

Facebook of Failure

by G. Murphy Donovan (May 2015)

“I like to watch.” – Chance the gardener, *Being There*

Personality is seldom thought to be relevant to national security analysis. Yet in the end, Intelligence, policy, and failures are made by men – and the occasional woman. We are fond of blaming history, institutions, processes, or systems for social and national security pathologies. Systems are the creations of ordinary men, too ordinary these days, it seems. There are no earthly institutions or human actions where men or personalities get off the hook. Failure is always personal.

Carol Hanisch was correct. The [personal](#) is political too.

Failure is about the wrong men in the wrong position at the wrong time. Five examples from the millennial era are Barack Hussein Obama, John Owen Brennan, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Martin E. Dempsey, and James Robert Clapper.

Mrs. Clinton makes the cut here because Hillary’s “actions,” as Hanisch likes to put it, were pivotal for team Obama. Distaff Clinton, the presidential candidate, makes Hillary part of the future and part the hazard of serial failure too.

Barack Hussein Obama

Barack Obama is an accident of history, a man of average abilities who looks good in a suit and tie. Indeed, Obama without a rap could have been a Jerzy Kosinski character. *Being There* was Kosinski’s classic novel about a District of Columbia gardener who inherits his dead employer’s clothes and is subsequently lionized, based on appearance and reticence.



Being There is a send up of the political groupie culture inside America’s Beltway. Chauncey, the protagonist, doesn’t have much to say, yet he is assumed to be a savant. Whenever he speaks, especially babble, his contradictions are taken as pearls of wisdom by fawning lackeys.

Like the miscast gardener, Barack Obama stumbled into national prominence when his opponent for an Illinois Senate race stepped on a campaign [landmine](#). Keep in mind that Illinois,

Chicago especially, is arguably the most corrupt political crucible in America. One undistinguished term in the US Senate and rookie Obama found himself in the Oval Office. In many ways, Obama was the apotheosis of a multicultural moment, a mixed race prospect that by virtue of paternal genes (or melanin) was thought to bridge all divides. Alas, "being there," or luck in politics, might be necessary but never sufficient.

National leadership over time requires real experience, [maturity](#), and relevant talent. None of these are evident so far in team Obama. Race is not competence.

The origins of Obama's puerile worldview are fairly clear. His absentee father may have been an African Muslim, but whatever Barack knows about religion and politics was probably absorbed in hardscrabble Chicago. Any formative or surrogate paternal influences like William Ayers, Jeremiah Wright, or Louis Farrakhan may have been probative and exculpatory at the same time.

Obama's domestic vision seems to be a kind of [liberation](#) theology, the black Christian mutation of Edward Said's [Orientalism](#). Victims and excuses are the bread and butter of both Liberation Theology and Orientalism. The closest that Mr. Obama came to any strain of militant Islam in America might have been the Nation of Islam (NOI) in Chicago.

The NOI and the apocalyptic variants of Shia and Sunni Islam share the same victim's crouch: violence, dogmatism, proselytizing, bigotry, misogyny, and supremacism too. The so-called Black Muslim movement in America is now a near [monolithic force](#) among African American males in US prisons. Ironically, the claim that "ISIS is not Islam" is an eerie echo of a similar claim made about the NOI and Elijah Mohammad back in the days of the [Malcom X](#) apostasy.

Mister Obama cultivates the victim meme at home and that same apologetic defensive crouch infests his view of Muslims and the Islamist threat abroad.

When you consider Obama's patronizing view of Black American culture, it is easy to comprehend the foreign policy parallels, where simplistic, if not [dishonest](#), assessments of necrotic Islam now exonerate or makes excuses for a global culture with 1.6 billion followers.

Every beheading mocks team Obama. What the President believes about the world or the *Ummah* outside of Chicago, however, is probably a function of other mentors. History, foreign policy, and war are clearly not Barack Obama's strong suites.

John Brennan

If President Obama is to be likened to Chauncey Gardener, then John Brennan might be a kind of Irish Catholic [Svengali](#). Any implied anti-Semitism here is intentional, neither Obama nor

Brennan have shown themselves to be friends to Israel in particular or Jews in general. Recent attempts to humiliate, dare we say [unseat](#), the Israeli Prime Minister speak for themselves.



Brennan looks like a bull dog with a bowel obstruction. If there is a fatal character flaw, it is Brennan's pandering for all things Islamic, including calling Jerusalem by its Arabic name. Brennan's pro-Muslim tilt is surely a function of background. He had at least one tour in Cairo where he may have acquired a persistent strain of [Stockholm](#) syndrome. Nonetheless, Brennan might be the perfect mentor for Obama on foreign affairs as both are inclined to lead abroad, from behind.

Brennan, an Arabist by trade, now Director of CIA, was previously special advisor to the President on terror and all things Muslim. Unlike Obama, Brennan has a paper [trail](#). Some axioms of conflict Brennan style are: rendition, torture, drone strikes, regime change, muted criticism of Iran, contempt for Israel, negotiations with *Hezb'allah* and the *Taliban*, *Jihad* denial, war denial and almost anything rhetorical that would exclude religion from the discussion and absolve a metastasizing Muslim culture.

In short, John Brennan is the narrative custodian for the party line on Islam. The all-purpose team Obama excuse for serial failure now is a tortured slice of Jesuitical logic that suggests that without Obama/Brennan policies things here and abroad would be worse. Or put another way, what doesn't happen is the new metric for success.

As an [apologist](#) for terror, small wars, Islam, Islamism, and Islamofascism; John Brennan is probably the most dangerous man in America.

Brennan is fond of sneering at *al Baghdadi* in public pronouncements. Alas, if events in the Levant tell us anything, the *Kalif* of Islam's literal cutting edge is having a much better [century](#) than Brennan's boss. *Baghdadi* has done more for the fascist caliphate in one year than Obama has done for democratic "nation building" in two terms.

Clinton and Kerry

Hillary Clinton makes the cut on the Facebook of Failure because she is probably the brightest of a dim lot. As a mistress of mendacity, she is surely a chip off Bill's block too. Mrs. Clinton jumped from a sinking Obama ship with the hope that four years would make the Libyan and Benghazi fiascos a distant memory. So far that calculus is correct, she is now the front runner for the 2016 presidential election. Alas Hillary, like Obama, cultivates a core

constituency of victims at home and abroad.

Her successor at Foggy Bottom has been very helpful. John Kerry, in contrast, makes Mrs. Clinton look like Catherine the Great.



Kerry is a political hermaphrodite. He was once the poster boy of the anti-war American Left. Today he seldom meets a small war, assassination, or a regime change that he can't support. Kerry's literal and figurative facelift and coiffure explain a lot. His favorite project seems to be photogenic Kerry, preferably above the fold after a half can of hairspray. Like his predecessor, Kerry has confused pricey suits, frequent flyer miles, [propaganda](#), and press conferences with achievement. And like Obama and Brennan, Kerry is no friend of Israel either.



Picturing Kerry or any of his State Department naïfs in a room with Shia ayatollahs is a little like imagining rodents in a cage with a lions. The cats are playing for time while the mice are just playing the fool.

Even Sunni ISIS pundits see through the Kerry pantomime. Jihadists on the Internet [mock](#) John Kerry as "the uncircumcised geezer." Indeed!

Martin E. Dempsey

The incumbent Chairman of the JCS is a token too, an apt representative of all those millennial flag officers who have advanced during the Muslim wars. Dempsey doesn't take initiative, set the tone, or win battles, and he most certainly does not lobby to end small wars in the *Ummah* that the Joint Chiefs have no intention of winning. A single incident in a passive tenure might say all that needs to be said about Dempsey and like-minded brass at the Department of Defense.



After the Benghazi slaughter in Libya, Dempsey was asked why he did not send military assistance to a beleaguered ambassador and staff. His response was that the then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, didn't ask for help. In short, Dempsey didn't act decisively on his own because he dare not vex the metrosexuals and cookie pushers over at Foggy Bottom.

Like Kerry, Dempsey is not above a little ego twerking too. Early in his JCS tenure, the

Chairman wore eight rows of fruit salad on his Class A blues, breastbone to earlobe. Now the general appears with only [two rows](#) of ribbons above his left pocket. False modesty or a peacock plucked?

Dempsey's biography would have you believe that he is a cavalry officer. Alas, like his classmate David Petraeus, somewhere between West Point and the Pentagon, Martin lost his horse and integrity. He is one of a new breed of generals who worries more about covering their azimuths than he frets about troops that might come home in body bags. The Obama/Dempsey era in military affairs is one where the "all volunteer" force is [expendable](#) for ephemeral objectives like stability, nation building, social work, disease control, and a dozen other non-military missions where lives and limbs are traded for time, not victory.

Like the recessive Barack Obama, Martin Dempsey mostly likes to watch too. The best metaphor for Pentagon doctrine today is children's T-Ball, no winners and no losers, but all the players get ribbons and uniforms anyway.

James Clapper

Images matter in national politics. James Clapper, with his perennial scowl and post-military Van Dyke beard, looked like Leon Trotsky. Nonetheless, the Director of National Intelligence is probably the best of a very bad lot. Jim Clapper came up through the ranks from Marine Corps enlisted grunt to USAF general officer. His specialty in Intelligence was signals, communications, and related technologies. Today Clapper sits atop the 17 agency American Intelligence megaplex, a byzantine if not mind boggling tangle of national security investments.



On the way to the top, Clapper was instrumental in the development of global gun slinging, the intercontinental capacity to find, fix, and kill a target from a trailer park in Nevada – in real time. General Clapper also presides over the largest peep show and Orwellian data achieve in the history of mankind. Jim Clapper could give Congress Hillary Clinton's [emails](#) overnight – if only someone would ask.

Compared to his colleagues on team Obama, Clapper has a resume of real, if not "nefarious," accomplishments. If Clapper were serving a policy clan with a plan, he would be a formidable weapon indeed. Unfortunately, like his operational military colleagues, Clapper has allowed American national security to be hijacked by venal domestic politics. Intelligence products, specifically intelligence reports and [estimates](#), can only be trusted now to pander to or

support the ephemeral and often venal politics of the moment.

The most recent DNI [report](#) to Congress removes Shia Iran and Shia *Hesb'allah* from the terrorism section, clearly a unilateral concession to the ayatollahs. These are the same fanatics that blew up 519 US Marines at the [Kobar](#) towers in Lebanon. *Semper Fidelis*, General Clapper!

Somewhere between Paris Island boot camp and the nation's capital a remarkable example of what used to be the American dream lost his way too. Difficult as it is to care much about the rest of team Obama, with Jim Clapper, there's a real sense of loss, if not waste.

The personal is political! Appearance and personality matter. Who rules matters too – so do the jesters and courtiers. Unfortunately, team Obama has a national security and foreign policy record unblemished by success.

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