

After a Year Under Lockdown, Will Our Freedoms Survive the Tyranny of COVID-19?

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“The remedy is worse than the disease.”—Francis Bacon

One way or another, the majority of Americans will survive COVID-19.

It remains to be seen, however, whether our freedoms will survive the tyranny of the government’s heavy-handed response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Indeed, now that the government has gotten a taste for flexing its police state powers by way of a bevy of lockdowns, mandates, restrictions, contact tracing programs, heightened surveillance, censorship, overcriminalization, etc., we may all be [long-haulers](#), suffering under the weight of long-term COVID-19 afflictions.

Instead of dealing with the headaches, fatigue and neurological [aftereffects of the virus](#), however, “we the people” may well find ourselves burdened with a Nanny State inclined to use its draconian pandemic powers to protect us from ourselves.

Therein lies the [danger](#) of the government’s growing addiction to power.

What started out a year ago as an apparent effort to prevent a novel coronavirus from sickening the nation (and the world) has become yet another means by which world governments (including our own) can expand their powers, abuse their authority, and further oppress their constituents.

Until recently, the police state had been more circumspect in its power grabs, but this latest state of emergency has brought the beast out of the shadows.

It’s a given that you can always count on the government to take advantage of a crisis, legitimate or manufactured. Emboldened by the citizenry’s inattention and willingness to tolerate its abuses, the government has weaponized one national crisis after another in order to expand its powers.

The war on terror, the war on drugs, the war on illegal immigration, asset forfeiture schemes, road safety schemes, school safety schemes, eminent domain: all of these programs started out as legitimate responses to pressing concerns and have since become

weapons of compliance and control in the police state's hands.

It doesn't even matter what the nature of the crisis might be—civil unrest, the national emergencies, “unforeseen economic collapse, loss of functioning political and legal order, purposeful domestic resistance or insurgency, [pervasive public health emergencies](#), and catastrophic natural and human disasters”—as long as it allows the government to justify all manner of government tyranny in the name of so-called national security.

This coronavirus pandemic has been no exception.

Not only have the federal and state governments unraveled the constitutional fabric of the nation with lockdown mandates that sent the economy into a tailspin and wrought havoc with our liberties, but they have almost persuaded the citizenry to depend on the government for financial handouts, medical intervention, protection and sustenance.

This past year under lockdown was a lesson in many things, but most of all, it was a lesson in how to indoctrinate a populace to love and obey Big Brother.

What started off as an experiment in social distancing in order to flatten the curve of this virus, and not overwhelm the nation's hospitals or expose the most vulnerable to unavoidable loss of life scenarios quickly became strongly worded suggestions for citizens to voluntarily stay at home and strong-armed house [arrest orders](#) with penalties in place for non-compliance.

Every day brought a drastic [new set of restrictions](#) by government bodies (most have been delivered by way of executive orders) at the local, state and federal level that were eager to flex their muscles for the so-called “good” of the populace.

There was talk of [mass testing](#) for COVID-19 antibodies, screening checkpoints, mass surveillance in order to carry out contact tracing, [immunity passports](#) to allow those who have recovered from the virus to move around more freely, [snitch tip lines](#) for reporting “rule breakers” to the authorities, and heavy fines and jail time for those who dare to venture out without a mask, congregate in worship without the government's blessing, or re-open their businesses without the government's say-so.

To some, these may seem like small, *necessary* steps in the war against the COVID-19 virus, but they're only necessary to the Deep State in its efforts to further undermine the Constitution, extend its control over the populace, and feed its insatiable appetite for ever-greater powers.

After all, whatever dangerous practices you allow the government to carry out now—whether it's in the name of national security or protecting America's borders or making America healthy again—rest assured, these same practices can and will be used against you when the government decides to set its sights on you.

The war on drugs turned out to be a war on the American people, waged with SWAT teams and militarized police. The war on terror turned out to be a war on the American people, waged with warrantless surveillance and indefinite detention. The war on immigration turned out to be a war on the American people, waged with roving government agents demanding “papers, please.”

This war on COVID-19 could usher in yet another war on the American people, waged with all of the surveillance weaponry at the government's disposal: thermal imaging cameras, drones, contact tracing, biometric databases, etc.

Unless we find some way to rein in the government's power grabs, the fall-out will be epic.

Everything I have warned about for years—government overreach, invasive surveillance, martial law, abuse of powers, militarized police, weaponized technology used to track and control the citizenry, and so on—has coalesced into this present moment.

The government's shameless exploitation of past national emergencies for its own nefarious purposes pales in comparison to what is presently unfolding.

It's downright Machiavellian.

Deploying the same strategy it used with 9/11 to acquire greater powers under the USA Patriot Act, the police state—a.k.a. the shadow government, a.k.a. the Deep State—has been anticipating this moment for years, quietly assembling a wish list of lockdown powers that could be trotted out and approved at a moment's notice.

It should surprise no one, then, that the Trump Administration asked Congress to allow it to [suspend](#) parts of the Constitution whenever it deems it necessary during this coronavirus pandemic and "other" emergencies. It's that ["other" emergencies part](#) that should particularly give you pause, if not spur you to immediate action (by action, I mean a loud and vocal, apolitical, nonpartisan outcry and sustained, apolitical, nonpartisan resistance).

In fact, the Department of Justice (DOJ) started to quietly trot out and test a long laundry list of terrifying powers that override the Constitution.

We're talking about lockdown powers (at both the federal and state level): [the ability to suspend the Constitution](#), indefinitely detain American citizens, bypass the courts, quarantine whole communities or segments of the population, override the First Amendment by outlawing religious gatherings and assemblies of more than a few people, shut down entire industries and manipulate the economy, muzzle dissidents, "stop and seize any plane, train or automobile to stymie the spread of contagious disease," reshape financial markets, create a digital currency (and thus further restrict the use of cash), determine who should live or die.

These are powers the police state would desperately like to make permanent.

Don't make the mistake of assuming that anything will change for the better under the Biden administration. That's not how totalitarian regimes operate.

Bear in mind, however, that the powers the government *officially* asked Congress to recognize and authorize barely scratch the surface of the far-reaching powers the government has already unilaterally claimed for itself.

Unofficially, the police state has been riding roughshod over the rule of law for years now without any pretense of being reined in or restricted in its power grabs by Congress, the courts or the citizenry.

As David C. Unger, [observes](#) in *The Emergency State: America's Pursuit of Absolute Security*

at All Costs:

“For seven decades we have been yielding our most basic liberties to a secretive, unaccountable emergency state – a vast but increasingly misdirected complex of national security institutions, reflexes, and beliefs that so define our present world that we forget that there was ever a different America. ... Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness have given way to permanent crisis management: to policing the planet and fighting preventative wars of ideological containment, usually on terrain chosen by, and favorable to, our enemies. Limited government and constitutional accountability have been shouldered aside by the kind of imperial presidency our constitutional system was explicitly designed to prevent.”

This rise of an “emergency state” that justifies all manner of government tyranny in the name of so-called national security is all happening according to schedule.

The civil unrest, the national emergencies, “unforeseen economic collapse, loss of functioning political and legal order, purposeful domestic resistance or insurgency, [pervasive public health emergencies](#), and catastrophic natural and human disasters,” the government’s reliance on the armed forces to solve domestic political and social problems, the implicit declaration of martial law packaged as a well-meaning and overriding concern for the nation’s security: the powers-that-be have been planning and preparing for such a crisis for years now, not just with active shooter drills and lockdowns and checkpoints and heightened danger alerts, but with a sensory overload of militarized, battlefield images—in video games, in movies, on the news—that acclimate us to life in a totalitarian regime.

Whether or not this particular crisis is of the government’s own making is not the point: to those for whom power and profit are everything, the end always justifies the means.

The seeds of this present madness were sown several decades ago when George W. Bush stealthily issued [two presidential directives](#) that granted the president the power to unilaterally declare a national emergency, which is loosely defined as “any incident, regardless of location, that results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruption severely affecting the U.S. population, infrastructure, environment, economy, or government functions.

Comprising the country’s Continuity of Government (COG) plan, these directives, which do not need congressional approval, provide a skeletal outline of the actions the president will take in the event of a “[national emergency](#).”

Mind you, that national emergency can take any form, can be manipulated for any purpose, and can be used to justify any end goal—all on the say so of the president.

Just what sort of actions the president will take once he declares a national emergency can barely be discerned from the barebones directives. However, one thing is clear: in the event of a national emergency, the COG directives give unchecked executive, legislative and judicial power to the executive branch and its unelected minions.

The country would then be subjected to martial law by default, and the Constitution and the Bill of Rights would be suspended.

The emergency state is now out in the open for all to see.

Unfortunately, “we the people” refuse to see what’s before us.

This is how freedom dies.

We erect our own prison walls, and as our rights dwindle away, we forge our own chains of servitude to the police state.

Be warned, however: once you surrender your freedoms to the government—no matter how compelling the reason might be for doing so—you can never get them back.

No government willingly relinquishes power. If we continue down this road, there can be no surprise about what awaits us at the end.

That said, we still have rights. Technically, at least.

We should not voluntarily relinquish every shred of our humanity, our common sense, or our freedoms to a nanny state that thinks it can do a better job of keeping us safe.

The government may act as if its police state powers trump individual liberties during this COVID-19 pandemic, but for all intents and purposes, the Constitution—especially the battered, besieged Bill of Rights—still stands in theory, if not in practice.

The decisions we make right now—about freedom, commerce, free will, how we care for the least of these in our communities, what it means to provide individuals and businesses with a safety net, how far we allow the government to go in “protecting” us against this virus, etc.—will haunt us for a long time to come.

At times like these, when emotions are heightened, fear dominates, common sense is in short supply, liberty takes a backseat to public safety, and democratic societies approach the tipping point towards mob rule, there is a tendency to cast those who exercise their individual freedoms (to freely speak, associate, assemble, protest, pursue a living, engage in commerce, etc.) as foolishly reckless, criminally selfish, outright villains or so-called “extremists.”

Sometimes that is true, but not always.

There is always a balancing test between individual freedoms and the communal good.

What we must figure out is how to strike a balance that allows us to protect those who need protecting without leaving us chained and in bondage to the police state.

Blindly following the path of least resistance—acquiescing *without question* to whatever the government dictates—can only lead to more misery, suffering and the erection of a totalitarian regime in which there is no balance.

Whatever we give up willingly now—whether it’s basic human decency, the ability to manage our private affairs, the right to have a say in how the government navigates this crisis, or the few rights still left to us that haven’t been disemboweled in recent years by a power-hungry police state—we won’t get back so easily once this crisis is past.

As I make clear in my book [*Battlefield America: The War on the American People*](#), the government never cedes power willingly. Neither should we.

A year ago, I warned that this was a test to see whether the Constitution—and our commitment to the principles enshrined in the Bill of Rights—can survive a national crisis and true state of emergency.

Nothing has changed on that front.

James Madison, the “father” of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights and the fourth president of the United States, once advised that we should “[take alarm](#) at the first experiment upon our liberties.”

These COVID-19 restrictions are far from the first experiment on our liberties. Yet if “we the people” continue to allow the government to trample our rights in the name of so-called national security, we can be assured that things will get worse, not better.

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