrooke and Mitchell, there are in fact deputy level positions for each of their roles. In other words, why are Holbrooke and Mitchell envoys to Afghanistan/Pakistan and the Middle East respectively, when the State Department specifies deputies to the Secretary already for those specific roles? In other words, why did he name them envoys when they should have just been appointed Deputy Secretaries for these respective areas?

This is not just some inconsequential concern. Both these men technically operate in the same function as the State Department but envoys aren't necessarily part of the State Department. As such, who do they report to? That is a question with no easy answer.

President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton all announced Thursday that two high-profile diplomats will serve as envoys to volatile regions, resolving the outstanding question about American foreign policy: Who will be in charge?

The answer: All of them.

Obama and Clinton appeared Thursday at the State Department to formally announce Clinton's appointment and to roll out some of her senior staff and envoys. Among them was former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, who, a source said, will report to both Obama and Secretary Clinton as Mideast envoy; Richard Holbrooke, envoy to South Asia and Afghanistan, will have a similar arrangement. The Mitchell appointment puts the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the hands of an experienced power player and deal-maker, but leaves unresolved some of the lines of command in the new administration.

As such, the role of foreign policy is ripe for a shadow government.

State Department is only the beginning of where the Obama administration could

turn into a shadow government. Let's look at the world of intelligence. Leon Panetta is head of the CIA. That role is defined. He runs the Central Intelligence Agency. Dennis Blair will be Director of National Intelligence. He will coordinate all of the intelligence agencies. So, what will John Brennan do? Brennan was originally tapped to be the head of the CIA. Then, his nomination was railroaded when the left wing turned on him because he was perceived to be in favor of Bush terrorism policies. Now, Obama has tapped him as terrorism advisor. Of course, the terrorism advisor is a brand new position created by Obama for Brennan. What will Brennan's role be in intelligence? That's anyone's guess. Given that Panetta has ABSOLUTELY NO EXPERIENCE IN INTELLIGENCE, it is very likely that Brennan, an intelligence veteran, will have significant power in intelligence. Unlike the CIA director and DNI though, his role will be entirely undefined. If he were to exert any influence in intelligence, it would be entirely as a shadow government.

Then, there are all of the czars that Obama has created. For instance, Dr. Stephen Chu is the Secretary of Energy. Carol Browner is going to be the energy czar. So, what will her role be in energy policy? Unlike the Secretary of Energy, the energy czar has no defined role. Dr. Chu is an academic with a history of running nothing more than a sophisticated lab. As such, he will likely be overwhelmed by the massive bureaucracy of the Department of Energy. Browner is the former head of the EPA. She has much more significant experience in management. As such, it is very likely that her own personality will overwhelm his. If it does, she will create a shadow government as well.

The czars only start there though. There's a climate czar, technology czar, auto czar, regulatory czar, health czar, among about a dozen of folks with the title "Czar". Their role overlaps with a full department. As such, their role is unclear. Why have an energy czar when there is a full Department of Energy? When the automakers get another round of bailouts, will it be Treasury or the car czar that decides how the money is dished out?

Most of these questions will be answered by which person has the stronger personality. Yet, if the stronger personality comes from the person with the role of a "Czar" then that creates yet another shadow government. After all, these Czars don't even go through a confirmation. They don't have a department. Their role is entirely undefined. The more influence they exert the more they create a shadow government. In the Obama administration, there are all sorts of folks with the ability to create their own little shadow government within the government.

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