

America is on the Brink of a Nervous Breakdown

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“As nightfall does not come at once, neither does oppression. In both instances, there is a twilight when everything remains seemingly unchanged. And it is in such twilight that we all must be most aware of change in the air – however slight – lest we become unwitting victims of the darkness.” – Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas

Yet another [shooting](#).

Yet another [smear of ugliness, hatred and violence](#).

Yet another ratcheting up of the calls for the government to clamp down on the citizenry by imposing more costly security measures without any real benefit, more militarized police, more surveillance, more widespread mental health screening of the general population, more [threat assessments](#) and behavioral sensing warnings, more gun control measures, more surveillance cameras with facial recognition capabilities, more “See Something, Say Something” programs aimed at turning Americans into snitches and spies, more metal detectors and whole-body imaging devices at so-called soft targets, more roaming squads of militarized police empowered to do more stop-and-frisk searches, more fusion centers to centralize and disseminate information to law enforcement agencies, and more government monitoring of what Americans say and do, where they go, what they buy and how they spend their time.

All of these measures play into the government's hands.

All of these measures add up to more government power, less real security and far less freedom.

As we have learned the hard way, the phantom promise of safety in exchange for restricted or regulated liberty is a false, misguided doctrine that has no basis in the truth.

Things are falling apart.

When things start to fall apart or implode, ask yourself: who stands to benefit?

In most cases, it's the government that stands to benefit by amassing greater powers at the citizenry's expense.

Unfortunately, the government's answer to civil unrest and societal violence, as always, will lead us further down the road we've travelled since 9/11 towards totalitarianism and away from freedom.

With alarming regularity, the nation is being subjected to a spate of violence that not only terrorizes the public but also destabilizes the country's fragile ecosystem, and gives the government greater justifications to crack down, lock down, and institute even more authoritarian policies for the so-called sake of national security without many objections from the citizenry.

Clearly, America is being pushed to the brink of a national nervous breakdown.

This breakdown—triggered by polarizing circus politics, media-fed mass hysteria, racism, classism, xenophobia, militarization and militainment (the selling of war and violence as entertainment), a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness in the face of growing government corruption and brutality, and a growing economic divide that has much of the population struggling to get by—is manifesting itself in

madness, mayhem and an utter disregard for the very principles and liberties that have kept us out of the clutches of totalitarianism for so long.

Yet there is a method to this madness.

Remember, authoritarian regimes begin with incremental steps. Overcriminalization, surveillance of innocent citizens, imprisonment for nonviolent–victimless–crimes, etc. Bit by bit, the citizenry finds its freedoms being curtailed and undermined for the sake of national security. And slowly the populace begins to submit.

No one speaks up for those being targeted.

No one resists these minor acts of oppression.

No one recognizes the indoctrination into tyranny for what it is.

Historically this failure to speak truth to power has resulted in whole populations being conditioned to tolerate unspoken cruelty toward their fellow human beings, a bystander syndrome in which people remain silent and disengaged–mere onlookers–in the face of abject horrors and injustice.

Time has insulated us from the violence perpetrated by past regimes in their pursuit of power: the crucifixion and slaughter of innocents by the Romans, the torture of the Inquisition, the atrocities of the Nazis, the butchery of the Fascists, the bloodshed by the Communists, and the cold-blooded war machines run by the military industrial complex.

We can disassociate from such violence.

We can convince ourselves that we are somehow different from the victims of government abuse.

We can continue to spout empty campaign rhetoric about how great America is, despite the evidence to the contrary.

We can avoid responsibility for holding the government accountable.

We can zip our lips and bind our hands and shut our eyes.

In other words, we can continue to exist in a state of denial.

Whatever we do or don't do, it won't change the facts: the nation is imploding, and our republic is being pushed ever closer to martial law.

As Vann R. Newkirk II [writes](#) for the *Atlantic*:

Trumpism demands that violence be solved by local militarization: increased security at schools, the arming of teachers, and now, the adoption of guns in places intended quite literally to be sanctuaries from the scourges of the world. Taken altogether, what Trumpism seems to intend is the creation—or perhaps the expansion—of [the machinery of a police state](#)..

In facing what appears to be a rising tide of violence—a tide that Trump himself elevates and encourages—the prescription of arms merely capitulates to the demands of that bloodshed. The purpose of political violence and terrorism is not necessarily to eliminate or even always to create body counts, but [to disempower people, to spread the contagion of fear, to splinter communities into self-preserving bunkers, and to invalidate the very idea that a common destiny is even possible](#). Mandates to arm people accelerate this process. They inherently promote the idea that society cannot reduce the global level of harm, and promote the authoritarian impulses of people seeking order.

Where Newkirk misses the point is by placing the blame squarely on the Trump Administration.

This shift towards totalitarianism and martial law started long before Trump, set in motion by powers-that-be that see

the government as a means to an end: power and profit.

As Paul Craig Roberts, former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, recognized years ago, "[Adolf Hitler is alive and well in the United States](#), and he is fast rising to power."

Roberts was not comparing Trump to Hitler, as so many today are wont to do.

Rather, he was comparing the American Police State to the Nazi Third Reich, which is a far more apt comparison.

After all, U.S. government agencies—the FBI, CIA and the military—have fully embraced many of the Nazi's well-honed policing tactics and have used them repeatedly against American citizens for years now.

Indeed, with every passing day, the United States government borrows yet another leaf from Nazi Germany's playbook: [Secret police](#). Secret courts. Secret government agencies. Surveillance. Censorship. Intimidation. Harassment. Torture. Brutality. Widespread corruption. Entrapment. Indoctrination. Indefinite detention.

These are not tactics used by constitutional republics, where the rule of law and the rights of the citizenry reign supreme. Rather, they are the hallmarks of authoritarian regimes, where the only law that counts comes in the form of heavy-handed, unilateral dictates from a supreme ruler who uses a secret police to control the populace.

The empowerment of the Gestapo, Germany's secret police, tracked with the rise of the Nazi regime in much the same way that the rise of the American police state corresponds to the decline of freedom in America.

How did the Gestapo become the terror of the Third Reich?

It did so by creating a sophisticated surveillance and law enforcement system that relied for its success on the

cooperation of the military, the police, the intelligence community, neighborhood watchdogs, government workers for the post office and railroads, ordinary civil servants, and a nation of snitches inclined to report "[rumors, deviant behavior, or even just loose talk.](#)"

In other words, ordinary citizens working with government agents helped create the monster that became Nazi Germany. Writing for the *New York Times*, Barry Ewen paints a particularly chilling portrait of how [an entire nation becomes complicit in its own downfall](#) by looking the other way:

In what may be his most provocative statement, [author Eric A.] Johnson says that [‘‘most Germans may not even have realized until very late in the war, if ever, that they were living in a vile dictatorship.’’](#) This is not to say that they were unaware of the Holocaust; Johnson demonstrates that millions of Germans must have known at least some of the truth. But, he concludes, [‘‘a tacit Faustian bargain was struck between the regime and the citizenry.’’](#) The government looked the other way when petty crimes were being committed. Ordinary Germans looked the other way when Jews were being rounded up and murdered; they abetted one of the greatest crimes of the 20th century not through active collaboration but through passivity, denial and indifference.

Much like the German people, "we the people" have become passive, polarized, gullible, easily manipulated, and lacking in critical thinking skills. Distracted by entertainment spectacles, politics and screen devices, we too are complicit, silent partners in creating a police state similar to the terror practiced by former regimes.

Can the Fourth Reich happen here?

It's already happening right under our noses. Much like the German people, "we the people" are all too inclined to "look the other way."

In our state of passivity, denial and indifference, here are some of the looming problems we're ignoring:

Our government is massively in debt. Currently, the national debt is somewhere in the vicinity of [\\$21 trillion](#). Approximately half of our debt is [owned by foreign countries](#), namely China, Japan and Saudi Arabia.

Our education system is abysmal. Despite the fact that [we spend more than most of the world on education](#), we rank [36th in the world when it comes to math, reading and science](#), far below most of our Asian counterparts. Even so, we continue to insist on [standardized programs such as Common Core](#), which teach students to be test-takers rather than thinkers.

Our homes provide little protection against government intrusions. Police agencies, already empowered to crash through your door if they suspect you're up to no good, now have [radar devices that allow them to "see" through the walls of our homes](#).

Our prisons, housing [the largest number of inmates in the world and still growing](#), have become [money-making enterprises for private corporations](#) that rely on the inmates for cheap labor.

We are no longer a representative republic. The U.S. has become a corporate oligarchy. As a recent academic survey indicates, [our elected officials, especially those in the nation's capital, represent the interests of the rich and powerful](#) rather than the average citizen.

We've got the [most expensive, least effective health care system](#) in the world compared to other western, industrialized nations.

The [air pollution levels are dangerously high for almost half of the U.S. population](#), putting Americans at greater risk of premature death, aggravated asthma, difficulty breathing and

future cardiovascular problems.

Despite outlandish amounts of money being spent on the nation's "infrastructure," there are [more than 63,000 bridges—one out of every 10 bridges in the country—in urgent need of repair](#). Some of these bridges are [used 250 million times a day by trucks, school buses, passenger cars and other vehicles](#).

[Americans know little to nothing about their rights or how the government is supposed to operate](#). This includes educators and politicians. For example, 27 percent of elected officials cannot name even one right or freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment, while [54 percent do not know the Constitution gives Congress the power to declare war](#).

Nearly [one out of every three American children live in poverty](#), ranking us among the worst in the developed world.

Patrolled by police, our schools have become little more than quasi-prisons in which [kids as young as age 4 are being handcuffed for "acting up,"](#) subjected to body searches and lockdowns, and suspended for childish behavior.

We're no longer innocent until proven guilty. In our [present surveillance state](#), that burden of proof has now been shifted so that [we are all suspects to be spied on, searched, scanned, frisked, monitored, tracked and treated as if we're potentially guilty](#) of some wrongdoing.

Parents, no longer viewed as having an inherent right to raise their children as they see fit, are increasingly being [arrested for letting their kids walk to the playground alone](#), or play outside alone. Similarly, parents who challenge a doctor's finding or request a second opinion regarding their children's health care needs are being [charged with medical child abuse](#) and, in a growing number of cases, losing custody of their children to the government.

Private property means little at a time when SWAT teams and other government agents can invade your home, break down your doors, kill your dog, wound or kill you, damage your furnishings and terrorize your family. Likewise, if government officials can fine and arrest you for growing vegetables in your front yard, praying with friends in your living room, installing solar panels on your roof, and raising chickens in your backyard, you're no longer the owner of your property.

Court rulings undermining the Fourth Amendment and justifying invasive strip searches have left us powerless against police empowered to forcefully draw our blood, forcibly take our DNA, strip search us, and probe us intimately. Accounts are on the rise of individuals—men and women alike—being subjected to what is essentially government-sanctioned rape by police in the course of “routine” traffic stops.

Americans can no longer rely on the courts to mete out justice. The courts were established to intervene and protect the people against the government and its agents when they overstep their bounds. Yet the courts increasingly march in lockstep with the police state, while concerning themselves primarily with advancing the government's agenda, no matter how unjust or unconstitutional.

Americans have no protection against police abuse. It is no longer unusual to hear about incidents in which police shoot unarmed individuals first and ask questions later. What is increasingly common, however, is the news that the officers involved in these incidents get off with little more than a slap on the hands.

If there is any absolute maxim by which the federal government seems to operate, it is that the American taxpayer always gets ripped off. This is true, whether you're talking about taxpayers being forced to fund high-priced weaponry that will be used against us, endless wars that do little for our safety or our freedoms, or bloated government agencies such as the

[National Security Agency](#) with its secret budgets, covert agendas and clandestine activities. Rubbing salt in the wound, even monetary awards in lawsuits against government officials who are found guilty of wrongdoing are paid with taxpayer funds.

Americans are powerless in the face of militarized police. In early America, government agents were not permitted to enter one's home without permission or in a deceitful manner. And citizens could resist arrest when a police officer tried to restrain them without proper justification or a warrant. Daring to dispute a warrant with a police official today who is armed with high-tech military weapons would be nothing short of suicidal. Moreover, as police forces across the country continue to be transformed into extensions of the military, [Americans are finding their once-peaceful communities transformed into military outposts](#), complete with tanks, weaponry, and other equipment designed for the battlefield.

Now these are not problems that you can just throw money at, as most politicians are inclined to do.

These are problems that will continue to plague our nation—and be conveniently ignored by politicians—unless and until Americans wake up to the fact that we're the only ones who can change things.

We're caught in a vicious cycle right now between terror and fear and distraction and hate and partisan politics and an inescapable longing for a time when life was simpler and people were kinder and the government was less of a monster.

Our prolonged exposure to the American police state is not helping.

As always, the solution to most problems must start locally, in our homes, in our neighborhoods, and in our communities.

We've got to refrain from the toxic us vs. them rhetoric that is consuming the nation.

We've got to work harder to build bridges, instead of burning them to the ground.

We've got to learn to stop bottling up dissent and disagreeable ideas and learn how to work through our disagreements without violence.

We've got to de-militarize our police and lower the levels of violence here and abroad, whether it's violence we export to other countries, violence we glorify in entertainment, or violence we revel in when it's leveled at our so-called enemies, politically or otherwise.

For starters, we'll need to actually pay attention to what's going on around us, and I don't mean by turning on the TV news. That will get you nowhere. It's a mere distraction from what is really going on. In other words, if you're watching, that means you're not doing. It's time to get active.

Pay attention to what your local city councils are enacting.

Pay attention to what your school officials are teaching and not teaching.

Pay attention to whom your elected officials are giving access and currying favor.

Most of all, stop acting like it really matters whether you vote for a Republican or Democrat, because in the grand scheme of things, it really doesn't.

While you're at it, start acting like citizens who expect the government to work for them, rather than the other way around. While that bloated beast called the federal government may not listen to you without a great deal of activism and effort brought to bear, you can have a great—and more immediate—impact on your local governing bodies.

This will mean gathering together with your friends and neighbors and, for example, forcing your local city council to start opposing state and federal programs that are ripping you off. And if need be, your local city council can refuse to abide by the dictates that continue to flow from Washington, DC. In other words, nullify everything the government does that is illegitimate, egregious or blatantly unconstitutional.

Finally, remember that when you strip away all of the things that serve to divide us, we're no different underneath: we all bleed red, and we all suffer when violence becomes the government's calling card.

As I make clear in my book [*Battlefield America: The War on the American People*](#), the oppression and injustice—be it in the form of shootings, surveillance, fines, asset forfeiture, prison terms, roadside searches, and so on—will come to all of us eventually unless we do something to stop it now.

Unless we can learn to live together as brothers and sisters and fellow citizens, we will perish as tools and prisoners of the American police state.

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