

# The Big Plantation, The “Digital Billionaires”, the Militarization of Law Enforcement, the Surveillance State

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*European Left-wing political scientists find difficult to understand that the colonial contradiction is at the heart of our present, they think it's a conceptual error, something anachronistic, that the joyful postmodernity – the one that delivers their Macs to them at home – has gone beyond all that, and that Trump or Bolsonaro are racist accidents of History, or of the « free world ». It's just the opposite. Under the advertising varnish of capitalist globalization, the deep History of our world has never disappeared, it has even come back to the surface, even stronger. The revolt that is happening in the United States is the same one that founds the resistance of the Venezuelan people.” – Thierry Deronne, Algeria Resistance Mohsen Abdelmoumen's blog 2020*

*“Everyone is a philosopher, though in his own way and unconsciously, since even in the slightest manifestation of any intellectual activity whatever, in ‘language’, there is contained a specific conception of the world, one then moves on to the second level, which is that of awareness and criticism.” – Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks*

Three of the four police officers involved in the murder of George Floyd were previously employed as stock boys by TARGET and Home Depot, and two had worked at McDonalds. One stocked for a grocery store. One didn't graduate high school. In other words these were economically part of that large temp minimum wage workforce that is now increasingly unemployed.

The fourth, officer Kueng, whose file was redacted, was apparently more middle class, from a nice family and who graduated with some distinction from his high school. It's interesting, first off, why his file was redacted.

But one of them had served in the military, Derek Chauvin, the man now charged with the murder. Chauvin also had 17 complaints filed against him for excessive force before he kneeled on George Floyd's neck.

There are a couple things to consider here. One is why these men are not on the side of the people they abuse (and murder)? The answer is multifold. One is a culture of machismo and violence that saturates American society. Another is that the United States was a slave owning nation where twelve presidents owned slaves.

Racism and Calvinist and Puritan values have never left this society. And it was founded (and its in the constitution) as an unequal and anti democratic republic. Owners of property

were established as privileged. And so it has continued. But it also the allure of the uniform. Now its understandable that being a cop and being handed a gun and impunity to harass and abuse the public is preferable to flipping burgers. One job is utter humiliation while the other is validated as heroic by popular culture.

Domestic police departments tend to hire military veterans before those without military service.

The Obama administration helped expand the preference: in 2012, the Department of Justice provided tens of millions of dollars to fund scores of vets-only positions in police departments nationwide. Official data on the impact of veteran-cops is scarce. Nearly all of the 33 police departments contacted by The Marshall Project declined to provide a list of officers who had served in the military, citing laws protecting personnel records, or saying the information was not stored in any central place. The Justice Department office that dispenses grants to hire cops and study policing said it has no interest in funding research into how military experience might influence police behavior. – SIMONE WEICHSELBAUM AND BETH SCHWARTZAPFEL, THE MARSHALL PROJECT

Those with special forces training tend to go into Private Security. One in four soldiers in theatre in Afghanistan are private contractors. The wars of empire are increasingly being outsourced.

During the Obama administration, the Pentagon has been equipping US police departments across the country with a staggering amount of military weapons, combat vehicles, and other equipment, according to Pentagon data.

According to a New York Times article published last week, at minimum, 93,763 machine guns, 180,718 magazine cartridges, hundreds of silencers and an unknown number of grenade launchers have been provided to state and local police departments since 2006. This is in addition to at least 533 planes and helicopters, and 432 MRAPs — 9-foot high, 30-ton Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected armored vehicles with gun turrets and more than 44,900 pieces of night vision equipment, regularly used in nighttime raids in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Much of the lethal provisions have gone to small city and county police forces. { } The recent militarization is part of a broader trend. According to Eastern Kentucky University professor Peter B. Kraska—who has studied this subject for two decades—as of the late 1990s, about 89 percent of police departments in the United States serving populations of 50,000 people or more had a PPU (Police Paramilitary Unit), almost double of what existed in the mid-1980s.

Their growth in smaller jurisdictions (agencies serving between 25 and 50,000 people) was even more pronounced. Currently, about 80 percent of small town agencies have a PPU; in the mid-1980s only 20 percent had them. The domestic military ramp-up is far from being in proportion to any perceived threat to public safety.

The Times notes that, “today, crime has fallen to its lowest levels in a generation... the number of domestic terrorist attacks has declined sharply from the 1960s and 1970s.” And yet, “police SWAT teams are now deployed tens of thousands of times each year, increasingly for routine jobs.”

– ZAC CORRIGAN, WSWS JUNE 2014

Couple this to the growing social inequality in the country, where 15% live below the poverty line (in 2015, and which no doubt is closing in on double that post Covid), and where on the heels of the pandemic hysteria and government fear mongering, which resulted in a nation wide (and global) house arrest, the problems with a militarily trained and equipped domestic police force, one drawing its officers from the low end of the educational spectrum, and one that provides at best rudimentary training, is obvious.

A Buddhist friend of mine, was mentioning that at her retreat one of the Tibetan teachers observed that Covid19 and the authoritarian policies it has engendered will unleash cataclysmic dark forces. Spiritual forces, so I take it. Or anti spiritual, actually. And this is how it feels. And this is beyond the clear fascist agenda in play, but extends into realms of psychic transformation for the bourgeoisie in particular.

The anxiety and fear that has grown silently for this privileged class, grown steadily over the last twenty years, is now cracking open and the toxic emotional slag of the atrophied inner lives is spilling out on the rest of society at large. It feels or is felt most deeply, from my anecdotal experience, in the white bourgeoisie's fear of the other.

And I have not felt this sort of collective confusion, anxiety, and fear since the days of Vietnam. Things surface for people. The psychological effects of this lockdown are being wildly underestimated (especially in the long term for children). The difference from the Vietnam war is five decades of screen damage and an accelerated transference of wealth to the top 1%.

The reality of such profound economic inequality is impossible to deny now, and the staggering numbers of homeless across the country eventually can't be NOT seen, it finally starts to serve as a psychic wound, a constant silent witness to the crimes of the system.

The ruling class, or certainly at the least one corner of it, launched the 'Covid19 panic' as a means to shut down western society. No matter if the virus is man made or accidental or just a naturally occurring zoonotic virus... it served as a prop for their agenda.

The ultimate plan remains a bit opaque but it likely includes a wholesale eradication of what is left of civil liberties, intensification of an already draconian surveillance state, and a transformation and rebranding of the meager welfare state into something fit for 7th century serfs, only far worse actually.

This is the world of Bill Gates and those elite new green capitalists, royal families, and digital billionaires. It should be noted that global health bureaucracies like WHO and the CDC are political organizations first. Both have deep and long standing ties to big Pharma and various other corporate interests.

The WHO is privately funded (Gates essentially owns it and directs policy) and the CDC is actually a part of the Health and Human Services department of government. And the current head of the CDC is a former pharmaceutical company executive and a guy who worked with John Bolton drawing up the National Biodefense Strategy for president Trump. Anthony Fauci is the creepy and slimy little frontman for all the agencies involved in urging governments around the world to shut down (they like the term lockdown for its prison connotations).

Without digressing too much here, what is relevant is that when one starts to wonder how it

is allowed for known white nationalists and Klansmen to openly serve as police officers, the answer is not that the decentralized nature of state and city police departments are hard to reform or clean up but rather that the very top officeholders in criminal justice share sympathy with the racists.

We are watching in real time the normalizing of martial law and the suspension of democracy. And these measures have given a bit of a boost to the beleaguered and increasingly brutish police departments across the country. When not even a high school diploma is necessary to be given a badge and gun, when the police recruit from the ranks of malcontent and angry TARGET stock boys and blank McDonald counter people, there must be a logic at work, and I suspect there is.

First, flipping burgers is the only thing many young men and women have open to them. I've done that kind of work. And I hated it, too. But the domestic police, those city departments fresh with new military hardware, don't want empathic or imaginative young men, they want the emotionally dead.

As a side point here, I know martial arts masters who can train you to subdue the wildest suspect without any harm. Adroitly and calmly — but it would require a few months training, not a few hours. But that is not what the departments want. They want crude clumsy tactics, ones that instill fear and which cause pain and suffering and sometimes death.

Those few percent of military trained special force guys, they don't go the Minneapolis police department, or San Diego, or Toledo or Indianapolis. They go into high-end private security.

This is not even to touch on the widespread use of steroids.

When it came to incarceration, the US prison population had reached a staggering 2.4 million people by 2014. Out of this number — which accounted for a full quarter of the entire world's prison population — 38 percent of inmates were black, even though as mentioned black people made up just 13.3 percent of the entire population.

Compare this to whites, who made up 35 percent of the US prison population while constituting just under 78 percent of the country's population. Mass incarceration was brought into being by Bill Clinton with the passage of his omnibus crime bill in 1994. Obama, over his two terms, did nothing to address what prison reform activists had long described as the new plantation."

- [JOHN WIGHT, MEDIUM 2020](#)

The police today are increasingly used for purposes of optics, as much as any real police work. Most crimes go unsolved and for uniformed cops in their black and white (usually) Cruisers the job description is essentially to function as an occupying force in poor neighborhoods. They carry out parole checks, harass and detain the poor, often on a whim. Most acutely in black inner cities.

They are a new gestapo. They are there to brutalize and frighten what is seen as a surplus population. The essence of America's slave legacy is found right there, in the grim counter insurgency tactics of domestic police departments on the streets of black inner cities. For important work, for the protection of important persons and prestige property the ruling

class have turned to private security.

That leaves the uniformed cops, badly paid, with minimum job security actually, as tools for enforcing racial oppression. And if any more proof were needed, one need only check the hyper incarceration rate in America's prisons, and further, the results of the Innocence Project. The numbers of falsely convicted men and women is staggering, it is mind numbing and a spiritual stain on this society that can never be washed away.

It is the overriding and ineradicable symbol of a savage culture of strict class separation, a separation enforced with lethality and pointless cruelty. For the hyper incarceration starts right there, on the same streets where Eric Garner was choked, or Tamir Rice was shot, where George Floyd was murdered, and Trayvon Martin and Philando Castile and hundreds of others have suffered and died. One topic not discussed enough is [post-arrest custodial deaths](#).

In properly staffed households throughout the world, the bodyguard is the new nanny, { } fear of terrorism, a volatile political climate and a pervasive sense that the wealth creation of a few has come at the expense of the many have made paranoia the norm."

TOWN AND COUNTRY, DEC 2016

We learned that the contractors in our sample are predominantly white men in their 40s who chose contracting as a second career. Most are veterans with significant military experience. Among those contractors who were previously deployed as service members, many are former officers and about half of them are Special Forces veterans.

They are more likely to have a college degree than their active-duty counterparts, but less likely than their fellow veterans in the general population. They come from parts of the U.S. or United Kingdom with higher unemployment rates and fewer job opportunities—not the areas with the strongest traditions for military service."

ORI SWED AND THOMAS CROSBIE, PACIFIC STANDARD, "THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF AMERICA'S PRIVATE MILITARY CONTRACTORS". MARCH 2019

In 2009, after Obama was elected, the Department of Homeland Security and FBI jointly wrote an intelligence study on white extremism in domestic police departments. Janet Napolitano, then DHS head, quickly and quietly swept the report under the proverbial rug.

Back in 1991 Los Angeles US District Judge Terry J. Hatter Jr found that sheriffs at the Lynwood substation were, were engaged in what he called 'racial hostility' and 'terrorist tactics' against Latino and Black prisoners. And that the top brass for the Sheriffs department were well aware of this. In 2006 the FBI released a redacted memorandum warning of white nationalists in domestic police departments. Or look up the Joe Burge case in Chicago. In departments in Florida, Texas, and Ohio, there were active Klansmen in police departments.

It is common knowledge that across the country police culture is profoundly racist and reactionary. The educated classes in the U.S. have internalized the Hollywood version of all this. Just think how many hours of cop shows (all them, literally) you have watched and how every single one signs off on a fantasy version of police heroism ...the thin blue line

metaphor, and how it is only these handsome and beautiful (if slightly flawed, you know, human) public servants are protecting you and your family from the vicious underclass, from drug dealing gangs, all minority, and where all them, literally, portray inner cities are lawless wastelands without culture, brutish and bestial.

This has led to the new narrative archetype of 'taking the wrong off ramp'. These are openly racist stories but the public has come to digest such pseudo storytelling in a sort of pattern recognition manner. And nearly every single cop show features one or more military veterans. Usually special forces, but not always. Service in the military is a signifier for virtue and honour.

Forward to 2019, and Los Angeles again, this time in the incorporated mostly black city of Compton in south LA. The details of the [Ryan Twyman killing](#), by sheriffs again, is perhaps the most perfect example of American white supremacy and when empowered the violent consequences.

Ryan Twyman was unarmed inside a parked car when two Los Angeles sheriff deputies approached and fired 34 rounds. Video of the entire incident, which happened in roughly 50 seconds, was as shocking as many police brutality cases that have gone viral in the US. But the killing of the 24-year-old father of three barely made the news. On that day, his death was far from unique: officers across LA shot five people in five separate incidents in just over 24 hours. Only one person survived. Families and activists said the bloodshed on 6 June provided a terrifying illustration of the culture of police violence and a system that trains officers to kill - while ensuring they won't face consequences."

SAM LEVINE, GUARDIAN, AUG 2019

This is not what you see on the new FOX cop show Deputy. Watch a few episodes and get back to me. But that is hardly a unique phenomenon, there is SWAT, Chicago PD, the various Law & Order franchises, or Criminal Minds. I could go on and on, obviously. The problem is not the violence depicted, for Shakespeare is violent. It is the naked propaganda and the racism. Anti black racism at the very top but today Islamophobic narratives abound as well, often with pro-Israeli sub plots. Military shows follow the same blueprint.

The point is that you cannot separate the Imperialist wars of aggression across the planet, which serve as recruitment pools for domestic police and private security and you cannot separate the counter-insurgency tactics in Iraq and Afghanistan, or Syria, not to mention the covert activities against Venezuela and Bolivia both of which involved at least some uniformed military personnel, from the sadistic actions of America's police. Nor can you separate these aggressions from the jingoistic entertainments (recruitment shows for the military and police) from Hollywood.

These foreign policy actions remain largely accepted and popular. The country may hate Trump, with good reason, but his foreign policy is so far actually less lethal than Obama's or Bush's or Clinton's. In any event every President gets a bump in approval ratings when he kills a dark-skinned foreigner either by drone or my military actions.

The public didn't much care at all about Fallujah, and the architect of that butchery, Jim 'Mad Dog' Mattis, former Sec of State for Trump before being fired, is now a darling of the white educated liberals who are so incensed about the prez' and his failure to lockdown the country even more, harder, and certainly for longer.



They are quite happy to cheer and identify with the FBI and war criminals like Mattis. That exaggerated hatred of Trump contains a number of contradictions. But for the purposes of this discussion the central one is that of soft or disguised racism vs. overt white sheets MAGA racism.

White paternalism knows no bounds. And the inherent tokenism of the educated white American has sort of reached its own, from their perspective, cultural horizon event. Another way of saying it is truly the death of irony epoch.

That Americans approve of military violence against the poor nations of the world suggests why the police in America are so steadfastly racist and white supremacist. They are hugely supported. Now, there is with the murder of Floyd a lot of discussion of defunding the police. The problem being, as many have pointed out, this would only increase privatization of security. The US spent 100 billion on domestic policing last year, give or take. And around 80 billion on prisons.

The US defense budget is four or almost five times that amount. So it would seem critical to defund the military right along with the police. It is clearly a positive to reallocate cop money to mental health and community infrastructure and education. But this is the nefarious aspect of Covid19 and the lockdown. I

n Philadelphia the proposed budget cuts, do the massive effects of the lockdown include cutting nearly all sanitation workers down to almost nothing, cutting stuff like soap in hospitals and upkeep of school and city buses. The Covid lockdown was a tool of the ruling class.

There is much press now given to polls showing American support for the Floyd protests. Except those polls are misleading.

Forty-five percent of respondents told Morning Consult that, on the whole, most of the protesters are peaceful and desire meaningful social reform, while 42 percent said most protesters are trying to incite violence or destroy property.

In Monmouth's poll, only 17 percent felt the actions of the protesters were fully justified, 37 percent said they were partially justified and 38 percent said they weren't justified at all. And the Reuters/Ipsos survey found that most Americans (72 percent) didn't think violent protests were an appropriate response to Floyd's killing, and that property damage caused by protesters undermined their goals (79 percent).

Morning Consult's survey also found that Americans were less supportive of the protests when they were specifically asked about black people protesting."

- FIVE THIRTY EIGHT

Its that last sentence, you see.

Whatever grassroots movements achieve is always going to run up against that last sentence. But I'm not cynical about defunding cops. It is a concrete material step in developing alliances in the working class. The movements for prison abolition and defunding are doing the groundwork for alliance formation. It has to start somewhere. And they are the front edges of suggesting property and capitalism are the source of most all of their

problems.

Gramsci envisioned the 'hegemonic' struggle as two-pronged – one to educate the working class from ideas that chain them to the existing order and their own exploitation, and two, to bring other 'subaltern' classes into what he called a 'bloc' with the working class.

I only see the average American remains bizarrely ignorant of US foreign policy. How many people know of Hillary Clinton's coup in Honduras? I suspect not many. The violence against the global south has not abated for sixty years (ok, for three hundred).

From AT&T to United Fruit to Dole pineapple, the business interests of corporate America has stood on the backs of the developing world (sic). What would actually happen if police were defunded? What would massive upticks in privatized security look like? Possibly something out of Robocop. And that is the danger today, that is the situation in which we find ourselves.

Take a look at Alabama, which sits up top in the U.S. alphabetically and in the middle, population-wise: Since 1996, Alabama police departments have received \$78,534,297.32 in planes, helicopters, rifles, and mine-resistant vehicles. How is there so much stuff to dole out? After 9/11, U.S. military funding increased 50 percent.

In fact, the average American has paid \$23,386 in taxes to support the military and its war efforts since 2001. All that spending has translated to a lot of extra mine-resistant vehicles, which local police now own.”  
AC SHILTON (FATHERLY, 2020)

Over the last thirty years funding for domestic police has grown over 400% according to the Justice Policy Institute. And there are millions of dollars shortfall for public education. The problem there is that public education sucks bad anyway. It is almost worse than no education, frankly (and yes I know there are exceptions). And this takes us back to the shelf stockers at Tesco and TARGET.

The elite Universities and prep schools are available for the rich, and increasingly the very rich only. And which serves as yet another factor in the acute resentment that seems to fuel so much American discourse. And while private schools are better (how could they be worse) the problem is the culture at large.

It's not only a reflexive and embedded and indelible racism, it is an anti-intellectualism, and fast-eroding literacy. And then there are the screens. The pernicious effects of social media (which really is a machine for creating resentment and/or guilt) and smart phones, aps, algorithms ... the entire attention economy, has produced a populace of emotional deadness, of crippling anxiety and insecurity about self, and it has done nothing to even mitigate in the slightest of ways the Imperialist project and what is called American Exceptionalism.

The cops that killed George Floyd, if prosecuted, will be exceptions that change nothing. Most cops serve with impunity. American soldiers shoot at Iraqi civilians as sport, amusement. The vicious IDF, fresh from killing teenagers, comes to the U.S. to teach domestic departments better how to instil terror and pain, nothing more. There is no secret magic Zionist martial art or mind control. Its just brute terrorizing. As it has always been for fascists. And as it has always been for plantations and chain gangs.



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