

The War on Freedom: How Tyranny Overran the United States

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Global Research, July 11, 2021

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

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Slowly, against their will, and against their natural inclination to watch football and eat pizza, Americans are awaking to the reality of a totalitarian system with its tentacles wrapped around every aspect of their existence. Sadly, the true nature of this tyranny still eludes the understanding of most citizens, in part because the process by which America was transformed utterly has been slow, in part because the commercial media points us away from the true causes of this slippage and pins all blame on easily identifiable bad guys.

Those seeped in the progressive political tradition sensed a radical loss of justice and transparency under the George W. Bush administration, a trend that only accelerated under the Trump administration—with a perceived reprieve under Obama and the possibility of a positive turn under Biden.

Those marinated in the juices of conservative politics observed an end of freedom and the spread of fake “leftist,” ideology that oppresses the citizen under Clinton and Obama.

Both interpretive communities refer to the same social and political trends, to the war on freedom that renders us up as sacrificial lambs to the cruel gods of global capital. The rhetoric employed by the two groups is so radically different, however, and the histories of the United States that they embrace are so divergent, that they are lost in intense ideological conflicts even as they describe the same creeping totalitarianism.

That conflict is no accident. That ideological battle over the insignificant is just what the doctor ordered for the interests of high finance. Or as J. P. Morgan put it,

“By dividing the people, we can get them to expend their energies in fighting over questions of no importance to us except as teachers of the common herd.”

The super-rich already had their consultants come up with detailed studies on how to divide up citizens by religion, by ethnic identity, by cultural signifiers, and by class so that they are incapable of unity even in the face of the complete takeover of the economy, the media, education and the political process.

“Progressives” refer to the supporters of Trump in rural areas as “stupid” and fundamentalist Christians refer to the followers of the Democratic Party as “evil.”

This profound misunderstanding is probably reinforced by numerous classified operations in which individuals promoting divisive left-wing, or right-wing, positions are encouraged, and paid, to do so as render those who should have common cause as foes.

There is another reason why we have such a difficult time understanding the transformation of our society. The nature of this totalitarianism runs against the assumptions we were taught by movies, novels, and news reports. Our minds are cluttered with archetypes for dictatorship and evil that are at odds with the reality.



The greatest crime of Hollywood was convincing us that evil takes the form of a monster with fangs and claws, of an evil leader with a sinister smile. Corrupt journalists extend this fiction to the public sphere, explaining how evil is embodied in foreign leaders like Kim Jong-un, Xi Jinping, or Vladimir Putin, or in domestic ill-doers like Hillary Clinton (for the right) or Donald Trump (for the left).

As a result, we are unable to detect, or to understand, the takeover of our society that has taken place.

That is to say that we are confronted by “inverted totalitarianism,” to borrow the term of the philosopher Sheldon Wolin, a cultural and political state in which all aspects of our daily lives are controlled by multinational corporations without our knowing and we lose all freedom.

As a result, our actions are profoundly limited; we are constantly beaten down by an iron fist covered in the soft glove of interest charges, student loans, and constant surveillance.

The totalitarianism that we face is “inverted” in the sense that we expect some dictator standing on top and playing the bad guy, oppressing us out of personal greed, vanity or cruelty. But the true source of our misery is rather the manner in which multinational corporations use supercomputers to calculate profits and then extract as much money as possible from us by making it impossible for us to grow our own food, to heal our own illnesses, to teach ourselves, or to entertain ourselves. Instead, we must buy products, online, or in supermarkets, in transactions from which multinational corporations and banks will invariably take a major cut. The only learning that is recognized and accredited is expensive and is controlled by corporations.

We are offered only false choices between Pepsi or Coke, between Taco Bell or Wendy's, between action films or romantic comedies, and between the Democratic or Republican Parties.



The process by which citizens lost their self-reliance, their self-sufficiency in food production and in energy production, and the basic skills of sewing, knitting and carpentry, growing dependent on products supplied by corporations, began 100 years ago. We can trace the current crisis back to the campaigns of John D. Rockefeller to force citizens to be dependent on petroleum through the promotion of automobiles and trade, the slashing of budgets for public transportation and the massive funding for highways, the push for the mechanization of farming and the popularization of plastics.

Rockefeller also paid off experts so as to marginalize homeopathic medicine and traditional treatments and create dependency on overpriced hospitals that are tied to corporations, while rendering universities and research institutes dependent on the benevolence of the rich, thus making systematic critiques of the sources of wealth a taboo topic.

To be more specific, the invisible inverted totalitarianism that has taken control of our daily experiences can be traced back to the launch of Windows as an operating system in 1985. Microsoft Word, under the rule of Bill Gates (an ardent student of John D. Rockefeller), set out to control the means by which citizens utilize their computers and later, to control how they interacted with each other over the internet.

Sure, presidential elections were held every four years, and the public was given a chance express itself. Secret secret police did not cart off those who criticized the government—in fact criticism of government was encouraged as way to distract from the impact of bank deregulation.

Most citizens were hardly aware that having one corporation control the system software for all computers that they supposedly “owed” meant that they had lost their freedom.

Yet the shift was profound. Whereas the individual previously could decide for himself where to place files in his office, how to organize documents and layout his papers around his typewriter, the manner in which information is organized within Windows is extremely limited, determined in advance by unaccountable forces and the format and layout cannot be modified by the user.

Needless to say, this first step down the road to tyranny, this fatal loss of basic autonomy, was carefully covered up in the rhetoric of convenience and efficiency, exciting innovation and technological advancement, so that few recognized the loss.

Myths about the importance of convenience, of connectivity and of globalization were swallowed by the entire population. Critical topics like the scientific method, the control of the means of production and the decision-making process in government, and in other institutions, were forgotten.

The next step in this hidden tyranny over our daily lives came in the form of search engines

like Google, social networks like Facebook, and other massive, interconnected, corporations that mediated the interactions of the individual with the community, often taking over critical functions that previously belonged to the community or to non-profit institutions like schools or research centers.

Under the guise of greater convenience for the individual, businessmen with unlimited funding from investment banks were able to buy up rivals, block out alternatives that offered search engines as cooperatives, and thereby created search engines that pose as transparent institutions but derive money through the sophisticated manipulation of human interactions using algorithms.

Because Google and Facebook had such resources that they could lose money for years, the manner in which they whittled away at the autonomy of the citizen was almost undetectable. Equally important was the strategy of using short-term stimulation of the brain by postings, instant messages and gaudy news reports, to remap the connections between synapses so as to render most incapable of complex, three-dimensional, thinking. That service, the creation of a dumbed down, passive, population, was true product that internet giants offer to their real clients.

Google controls what information we access to, in what order we have access to it, and it lays out a hierarchy of significance in search results that has some basis in fact, but is primarily a political act for sale to the highest bidder.

Results of Google searches are altered, on a case-by-case basis, in response to the needs of corporations to promote their views to extremely specific audiences.

Although we are trained to think of Google as a public service, its falsehoods, increasingly given authority by the parallel Wikipedia entries created by public relations firms, are not subject to external review. Google users are never permitted to participate in the process of the formulation of policy, or in the review of content. That is to say, the United States calls itself a democracy, but the primary tool that citizens rely on for information is run as a dictatorship.

Another popular cloak for the slip into tyranny is the framing of “opinion” as content in the news. Scientific fact ceased to be central in reporting from 1990s. In its stead, opinion polls of groups selected by polling companies are held up as a confirmation of what is true.

Public opinion polls are the propaganda equivalent of stock buybacks. The billionaires, having radically deregulated the economy and dumbed down the population, merely force-feed their opinions to the public through the media that they control and then claim that the policies they want are demanded by the public.

Facebook gives the appearance that the citizen can express himself freely, and can make friends with anyone. Yet, since Facebook Inc. controls whom a citizen can easily find through its network, and who sees what, and it does not permit users to use their own software, or design their own page, or own the networks they create on Facebook, or to have any say in how Facebook is administered, the freedom is fiction.

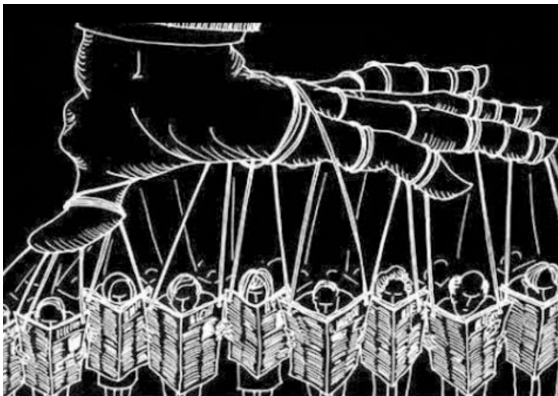
Legal concepts like the contract have been twisted beyond recognition in the totalitarian cyberspace that surrounds us.

A contract is a negotiated agreement between two parties. On-line, however, whether it is

the decision to accept cookies, or to comply with the rules for a commercial application, the user has no right to make demands of the corporation. He or she is given the false choice of either agreeing with all conditions offered, or not having access to the service. The contract is an empty ritual.

We are accustomed to permitting Facebook, Twitter, SnapChat or Instagram to determine what becomes of information that we share, and we are unaware of the billions in profits those corporations make by selling off the information, the content, and the creative ideas that we supply without giving us any compensation. In a sense, these social networks are a form of virtual slavery.

COVID19 Totalitarianism



Because the thinking of citizens has been degraded for decades, and citizens rely on corporate-sponsored sources for basic information, it became possible, for the first time, to create a virtual pandemic, planned by the super-rich, promoted by the news sources that they own, authorized by experts at the institutes and universities that they fund, and legitimated by government agencies (and international institutions like the World Health Organization) that have been radically privatized.

Previously, a significant number of citizens were capable of assessing the accuracy of information on their own. Research institutes like Harvard University still had an ethical commitment to the scientific method and to academic integrity.

All that is over now. The façades of the NIH and Harvard remain the same, maybe they are even better maintained, but the intellectual innards have rotted away. Distinguished professors are easily assembled to give testimony to ridiculous theories about COVID19.

The dangers of the COVID19 vaccines are not the primary threat. The danger lies rather in the shift of the decision-making process for policy away from science, and away from a transparent policy debate. COVID19 serves a successful precedent for invisible forces at private equity funds to decide medical policy in secret and then feed it to us through authority figures.



Those invisible forces now feel they are free to require of us, without any accountability to science, that we have any substance that they offer injected into our bodies as a condition for the right to attend school, to find employment or to receive medical treatment.

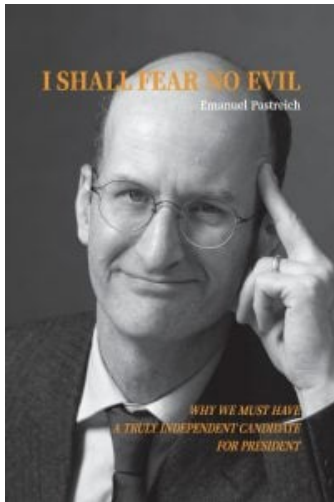
The process was made possible by the interaction of social networks, search engines, commercial media, and other critical components of daily experience that determine opinions concerning reliable and authoritative voices. That process is run as an invisible dictatorship that controls a distracted, confused and unfocused population, drowning in connectivity.

Nothing will get better until citizens recognize the cause of this nightmare was not the legacy of the Bushes, the Clintons, the Obamas or the Trumps, although they all played their role, but rather the end of the self-reliant and informed citizen with access to the writings of experts with a deep commitment to the scientific method and to ethical principles.

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Why we need a truly independent candidate for president

Author: Emanuel Pastreich

Paperback ISBN: 9781649994509

Pages: 162

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