

America's Continuity of Government Plan:

The Cronyism of the Revolving Door

by John Stanton

All the media bluster and folly surrounding whistleblower Edward Snowden is detracting from critical thinking that Americans must engage in and act upon. At this moment, benefits from the Snowden [data dump](#) appear to be accruing to the US government and its assorted defense related corporate interests. If the American national security apparatus is to be checked and balanced, structural changes must take place. Substance must be ascendant, form can come later.

The US Constitution and the Bill of Rights have been bypassed by the Cronyism of the Revolving Door. It is an inept practice hardly useful for designing comprehensive national security strategies, policies, operations or tactics (SOCOM stands out though) that protect the American people. The civilian side of the coin is even worse. What has the [Cronyism of the Revolving Door](#) produced? The Great Recession of 2008, the destruction of Iraq and Syria, the unleashing of Sunni Takfiri, the decay of America's education infrastructure and the chasm that separates American leadership from the majority of American citizens.

This is the stuff of authoritarian regimes. It does not matter whether the form is capitalism, socialism, communism or whatever mix exists between them. Put bluntly, the Cronyism of the Revolving Door is a shitty form of government. And it is not confined to US government leaders. It is the same story in academia, media, industry, and finance. America's slogan these days is, Who Gives a Shit?

Here are some suggestions for recovery.

First: whistleblowers must provide more substantive information that leads to a complete overhaul of the US civilian and military intelligence apparatus. Publicizing the names of all US intelligence and military operatives/assets working in corporations, financial institutions, academia, media and foreign governments would force a restructure. The names and locations of all college students in the USA and abroad on the US intelligence community payroll (including scholarships) should be publicized. A listing of all government approved secret clearances held by American university and US business personnel and a listing of all Brass Plate organizations should be made public. Information must be dumped rapidly in raw form. The slow-leak practice by the Guardian and Washington Post (Snowden) is all about readership numbers, advertising and profit—nothing more.

Second: substance over form. Asking the right questions is important. The more questions the better. "Shots on Goal", as the saying goes. Who is the Pentagon-Industry partnership group that runs the NSA and the private defense corporations that design, deploy and operate PRISM-like programs? There are far too many complexities involved in massive data harvesting for one organization, civilian or military, to run global operations. Who are the representatives/senators—and their senior staffs—in the US Congress who oversee the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice? What group is pushing President Obama to put a freeze on national security

reporting and ramp up Insider Threat programs in the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Commerce, et al? This is a coordinated effort by many, not one person in the Oval Office.

Third: eliminate the revolving door, stop deifying military. Fundamental changes in the Pentagon, the US Congress, and the Defense Industrial Base are desperately needed. This means wiping away the Strangeloveian Culture that prevails at the highest echelons of America's ruling class. And let's face it. There is, indeed, a ruling class in the United States. That extraordinary wealthy, interconnected and influential "class" has particular views about the world and what it should look and think like. All of us are its targets.

The Washington, DC, revolving door that allows retired generals and admirals to move effortlessly from uniformed military assignments to employment with private defense companies, or with defense associations, must be eliminated. The revolving door leads into what is affectionately known as the "Fifth Service" which is another term for America's defense industry and its assorted non-profit associations, consultants and think tanks like the Institute for Defense Analysis. The Fifth Service also includes US military specific non-profits (the Association of the US Army and Navy League, for example). These are powerful interest groups normally headed by former Flag Officers flush with retirement cash, sort of the One Percent version of the US military. This minority protects its self-interest aggressively whilst those soldiers that engage in the bulk of combat see little rewards. "Only [17 percent](#) of the all-volunteer force serves for 20 years and they are endowed with a lifetime benefit."

So off they go with their hefty military pensions—healthcare plan in tow—with them to Lockheed Martin, BAE Systems, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, the National Defense Industrial Association or the Aerospace Industries Association. Many end up in lucrative federal government positions or they start their own consulting firms making money off the same people they once commanded.

The same revolving door situation exists in the US Congress. Senators and Representatives retire or are defeated in elections and move on to start lobbying firms or consultancies. Their [skills are for sale](#) to corporations and foreign governments alike. Senior national security congressional staffers rotate in and out of the Pentagon and defense industry with ease. Republican and Democrat, Liberal and Conservative national security political appointees seem to always land on their feet as consultants with the mainstream media, association heads (the American Turkish Council, for example) or as scholars at prominent think tanks like the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The revolving door needs to be closed and demolished. Lt. Colonel to Flag Rank officers should be forbidden to rotate to private defense industry or defense non-profits, the latter of which are simply lobbying and meeting planning firms where deal cutting takes place. Former members of congress should be forbidden to lobby for foreign governments or establish consultancies whose primary purpose is to influence the votes of active members of the US Congress (The Cohen Group comes to mind). Staffers and political appointees should be stopped from rotating from the US Congress, to the Pentagon and to defense related corporations. And by all means the deification of military personnel by corporations, politicians and pizza franchises should cease. Most military personnel don't like the practice and they prefer to remain silent about their efforts.

Fourth: set term limits. The record is clear. The longer the term the more likely it is that a US representative or senator will become beholden to moneyed national security interests. Both the House and Senate continue to be populated by those who have little experience studying national security or working within it. They and their staffers are easily mesmerized by gee-whiz technology and a uniform full of ribbons and stars. The only way to minimize the damage to the USA is to limit the time they have in office. The President of the United States should have a term set at six years, the US House at five years and the US Senate at seven years. Campaign financing should be nationalized, Citizen United revoked. It is duty of the American people to find and promote new candidates. Thomas Jefferson commented on just that in the Declaration of Independence. Further, Supreme Court vacancies should be filled by a national referendum, not a rubber stamping Senate Judiciary Committee that, in line with the Cronyism of the Revolving Door, approves its own kind, its own class to a lifetime position. Potential justices should be required to explain their views to the national electorate. And their terms should be limited to a 15 year term.

Fifth, require national service. Americans need to regain their civic pride and contribute to the rebuilding of the America's infrastructure. Not the critical infrastructure as defined by the national security community, but the reconstitution of decaying cities and communities across the land, the morale of the country, and the educational infrastructure of the USA. National Service programs should be a requirement for all 18-21 year olds males and females. Whirlwind, overseas travel to visit and work in other cultures should be a mandatory component of national service. Exposure to US military culture should be a requirement. Synergistic civilian and military tracks could be designed for those qualified and who want to continue in National Service.

Sixth, ignore [US history](#) at your own risk. Was it really that surprising that the USA/Pentagon has been vacuuming up data from networks across the Continents for so long? Below is what Leon Trotsky had to say about the United States in 1922. Viewed through his lenses, the Pentagon is merely following through.

"Nobody believes at present...in the inviolability of frontiers or the stability of regimes...The US progressively gobbles up the shares which will give her control of the human race; assuredly, a great undertaking, but a risky one. The Americans will not be long in convincing themselves of it. This American pacifist program of putting the whole world under her control is not at all a program of peace; on the contrary, it is pregnant with wars, and with the greatest revolutionary convulsions. It is not very likely that the bourgeoisie of all countries will consent to be shoved into the background, to become vassals of America without at least trying to resist. The contradictions are too great, the appetites are too monstrous, the urge to preserve old rulership is too great, the habits of world domination are too powerful...Military conflicts are inevitable. The era of pacifist Americanism that seems to be opening up at this time is only a preparation for new wars of unprecedented scope and unimaginable monstrosity.

The United States, you see, lacks many things of which others have no lack. In this connection American newspapers have published a map showing the distribution of raw materials over the whole globe. They now talk and think in terms of whole continents... Americans think in terms of continents: it simplifies the study of geography, and, what is most important, it provides ample room for robbery. And so, American

newspapers have published a map of the world with ten black spots on it, the ten major deficiencies of the US economy in raw materials: rubber, coffee, nitrates, tin, potash, sisal and other less important raw materials...But American capitalism is no longer self-sufficing. It cannot maintain itself on an internal equilibrium. It needs world equilibrium...In military art there is a saying that whoever moves into the enemy's rear in order to cut off, is often cut off himself. In economy something analogous takes place: the more the United States puts the whole world under its dependence, all the more does it become dependent upon the whole world, with all its contradiction and threatening upheavals...

Already today, revolution in Europe means convulsions in Wall Street; tomorrow, when the investments of American capital in European economy have increased, it will mean a profound upheaval...In order to maintain its internal equilibrium the United States requires a larger and larger outlet abroad; but its outlet abroad introduces into its economic order more and more elements of European and Asiatic disorder...We know that when its own skin is at stake, American capitalism will unleash the fiercest energy in the struggle. It is quite possible that all that books and our own experience have taught us about the fight of the privileged classes for their domination will pale before the violence that American capital will try to inflict."

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