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John Brennan's Trump Problem



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It started out as a fermented, weekend rage. “When the full extent of your venality, moral turpitude, and political corruption becomes known, you will take your rightful place as a disgraced demagogue in the dustbin of history.” The words continue, in hurried fury. “You may scapegoat Andy McCabe but you will not destroy America... America will triumph over you.”

Such sentence structures suggest the meditative irritations of a left-leaning reader questioning of the ill-leaning ways of the US Republic. But they come, in fact, from [former CIA director John O. Brennan](#), furious at the ouster of deputy director of the FBI.

McCabe's removal, instigated by Attorney General Jeff Sessions on Friday night, had been crude, taking place a mere few hours before his retirement. This had a certain Trumpian malice, disrupting the prospect that McCabe might be able to collect his full pension accrual.

Voices of sympathy, however, varied. These are testy times for various factions in Washington. Remarks from House Intelligence Committee Ranking member [Adam Schiff](#) (D-Calif), despite generally being in default disagreement with the GOP, were cool, claiming that the sacking "may have been justified". That said, there was "no way for us to know at this point, but even though it may have been justified, it can also be tainted."

[Kentucky's Senator Rand Paul](#) saw it differently. Given that relevant material had come from the inspector general's office, objectivity was unimpeachable. "They basically have said that McCabe lacked classified documents. That's illegal, but then he also lied about leaking classified documents."

Brennan's hollow outrage, being from a former CIA director, leaves a certain flavour. It is worth noting that such frothing indignation came from the same individual whose tenure saw a generous, keen deployment of drone warfare which did not make exceptions of women, children and US citizens.

As Reid Cherlin would note [in interviewing Brennan](#) in 2013, even "though you and I are probably never going to join Al Qaeda or hang out with militants in Yemen, our government definitely thinks it could kill you if it thought you had joined up with Al Qaeda or *were* hanging out with militants in Yemen."

Former US ambassador to the United Nations, [Samantha Power](#), in turn, will happily defend Brennan's "angry (& eloquent) voice" even in the absence of any eloquence whatsoever. (Power's enthused defence says much about the interventionist, blood curdling nature of US power in its liberal guise.)

[Anne Marie Slaughter](#), former State Department policy planning director, was very much of the Power mould: "[A] world in which, in the end, you can target individuals rather than having to invade countries is probably better."

To that end, it is worth noting the jagged inconsistencies in the views of those nominally progressive types who found voices of influence during the Obama era. They, for instance, saw no venality in embracing certain blood-letting programs of empire. Death

was necessary; killing was required. Now, before them, stands Donald Trump, a monster of such proportion he has made them forget hypocrisy and inconsistency.

The relationship of the US progressive fold with the Republic's more secret and unsavoury organs has been, at times, a confused one. Norman Mailer, supposedly one of its more grizzled members, penned a 1,310 page tome on the CIA which attempted, in various ways, to understand this monster of destabilisation. That same man had insisted, on the occasion of his 50th birthday in 1973, to call for the creation of a "people's CIA". Democracy, he argued then, was threatened by this insidious organisation, this "huge mysterious social organism... an evil force in American life".

Not so on his visit to the organisation's headquarters in 1992. *Harlot's Ghost* had made its mark. He was greeted by 500 officials who, according to the *New York Times*, gave him a standing ovation. He had occasion to emit murmurings that gave even a few CIA officers moments of astonishment.

"Wet jobs" – those involving murder and assassination – were, for this tested scribe, permissible. Why not, for instance, do in Iraq's then leader, Saddam Hussein? "It really shocked me when he said that," came the alarmed words of one befuddled officer. "We've been so conditioned to the fact that such operations are wrong, that they're illegal." Prophetically enough, this same sentiment would find its way into the righteous callings of such self-professed socialists as Christopher Hitchens, whose enthusiastic calling for the destabilisation and overthrow of the Saddam regime yielded the most bitter of harvests.

A person who has more than squinted at the nature of such abuses from the CIA has been the libertarian Senator Paul. "This man had the power," snorted Paul of Brennan, "to search every American's records without a warrant. What's disgraceful is attacking the Bill of Rights and the freedom of every American."

Rand Paul's irate response to Brennan's Saturday effusion builds on his filibuster during Brennan's confirmations for CIA director in 2013. The lengthy session afforded him an opportunity to seek answers on what had become a notorious aerial targeting program that did not exempt US citizens. For 13 straight hours, he held the floor, admittedly falling short of Strom Thurmond's seemingly untouchable record. "Has America the beautiful," he rued, "become Alice's Wonderland? ... Only in Alice's Wonderland would you sentence someone to death before trying him."

There is little doubt that Trump's caging of FBI investigative efforts and attempts to circumvent it are part of a broader struggle in Washington politics. Liberals, in their own

version of Wonderland, find themselves the defending the rougher side of the deep state paladins.