

They Are Scrubbing the Internet Right Now

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by [Jeffrey A Tucker](#) and [Debbie Lerman](#), *Brownstone Institute*

October 30, 2024

Instances of censorship are growing to the point of normalization. Despite ongoing litigation and more public attention, mainstream social media has been more ferocious in recent months than ever before. Podcasters know for sure what will be instantly deleted and debate among themselves over content in gray areas. Some like Brownstone have given up on YouTube in favor of Rumble, sacrificing vast audiences if only to see their content survive to see the light of day.

It's not always about being censored or not. Today's algorithms include a range of tools that affect searchability and findability. For example, the Joe Rogan interview with Donald Trump racked up an astonishing 34 million views before YouTube and Google tweaked their search engines to make it hard to discover, while even presiding over a technical malfunction that disabled viewing for many people. Faced with this, Rogan went to the platform X to post all three hours.

Navigating this thicket of censorship and quasi-censorship has become part of the business model of alternative media.

Those are just the headline cases. Beneath the headlines, there are technical events taking place that are fundamentally affecting the ability of any historian even to look back and tell what is happening. Incredibly, the service Archive.org which has been around since 1994 has stopped taking images of content on all platforms. For the first time in 30 years, we

have gone a long swath of time – since October 8-10 – since this service has chronicled the life of the Internet in real time.

As of this writing, we have no way to verify content that has been posted for three weeks of October leading to the days of the most contentious and consequential election of our lifetimes. Crucially, this is not about partisanship or ideological discrimination. No websites on the Internet are being archived in ways that are available to users. In effect, the whole memory of our main information system is just a big black hole right now.

The trouble on Archive.org began on October 8, 2024, when the service was suddenly hit with a massive Denial of Service attack (DDOS) that not only took down the service but introduced a level of failure that nearly took it out completely. Working around the clock, Archive.org came back as a read-only service where it stands today. However, you can only read content that was posted before the attack. The service has yet to resume any public display of mirroring of any sites on the Internet.

In other words, the only source on the entire World Wide Web that mirrors content in real time has been disabled. For the first time since the invention of the web browser itself, researchers have been robbed of the ability to compare past with future content, an action that is a staple of researchers looking into government and corporate actions.

It was using this service, for example, that enabled Brownstone researchers to discover precisely what the CDC had said about Plexiglas, filtration systems, mail-in ballots, and rental moratoriums. That content was all later scrubbed off the live Internet, so accessing archive copies was the only way we could know and verify what was true. It was the same with the World Health Organization and its disparagement of natural immunity which was later changed. We were able to

document the shifting definitions thanks only to this tool which is now disabled.

What this means is the following: Any website can post anything today and take it down tomorrow and leave no record of what they posted unless some user somewhere happened to take a screenshot. Even then there is no way to verify its authenticity. The standard approach to know who said what and when is now gone. That is to say that the whole Internet is already being censored in real time so that during these crucial weeks, when vast swaths of the public fully expect foul play, anyone in the information industry can get away with anything and not get caught.

We know what you are thinking. Surely this DDOS attack was not a coincidence. The time was just too perfect. And maybe that is right. We just do not know. Does Archive.org suspect something along those lines? Here is what they [say](#):

Last week, along with a DDOS attack and exposure of patron email addresses and encrypted passwords, the Internet Archive's website javascript was defaced, leading us to bring the site down to access and improve our security. The stored data of the Internet Archive is safe and we are working on resuming services safely. This new reality requires heightened attention to cyber security and we are responding. We apologize for the impact of these library services being unavailable.

Deep state? As with all these things, there is no way to know, but the effort to blast away the ability of the Internet to have a verified history fits neatly into the stakeholder model of information distribution that has clearly been prioritized on a global level. The [Declaration of the Future of the Internet](#) makes that very clear: the Internet should be "governed through the multi-stakeholder approach, whereby governments and relevant authorities partner with academics, civil society, the private sector, technical community and

others.” All of these stakeholders benefit from the ability to act online without leaving a trace.

To be sure, a librarian at Archive.org has [written](#) that “While the Wayback Machine has been in read-only mode, web crawling and archiving have continued. Those materials will be available via the Wayback Machine as services are secured.”

When? We do not know. Before the election? In five years? There might be some technical reasons but it might seem that if web crawling is continuing behind the scenes, as the note suggests, that too could be available in read-only mode now. It is not.

Disturbingly, this erasure of Internet memory is happening in more than one place. For many years, Google offered a cached version of the link you were seeking just below the live version. They have plenty of server space to enable that now, but no: that service is now completely gone. In fact, [the Google cache service officially ended](#) just a week or two before the Archive.org crash, at the end of September 2024.

Thus the two available tools for searching cached pages on the Internet disappeared within weeks of each other and within weeks of the November 5th election.

Other disturbing trends are also turning Internet search results increasingly into AI-controlled lists of establishment-approved narratives. The web standard used to be for search result rankings to be governed by user behavior, links, citations, and so forth. These were more or less organic metrics, based on an aggregation of data indicating how useful a search result was to Internet users. Put very simply, the more people found a search result useful, the higher it would rank. Google now uses very different metrics to rank search results, including what it considers “trusted sources” and other opaque, subjective determinations.

Furthermore, the most widely used service that once ranked

websites based on traffic is now gone. That service was called Alexa. The company that created it was independent. Then one day in 1999, it was bought by Amazon. That seemed encouraging because Amazon was well-heeled. The acquisition seemed to codify the tool that everyone was using as a kind of metric of status on the web. It was common back in the day to take note of an article somewhere on the web and then look it up on Alexa to see its reach. If it was important, one would take notice, but if it was not, no one particularly cared.

This is how an entire generation of web technicians functioned. The system worked as well as one could possibly expect.

Then, in 2014, years after acquiring the ranking service Alexa, Amazon did a strange thing. It released its home assistant (and surveillance device) with the same name. Suddenly, everyone had them in their homes and would find out anything by saying "Hey Alexa." Something seemed strange about Amazon naming its new product after an unrelated business it had acquired years earlier. No doubt there was some confusion caused by the naming overlap.

Here's what happened next. In 2022, Amazon actively took down the web ranking tool. It didn't sell it. It didn't raise the prices. It didn't do anything with it. It suddenly made it go completely dark.

No one could figure out why. It was the industry standard, and suddenly it was gone. Not sold, just blasted away. No longer could anyone figure out the traffic-based website rankings of anything without paying very high prices for hard-to-use proprietary products.

All of these data points that might seem unrelated when considered individually, are actually part of a long trajectory that has shifted our information landscape into unrecognizable territory. The Covid events of 2020-2023, with

massive global censorship and propaganda efforts, greatly accelerated these trends.

One wonders if anyone will remember what it was once like. The hacking and hobbling of Archive.org underscores the point: there will be no more memory.

As of this writing, fully three weeks of web content have not been archived. What we are missing and what has changed is anyone's guess. And we have no idea when the service will come back. It is entirely possible that it will not come back, that the only real history to which we can take recourse will be pre-October 8, 2024, the date on which everything changed.

The Internet was founded to be free and democratic. It will require herculean efforts at this point to restore that vision, because something else is quickly replacing it.

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The Multi-Headed Elites

[The Multi-Headed Elites](#)

by [Tuomas Malinen](#), [Brownstone Institute](#)

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April 22, 2024



In mid-January, we were able to watch the gathering of the global elite in Davos, Switzerland. The publicly stated aim of this year's Davos meeting, organized by the World Economic Forum, from now on WEF, was "Rebuilding Trust." The topics ranged from the urgency to introduce [Global Digital ID](#) (because "people can no longer be trusted"), to climate

change (a recurring topic), and further to a mysterious "[Disease X](#)," which is [expected to kill](#) tens of millions of people in the not-so-distant future. These are dystopian themes under a subtitle of 'rebuilding trust,' but should we be worried?

In this piece, we outline the reasons for worry. The global elite is steering both developments and discussion on a global scale, and their aims are unlikely to be benevolent. In actuality, these Davos meetings seem likely to indicate the path forward as envisaged by the elite, and there are several such meetings and groups operating across the globe.

One of the issues with these meetings, and groups, is this; would a group of billionaires really organize these 'get-togethers' just for the fun of hanging around with celebrities, editors, and leading politicians? Most likely not. A deeper look reveals that they appear more like secret societies weaving their 'web' around our societies.

Secret Society Look-Alikes

The hypocrisy of the "Davos Man;" that is, a rich and/or famous person attending Davos meetings, is conspicuous. The elites fly there with their private jets releasing a massive amount of CO2 they blame to be a central driver of the phenomenon nowadays dubbed climate change, or "emergency." Escort and prostitute services in the region are [fully booked](#) during the week, which is another sign of the double-standards followed by the elite, much as was the case during the so-called Covid-19 pandemic, where several video clips and photos showed how the elites removed their face masks once TV cameras had stopped rolling. Rumors of widespread use of cocaine and other illegal substances in the 'after-parties' of the Davos conference also [abound](#). "Do as I say, not as I do" seems like a fitting mantra to our current elite.

What makes such gatherings exceptionally worrisome is the

secrecy which surrounds them. For example, it is well-known that in one of the main gatherings of the elite, the annual meeting of the [Bilderberg Group](#), which hosts politicians, business leaders, and journalists, the participants are sworn to secrecy in all the discussions that take place there.

GnS Economics concluded, in its special report on the [Great Reset agenda](#) (GR) driven by the WEF, that:

This is the true threat of GR, NWO [New World Order] and their ilk. They can, and probably will, take decision-making to a global level into undemocratic and often opaque institutions. They represent, quite simply, a direct threat to democratic processes and decision-making. They threaten, or have already taken, the true power from citizens to 'halls' of supranational entities.

This implies that we, the people, have already lost most of our power to steer the development of societies to various supranational entities and groups, some of which look like secret societies, when one observes their opaqueness. Moreover, the double standards of the elite give a worrying indication on their moral standards.

To understand where we are heading we need to ask, what is the aim of the elites? To this, history presents some unpleasant answers.

The Elite Strikes Back

Germany in the early 1920s was in transition to a newly rediscovered concept – democracy – after the devastating First World War and hyperinflation that followed. The first constitutional federal republic of Germany was called the Weimar Republic, named after the town where the constitutional assembly was held. However, the elites in the army, the bureaucracy, the judiciary, academia, and business were frightened by the idea, and sought a return to an elite-controlled authoritarian society.

Landowners feared losing their land, and elites in general grew worried of 'marginalization' of their power through democratization of German society. This produced a 'tacit' support by the German elite for a newly formed party and its enigmatic leader, who they (correctly) assumed would push for an authoritarian rule. The party was *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, or NSDAP, and their leader Adolf Hitler. That is, the German elites helped lift the Nazis to power, [supported](#) by US financiers, thus creating one of the most oppressive and destructive regimes the world has seen.

During the past 70 years, and especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the world has seen a massive wave of democratization across the globe. The internet contributed by democratizing access to knowledge and information. The information commons started to decentralize – similar to what occurred in the wake of the printing press. We need to ask ourselves, do – or did – our elites welcome these developments, or do they act to stop or even reverse them? Based on the historical evidence, and the simple psychology of power games, would it not be very naïve to think that the elites would be happy with losing power?

The Elites Are Undermining Democracy Itself

Indeed, the elites do not seem happy at all. Since the UK's decision to leave the EU in 2016 and the American presidential election of that same year, the current power structures of the West have moved at a rapid pace to undermine some of the pillars of liberal democracy. This might sound like a harsh conclusion, but let's consider freedom of speech, consent of the governed, and informed consent.

The *Twitter Files* showed that the government and the intelligence agencies of the UK and the US (and presumably other countries) have incestuous, perhaps illegal, relationships with social media companies, directing platforms

to censor information, diminish its spread, or even to deplatform organisations or individuals. True (objective) information has been made harder to find or even removed as Meta's CEO Mark Zuckerberg [admitted last year](#). Famous examples include the "[laptop from hell](#)" from late fall 2020 when e.g. Facebook's users were prohibited from sharing links to the story – and similarly with some [medical information](#) during the so-called Covid-19 pandemic.

Let's remind ourselves what John Stuart Mill wrote in one of liberalism's most central works [On Liberty](#):

...the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.

Censorship is thus "[robbing the human race](#)" and it undermines truth according to one of history's foremost proponents of liberalism. Censorship also diminishes the legitimacy of our democratic systems. The [Declaration of Independence](#) underlies the Constitution of the US, and states:

...governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government...

It is a commonly held view that a democracy's legitimacy stems from the electorate's participation in choosing their government, reflecting governance with the governed's approval. But if *We the People* are denied the ability to

freely express our opinions – and influence others, the mechanism for providing (or denying) this consent becomes fundamentally flawed. What does that say about the system's legitimacy?

Robert Malone, a physician and biochemist who produced a [landmark study](#) on the mRNA vaccines, recently described the information spread by the global elite regarding *Disease X* as [black propaganda](#) and “fear porn.” This *Disease X* – a placeholder name, surely – was discussed already in the [2019 Davos meeting](#). That year, the US simulated “a severe pandemic of influenza originating in China” in *Crimson Contagion*. And in October of that same year, the WEF conducted a simulation exercise to “prepare public and private leaders for pandemic response.” We already know the taxpayer-funded EcoHealth Alliance [conspired to undermine](#) the “lab-leak theory,” but new eye-opening [academic research](#) links the WEF to the silencing campaign of the lab-leak theory as well.

While the takeover of X (formerly Twitter) by Elon Musk has altered the information landscape and is likely hindering some parts of the elite to censor social media, the experience propaganda during the [Russo-Ukrainian war](#) remains noteworthy. While Russian propaganda operations are often mentioned in Western media, what are we to make of [Nafo fellas](#), [Baltic elves](#), and [Psy-Op girl](#)? All parties involved are busy polluting the information commons, as always happens in a war.

What's more, censorship, as well as propaganda, undermine the very essence of **informed consent**, at least if aimed at the domestic population. The formulation of the Nuremberg Code emerged in the aftermath of World War II, a period during which there were no established international standards differentiating between permissible and impermissible experiments, as emphasized by German doctors at the time.

According to the Code's first point, an individual's informed consent is absolutely essential. It stipulates that the

individual should have the right to “exercise free power of choice, without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, overreaching, or other ulterior form of constraint or coercion, and should have sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the elements of the subject matter.” This code was clearly not followed during the so-called pandemic in a great many nations – how could it have been, given constraints and in some cases “coercion?”

If the government or its affiliates are dictating the information we can access – whether to [foster trust](#) or not – it becomes impossible to discern whether the information we receive is born of comprehensive debate or if certain truths have been concealed, as was done ahead of the US presidential election 2020 as well as during the so-called pandemic. Does this not suggest that the ethical principle of informed consent has been discarded in its entirety? “We must bravely destroy democracy in order to save democracy from those who wish to destroy democracy” might be a more fitting motto for our elites.

We are forced to conclude that the elites have been busy undermining freedom of speech and consent of the governed as well as the principle of informed consent. These are arguably some of the pillars of both a humane and liberal democracy, but the elites are far from done.

CBDC: The Elites’ Chekov’s Gun

AML (anti money-laundering) and KYC (know-your-customer) regulations have increased the governments’ power in terms of surveilling what their citizens are up to. But such monitoring can’t (yet) prevent you from spending; only monitor – and perhaps punish you – after the fact. That will change with [Central Bank Digital Currencies](#) (CBDCs), which will offer either programmable money or programmable payments (the distinction is not important). But once the government or its partners in the financial system can monitor and control your

spending for goods and services, our hard-won freedoms will have been lost.

The ability to freely and anonymously transact is a crucial component in preserving fundamental rights and freedoms. Without the freedom to pay for goods and services without external interference, the ability to exercise one's right to free speech, assembly, demonstration, and religion will be hindered. And with CBDCs, the state, companies, or other groups will be able to prevent companies, organisations, or individuals from making the necessary transactions to exercise these rights, effectively eroding them. Indeed, without the freedom to transact, [liberty becomes impossible](#).

In Canada, the central bank recently [surveilled the public](#) and found 78% of the public concerned that the central bank would ignore the public's feedback when building the new system, and a whopping 88% of the respondents were against building a digital Canadian dollar. The public, having witnessed the trucker protest in 2022, opposes granting even more power to the government. Such opposition, of course, does not prevent the Bank of Canada from rapidly continuing the development of a CBDC. If this is not suggestive of a hidden agenda, we don't know what is.

If 9/11, the war on terror, or the so-called pandemic taught us anything, it's that when the next crisis comes, whether the crisis is real or made up, it will be used for whatever purpose and projects the elite at the time is committed to. Rolling out CBDCs seems to be high on that list. We might be told about the necessity of CBDCs to thwart a demonized threat, be it a banking crisis, Putin, the Far Right, or perhaps, The Unvaccinated (*against Disease X?*). And amidst public acclaim, the liberties that were the cornerstone of a flourishing Western world will be thoroughly unraveled.

[Chekhov's gun](#) is named after the Russian playwright Anton Chekhov, who articulated the concept by saying that if a gun

is introduced in a story, it should be fired at some point. CBDCs are Chekhov's gun. If introduced, their restrictive powers will eventually be used, and at that point our freedoms are likely to be gone, for good.

Divide et Impera

What's even more worrisome, the global elite seems to be pushing for an open confrontation, a war, with Russia or China, or both. It's hard to conclude otherwise by the "warmongering" on display across the Western Hemisphere.

Candidates of the Finnish Presidential elections, held on 28 January, for example, were effectively pushing for confrontation with Russia, or at least they did not see a possibility for normalization of the relations with Russia. This is completely unheard-of in Finnish politics, as we have had very peaceful and prosperous relations with Russia for over 70 years. Sweden has recently abandoned its policy of formal neutrality, which it followed even during the exceptional period of the Second World War, and Sweden's commander-in-chief recently said Swedes "[must prepare for times of war.](#)" Now, suddenly, two former beacons of peace in Europe have taken a sharp turn towards confrontation with Russia. It does seem as if the global elite is guiding the West towards war.

These lead us to conclude that we have a very serious and pressing global elite problem.

Our societies and economies seem largely steered by opaque supranational forces over which the people have very little control. We can also conclude that, with a high likelihood, the motives of [the global elite are malevolent](#). Pushing us towards extreme control of society through censorship, digital IDs and CBDCs, and death and suffering, through wars, leaves very little doubt on this.

The elite seems to follow the old Roman doctrine of *Divide et*

Impera (Divide and Conquer). They [sow chaos](#) and undermine national sovereignty to make populations submissive to different control mechanisms. The main aim can be the same as with the German elites a century ago, when they eventually hoisted Nazis to power. That is, they may want to cement their power to steer our societies, whatever the cost.

The question is, what should we do about this?

A Need to Retake Our Political Systems

The Western world is currently heading in the same direction that led to the French Revolution in 1789. Political violence then engulfed France after a failure of the political system, economic collapse, and famine. Revolution and all the violence it would bring is one possible endgame of our current path.

However, we can choose not to follow our elites into the abyss of decadence, violence, and suffering. We can say no to their control systems, no to their efforts to undermine the moral backbone of our societies, and no to the wars they try to sow.

To accomplish this, we need to reject Digital IDs, CBDCs, warmongering, as well as supranational control. Corrupt politicians need to be removed from office, and power needs to be restored to national or local parliaments. The more decentralized the power, the better. Direct democracy with referendums would help to diminish or even eliminate the power of (current and forthcoming) elites. The fight between the Governor of Texas against the unconstitutionality of the Biden administration's action at the Texas-Mexico border might be a sign that this is starting to unfold.

It's high time we turn our backs to the elites, and start laying the bricks for a new renaissance of humanity. We need to start now.

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What Happened to Bitcoin?

[What Happened to Bitcoin?](#)

by [Jeffrey A. Tucker](#), [Brownstone Institute](#)

April 14, 2024

Those who involved themselves in Bitcoin markets after 2017 encountered a different operation and ideal than those who came before. Today, no one much cares about what came before, speaking of 2010-2016. They are only watching the upward price momentum and are thrilled for the increase in the asset valuation of their portfolio.

Gone is the talk of separating money and state, of a market-based means of exchange, of genuine revolution that would extend from money to the whole of politics the world over. And gone is the talk of changing the operation of money as a means

of changing the prospects for freedom itself. The enthusiasts around Bitcoin have different goals in mind.

And during this entire period, the exact time when this digital asset might have protected multitudes of users and businesses from rapacious inflation growing out of the worst and most globalized experience of corporatist statism in modern history, made possible due to the money monopoly of central banks that funded the operation, the original asset that carries the symbol BTC was systematically diverted from its original purpose.

The ideal was nicely articulated by F.A. Hayek in 1974. Much of his career as an economist was spent arguing for sound monetary policies. At every important turning point, he faced the same problem: governments and the institutions they serve did not want sound money. They wanted to manipulate the currency system to benefit elites, not the public. Finally, he refined his argument. He concluded that the only real answer was a complete divorce of money and power.

“Nothing can be more welcome than depriving government of its power over money and so stopping the apparently irresistible trend towards an accelerating increase of the share of the national income it is able to claim,” he [wrote](#) in 1976 (two years after his Nobel Prize). “If allowed to continue, this trend would in a few years bring us to a state in which governments would claim 100 per cent of all resources—and would in consequence become literally ‘totalitarian’.”

“It may turn out that cutting off government from the tap which supplies it with additional money for its use may prove as important in order to stop the inherent tendency of unlimited government to grow indefinitely, which is becoming as menacing a danger to the future of civilisation as the badness of the money it has supplied.”

The problem in achieving this ideal was technical and

institutional. So long as state money worked, there was no real drive to change it. Certainly the push would never come from the ruling classes who benefit from the present system, which is precisely where every old argument for the gold standard faltered. How to get around this problem?

In 2009, a pseudonymous developer or group released a white paper, written in language for computer scientists and not economists, for a peer-to-peer system of digital cash. For most economists at the time, its functioning was opaque and not quite believable. The proof came in the functioning itself which unfolded over the course of 2010. To summarize, it deployed a distributed ledger, double-key cryptography, and a protocol of fixed quantity to release a new form of money that operationally tied together money itself and a settlement system in one.

In other words, Bitcoin achieved the ideal about which Hayek could only dream. The key to making it all possible was the distributed ledger itself, which relied on the internet to globalize the nodes of operation, bringing a new form of accountability we had never seen in operation before. The notion of melding together the means of payment plus the mechanisms of settlement on this scale was something that had previously not been possible. And yet there it was, earning its way into the market with ever increasing valuations made possible by the distributed ledger.

So, yes, I became an early enthusiast, writing hundreds of articles, even publishing a book in 2015 called [*Bit By Bit: How P2P Is Freeing the World*](#). I could not have known it at the time, but those were in fact the last days of the ideal and just before the protocol came to be controlled by a consolidated group of developers who jettisoned entirely the idea of peer-to-peer cash to turn it into a high-earning digital security, not a competitor with state-based money but rather an asset designed not to use but hold with third-party intermediaries controlling access.

We saw all this unfold in real time and many of us were aghast. All that is left to us is to tell the story, which has not been done in a complete form until now. Roger Ver's new book [Hijacking Bitcoin](#) does the job. It is a book for the ages simply because it lays out all the facts of the case and lets readers come to their own conclusion. I was honored to write the foreword, which follows.

The story you will read here is of tragedy, the chronicle of an emancipationist monetary technology subverted to other ends. It's a painful read, to be sure, and the first time this story has been told with this much detail and sophistication. We had the chance to free the world. That chance was missed, likely hijacked and subverted.

Those of us who watched Bitcoin from the earliest days saw with fascination how it gained traction and seemed to offer a viable alternative path for the future of money. At long last, after thousands of years of government corruption of money, we finally had a technology that was untouchable, sound, stable, democratic, incorruptible, and a fulfillment of the vision of the great champions of freedom from all history. At last, money could be liberated from state control and thus achieve economic rather than political goals—prosperity for everyone versus war, inflation, and state expansion.

That was the vision in any case. Alas, it did not happen. Bitcoin adoption is lower today than it was five years ago. It is not on a trajectory of final victory but on a different path to gradually increase in price for its earlier adopters. In short, the technology was betrayed by small changes that hardly anyone understood at the time.

I certainly did not. I had been playing with Bitcoin for a few years and was mainly astounded at the speed of settlement, the low cost of transactions, and the ability for anyone without a

bank to send or receive it without financial mediation. That's a miracle about which I wrote rhapsodically at the time. I held a CryptoCurrency Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, in October 2013 that focused on the intellectual and technical side of things. It was among the first national conferences on the topic, but even at this event, I noticed two sides coalescing: those who believed in monetary competition and those whose sole commitment was to one protocol.

My first clue that something had gone wrong came two years later, when for the first time I saw that the network had been seriously clogged. Transaction fees soared, settlement slowed to a crawl, and vast numbers of on-ramps and off-ramps were closing due to high compliance costs. I did not understand. I reached out to a number of experts who explained to me about a quiet civil war that had developed within the crypto world. The so-called "maximalists" had turned against widespread adoption. They liked the high fees. They did not mind the slow settlements. And many were involving themselves in the dwindling number of crypto exchanges that were still in operation thanks to a government crackdown.

At the same time, new technologies were becoming available that vastly improved the efficiency and availability of exchange in fiat dollars. They included Venmo, Zelle, CashApp, FB payments, and many others besides, in addition to smartphone attachments and iPads that enabled any merchant of any size to process credit cards. These technologies were completely different from Bitcoin because they were permission-based and mediated by financial companies. But to users, they seemed great and their presence in the marketplace crowded out the use case of Bitcoin at the very time that my beloved technology had become an unrecognizable version of itself.

The forking of Bitcoin into Bitcoin Cash occurred two years later, in 2017, and it was accompanied by great cries and screams as if something horrible was happening. In fact, all

that was happening was a mere restoration of the original vision of the founder Satoshi Nakamoto. He believed with the monetary historians of the past that the key to turning any commodity into widespread money was adoption and use. It's impossible to even imagine conditions under which any commodity could take on the form of money without a viable and marketable use case. Bitcoin Cash was an attempt to restore that.

The time to ramp up adoption of this new technology was 2013-2016, but that moment was squeezed in two directions: the deliberate throttling of the ability of the technology to scale and the push of new payment systems to crowd out the use case. As this book demonstrates, by late 2013, Bitcoin had already been targeted for capture. By the time Bitcoin Cash came to the rescue, the network had changed its entire focus from use to holding what we have and building second-layer technologies to deal with the scaling issues. Here we are in 2024 with an industry struggling to find its way within a niche while the dreams of a "to-the-moon" price are fading into memory.

This is the book that had to be written. It is a story of a missed opportunity to change the world, a tragic tale of subversion and betrayal. But it is also a hopeful story of efforts we can make to ensure that the hijacking of Bitcoin is not the final chapter. There is still the chance for this great innovation to liberate the world but the path from here to there turns out to be more circuitous than any of us ever imagined.

Roger Ver does not blow his own trumpet in this book, but he truly is a hero of this saga, not only deeply knowledgeable of the technologies but also a man who has clung to an emancipatory vision of Bitcoin from the earliest days through the present. I share his commitment to the idea of peer-to-peer currency for the masses, alongside a competitive marketplace for free-enterprise monies. This is a hugely

important documentary history, and the polemic alone will challenge anyone who believes himself to be on the other side. Regardless, this book had to exist, however painful. It's a gift to the world.

Does this story seem familiar? Indeed it does. We've seen this trajectory in sector after sector. Institutions born and built by ideals are later converted by various forces of power, access, and nefarious intent into something else entirely. We've seen this happen to digital tech in particular and the Internet generally, not to mention medicine, public health, science, liberalism, and so much else. The story of Bitcoin follows the same trajectory, a seemingly immaculate conception turned toward a different purpose, and serving again as a reminder that on this side of heaven, there will never be an institution or idea immune to compromise and corruption.

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Prescription Drugs Are the Leading Cause of Death

[Prescription Drugs Are the Leading Cause of Death](#)

And psychiatric drugs are the third leading cause of death

by [Peter C. Gøtzsche](#), [Brownstone Institute](#)

April 16, 2024

Overtreatment with drugs kills many people, and the death rate is increasing. It is therefore strange that we have allowed this long-lasting drug pandemic to continue, and even more so because most of the drug deaths are easily preventable.

In 2013, I estimated that our prescription drugs are the third leading cause of death after heart disease and cancer,¹ and in 2015, that psychiatric drugs alone are also the third leading cause of death.² However, in the US, it is commonly stated that our drugs are “only” the fourth leading cause of death.^{3,4} This estimate was derived from a 1998 meta-analysis of 39 US studies where monitors recorded all adverse drug reactions that occurred while the patients were in hospital, or which were the reason for hospital admission.⁵

This methodology clearly underestimates drug deaths. Most people who are killed by their drugs die outside hospitals, and the time people spent in hospitals was only 11 days on average in the meta-analysis.⁵ Moreover, the meta-analysis only included patients who died from drugs that were properly prescribed, not those who died as a result of errors in drug administration, noncompliance, overdose, or drug abuse, and not deaths where the adverse drug reaction was only possible.⁵

Many people die because of errors, e.g. simultaneous use of contraindicated drugs, and many possible drug deaths are real. Moreover, most of the included studies are very old, the median publication year being 1973, and drug deaths have increased dramatically over the last 50 years. As an example, 37,309 drug deaths were reported to the FDA in 2006 and 123,927 ten years later, which is 3.3 times as many.⁶

In hospital records and coroners' reports, deaths linked to prescription drugs are often considered to be from natural or unknown causes. This misconception is particularly common for deaths caused by psychiatric drugs.^{2,7} Even when young patients with schizophrenia suddenly drop dead, it is called a natural death. But it is not natural to die young and it is well known that neuroleptics can cause lethal heart arrhythmias.

Many people die from the drugs they take without raising any suspicion that it could be an adverse drug effect. Depression drugs kill many people, mainly among the elderly, because they can cause orthostatic hypotension, sedation, confusion, and dizziness. The drugs double the risk of falls and hip fractures in a dose-dependent manner,^{8,9} and within one year after a hip fracture, about one-fifth of the patients will have died. As elderly people often fall anyway, it is not possible to know if such deaths are drug deaths.

Another example of unrecognised drug deaths is provided by non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). They have killed hundreds of thousands of people,¹ mainly through heart attacks and bleeding stomach ulcers, but these deaths are unlikely to be coded as adverse drug reactions, as such deaths also occur in patients who do not take the drugs.

The 1998 US meta-analysis estimated that 106,000 patients die every year in hospital because of adverse drug effects (a 0.32% death rate).⁵ A carefully done Norwegian study examined

732 deaths that occurred in a two-year period ending in 1995 at a department of internal medicine, and it found that there were 9.5 drug deaths per 1,000 patients (a 1% death rate).¹⁰ This is a much more reliable estimate, as drug deaths have increased markedly. If we apply this estimate to the US, we get 315,000 annual drug deaths in hospitals. A review of four newer studies, from 2008 to 2011, estimated that there were over 400,000 drug deaths in US hospitals.¹¹

Drug usage is now so common that newborns in 2019 could be expected to take prescription drugs for roughly half their lives in the US.¹² Moreover, polypharmacy has been increasing.¹²

How Many People Are Killed by Psychiatric Drugs?

If we want to estimate the death toll of psychiatric drugs, the most reliable evidence we have are the placebo-controlled randomised trials. But we need to consider their limitations.

First, they usually run for only a few weeks even though most patients take the drugs for many years.^{13,14}

Second, polypharmacy is common in psychiatry, and this increases the risk of dying. As an example, the Danish Board of Health has warned that adding a benzodiazepine to a neuroleptic increases mortality by 50-65%.¹⁵

Third, half of all deaths are missing in published trial reports.¹⁶ For dementia, published data show that for every 100 people treated with a newer neuroleptic for ten weeks, one patient is killed.¹⁷ This is an extremely high death rate for a drug, but FDA data on the same trials show it is twice as high, namely two patients killed per 100 after ten weeks.¹⁸ And if we extend the observation period, the death toll becomes even higher. A Finnish study of 70,718 community-dwellers newly diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease reported that

neuroleptics kill 4-5 people per 100 annually compared to patients who were not treated.¹⁹

Fourth, the design of psychiatric drug trials is biased. In almost all cases, patients were already in treatment before they entered the trial,^{2,7} and some of those randomised to placebo will therefore experience withdrawal effects that will increase their risk of dying, e.g. because of akathisia. It is not possible to use the placebo-controlled trials in schizophrenia to estimate the effect of neuroleptics on mortality because of the drug withdrawal design. The suicide rate in these unethical trials was 2-5 times higher than the norm.^{20,21} One in every 145 patients who entered the trials of risperidone, olanzapine, quetiapine, and sertindole died, but none of these deaths were mentioned in the scientific literature, and the FDA didn't require them to be mentioned.

Fifth, events after the trial is stopped are ignored. In Pfizer's trials of sertraline in adults, the risk ratio for suicides and suicide attempts was 0.52 when the follow-up was only 24 hours, but 1.47 when the follow-up was 30 days, i.e. an increase in suicidal events.²² And when researchers reanalysed the FDA trial data on depression drugs and included harms occurring during followup, they found that the drugs double the number of suicides in adults compared to placebo.^{23,24}

In 2013, I estimated that, in people aged 65 and above, neuroleptics, benzodiazepines, or similar, and depression drugs kill 209,000 people annually in the United States.² I used rather conservative estimates, however, and usage data from Denmark, which are far lower than those in the US. I have therefore updated the analysis based on US usage data, again focusing on older age groups.

For neuroleptics, I used the estimate of 2% mortality from the

FDA data.¹⁸

For benzodiazepines and similar drugs, a matched cohort study showed that the drugs doubled the death rate, although the average age of the patients was only 55.²⁵ The excess death rate was about 1% per year. In another large, matched cohort study, the appendix to the study report shows that hypnotics quadrupled the death rate (hazard ratio 4.5).²⁶ These authors estimated that sleeping pills kill between 320,000 and 507,000 Americans every year.²⁶ A reasonable estimate of the annual death rate would therefore be 2%.

For SSRIs, a UK cohort study of 60,746 depressed patients older than 65 showed that they led to falls and that the drugs kill 3.6% of patients treated for one year.²⁷ The study was done very well, e.g. the patients were their own control in one of the analyses, which is a good way to remove the effect of confounders. But the death rate is surprisingly high.

Another cohort study, of 136,293 American postmenopausal women (age 50-79) participating in the Women's Health Initiative study, found that depression drugs were associated with a 32% increase in all-cause mortality after adjustment for confounding factors, which corresponded to 0.5% of women killed by SSRIs when treated for one year.²⁸ The death rate was very likely underestimated. The authors warned that their results should be interpreted with great caution, as the way exposure to antidepressant drugs was ascertained carried a high risk of misclassification, which would make it more difficult to find an increase in mortality. Further, the patients were much younger than in the UK study, and the death rate increased markedly with age and was 1.4% for those aged 70-79. Finally, the exposed and unexposed women were different for many important risk factors for early death, whereas the people in the UK cohort were their own control.

For these reasons, I decided to use the average of the two estimates, a 2% annual death rate.

These are my results for the US for these three drug groups for people at least 65 years of age (58.2 million; usage is in outpatients only):²⁹⁻³²

	Usage 65+	Mortality rate	Annual deaths
Neuroleptics	1.5%	2%	17460
Benzodiazepines	13.0%	2%	151320
Depression drugs	19.0%	2%	221160
Total			389940

A limitation in these estimates is that you can only die once, and many people receive polypharmacy. It is not clear how we should adjust for this. In the UK cohort study of depressed patients, 9% also took neuroleptics, and 24% took hypnotics/anxiolytics.²⁷

On the other hand, the data on death rates come from studies where many patients were also on several psychiatric drugs in the comparison group, so this is not likely to be a major limitation considering also that polypharmacy increases mortality beyond what the individual drugs cause.

Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention list these four top causes of death:³³

Heart disease: 695,547

Cancer: 605,213

Covid-19: 416,893

Accidents: 224,935

Covid-19 deaths are rapidly declining, and many such deaths are not caused by the virus but merely occurred in people who tested positive for it because the WHO advised that all deaths in people who tested positive should be called Covid deaths.

Young people have a much smaller death risk than the elderly, as they rarely fall and break their hip, which is why I have focused on the elderly. I have tried to be conservative. My estimate misses many drug deaths in those younger than 65 years; it only included three classes of psychiatric drugs; and it did not include hospital deaths.

I therefore do not doubt that psychiatric drugs are the third leading cause of death after heart disease and cancer.

Other Drug Groups and Hospital Deaths

Analgesics are also major killers. In the US, about 70,000 people were killed in 2021 by an overdose of a synthetic opioid.³⁴

The usage of NSAIDs is also high. In the US, 26% of adults use them regularly, 16% of which get them without a prescription³⁵ (mostly ibuprofen and diclofenac).³⁶

As there seems to be no major differences between the drugs in their capacity to cause thromboses,³⁷ we may use data for rofecoxib. Merck and Pfizer underreported thrombotic events in their trials of rofecoxib and celecoxib, respectively, to such an extent that it constituted fraud,¹ but in one trial, of colorectal adenomas, Merck assessed thrombotic events. There were 1.5 more cases of myocardial infarction, sudden cardiac death or stroke on rofecoxib than on placebo per 100 patients treated.³⁸ About 10% of the thromboses are fatal, but heart attacks are rare in young people. Restricting the analysis to those aged at least 65, we get 87,300 annual deaths.

It has been estimated that 3,700 deaths occur each year in the

UK due to peptic ulcer complications in NSAID users,³⁹ corresponding to about 20,000 deaths each year in the US. Thus, the total estimate of NSAID deaths is about 107,000.

If we add the estimates above, 315,000 hospital deaths, 390,000 psychiatric drug deaths, 70,000 synthetic opioid deaths, and 107,000 NSAID deaths, we get 882,000 drug deaths in the United States annually.

Many commonly used drugs other than those mentioned above can cause dizziness and falls, e.g. anticholinergic drugs against urinary incontinence and dementia drugs, which are used by 1% and 0.5% of the Danish population, respectively, even though they do not have any clinically relevant effects.^{1,2}

It is difficult to know what the exact death toll of our drugs is, but there can be no doubt that they are the leading cause of death. And the death toll would be much higher if we included people below 65 years of age. Moreover, from the official number of deaths from heart disease, we would need to subtract those caused by NSAIDs, and from accidents, deaths by falls caused by psychiatric drugs and many other drugs.

If such a hugely lethal pandemic had been caused by a microorganism, we would have done everything we could to get it under control. The tragedy is that we could easily get our drug pandemic under control, but when our politicians act, they usually make matters worse. They have been so heavily lobbied by the drug industry that drug regulation has become much more permissive than it was in the past.⁴⁰

Most of the drug deaths are preventable,⁴¹ above all because most of the patients who died didn't need the drug that killed them. In placebo-controlled trials, the effect of neuroleptics and depression drugs has been considerably below the least clinically relevant effect, also for very severe depression.^{2,7} And, despite their name, non-steroidal, anti-

inflammatory drugs, NSAIDs do not have anti-inflammatory effects,^{1,42} and systematic reviews have shown that their analgesic effect is similar to that of paracetamol (acetaminophen). Yet, most patients with pain are recommended to take both paracetamol and an NSAID over the counter. This will not increase the effect, only the risk of dying.

Most tragically, leading psychiatrists all over the world do not realise how ineffective and dangerous their drugs are. A US psychiatrist, Roy Perlis, professor at Harvard, argued in April 2024 that depression pills should be sold over the counter because they are “safe and effective.”⁴³ They are highly unsafe and ineffective. Perlis also claimed that depression drugs do not increase the risk of suicide in people older than 25, which is also wrong. They double suicides in adults.^{23,24}

Perlis wrote, “Some still question the biological basis of this disorder, despite the identification of more than 100 genes that increase depression risk and neuroimaging studies showing differences in the brains of people with depression.” Both of these claims are plain wrong. Genetic association studies have come up empty-handed and so have brain imaging studies, which are generally highly flawed.⁴⁴ People are depressed because they live depressing lives, not because of some brain disorder.

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Dr. Peter Gøtzsche co-founded the Cochrane Collaboration, once considered the world's preeminent independent medical research organization. In 2010 Gøtzsche was named Professor of Clinical Research Design and Analysis at the University of Copenhagen. Gøtzsche has published more than 97 papers in the "big five" medical journals (JAMA, Lancet, New England Journal of Medicine, British Medical Journal, and Annals of Internal Medicine). Gøtzsche has also authored books on medical issues including Deadly Medicines and Organized Crime. Following many years of being an outspoken critic of the corruption of science by pharmaceutical companies, Gøtzsche's membership on the governing board of Cochrane was terminated by its Board of Trustees in September, 2018. Four board resigned in protest.

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The WHO and Phony International Law

[The WHO and Phony International Law](#)

by [Bruce Parly, Brownstone Institute](#)

January 31, 2024

A new pandemic treaty is in the works. Countries are

negotiating its terms, along with amendments to international health regulations. If ready in time, the World Health Assembly will approve them in May. The deal may give the WHO power to declare global health emergencies. Countries will promise to follow WHO directives. Lockdowns, vaccine mandates, travel restrictions, and more will be in the works. Critics say that the agreements will override national sovereignty because their provisions will be binding. But international law is the art of the Big Pretend.

You drive down Main Street. Cars are parked everywhere. The signs say "No Parking" but they also say, "The City does not enforce parking restrictions." In effect there's no rule against parking. Laws are commands imposed with the force of the state. Rules without sanctions are mere suggestions. Some people may honor the request, but others won't. Those who disagree with the rule can safely ignore it. In domestic law, "enforceable" and "binding" are synonyms.

But not in international law, where promises are called "binding" even if they are unenforceable. In the international sphere, countries are the highest authority. Nothing stands above them with the power to enforce their promises. No such courts exist. The International Court of Justice depends on the consent of the countries involved. No international police enforce its orders. The UN is a sprawling bureaucracy, but in the end, it is merely a place for countries to gather. The WHO is a branch of the UN whose mandate countries negotiate amongst themselves.

In the proposed pandemic treaty, parties are to settle disputes through negotiation. They may agree to be subject to the International Court of Justice or to arbitration. But they cannot be required to.

Yet international law jurists insist that unenforceable treaty promises can be binding. "The binding character of a norm does not depend on whether there is any court or tribunal with

jurisdiction to apply it," Daniel Bodansky, a professor of international law at Arizona State University, wrote in a 2016 [analysis](#) of the Paris climate agreement. "Enforcement is not a necessary condition for an instrument or norm to be legally binding." Without this Big Pretend, international law would collapse like a house of cards on a windy beach.

All countries are sovereign. They are free to retaliate against each other for perceived wrongs, including breaches of treaty promises. They can seek to have other countries censured or expelled from the international regime. They can impose trade sanctions. They can expel ambassadors. But retaliation is not "enforcement." Moreover, international relations are a delicate business. Aggrieved countries are more likely to express their disappointment in carefully crafted diplomatic language than to burn bridges.

The threat from WHO proposals come not from outside but from within. We live in a managerial age, run by a technocratic elite. Over time, they have acquired for themselves the discretion to direct society for the common good, as they declare it to be.

As journalist David Samuels [puts it](#), "Americans now find themselves living in an oligarchy administered day-to-day by institutional bureaucracies that move in lock-step with each other, enforcing a set of ideologically-driven top-down imperatives that seemingly change from week-to-week and cover nearly every subject under the sun." These bureaucracies regulate, license, expropriate, subsidize, track, censor, prescribe, plan, incentivize, and inspect. Pandemics and public health are the most recent justifications for yet more control.

Domestic governments, not international bodies, will impose WHO recommendations on their citizens. They will pass laws and policies that incorporate those directives. Even an exasperated WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

said so in a briefing this week. "There are those who claim that the pandemic agreement and [amended regulations] will seed sovereignty...and give the WHO Secretariat the power to impose lockdowns or vaccine mandates on countries...These claims are completely false...the agreement is negotiated by countries for countries and will be implemented in countries in accordance with your own national laws."

Ghebreyesus is correct. Local and national authorities will not give up their powers. To what extent international commitments will be "binding" on a country depends not on international law but on that country's own domestic laws and courts. Article VI of the US Constitution, for example, provides that the Constitution, federal laws, and treaties together "shall be the supreme Law of the Land." That does not mean that treaties supersede the Constitution or federal laws. Domestic legislation and policy will be required for the proposed pandemic treaty and WHO directives to be enforced on American soil. Such legislation is an exercise of sovereignty, not a repudiation of it.

The proposals are not benign. Domestic authorities seek cover for their own autocratic measures. Their promises will be called "binding" even though they are not. Local officials will justify restrictions by citing international obligations. Binding WHO recommendations leave them no choice, they will say. The WHO will coordinate their imperatives as the face of global public health.

The WHO is not taking over. Instead, it will be the handmaiden for a coordinated global biomedical state. Managers hate straight lines. Diffuse, discretionary powers avoid accountability and the rule of law. The global health regime will be a tangled web. It is meant to be.

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The CDC Doctor Responsible for Hiding Myocarditis and Promoting Vaccines

[The CDC Doctor Responsible for Hiding Myocarditis and Promoting Vaccines](#)

by [Brownstone Institute](#)

January 20, 2024

The CDC withheld an “alert on myocarditis and mRNA vaccines” warning of the connection between heart inflammation and Covid-19 shots in May 2021, [the Epoch Times has revealed](#).

The agency never published the alert; instead, its authors pushed vaccines on all age groups across the country.

Dr. Demetre Daskalakis was the author of the draft. He gained minor celebrity status during the response to Covid and Monkeypox, appearing on magazine covers [dressed in bondage](#) and posting [shirtless photos](#) demanding Americans wear masks.

The proposed alert came in response to two fatal post-Pfizer vaccination myocarditis deaths in Israel and repeated warnings from the Department of Defense.

Despite voicing private concern, Daskalakis publicly promoted the products. In the same month he sent the warning, he [wrote](#), “Data over dogma. Vaccines Work,” in response to a CDC tweet

allowing “fully vaccinated” Americans to “resume activities without wearing a mask or staying 6 feet apart.” He then [posted](#), “Highly effective prevention means fewer barriers, physical or social. #Covidvaccine.”

At the time, the overwhelming majority of American teenagers had not received Covid shots. No state had a vaccination rate above 20% for 12- to 17-year-olds. In California, 90% of that age cohort remained unvaccinated. Indeed, the age gradient of risk was so steep – medically significant outcomes from the virus centered on the age and infirm – there was never a reason to push them on the general population.

Over the following two years, Dr. Daskalakis and his colleagues pushed the shots on every age group and deliberately withheld publishing its alert on myocarditis. Instead, the CDC sent repeated alerts encouraging Covid-19 vaccination for everyone.

Two months after the unpublished warning, the CDC sent an [alert](#) to doctors to “remind patients that vaccination is recommended for all persons aged 12 years of age and older, even for those with prior SARS-CoV-2 infection.”

The propaganda efforts, in conjunction with President Biden’s mandates, succeeded. By May 2023, a large majority of American teenagers had received at least one dose of a Covid vaccine. The vaccination rate for 12 to 17-year-olds in California skyrocketed from 10% to 84%, with one in five receiving an additional booster, according to [CDC data](#).

The rate of vaccination for 12 to 17-year-olds went from 3% to 47% in Mississippi, 15% to 87% in Virginia, and 19% to 94% in Vermont from May 2021 to May 2023.

During that time period, Dr. Daskalakis repeatedly avoided voicing concerns over the risk of myocarditis. “I am so excited for my #Covid19 booster on Monday! I love vaccines!” he [posted](#) on Twitter in September 2022. In [October 2023](#), he

posted a photo of him receiving another Covid shot.

Daskalakis sent the draft alert to Henry Walke and John Brooks, both senior officials at the CDC. Their social media accounts do not share the same penchant for nudity and mRNA shots as [Dr. Demetre's](#), but, like Daskalakis, they continued to promote the shots without mentioning the discarded myocarditis alert.

In January 2022, Walke joined Dr. Rochelle Walensky in a [CDC telebriefing](#) that recommended a “safe and effective vaccine” for “all children five and older.” Brooks [blamed](#) “people who are not vaccinated” as “the source of new emerging [Covid] variants” in March 2022.

To this day, the CDC [recommends](#) children begin receiving Covid vaccines once they are six months old. It is not possible for immigrants to obtain legal permission to work in the US without one.

Fifty years ago, the most incisive questions from the Watergate hearings came from Senator Howard Baker: “What did the President know, and when did he know it?” The inquiry, ostensibly simple, encompassed the entire scandal.

The corruption of our public health apparati demands a similar probe. What did they know, and when did they know it? As the Covid regime demands [“a pandemic amnesty,”](#) the report from the *Epoch Times* adds to the [plethora of evidence](#) that their misdeeds were not mere mistakes; they were deliberate acts of fraud and deceit.

They knew of the risks, and they withheld the information from the American people. Stripped of informed consent, millions of citizens took the shots while doctors like Demetre Daskalakis denied them the right to know the risks of the product.

A Nation of Non-Compliers

[A Nation of Non-Compliers](#)

by [Jeffrey A. Tucker](#), [Brownstone Institute](#)

January 6, 2024

The train wasn't scheduled for another 20 minutes, so I had a chance to contemplate the official sign on the door of the huge elevator leading to the platform. It said that only four people are allowed in because we must all practice social distancing. There was a helpful map of the interior of the elevator with stick figures telling people exactly where to stand.

Yes, these stickers are still everywhere. I recall when they first went up, sometime in April 2020. They seemed oddly uniform and appeared even permanent. At the time I thought, oh, this is a huge error because within a few weeks, the error of the whole of this idiocy is going to be known by all. Sadly, my worst fears came true: it was designed to be a permanent feature of our lives.

Same with the strange arrows on the ground telling us which way to walk. They are still everywhere, stuck on the floor, an integral part of the linoleum. If you walk this way, you will infect people, which is why you have to walk that way, which is safe. As for masks, the mandates keep popping up in strange

places and strange ways. My inbox fills with pleas for how people can fight this stuff.

The essential message of all these edicts: you are pathogenic, a carrier, poisonous, dangerous, and so is everyone else. Every human person is a disease vector. While it's fine you are out and about, you must always create a little isolation zone around you such that you have no contact with other human beings.

It's so odd that no dystopian book or novel ever imagined a plot centered on such a stupid and evil concept. Not even in [1984](#) or *The Hunger Games*, or *The Matrix* or *Equilibrium*, or [Brave New World](#) or [Anthem](#), was it ever imagined that a government would institute a rule that all people in public spaces must stand six feet away in all directions from any other person.

That some government would insist on this was too crazy for even the darkest imaginings of the most pessimistic prognosticator. That 200 governments in the world, at roughly the same time, would go there was unimaginable.

And yet here we are, years after the supposed emergency, and while governments are not enforcing it, for the most part, many are still pushing the practice as the ideal form of human engagement.

Except that we are not doing it. In this train station, no one paid any attention to any of the signage. The exhortations were entirely ignored, even by those who are still masked up (and, one presumes, boosted seven times).

When the moment arrived for people to get into the elevator, a crowd began to pour in, quickly beyond four, then eight, then 12. I stood there shoulder to shoulder with fully 25 other people in one elevator with a sign that demanded only four people get in at any one time.

I sort of wanted to ask the crowd if they saw the sign and what did they think. But that would have been absurd, because, actually, no one even cares. In any case, one guy asking a crowded elevator such a question would have raised suspicions that I was deep state or something.

It was never clear in any case who was enforcing this. Who issued the rule? What are the penalties for not complying? No one ever said. Sure, there was in the past usually some flunky bureaucrat or Karen who yelled at people and said do this and don't do that. But those people seem long ago to have given up.

It's not even a thing anymore. And yet the signs still exist. Probably they will stay forever.

There is an enormous disjunction that still persists between what we are told to do and what we actually do. It's as if incredulity toward official diktat is now baked into our daily lives. My first thought is that it doesn't make much sense at all, even from the point of view of those who aspire to control our lives, to issue commands to which no one listens or obeys. On the other hand, there might be some meta-rationale for this, as if to say, "We are nuts, you know we are nuts, we know you know we are nuts, but we are in charge and can continue to do this anyway."

In other words, edicts to which no one complies serve a certain purpose. They are a visual reminder of who is in charge, what those people believe, and the presence of a Sword of Damocles hanging above the whole population: at any point, anyone can be snatched away from normal life, made a criminal, and be forced to pay a price.

The nuttier the edicts, the more effective the message.

Thus do we live in insane times. There seems to be a huge and widening gulf separating the rulers from the ruled, and this gulf pertains to values, aims, methods, and even vision for

the future. Whereas most of the population aspires to live a better life, we cannot shake the sense that someone out there who has more power than the rest of us aspires for us to be poorer, more miserable, more afraid, more dependent, and more compliant.

After all, we are just barely shaking off the most grandiose experiment in universal human control in the historical record, the attempt to micromanage the whole of everyone belonging to the human race in the name of gaining control over the microbial kingdom. The effort petered out over time but how in the heck does anyone with ruling-class power expect to maintain any credibility after such a destructive experiment?

And yet there is a reason we have heard precious few concessions that it was all bogus and unworkable, and why there is still a dripping sound of papers telling us that the whole scheme worked pretty well and that people who say otherwise are disseminators of disinformation. There are still publishing opportunities out there to trash repurposed generics and praise the shots and boosters. The power is still with the crazy people, not with those who question them.

And the people who threw themselves into Covid controls as the greatest years of their lives are still at it. Hardly a day goes by when there is not a freshly written hit piece on the resistance and efforts to trash those with enough sagacity to see through all the baloney. Far from being rewarded, those who protested and opposed are still living under a cloud that comes with being an enemy of the state.

We all know that it is not just about these dumb stickers and these virus controls. There is more going on. Coincident with the pandemic restrictions came the triumph of woke ideology, the intense push for EVs, and wild ramp-up in weather paranoia with the discovery that climates change, a rampant gender dysphoria and denial of chromosomal reality, an unprecedented

refugee flood that no one in power is willing to mitigate, a continued attack on gas including even stoves, and a host of other inane things that are driving rational people to the brink of despair.

We long ago gave up the hope that all of this is random and coincidental, any more than it so happened that nearly every government in the world decided to plaster social distancing signs everywhere at the same time. Something is going on, something malevolent. The battle of the future really is between them and us but who or what “them” is remains opaque and too many of “us” are still confused about what the alternative is to what is happening all around us.

Noncompliance is an essential start regardless. That crowded elevator, assembling spontaneously in open defiance to the blasting signage, is a sign that something in the human longing to be free to make our own decisions, still survives. There are cracks in the great edifice of control.

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The Religion of Masking

[The Religion of Masking](#)

by [Gwendolyn Kull](#), [Brownstone Institute](#)

September 14, 2023

What do burkas, tichels, yarmulkes, hijabs, kapps, fezzes, dukus, and surgical masks all have in common? Religious cultures mandate or strongly encourage these head coverings to comply with dogma. Although most of these are rooted in ethnic and religious traditions of any denomination to reflect humility before G-d and modesty before man, surgical masks have become the morality trend of the Western world for those who fear The Science before they fear any god.

As absurd as that last sentence may sound, the People of the United States are under siege—a war that is targeting our greatest claim to fame, our pride and joy: our freedom. Our Forefathers determined at the inception of this nation that all men have the inviolate right to life and liberty. Recognizing some freedoms that are indelible to the identity of a human are especially at risk of infringement, the Founders drafted the Bill of Rights to expressly protect freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to peaceably assemble, and freedom to petition the government among other activities.

Yet over the last three years, our government has encroached on these unalienable freedoms in the name of public health and following The Science. The few government officials and bureaucrats sitting in D.C. and Georgia imposed their beliefs on what makes the public healthy on the masses, without regard for dissenting opinions or contrary beliefs. Such factional tyranny is exactly the breach of social contract the Framers

aimed to prevent.

After initially telling the country that masks would not work against this virus, Anthony Fauci [fell in step](#), ordering persons be masked and directing both government and non-government actors alike to hold their fellow citizens accountable for failing to mask. A futile exercise in the name of “public health” given research predating the pandemic had already [put to bed](#) the idea that masking could prevent respiratory infections. Even following the Cochrane Review’s [pandemic masking study](#) showing little-to-no efficacy at masks preventing infection, the Biden administration [still tells the People](#) we should be masking.

Beyond inefficacy, [recent studies](#) are also researching possible adverse consequences from constant mask-wearing, now termed “Mask-Induced Exhaustion Syndrome.” The illness bears many of the same symptoms as “long covid,” begging the question: are the health risks of long-term masking worth the miniscule efficacy? I digress. Masking mandates began to die down when the CDC lost a [legal battle](#) where the court only addressed the agency’s statutory authority to impose such a mandate. The question of whether such mandates are constitutional at all was never reached. Despite the open question in the courts, I firmly believe mask mandates do not pass constitutional muster.

Recalling my extreme parallel of religious head coverings to surgical masks, compare this scenario: one day, the bureaucrats in Washington decide that for public health and decency, everyone must wear a burka. The land would cry, “Foul!” Non-muslim citizens would lose their minds that *Sharia* law was being imposed on them in violation of their First Amendment right to be free from the establishment of religion! Only the worshippers of the public health fascists would gladly adorn the dress as a testament to their true belief that the burka would save them from illness. I ask you, how is our current masking guidelines any different?

Because masking is not a teaching from an institutionalized religion? Is trusting The Science not a form of having faith?

In truth, our courts have held time and time again that government actors cannot infringe on our clothing under both freedom-tenants of [religion](#) and [speech](#). Our Constitution contracts our appointed government to respect and defend our human right to liberty, which includes our ability to express ourselves and beliefs through our clothing and appearances. After all, our appearance is all a part of our individual identities. Covering one's face, one's physical identity, must be a *choice* and not a requirement.

Moreover, our individual identities are not just linked to our physical attributes. Nay, our speech is also core to our humanity and identities. Speech is the expression of one's soul, subjective based upon the speaker's own perceptions and experiences. How I speak and what I say is part of how others (and I) recognize me as who I am!

Like any painting serves as a window into the artist's being, so is speech into a person's mind, heart, and soul. It is as complex as the human body that produces such words and sounds: the speaker's larynx, vocal chords, pharynx, palate, tongue, teeth, cheeks, lips, and nose are all coordinating in harmony to make what we think in our minds come out of our mouths. Speech is as unique to each individual as a person's fingerprints or DNA. Muffling a person's voice, covering the delicate facets producing speech, hiding non-verbal facial cues, and restricting air flow via masks is not natural.

Masking inhibits self-expression. Even prior to physical masking, virtue-signalers touted policing one's own speech as being "politically correct." Policing and masking speech is toxic to both individuals and humankind. It evokes the same hesitancy as does domestic abuse—the feeling of "walking on eggshells" for fear your words will trigger and bring you harm. It further causes an identity crisis—a dissociation

within oneself, wherein the mind is policing the heart and soul for fear of offending any listener (or observer). Both perpetuate the [victimhood complex](#) where one believes she cannot live without fear because others will not do “what they are supposed to do.”

It is true that internal perceptions expressed outwardly are not always correct or palatable. Such is the beauty of allowing one to convey his opinions and beliefs in his own words: the listener can understand the person with whom she is speaking and take the opportunity to debate and educate, correct her own misunderstanding, or completely discredit the speaker of value within her own mind. Speech is not just about speaking, but about hearing and deciding what one believes to be true. Speech of our own and listening to others' speech helps us understand and develop our own identities.

It is not that constant expletives and hyperboles should become the norm of self-expression through speech. No, language itself is so vastly malleable that it can be morphed to rise to any situation—to connect with one's listeners. For instance, there are different ages of communication. You would not use the same words with a child as you would with adults, unless your intention is to be misunderstood or completely unintelligible like the unseen adult characters of *Charlie Brown*. To be understood by your listeners, you must change your speech to be appropriate for the venue and target audience.

How is any of this relevant to the topic of mask mandates eroding freedom? Requiring people to cover the face and bodily member responsible for speaking and being heard and understood is inhumane. It strips children of their ability [to learn how to speak](#), how to use their body to produce sounds and words and sentences, and how to connect those words to facial expressions to add context for listeners. It socially distances people from each other, deteriorating the human connection that allows us to communicate and understand each

other.

There is no replacement for that connection. As I discussed in a [prior article](#), humans are a social species. Although we are capable as individuals, we fail to thrive when deprived of interacting with others. During lockdowns, people yearned to visit family, go out to restaurants, to resume “normalcy.” Zoom meetings, video calls, and text messages were not enough to curb the cravings for human connection.

Masking is just another degree of separation from one another. Although it is less obvious than the isolation of quarantines, it is just another lonely reminder that we are not free. Not free to be ourselves, not free to connect, not free from fear, not free to breathe, not free to decide for ourselves what is in our own best interest. Even President Biden joked during a recent [press conference](#) that, “they keep telling me... I got to keep wearing [a mask], but don’t tell them I didn’t have it on when I walked in,” defiantly waving his surgical mask away from his face.

Who are “they” to decide what is in any individual’s best interest? Are we children and “they” our parents? Do we lack the mental capacity to think for ourselves? Are we not developed and educated enough to decide what is healthy and what is not? Are our God-given immune systems so defective that we can no longer survive colds? I find it a hard blue pill to swallow that humanity has survived on this planet for hundreds of thousands of years for a coronavirus variant to suddenly confound our natural biological defenses.

Who are “they” at all? “They” are not our duly-elected legislators who oathed to uphold and defend our Constitution and who are the only branch of government who the People gave authority to create laws. In fact, Senator JD Vance (R-OH) is now fighting this usurpation of legislative authority by “them.” On September 7, 2023, he brought to the [Senate floor](#) the “[Freedom to Breathe](#)” Act, which would prohibit mask

mandates. Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) objected to the call for unanimous consent, arguing that this legislation would infringe on the health powers of the states.

An interesting and seemingly Constitution-based argument by Senator Markey, but it presupposes masking mandates on the public are a health-related decision at all, which is not supported by scientific evidence, and that such mandates are not otherwise constitutionally prohibited.

Though the People granted health powers to the states, those powers are still limited by the People's ultimate right to life and liberty, including the free exercise of religion without a state-sanctioned religion (The Science) and free speech without intrusions on the speech-producing orifice or physical identity of the speaker.

Masking restrictions are not a "health power" the state governments are permitted to enforce. Masking mandates are not a public health measure the federal government is permitted to sanction. Both impede life and liberty guaranteed to the People by being human and safeguarded by the People through enforcing our Constitution. As such, the People will not comply.

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David v. Goliath in New York

[David v. Goliath in New York](#)

by [Brownstone Institute](#)

September 12, 2023



There is a battle going on for our freedoms this week. And very few Americans are even aware of what is at stake.

New York attorney Bobbie Anne Cox single-handedly goes up against the State of New York this week, after the state appealed a [New York State Supreme Court ruling](#) that a so-called “quarantine camp” regulation (“*Isolation and Quarantine Procedures*”) issued by Governor Kathy Hochul was unconstitutional.

The order concerns quarantine of citizens by the state government. Like other states, New York already has in place laws regarding quarantine of the citizenry – laws duly passed by the elected state representatives. Those laws were crafted by legislators (whose job it is to do this work) and passed by a majority vote of both Assembly and Senate and signed by the governor. That law not only provides for protecting the public by use of quarantine, but also includes protections for individual rights.

There are problems with the governor's action.

- The executive branch **does not have the power to make laws** under the constitution. That is reserved to the legislature.
- With one state executive branch taking power not given to them constitutionally, it **creates a precedent** that could be used similarly for other issues to violate the rights of citizens on a host of other issues – not only in New York, but in all the other states as well.

So, what is in this regulation, you ask? It has to do with quarantine of the citizenry. There is a history of government-mandated quarantine during times of epidemics in our country. Whether or not the existing laws have been misused against individuals is another debate (see the case of [Typhoid Mary](#), for example, who was imprisoned for more than 23 years under the quarantine law of the time).

This governor's regulation puts the power at the highest levels of the state government – centrally controlled. The governor's regulation not only circumvents the legislature's power and responsibility to enact appropriate laws for the citizenry, but it also takes that power beyond the local level, where it can most appropriately be considered, and completely fails to protect the rights of the individuals against misuse or mis-application by the state officials.

In this regulation, there is no requirement for the state government to **prove** that the targeted individual is infected, has been exposed to an infectious disease, or poses any actual risk to his/her fellow citizens. The application of the regulation is broad – not just limited to Covid cases. There is no limit regarding the age or medical condition of the individual (it could be imposed on a child or a very elderly person), and there is nothing specified as to the duration of the quarantine, or how that duration would be determined. Most concerning: **there is no mechanism provided for the individual**

to be released.

During the initial court case, it was clearly stated that the only possible mechanism for release was for that individual to sue the state, unless the state officials decided to lift it of their own accord.

Under the provisions of the governor's regulation, the state government can use law enforcement to forcibly remove citizens from their homes or businesses against their will to place them in unspecified quarantine locations for an indeterminate period with no mechanism for release!

This terrible infringement on citizens' rights, however, doesn't stop here. It sets a precedent for more executive branch overreach. If it is not overturned in the appellate court, it will embolden other governors to make more forays into the realm of executive usurpation of the legislative branch of government (see the recent [NM Governor's action](#) to remove 2nd Amendment rights by executive order).

There is no doubt that those who take this type of executive action (Lujan Grisham in New Mexico and Hochul in New York) know that this is outside their scope of power within our governmental system. They also know that, until someone files a lawsuit and prevails against them, they have a period of time when these executive regulations and orders will be in place.

It is essential that the appeals court upholds the ruling in the case of this regulation by Governor Hochul – for the good of all the people of New York, but also for all of us in other states.

This passionate, articulate, brilliant lawyer is fighting for all of us.

And Bobbie Anne Cox has suffered for it. She has set aside her normal legal practice to pursue this effort and has been

focusing solely on this case for an extended period. She has sacrificed valuable time with her family, spending countless hours in the maze of motions, filings, dockets, scheduling, and research that are part and parcel of the legal system with all its complexities. The work has been arduous, solitary, and, to some extent, thankless. If she wins the appeal, there is **no financial benefit** to her or any of the plaintiffs that will be realized.

She has no large staff of paralegals and junior attorneys assisting her to put this case together. She has not had assistance from her other colleagues in New York in fighting this battle.

And, because it has to do with complexities of the legal system, it gets little coverage in the media. Perhaps it is so difficult to imagine just why a state government even wants this type of power over the citizenry, that people find it very hard to grasp that it is really just what Bobbie Anne describes in terms of the potential abuse of individual rights.

No public outcry has occurred. No groundswell of support for her work has happened. And while many are supportive of the great work she has done and were so relieved when she won the case initially, the vast majority of people who stand to benefit from her work will never know they owe her a debt of gratitude.

On Wednesday, September 13, 2023 at 10:00 am EST (at the courthouse in Rochester, NY, located at 50 East Avenue), Bobbie Anne Cox goes forth as a sort of David to meet Goliath, depending on her knowledge of the law rather than a slingshot and stones. She is relying on the New York panel of judges to truly prove that there still exists blind justice in New York.

The [merits of her case](#) are clear – even to people not that

familiar with the law. Basic Civics shows us the correctness of her contention. This is not a partisan issue. While she is representing Republican plaintiffs, she is not one herself.

If you are able to support her by physically attending the hearing, do so. Perhaps by your presence you can be a silent reminder to the court that New Yorkers are interested in this and are supportive of her efforts.

If you cannot be there in person, consider watching the oral arguments live on the court's website at: <https://ad4.nycourts.gov/go/live/>. Please also keep her and the court judges in your thoughts and prayers and share this information with your circle of friends and colleagues.

May she prevail.

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The Free Speech Scare

[The Free Speech Scare](#)



“War and censorship go together because it is wartime that allows ruling elites to declare that ideas alone are dangerous to the goal of defeating the enemy...”

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*“The war, however, was of domestic origin and targeted at Americans themselves...”*

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“The Red Scare mutated a century later to become the virus scare in which the real pathogen they tried to kill was your willingness to think for yourself.”



[The Free Speech Scare](#)

by [Jeffrey A. Tucker](#), [Brownstone Institute](#)

July 21, 2023

It was a strange experience watching the [House hearing](#) in which Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. was testifying. The topic was censorship and how and to what extent federal government agencies under two administrations muscled social media companies to take down posts, ban users, and throttle content. The majority made its case.

What was strange was the minority reaction throughout. They tried to shut down RFK. They moved to go to executive session so that the public could not hear the proceedings. The effort failed. Then they shouted over his words when they were questioning him. They wildly smeared him and defamed him. They even began with an attempt to block him from speaking at all, and 8 Democrats voted to support that.

This was a hearing on censorship and they were trying to censor him. It only made the point.

It became so awful that RFK was compelled to give a short tutorial on the importance of free speech as an essential

right, without which all other rights and freedoms are in jeopardy. Even those words he could barely speak given the rancor in the room. It's fair to say that free speech, even as a core principle, is in grave trouble. We cannot even get a consensus on the basics.

BREAKING – EXPLOSIVE: [@RobertKennedyJr](#) puts Democratic Congress members trying to censor him in their place with fiery open remarks during a hearing to expose censorship. It's shocking that in the United States of America, people are being censored for speaking the truth! WATCH! <pic.twitter.com/MKQMk2INAu>

– Simon Ateba (@simonateba) [July 20, 2023](#)

It seemed to viewers that RFK was the adult in the room. Put other ways, he was the preacher of fidelity in the brothel, the keeper of memory in a room full of amnesiacs, the practitioner of sanity in the sanatorium, or, as Mencken might say, the hurler of a dead cat into the temple.

It was oddly strange to hear the voice of wise statesmen in that hothouse culture of infantile corruption: it reminded the public just how far things have fallen. Notably, it was he and not the people who wanted him gagged who was citing scientific papers.

A PHD level explanation of the important of free speech to democracy from [@RobertKennedyJr](#). <pic.twitter.com/S0HxIDLvLA>

– The Wolf Of All Streets (@scottmelker) [July 20, 2023](#)

The protests against his statements were shrill and shocking. They moved quickly from “Censorship didn’t happen” to “It was necessary and wonderful” to “We need more of it.” [Reporting](#) on the spectacle, the *New York Times* said these are “thorny

questions”: “Is misinformation protected by the First Amendment? When is it appropriate for the federal government to seek to tamp down the spread of falsehoods?”

These are not thorny questions. The real issue concerns who is to be the arbiter of truth?

Such attacks on free speech do have precedent in American history. We have already discussed the [Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798](#) which led to a complete political upheaval that swept Thomas Jefferson into the White House. There were two additional bouts of censorship folly in the 20th century. Both followed great wars and an explosion in government size and reach.

The first came with the Red Scare (1917-1920) following the Great War (WWI). The Bolshevik Revolution and political instability in Europe led to a wild bout of political paranoia in the US that the communists, anarchists, and labor movement were plotting a takeover of the US government. The result was an imposition of censorship along with strict laws concerning political loyalty.

The [Espionage Act of 1917](#) was one result. It is still in force and being deployed today, most recently against former President Trump. Many states passed censorship laws. The feds deported many people suspected of sedition and treason. Suspected communists were hauled in front of Congress and grilled.

The second bout occurred after the Second World War with the House UnAmerican Activities Committee (HUAC) and the Army-McCarthy hearings that led to blacklists and media smears of every sort. The result was a chilling of free speech across American industry that hit media particularly hard. That incident later became legendary due to the exaggerations and disregard for the First Amendment.

How does the Covid-era censorship fit into this historical

context? At Brownstone, we've compared the wild Covid response to a wartime footing that caused as much trauma on the homeland as previous world wars.

Three years of research, documents, and reporting have established that the lockdowns and all that followed were not directed by public health authorities. They were the veneer for the national security state, which took charge in the month of February 2020 and deployed the full takeover of both government and society in mid-March. This is one reason that it's been so difficult getting information on how and why all of this happened to us: it's been mostly classified under the guise of national security.

In other words, this was war and the nation was ruled for a time (and maybe still is) by what amounts to quasi-martial law. Indeed, it felt like that. No one knew for sure who was in charge and who was making all these wild decisions for our lives and work. It was never clear what the penalties would be for noncompliance. The rules and edicts seemed arbitrary, having no real connection to the goal; indeed no one really knew what the goal was besides more and more control. There was no real exit strategy or end game.

As with the two previous bouts of censorship in the last century, there commenced a closure of public debate. It began almost immediately as the lockdowns edict were issued. They tightened over the months and years. Elites sought to plug every leak in the official narrative through every means possible. They invaded every space. Those they could not get to (like Parler) were simply unplugged. Amazon rejected books. YouTube deleted millions of posts. Twitter was brutal, while once-friendly Facebook became the enforcer of regime propaganda.

The hunt for dissenters took strange forms. Those who held gatherings were shamed. People who did not socially distance were called disease spreaders. Walking outside without a mask

one day, a man shouted out to me in anger that “masks are socially recommended.” I kept turning that phrase around in my mind because it made no sense. The mask, no matter how obviously ineffective, was imposed as a tactic of humiliation and an exclusionary measure that targeted the incredulous. It was also a symbol: stop talking because your voice does not matter. Your speech will be muffled.

The vaccine of course came next: deployed as a tool to purge the military, public sector, academia, and the corporate world. The moment the *New York Times* reported that vaccine uptake was lower in states that supported Trump, the Biden administration had its talking points and agenda. The shot would be deployed to purge. Indeed, five cities briefly segregated themselves to exclude the unvaccinated from public spaces. The continued spread of the virus itself was blamed on the noncompliant.

Those who decried the trajectory could hardly find a voice much less assemble a social network. The idea was to make us all feel isolated even if we might have been the overwhelming majority. We just could not tell either way.

War and censorship go together because it is wartime that allows ruling elites to declare that ideas alone are dangerous to the goal of defeating the enemy. “Loose lips sink ships” is a clever phrase but it applies across the board in wartime. The goal is always to whip up the public in a frenzy of hate against the foreign enemy (“The Kaiser!”) and ferret out the rebels, the traitors, the subversives, and promoters of unrest. There is a reason that the protestors on January 6 were called “insurrectionists.” It is because it happened in wartime.

The war, however, was of domestic origin and targeted at Americans themselves. That’s why the precedent of 20th century censorship holds in this case. The war on Covid was in many ways an action of the national security state, something akin

to a military operation prompted and administered by intelligence services in close cooperation with the administrative state. And they want to make the protocols that governed us over these years permanent. Already, European governments are issuing stay-at-home recommendations for the heat.

If you had told me that this was the essence of what was happening in 2020 or 2021, I would have rolled my eyes in disbelief. But all evidence Brownstone has gathered since then has shown exactly that. In this case, the censorship was a predictable part of the mix. The Red Scare mutated a century later to become the virus scare in which the real pathogen they tried to kill was your willingness to think for yourself.

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The Future of Traditional

Farming and Healthcare in the Netherlands

[The Future of Traditional Farming and Healthcare in the Netherlands](#)

by [Carla Peeters](#), [Brownstone Institute](#)

July 9, 2023

The Netherlands has been chosen as a pilot area in the EU to be climate neutral with a transition in protein food and a transformation of healthcare into a telemedicine, data, and AI-driven connected system approach led by Public Private Partnerships. A closure of 55-70 percent of traditional farming is foreseen to be replaced by tech-driven vertical farming, gene-edited crops, edible insects, veganism, 15-minute cities and a CBDC passport covering personal health data.

Citizens will pay for the transition by increasing prices for energy, food, healthcare services, and insurance.

A U-turn of these EU-driven policies is highly needed. Health and wealth have been decreasing in the past years due to pandemic measures, inflation, and recently implemented policies. The Netherlands, famous for farming and innovations, can best win this challenge to re-establish healthcare driven by traditional farmers producing nutritious whole food that prevents famine, improves the soil and the immune system for healthy lives.

Dutch Farmers will no longer accept harmful policies

The Netherlands, a small country conveniently situated within the EU, has been economically growing by [generations](#) of farming and fishing. In July 2022 the Dutch policies on

farming led to the article [No farmers No Food No Life](#).

Large demonstrations initiated by [farmers and fishermen](#) took place in July 2022, November 2022, and March 2023 in The Hague and [Brussels](#) respectively, which received much attention worldwide. Now, half a year later an even bigger demonstration initiated by Dutch farmers took place on June 29, 2023 in The Hague. Farmers and citizens have drawn the line.

The new policies pushed forward by politicians in Rutte IV could be disastrous for farmers and humanity. This will not only affect the Netherlands. Changes in farming in the Netherlands, being the second largest export country for food, will affect many people [worldwide](#).

Last week the negotiations with farmers and agricultural society on the Agriculture Agreement IN MOVEMENT to meet the governmental goals for climate change on CO2 and Nitrogen reduction in 2040 collapsed. In the draft Agreement a [25-30 percent reduction](#) of farmers and cattle and loss of agricultural fields is foreseen in 2035.

It could even be a reduction of 55-70 percent of farmers to transform the Netherlands together with Flanders and North-Rhine Westphalia in one region '[Tristate city](#)' "a large green world city with 30 million inhabitants." This is a concept that was introduced in 2016 as a marketing strategy, established as a place brand, and initiated by the [private sector](#). The concept was found by visiting emerging markets in China. The opinion of thought leaders is that it will be a success, but there is no way of knowing this would be the case.

When the new agreement is signed farmers need to fulfill [122 measures](#); most of them will not be able to meet them. Farmers are warning that if the eighth EU Nitrogen rule will be forced for the ability to grow vegetables and fruit, it will be impossible to continue farming. This year the use of certain

crop protection spreads has become restricted in the Netherlands while other countries are allowed to use it. A 40 percent reduction in yield is expected.

The only way out for farmers seems to be to accept the offer by the government to sell their ownings for 120 percent of the value with a restriction not to be allowed to start another farm within the EU area. Many farmers still refuse the offers made. 'Even when they pay [400](#) percent of the value I won't leave, my son is going to be the next generation farmer.'

The draft agreement does not present information on effects on farmers' income and consumers' behavior. The advisory report from Wageningen University and Research (WUR) writes that they cannot advise on this topic as they [do not have](#) the information. With the reduction of cattle, farming land and a transition to regenerative farming they will be able to meet the goals on climate change. However, 30,000 jobs will be lost and €6.5 billion of [added value](#).

Remarkably, the role of [Rabobank](#) (originally derived from Boerenleenbank, a cooperative owned and run by farmers) which has been pushing investments by farmers for large-scale farming, while knowing for 30 years this strategy could harm the environment, has been kept out of the N2 debate in the Netherlands. A report published by Greenpeace explores [the role](#) of Rabobank. The minimum Rabobank (a bank for actively accelerating transitions for food, climate and finance) can do says Greenpeace is to contribute [€3.1 billion](#) in the N2 Fund.

A catastrophic power by a Culture of Climate Hysteria

Recently Rob Jetten, the Dutch minister for Climate and Energy Policy presented in parliament the net zero CO2 and nitrogen plan, which will cost [€28 billion](#) and would result in a 0.000036 degree Celsius reduction in temperature in 2050. A harmful and unrealistic plan for a problem that even does not exist.

There is no climate emergency, over 500 eminent experts wrote in 2019 in an [open letter](#) to the United Nations. A [research paper](#) by Skrabble et al, in Health Physics in 2022 concludes the increase in total CO2 due to the use of fossil fuels was much too low to be the cause of global warming. Another group of researchers found [ice](#) around Antarctica Thwaites Doomsday was eight times thinner around 8,000 years ago.

Furthermore, the [Nobel Prize](#) winner in Physics in 2022, John F Clauser, says it is clear; there is no climate crisis. Climate crisis is based on scientific corruption, pseudo-science. Similarly, Greenpeace co-founder [Dr Patrick Moore](#) explains in his speeches 'Carbon dioxide is the currency of life and the most important building block for all life on earth. It is not responsible for global warming. The whole debate on climate change is a fabrication.'

The European Court of Auditors [stated](#) in a recent report, 'It is not clear if the suggested measures will be supportive to meet the climate goals.' Probably the EU will not be able to meet their sustainability goals to reduce CO2 emission in 2030 by 55 percent. Unfortunately, the EU committed that they will be the first worldwide to be climate neutral. In the near future every [EU citizen](#) will have to pay for CO2 emissions via house, car, and company.

Gripped in a culture of [climate catastrophism](#), society seems to allow to rip the work of generations of farmers and thousands of cattle being slaughtered while the real consequences are unknown and threatens us all.

What is also conveniently overlooked in the climate debate against cows is [the carbon cycle](#). CO2 is absorbed by grass during photosynthesis. Cows eat the grass produce methane-which is released into the atmosphere and breaks down into CO2 and H2O. And the cycle repeats itself. Basic biological knowledge that is learned at school and everybody knows. Livestock are highly needed for fertile lands. A healthy soil,

the underpinning of cultivation throughout [history](#) is created in interaction between grazing animals and soil microbiology. Regenerative agriculture can sequester more carbon than humans are inventing.

A net zero CO2 policy in Sri Lanka has proven to be a disaster and ruined many farmers' lives. The policy resulted in complete chaos and a setback in health, environment, and economy.

In the Netherlands an increasing number of farmers a year [commit suicide](#); the exact numbers are unknown. According to a recent investigation there was a 37 percent increase in 2020. Families are crying at the kitchen table daily.

Dutch citizens will be financing the €28 billion climate plan by [extra taxes](#) on food prices for example on milk products, meat, compounds for vegetation protection, and fertilizers while inflation is high and purchases are expensive.

Also, a prepared law for [zero taxes](#) on vegetables and fruits to promote healthy foods supposed to pass for January 2024 seems to make a U-turn. According to a report from SEO Economic Research it will be [too complex](#) and too expensive and it is not sure the introduction of this law will promote health. However, keeping taxes on vegetables and fruit will generate €550-950 million in income for government.

Overlooked risks of expensive food transitions

A transition to '[Food is Medicine](#)' initiatives is a strong promotion for the necessity to eat fully plant-based (vegan), bio-engineered food, lab-grown meat, and novel foods like edible insects. Fresh whole foods from farmers will be replaced by products derived from vertical farming, food grown in laboratories, and innovative Food Hubs.

According to the many start-ups and initiatives, it is necessary to solve diminishing resources and an insecurity for

healthy nutritious and sustainable food for a fast-growing human population to 9 billion people in 2050. A future of food with low-footprint ingredients and technology that will bring a beautiful nature back into balance. A [Global Food Forum](#) of young people is accelerating the transition.

The [Netherlands](#) is leading this worldwide food transition funded by the private sector-run [FoodvalleyNL](#), the World Economic Forum and Rockefeller Foundation, the EU, and the Dutch government. The secretariat and [coordinating centre](#) for various Food Hubs in the world is based at Wageningen University and Research (WUR). In 2050 we will eat less meat, eggs and dairy products and more chickpeas, crickets and chlorella; a [movement](#) for everyone, the WUR states.

A [McKinsey report](#) 'Alternative proteins, the market share is on' states leading alternative protein resources will be plant protein, insect protein, mycoprotein and cultured meat.

It is not a surprise that the world's largest and [leading](#) insect company [Protix](#), producing protein and fats from insects for feed and food for animals and [humans](#), is based in the Netherlands.

The company was founded in 2009 by two consultants from McKinsey and attracted huge amounts of funding. Protix uses high-track control systems, artificial intelligence, genetic improvement programs, and robotics. The company received many awards, among them from the WEF. A circular frontrunner in the greenfield of insect-based foods.

In the EU in the past few years Protix, Fair Insects, and [CricketOne](#), a Vietnam-based company, gained approval for use of insects in [human consumption](#). The growing number of insects authorized in the EU for sale in food including dietary supplements will not be required to carry [special labels](#) to distinguish them from other products the [EU](#) has confirmed despite protests from MEPs.

Insect protein and fat can be found in products like paste, bread, ice creams, cakes, and more. The argument is that before insects can become a large-scale food product for humans in the Western world, insects should be turned into an appealing product. For several years start-ups in food transition products like hamburgers from cultivated crickets have been supported by the EU and government in the Netherlands.

According to the [Dutch Platform De Krekerij](#) is the most sustainable fast food on the planet. One kg of cricket meat uses 85 percent less food, 90 percent less land and 95 percent less water than one kg of beef.

Green gas emission from farming insects would be 100 times lower than those from pigs and cattle. However, a position paper of the Eurogroup for animals says insect farming is [a false solution](#) for the EU's food system. Industrial animal farming for food should be replaced rather than having insect protein as another form of industrial farming.

Although more than 2,000 edible insects caught in the forests or agricultural fields have been consumed for [thousands of years](#) all over the world, there is hardly any knowledge on consuming insects cultivated in plastic boxes in fabrics. [Impacts](#) on various aspects, governing the cultivating and production methods of insects and issues on upscaling, on health, and the environment have not been investigated in the short and long term. 'Little is known about the food chain leading edible insects from farm to plate and on [their role](#) in human and planet wellbeing says the editorial Edible Insects: From Farm to Fork.

In a report in 2022 the FAO documented possible [food safety](#) issues with edible insects. Among them are allergen cross-reactivity, biological safety hazards as bacteria, viruses, fungi as well as [chemical contaminants](#) (toxins (myco), [PFAS](#), pesticides, antibiotics, [toxic metals](#), flame

retardation, cyanogenic glycosides). Especially for [undernourished children](#) and people with a weakened immune system, eating insects might be a risk factor. The [EFSA report](#) for CricketOne is warning of a possible negative impact on both the innate and adaptive immune system.

A research paper on [edible insects versus meat](#) shows that the content of individual nutrients in both insects and meat varies significantly. Both are rich in nutrients for development and functioning of the human body. Some foods [might](#) exacerbate diet-related health problems while others may be effective in treatments. However, studies on eating insect products versus meat on health are still lacking.

Around the [myth](#) of cultured meat It remains to be seen whether the production of artificial meat will be enough to be competitive in comparison with conventional meat. It is still in its infancy. Analysis found that lab-grown meat made from cultivated stem cells could be [25 times](#) worse for the climate than beef if current production methods are scaled up because they are still highly energy-intensive.

Another threat for traditional farming in the [EU conversation](#) is the industrial lobby owning [10,000 patents](#) boosting the use of gene-edited crops (CRISPR-Cas) as a solution to climate change and biodiversity. Recent research by the EU and the Global Biodiversity Framework are likely to foster the use of CRISPR-Cas as a solution to not only climate change but also biodiversity conversion. Also WUR scientists expect the EU will change the rules this year with [smarter governance](#) for the benefits of society and environment.

The debate on gene-editing for crops instead of classical natural crossings for crops is not new and has been used by Monsanto. The use of the gene-edited seeds has been expensive for many farmers. [Biological farmers](#) are concerned that farmers will become dependent on multinationals and natural

classical solutions will no longer be effective. The balance with nature will be destroyed. Plants are interconnected with soil, animals and humans. The long-term effects of combining various gene-edited plants and foods are not known. Moreover human gene-editing is still [controversial](#) and the effects of eating the gene-edited plants and fruits on animals and humans is not known.

It is clear that when evaluating the food transition to [veganism](#), gene-edited plants, soil fertilizers converting biodiversity, increased irrigation technologies, and edible insects, the intended transition has many risks in the short and long term for humans, animals, plants, and the planet.

A 'rich' country in famine and lack of care

The Healthcare system in the Netherlands has been ranking for years as [the best](#) in Europe. In 2020 the Dutch healthcare system was ranked as the number three most [innovative](#) in the world.

Unfortunately, in a country with [17.8 million](#) people, approximately [2 million](#) people do not get the care they need, and 1.2 million people are living below poverty. Around 148,000 citizens visit a [food bank](#). Poverty is expected to rise to [5.8 percent](#).

[In 2021](#) 30.9 percent of men and 35.9 percent of women (age > 16 years) experienced one or more chronic diseases. This is expected to increase to around 7 million in 2030. During the last few years a strong increase in heart problems has taken place, and [one in ten](#) persons in the Netherlands experiences heart problems.

After three years of pandemic measures and limited care, healthcare is confronted with a population with an increasing number of elderly people, people with more [chronic diseases](#), [rising mental problems](#), increased feelings of stress, fear, and loneliness, more people [dying](#) as expected,

shortness of nurses, [increased](#) sickness leaves, low salaries, inflation, high prices for energy and food, and more people being [undernourished](#). People are [leaving](#) the healthcare system, and [37 percent](#) experience moral conflicts. Doctor visits are replaced by telemedicine or done by people with less professional education.

The number of people on [waiting lists](#) for urgent care in nursing homes is increasing and surgeries have been [postponed](#). CEO's of healthcare organisations have started to hire nurses from [Indonesia](#) and India as sufficient Dutch nurses are not available or prefer to work as an independent nurse. In 2032 a [shortness](#) of 137,000 nurses is expected. Furthermore, shortness of family doctors (35 -45 percent) is on the rise. [Telemedicine](#) and efforts on the implementation of technological support for big data and AI are pushed forward by the minister of Healthcare.

Large academic hospitals have started [AI](#) labs. Personal medical information files [will become](#) more easily available among different care organisations and within the EU. Special acute care will be concentrated in fewer hospitals.

CEO's of healthcare organizations with [nursing homes](#) and homes for the [disabled](#) have written an open letter to the minister that the current situation will drive organisations into bankruptcy. The risk for [Dutch women](#) to become burnt out or lose their paid work to replace with unpaid voluntary care is near.

Prices for mandated private health insurance [increase](#) due to inflation. During the pandemic [billions](#) have been thrown away for unsafe and ineffective and even harmful measures. But, politicians in the Netherlands don't see it as a priority to evaluate the policies as they have postponed the pandemic [inquiry](#). Trust in politics in the Netherlands is at an all-time [low](#).

Preventing Famine

It is the [UN report](#) that appeared in April 2023 that needs to be on the front page of all media worldwide. “Globally the consumption of animal source foods including, meat, eggs and milk can help to reduce stunting, wasting and overweight amongst children.”

“This is a significant gap given the co-existence of micronutrient deficiencies with overweight, obesity and Non-Communicable Disease.”

At least [one in ten](#) people and [one in three children](#) worldwide is malnourished. This is presumably much more when various grades of deficiencies are considered. While it is known that most non-communicable diseases can be prevented and restored, it is unacceptable given the co-existence with deficiencies that malnutrition and even hunger and famine may increase when EU policies will be forced into the agriculture and healthcare system in the Netherlands.

The Netherlands owes generations of hard-working farmers and fishermen a solution to the problem of famine and a restoration of lower cost of healthcare. A cooperation between farmers, fishermen, and medical doctors for good nutritious whole food and loving care will be a strategy less costly, safe, better for soil and the immune system, and more successful. This will be the way that needs to be followed to regain trust and wealth.

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They're Coming to Take You Away

They're Coming to Take You Away



...When the monolithic narrative that is all they have been taught lies in ruins, they will replace it not with a rational, informed alternative – for they will know of none – but with whatever satisfies the rage of a population that realizes, too late, that it has been hoodwinked.

Woe to the freedom-haters when the lion they think they have tamed turns its fury on the liberal society that soothsayers like Zelikow and Lipstadt still imagine they are defending!”



by [Michael Lesher](#), [Brownstone Institute](#)

May 9, 2023

Suppose I tell you in advance that the essay you are reading is meant to startle you. And suppose I suggest, by way of demonstration, that two people as loosely connected as the leader of the “COVID Crisis Group” and Joe Biden’s “Special Envoy To Monitor and Combat Antisemitism” – both of whom have recently offered recommendations for improving political life in the United States – are in fact determined to unravel American freedoms.

Would you be surprised?

Well, if so, that is exactly the startling fact I am trying to bring to your attention. True, you may not have heard that the [34 COVID-19 “experts”](#) headed by one Philip Zelikow (last seen [justifying the concealment of information](#) about the 9/11 attacks) and anti-Semitism “ambassador” Deborah Lipstadt – perhaps best known for [slandering](#) scads of Jewish survivors of the Nazis as “soft-core” Holocaust deniers because they objected to the [massacre](#) of 1,462 of Gaza’s civilians nine years ago – are both out to dismantle the Bill of Rights. But if you haven’t, it isn’t because they’ve been coy about their objectives.

Take the Zelikow panel. Its [new book](#) on “the lessons learned from COVID-19” openly conflates the federal government’s management of a respiratory virus with “wartime” – thus rationalizing the executive branch’s preemption of democratic government. Not only that, Zelikow and his band of “experts” explicitly call for the consolidation of power in the hands of an unelected “health security enterprise” that would control, among other things, a “systematic biomedical surveillance network.” And in case you can’t guess who is likely to benefit from the snooping, the panel goes on to praise the coercive experimental drug program that gave us the COVID-19 “vaccines” – “a bargain at \$30 billion,” [according to the editors of the Washington Post](#) – signaling at one stroke the experts’ contempt for [the Nuremberg Code](#) and their subservience to Big Pharma.

As for Lipstadt, she has launched her attack on the First Amendment by redefining “anti-Semitism” so as to include an extraordinary range of political speech. Her first step in that transformation is the familiar trick of [confusing criticism of the Israeli government with anti-Jewish bigotry](#). But her second step is newer and, arguably, even more disturbing: she tars all denigration of Jews with the hot-button label “conspiracy theory.”

Let's be clear: however noble the pretext of opposing Jew-hatred, it should be obvious that once you characterize anti-Semitism as a "conspiracy theory" you have made a case for censorship. As Lipstadt herself explained to Jane Eisner of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism (in an interview printed in the latest *AARP Magazine* but not available online): "[I]t's a conspiracy theory that Jews control the media, the banks, the election process, etc. *If you believe that there is a group controlling these things, then essentially you're saying that you don't believe in democracy.*"

And there's the trouble. After all, an overt attack on democracy isn't a viewpoint; it isn't even an expression of run-of-the-mill bigotry. It's a threat to the state. And it follows, if you accept Lipstadt's formulation, that anyone the government can label an "anti-Semite" may now be punished in the same way the Biden administration is [already punishing people](#) who protested the presidential election results of November 2020. Note, too, the selective parameters of the offense: blaming Donald Trump's election on the Russians is [presumably "legitimate" speech](#); but accusing a "group" of controlling "the election process" can land you in jail – that is, when the "group" is not an official enemy but a favored minority, and when that "process" has reached results endorsed by those in power.

So the Zelikow panel and Ambassador Lipstadt can't be accused of hiding their illiberal goals. Like the [Democratic lynch mob](#) that denounced Matt Taibbi and Michael Shellenberger on the floor of Congress last March for revealing the extent of government censorship of Twitter, these propagandists quite openly assert that surveillance is good for us, while free speech is entirely too dangerous to be entrusted to mere citizens.

"Ordinary folks and national security agencies responsible for our security," [Congressman Colin Allred lectured Taibbi](#), "are

trying their best to find a way to make sure that our online discourse doesn't get people hurt, or see our democracy undermined." It's pretty breathtaking to watch an African-American liberal solemnly declare that the CIA and the FBI are the true guardians of democracy – not to mention his defense of the security state's behind-the-scenes censorship of political speech. But what's even more ominous is that not a single prominent Democratic politician nor a single pundit in mainstream liberal media has repudiated anything the congressman said.

Is it any wonder, then, that no one in mainstream media has mentioned the totalitarian tendencies implicit in the COVID Crisis Group's recommendations for "pandemic" regulation via dismantling democracy, or in Ambassador Lipstadt's appeals to the public to "discredit" anti-Semitism by recasting it as a criminal conspiracy?

Of course it isn't. And that is my point. That is my motive in writing in tandem about these two apparently disparate subjects, connected only by the facts that both of them involve recent public declarations and that both of them represent attacks on fundamental liberties.

Because the truth is that condemning freedom is now so entirely respectable that it's happening practically everywhere – under every possible pretext, almost any day, from just about any left-liberal institution that claims to care about the public good. Close your eyes, and you can hardly tell whether what you're hearing is coming from a Democratic Party stalwart or from an old-line Soviet apologist explaining why Andrei Sakharov or Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn or Yuri Orlov is really, notwithstanding the accuracy of what he's been saying, a threat to the state who deserves to be muzzled or jailed.

And the media's silence about it all is as ominous as the Orwellian nattering of the freedom-haters themselves.

Take another look at the Zelikow panel's assessment of the US government's performance during the "COVID crisis." Writing about what the "experts" praise or blame in their report, the *Washington Post* never once mentions the [crippling of the US working-class economy](#) due to arbitrary confinements and business shutdowns, the [educational damage](#) done to a whole generation of children through needless school closures, the reckless [suspension of representative democracy](#) in four-fifths of our states, the medically unjustifiable [trauma](#) caused by "mask mandates," or the [undermining of the national healthcare system](#) through an obsessive focus on one respiratory virus while more serious issues were sidelined for over a year. As far as the *Post* is concerned, the real outrages of the COVID coup never happened at all.

Even when the experts and the editors do manage to notice something sinister, they go out of their way to miss the point. The Zelikow panel [specifically notes](#) the "four pandemic planning exercises" staged by the US government barely a year before the announcement of the COVID-19 outbreak. And it offers a few technical criticisms of the proceedings.

But neither the panel nor the *Post* editors' congratulatory summary of its conclusions addresses the fact that the exercises – which omitted any suggestion for using repurposed drugs as early treatment for a novel virus, as in all previous influenza-like outbreaks – made a point of discussing the importance of [thought-policing social media](#). That prescription for censorship became [a grim reality](#) after March 2020. But you'd never know it from reading the Zelikow panel's assessment of the government's mistakes in addressing the "pandemic."

And Lipstadt? She claims to be a [passionate defender](#) of free speech. But that didn't stop her from [smearing](#) Senator Ron Johnson as a "white nationalist sympathizer" because of his politically incorrect comments about Black Lives Matter. And when that issue made it to the [op-ed page of the New York](#)

[Times](#), it was only to further demonize Johnson; Lipstadt's slander got a pass.

Why do I worry so much about this? Well, first of all because an attack on freedom is an attack on all of us.

But I think there is a special reason for alarm. It's not just that our ruling elites believe that we, the people, need to be stripped of our right to free expression. I'm afraid that the freedom-haters clustered around our figurehead President are not even aware just how thin the ice is onto which they're propelling us. Their position (taking the most charitable possible view of it) runs something like this: if the public isn't exposed to views of which the censors disapprove, *hoi polloi* will meekly accept whatever policies are imposed on them (for their own good, of course).

But the censors are wrong. The fabric of American political life has been strained to such tautness that a single acute crisis might rupture it altogether. And if that happens, people who have been deprived of reasonable dissent will not shrink from violent opposition; on the contrary, they will embrace it. When the monolithic narrative that is all they have been taught lies in ruins, they will replace it not with a rational, informed alternative – for they will know of none – but with whatever satisfies the rage of a population that realizes, too late, that it has been hoodwinked.

Woe to the freedom-haters when the lion they think they have tamed turns its fury on the liberal society that soothsayers like Zelikow and Lipstadt still imagine they are defending!

Michael Lesher is an author, poet and lawyer whose legal work is mostly dedicated to issues connected with domestic abuse and child sexual abuse. A memoir of his discovery of Orthodox Judaism as an adult – [Turning Back: The Personal Journey of a "Born-Again" Jew](#) – was published in September

2020 by Lincoln Square Books. He has also published op-ed pieces in such varied venues as Forward, ZNet, the New York Post and Off-Guardian.

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Dignity Is Yours to Lose

[Dignity Is Yours To Lose](#)

by [Richard Kelly](#), [Brownstone Institute](#)

March 4, 2023

On my morning walk with the dog I passed through a family gathering. The path I was on goes right along the foreshore between a carpark and the sand. From about 10 metres away I could see a father and mother, two teenage or early twenties kids, and an old, infirm dog being gently cradled by the dad, carried a few metres from the car, across the path, and being laid down on the little bit of grass growing on the sand dunes.

Was this spot a favourite of the dog? The sun was shining and the family was in the lee of the cliff, sheltered from the wind. The sea was calm.

By the time I realised what was going on it was too late to reverse course or avoid walking between them. I hurried on with my own pup, his energy and cheekiness on the end of the lead a stark contrast with the slow, pained movements of the old dog that was blinking into the sun and raising his muzzle

to the ocean smells. Perhaps not today, but soon, that old dog will have one last journey in the car.

Those moments of peace, togetherness and dignity were precious. I was very moved and sat down on a bench about a hundred metres away to offer a prayer for the family and the dog.

Dignity is a concept that doesn't seem to cut any ice with our overlords. Even if they worked, and especially if they didn't, masks were an affront to dignity. Denial of the comforting embrace or kiss of a loved one made dying with dignity that much harder. The invasion of snarling, smug, hunching, hectoring tyrants into our living rooms each night made dignified conduct a test of will power and patience.

The extraordinary turmoil of the last three years, on the surface, is ebbing away. But the undercurrents are as strong as ever, dragging us further away from the dignity that used to be inherent in our daily lives, our encounters with others, our institutions, our nations.

The algorithmic censorship and self-censorship we commit in our guarded conversations with friends and colleagues attack the dignity of relationships in general, and friendships in particular. There are some things we cannot say, will not say, are frightened to say, especially if someone beloved might hear or read them. Ironically, some self-censorship would have been nice from those who thought it was appropriate to hector, bully and guilt-trip those who were not to be coerced into injecting an experimental concoction on pain of exclusion from society.

The evasiveness and weasel-wording of our institutional representatives continues apace, vowing before an election not to make changes to tax on superannuation, then months later reversing course. It was ever thus; it's unreasonable to expect that this feature of our democracy would be at the

vanguard of a revival in trust. The politicians have sacrificed their own dignity on the altar of power.

Likewise the so-called health experts, proclaiming their infallibility and imposing strictures at odds with human dignity, and human life. State-wise, Victoria seems likely to pass legislation that will share personal health 'data' compulsorily, with no opt-out. The long-held tenet that medical information was the most sacrosanct private data of all is being swept away before our eyes.

At the national level, in Australia and across the world, the proposed changes to the WHO treaty will see whole nations prostrate themselves to a global scheme, abdicating responsibility, and making the idea of national sovereignty, and thus national dignity, completely obsolete.

Even more insidious, inroads are being driven into our cultural understanding of what it means to be an individual with agency, and responsibility, and autonomy. Here is an extract of the Product Disclosure Statement that came with my latest House and Contents insurance renewal bill:

On page 28 under the heading 'Things we don't cover' delete the exclusion 'Communicable Disease' and replace with:

Communicable Disease

any loss, damage, claim, cost, expense, legal liability or other sum, directly or indirectly arising out of, or attributable to, a Communicable Disease or the fear or threat (whether actual or perceived) of a Communicable Disease.

So my insurer will not cover "any loss...arising out of...the fear...of a Communicable Disease."

What on earth is this clause saying? What possible circumstance would see the insurer invoke this clause to deny a claim? In any case, fear, as such, is baked into this

contract as an entirely predictable predisposition or attitude for someone to hold – and that if a claim arises because someone was afraid, then the claim is avoidable. Bottom line – our insurers have conceded that Fear is an attribute of our culture, and they don't want to have to pay for it. Fear and dignity can't coexist.

The good news is that no one, not a [Supermarket insisting on 'vaccination'](#) to hold down a job, not a [Premier salivating about qualifying for a statue](#) on account of being in power for 3,000 days, not [a bully masquerading as a cop walking away scott free](#) from court, can take a person's dignity, no matter how much they might want to. Ultimately it is a personal possession, only to be freely exchanged, and only retrieved at great cost.

What then to make of the rest of it, our 'democracy,' our nation, our culture? Is it time, lovingly, to pick it up and lay it on a blanket in the sun, and like the family at the beach stroke its head while we say goodbye through our tears? I'm reminded of Wilfred Owen's poem "Futility."

*Move him into the sun—
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields half-sown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.*

*If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.
Think how it wakes the seeds—
Woke once the clays of a cold star.*

*Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides
Full-nerved, still warm, too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
—O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?*

Can the kind old sun wake our democracy? Or will we, grieving, one day find a new puppy, and train him in the ways of dignity?

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The West Must Never Again Go Totalitarian

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by [Joakim Book](#), [Brownstone Institute](#)

January 26, 2023

The West can never again go [totalitarian](#).

We saw it happen generations ago. We fought two of humanity's most destructive wars and faced the horror of industrial-scale

extermination. Never again, said the world's peoples in the late 1940s, and they began the difficult task of uncovering all that had been done, all that had gone wrong.

The mass graves, the German and Soviet labor camps, the Japanese massacres in the Far East, America's internment camps, the secret police and the mutilations, the ever-present threat of violence hanging over every member of society. We saw the personality cults around Hitler or Stalin for what they were, the blatant ideologies for what they had resulted in.

When the Berlin Wall fell in November of 1989, and with it the remains of the Evil Empire that had put it there, we discovered more horror. The archives of East Germany and the Kremlin showed that informants were everywhere happily giving up information – real or invented – on their fellow humans. We found more bodies. We learned that under enough fear and pressure, human life wasn't worth anything. When push came to violent shove, bonds of family and community meant nothing.

The error of this terrifying history is to think that this was a problem of "the other," someone far away who is nothing like us. Asks Thorsteinn Siglaugsson in a recent [article](#): "How do you find your inner Nazi? And how do you get him under control? Most people would have participated in the atrocities of their time, had they been put in that position – or at least sat by and allowed them to happen."

In [The Gulag Archipelago](#), Solzhenitsyn's oft used and highly relevant phrase says that the line between good and evil passes "right through every human heart." The passage goes on, and Solzhenitsyn digs even deeper into the most horrifying self-reflection a man can reach: the line of good and evil goes through *all* human hearts, mine included, "This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained."

It oscillates. What is evil isn't always an identifiable thing, a clear enemy, but a blurry line that moves and becomes clear only in hindsight. History is hard like that. It's us, but in the past, doing things we couldn't imagine ourselves doing. Yet millions of our prior selves *did*. Are we really confident enough that with the right external circumstances "we" wouldn't once again?

We received a small-scale test with the upheaval of societies in the last three years. Many of us wonder both [what went wrong](#) in the Covid saga and how the future will look upon the events that took place. Are the anti-vaxxers the unsung heroes who stood up against unjust tyranny, or the new [9/11-truthers](#) nobody really cares about? Are the lockdowners wise lifesavers who hadn't yet perfected a tool that the future takes for granted as obvious and necessary? Only on a long enough historic timeline will we know.

Take the following segment from Michael Malice's [The White Pill: A Tale of Good And Evil](#), a newly released and much-needed account of the Soviet Union's totalitarianism:

"Even if the man on the street felt something wasn't quite adding up, it was very difficult for him to get the full picture – especially in a culture where questioning authority could have deadly consequences for oneself and one's entire family. The newspapers were filled with boasts about enormous achievements of production and the success of heroic 'Stakhanovite' workers, yet there were no clothes in the stores and no food on the shelves."

Even to the regular Joe (or Vladimir...), something wasn't adding up:

"Sure the papers might make mistakes or have a bias, but they couldn't realistically be filled with lies, week after week, year after year. ... Only crazy people would think that there was a conspiracy to control the news and what information

reached the public. The only possible logical alternative was that someone must have been keeping the productive socialist bounty from reaching the people. It had to be the wreckers."

The echo of 2020-22 intrudes, too close for comfort. For is not this precisely what happened to us?

In the early days of Covid, the newspapers were filled first with outrageous disaster porn and fear-mongering and later with "boasts about enormous achievements of production and the success of heroic [Big Pharma] workers," all the while there were "no clothes in the stores and no food on the shelves." Everyone took outlandish personal actions, yet the catastrophic numbers shot higher and higher.

Clearly, somebody must have been ruining the good men's neatly laid plans, those who chanted messianic faith in "two weeks to flatten the curve." They told us what to do; it got worse than they said; somebody must be wrecking the process.

I did my pandemic part, many people reasoned: I masked and desanitized and [kept my distance](#) and vaxxed myself over and over to Fauci's delight. Yet, the pathogen kept spreading and people kept dying and I even got sick, again and again – something the rulers repeatedly said was impossible. And then [it wasn't](#), which they said was always going to happen.

It felt scripted, of course. When I for [Brownstone reviewed Mattias Desmet's great book](#) on totalitarianism last summer, I wrote that toying with objective truth is precisely what totalitarian regimes do:

"The collective hums together and upholds the rules, no matter how insane or ineffective at achieving their supposed aim. Totalitarianism is the blurring of fact and fiction, yet with an aggressive intolerance for diverging opinions. One must toe the line."

It matters not whether the charge holds water or has logic on its side; it just has to stick, by endless repetition if need be. Like all propaganda. In the last few years surely, there must have been some evil group of detractors undermining the Party's good efforts. Those fifthly pandemic wreckers, the anti-vaxxers! They are nothing; less than nothing, and [it's OK to blame them!](#)

Replace "wreckers" with anti-vaxxers, the media's boasts of Soviet production with today's establishment elite's never-ending yapping about vaccine efficacy or lockdown effects or responsible monetary policy, and Malice's distant history feels much closer to our recently lived-through present.

We might still have food on the shelves – though of [worse quality](#) and at much higher prices. We might still have the ability to move and work and travel, but heavily circumscribed, always at risk of canceling and always with papers showing the number of needles in your arm, or your [scarred heart tissue](#). Nobody is torturing us (yet anyway) and for the most part we have some semblance of rights and freedoms remaining.

But we're closer to that horrific totalitarian world today than we were, say five years ago. Or perhaps it was just always there, calmly waiting to be unleashed like Solzhenitsyn implied.

What Malice's book so expertly chronicles is that elites can be wrong. Wrong in facts, wrong in morals. It is possible that whole sways of intellectuals, scientists, journalists, professionals, and civil servants can be deceived and deluded, for decades stubbornly refuse to admit their error.

The 1930s US intelligentsia's view of Comrade Stalin and the Soviet Union is one such episode. The warmongering early 2000s in Britain and the US, though far from unopposed by the public, is another.

Nothing shows this better than my own field of economics, riddled with [wrong calls](#) and [embarrassing prediction](#) errors. The Great Moderation of stable growth, low inflation and unemployment, circa 1990 to 2007, is another collective bout of madness and mistaken optimism.

Four years before the Great Recession began, Nobel laureate [Robert Lucas](#) gave a presidential address to the American Economics Association saying that macroeconomics had succeeded: “its central problem of depression prevention has been solved, for all practical purposes, and has in fact been solved for many decades.” In the summer of 2008, already nine months into the recession and merely weeks before Lehman Brothers collapsed, Olivier Blanchard, then at the IMF, published “[The State of Macro is Good.](#)”

The year 2020 marked the beginning of just another such episode of [collective insanity](#). It will take some time and soul-searching before we can once again view the errors of our time the way we now view the “adulation of Stalin’s professed ideology,” or laugh at them like we do the [crooks](#) in *The Big Short*.

But Malice’s message is ultimately optimistic. “[I’m not saying nothing bad ever happens,](#)” he confesses, but that evil isn’t almighty, doesn’t have to win. It might take a while, but even for the West’s most malevolent elements, the “[costs are just going to be too much for them to bear – and they’re going to fold.](#)”

One day, a future chronicler might look upon the Covid era with the same deep incredulity that Malice’s readers look upon the Soviet Union.

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Cover image: Polish Jews captured by Germans during the suppression of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (Poland) – Photo from Jürgen Stroop Report to Heinrich Himmler from May 1943. One of the most famous pictures of World War II. ([Public Domain](#))