

The Politics of Fear: Laying the Groundwork for Fascism, American-Style

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by [John & Nisha Whitehead](#), [The Rutherford Institute](#)

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[*"No one can terrorize a whole nation, unless we are all his accomplices."*](#)

~ Edward R. Murrow, broadcast journalist

America is in the midst of an epidemic of historic proportions.

The contagion being spread like wildfire is turning communities into battlegrounds and setting Americans one against the other.

Normally mild-mannered individuals caught up in the throes of this disease have been transformed into belligerent zealots, while others inclined to pacifism have taken to stockpiling weapons and practicing defensive drills.

This plague on our nation—one that has been spreading like wildfire—is a potent mix of fear coupled with unhealthy doses of paranoia and intolerance, tragic hallmarks of the post-9/11 America in which we live.

Everywhere you turn, those on both the left- and right-wing are fomenting distrust and division. You can't escape it.

We're being fed a constant diet of fear: fear of terrorists, fear of illegal immigrants, fear of people who are too religious, fear of people who are not religious enough, fear of extremists, fear of conformists, fear of the government, fear of those who fear the government, fear of those on the Right, fear of those on the Left... The list goes on and on.

The strategy is simple yet effective: the best way to control a populace is through fear and discord.

Fear makes people [stupid](#).

Confound them, distract them with mindless news chatter and entertainment, pit them against one another by turning minor disagreements into major skirmishes, and tie them up in knots over matters lacking in national significance.

Most importantly, divide the people into factions, persuade them to see each other as the enemy and keep them screaming at each other so that they drown out all other sounds. In this way, they will never reach consensus about anything and will be too distracted to notice the police state closing in on them until the final crushing curtain falls.

This is how free people enslave themselves and allow tyrants to prevail.

This Machiavellian scheme has so ensnared the nation that few Americans even realize they are being manipulated into adopting an "us" against "them" mindset. Instead, fueled with fear and loathing for phantom opponents, they agree to pour millions of dollars and resources into political elections, militarized police, spy technology and endless wars, hoping for a guarantee of safety that never comes.

All the while, those in power—bought and paid for by lobbyists and corporations—move their costly agendas forward, and "we the suckers" get saddled with the tax bills and subjected to pat downs, police raids and round-the-clock surveillance.

Turn on the TV or flip open the newspaper on any given day, and you will find yourself accosted by reports of government corruption, corporate malfeasance, militarized police and marauding SWAT teams.

America has already entered a new phase, one in which children are arrested in schools, military veterans are forcibly detained by government agents because of their so-called "anti-government" views, and law-abiding Americans are having their movements tracked, their financial transactions documented, and their communications monitored.

These threats are not to be underestimated.

Yet even more dangerous than these violations of our basic rights is the language in which they are couched: the language of fear. It is a language spoken effectively by politicians on both sides of the aisle, shouted by media pundits from their cable TV pulpits, marketed by corporations, and codified into bureaucratic laws that do little to make our lives safer or more secure.

This language of fear has given rise to a politics of fear whose only aim is to distract and divide us. In this way, we have been discouraged from thinking analytically and believing that we have any part to play in solving the problems before us. Instead, we have been conditioned to point the finger at the *other* Person or vote for *this* Politician or support *this* Group, because they are the ones who will fix it. Except that *they* can't and won't fix the problems plaguing our communities.

Nevertheless, fear remains the method most often used by politicians to increase the power of government.

The government's overblown, extended wars on terrorism, drugs, violence, disease, illegal immigration, and so-called domestic extremism have been convenient ruses used to terrorize the populace into relinquishing more of their freedoms in exchange

for elusive promises of security.

An atmosphere of fear permeates modern America. However, with [crime at an all-time low](#), is such fear rational?

Statistics show that [you are 17,600 times more likely to die from heart disease than from a terrorist attack](#). You are 11,000 times more likely to die from an airplane accident than from a terrorist plot involving an airplane. You are 1,048 times more likely to die from a car accident than a terrorist attack. You are 404 times more likely to die in a fall than from a terrorist attack. You are 12 times more likely to die from accidental suffocating in bed than from a terrorist attack. And you are 9 more times likely to choke to death in your own vomit than die in a terrorist attack.

Indeed, those living in the American police state are [8 times more likely to be killed by a police officer than by a terrorist](#). Thus, the government's endless jabbering about terrorism amounts to little more than propaganda—the propaganda of fear—a tactic used to terrorize, cower and control the population.

In turn, the government's stranglehold on power and extreme paranoia about the citizenry as potential threats has resulted in a populace that is increasingly viewed as the government's enemies.

Why else would the government feel the need to monitor our communications, track our movements, criminalize our every action, treat us like suspects, and strip us of any means of defense while equipping its own personnel with an amazing arsenal of weapons?

So far, these tactics—terrorizing the citizenry over the government's paranoia and overblown fears while treating them like criminals—are working to transform the way “we the people” view ourselves and our role in this nation.

Indeed, fear and paranoia have become hallmarks of the modern American experience, impacting how we as a nation view the world around us, how we as citizens view each other, and most of all how our government views us.

The American people have been reduced to what [commentator Dan Sanchez](#) refers to as “[herd-minded](#) hundreds of millions [who] will stampede to the State for security, bleating to *please, please* be shorn of their remaining liberties.”

Sanchez [continues](#):

I am not terrified of the terrorists; i.e., I am not, myself, terrorized. Rather, I am terrified of the terrorized; terrified of the bovine masses who are so easily manipulated by terrorists, governments, and the [terror-amplifying media](#) into allowing our country to slip toward totalitarianism and total war...

I do not irrationally and disproportionately fear Muslim bomb-wielding jihadists or white, gun-toting nutcases. But I rationally and proportionately fear those who do, and the regimes such terror empowers. [History demonstrates](#) that governments are capable of mass murder and enslavement far beyond what rogue militants can muster. Industrial-scale terrorists are the ones who wear ties, chevrons, and badges. But such terrorists are a [powerless few](#) without the [supine acquiescence](#) of the terrorized many. There is nothing to fear but the fearful themselves...

Stop swallowing the overblown scaremongering of the government and its corporate media cronies. Stop letting them use hysteria over small menaces to drive you into the arms of tyranny, which is the greatest menace of all.

As history makes clear, fear and government paranoia lead to fascist, totalitarian regimes.

It's a simple enough formula. National crises, reported

terrorist attacks, and sporadic shootings leave us in a constant state of fear. Fear prevents us from thinking. The emotional panic that accompanies fear actually shuts down the prefrontal cortex or the rational thinking part of our brains. In other words, [when we are consumed by fear, we stop thinking.](#)

A populace that stops thinking for themselves is a populace that is easily led, easily manipulated and easily controlled.

The following, derived by from John T. Flynn's 1944 treatise on fascism [As We Go Marching](#) are a few of the necessary ingredients for a fascist state:

- The government is managed by a powerful leader (even if he or she assumes office by way of the electoral process). This is the fascistic leadership principle (or father figure).
- The government assumes it is not restrained in its power. This is authoritarianism, which eventually evolves into totalitarianism.
- The government ostensibly operates under a capitalist system while being undergirded by an immense bureaucracy.
- The government through its politicians emits powerful and continuing expressions of nationalism.
- The government has an obsession with national security while constantly invoking terrifying internal and external enemies.
- The government establishes a domestic and invasive surveillance system and develops a paramilitary force that is not answerable to the citizenry.
- The government and its various agencies (federal, state, and local) develop an obsession with crime and punishment. This is overcriminalization.
- The government becomes increasingly centralized while aligning closely with corporate powers to control all aspects of the country's social, economic, military, and

governmental structures.

- The government uses militarism as a center point of its economic and taxing structure.
- The government is increasingly imperialistic in order to maintain the military-industrial corporate forces.

The parallels to modern America are impossible to ignore.

“Every industry is regulated. Every profession is classified and organized. Every good or service is taxed. Endless debt accumulation is preserved. Immense doesn’t begin to describe the bureaucracy. Military preparedness never stops, and war with some evil foreign foe, remains a daily prospect,” writes economist Jeffrey Tucker. [“It’s incorrect to call fascism either right wing or left wing. It is both and neither... fascism does not seek to overthrow institutions like commercial establishments, family, religious centers, and civic traditions. It seeks to control them... it preserves most of what people hold dear but promises to improve economic, social, and cultural life through unifying their operations under government control.”](#)

For the final hammer of fascism to fall, it will require the most crucial ingredient: the majority of the people will have to agree that it’s not only expedient but necessary. In times of “crisis,” expediency is upheld as the central principle—that is, in order to keep us safe and secure, the government must militarize the police, strip us of basic constitutional rights and criminalize virtually every form of behavior.

We are at a critical crossroads in American history.

As I make clear in my book [*Battlefield America: The War on the American People*](#) and in its fictional counterpart [*The Erik Blair Diaries*](#), fear has been a critical tool in past fascistic

regimes, and it has become the driving force behind the American police state.

All of which begs the question what we will give up in order to perpetuate the illusions of safety and security.

As we once again find ourselves faced with the prospect of voting for the lesser of two evils, “we the people” have a decision to make: do we simply participate in the collapse of the American republic as it degenerates toward a totalitarian regime, or do we take a stand and reject the pathetic excuse for government that is being fobbed off on us?

There is no easy answer, but one thing is true: the lesser of two evils is still evil.

*Constitutional attorney and author **John W. Whitehead** is founder and president of [The Rutherford Institute](#). His most recent books are the best-selling [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#), the award-winning [A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State](#), and a debut dystopian fiction novel, [The Erik Blair Diaries](#). Whitehead can be contacted at staff@rutherford.org. Nisha Whitehead is the Executive Director of The Rutherford Institute. Information about The Rutherford Institute is available at www.rutherford.org.*

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