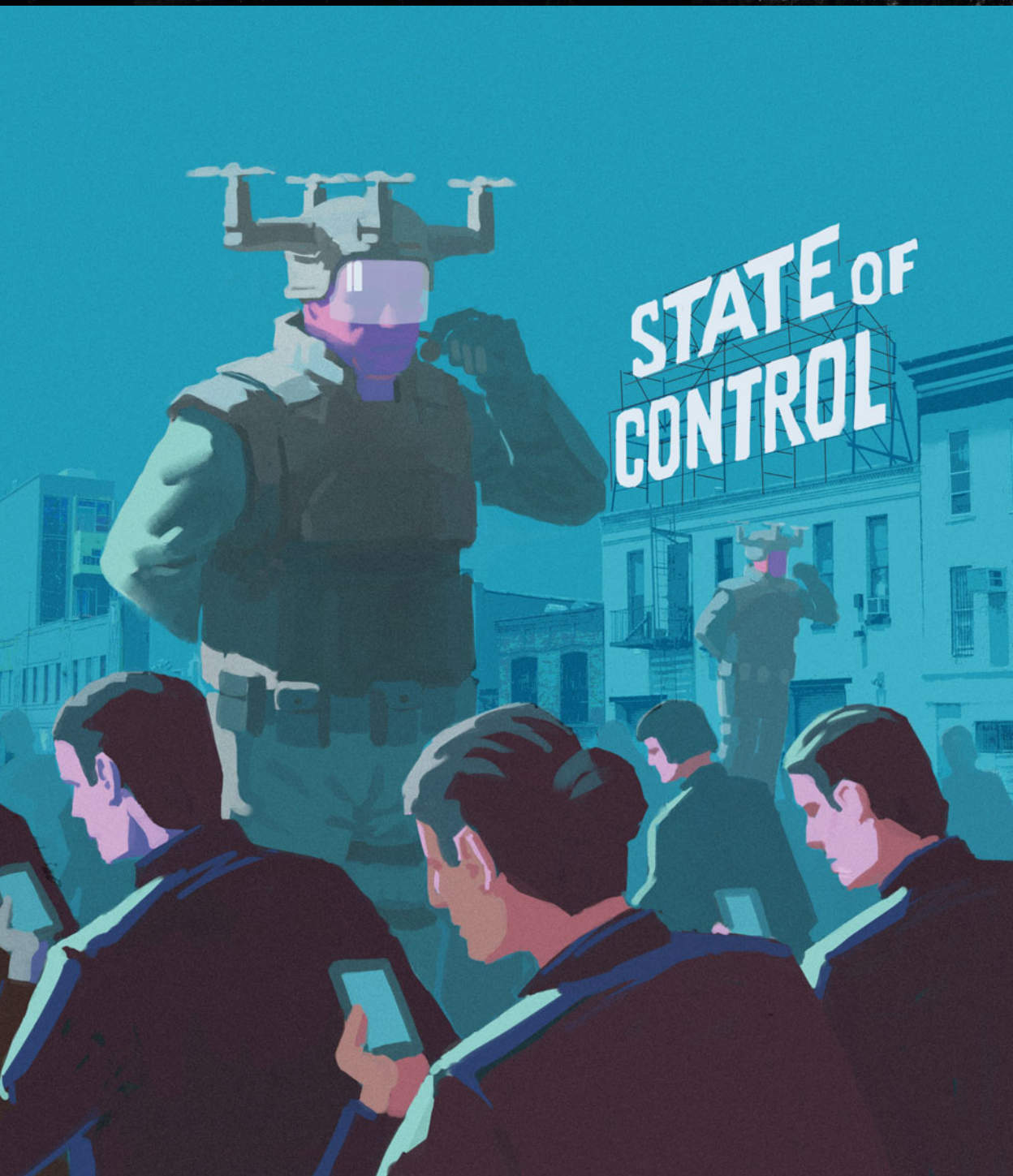


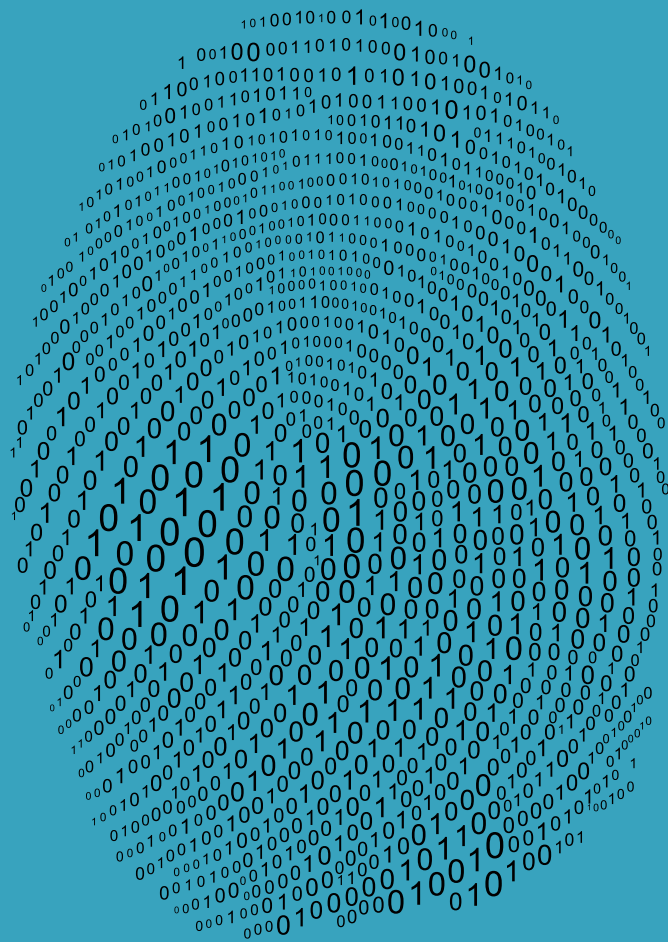
# ROAR

Reflections on a Revolution

ISSUE #4 - WINTER 2016

Taylor ★ Calhoun ★ Bown ★ Leverink ★ Sperber  
Bruff ★ Kuzmarov ★ Elliot-Cooper ★ Spannos





# 4

Issue #4

# State of Control

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*“Stability,” insisted the Controller, “stability.  
The primal and the ultimate need. Stability.  
Hence all this.”*

— Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

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# Managing Disorder

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**W**e live in a topsy-turvy world. As one widely shared meme recently put it, “everything we feared about communism — that we would lose our houses and savings and be forced to labor eternally for meager wages with no voice in the system — has come true under capitalism.” Far from leading to greater economic and political freedom, as its acolytes and intelligentsia always claimed it would, the ultimate triumph of the neoliberal project has gone hand-in-hand with a dramatic expansion of state surveillance and control. More people are currently under correctional supervision in the United States than were in the Gulags at the height of Stalin’s terror. The NSA’s servers can now capture 1 billion times more data than the Stasi ever could. When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, there were 15 border walls worldwide. Today there are 70. In many respects, the dystopian future of the novels is already here.

In its Faustian bid to restructure entire societies in line with the prerogatives of private profit and endless economic growth, neoliberalism has always placed the iron fist of the state firmly alongside the invisible hand of the market. In the wake of the global financial crisis, however, this collusion between private interests and public authority has been radicalized. The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben writes that we are witnessing “the paradoxical convergence today of an absolutely liberal paradigm in the economy with an unprecedented and equally absolute paradigm of state and police control.” Tracing the origins of this

paradigm back to the emergence of the police and the bourgeois obsession with security in pre-revolutionary Paris, Agamben notes that “the extreme step has been taken only in our days, and it is still in the process of full realization.”

The terror attacks of 9/11 and the fallout of the Great Recession played an important role in catalyzing these developments, speeding up the ongoing de-democratization of the state and casting the fundamentally coercive nature of neoliberalism into ever-sharper relief. The result, for Agamben, has been the rise of a new political formation operating according to a distinct logic of its own:

“*The state under which we now live is no more a disciplinary state. Gilles Deleuze proposed to call it the État de contrôle, or state of control, because what it wants is not to order and to impose discipline but rather to manage and to control. Deleuze’s definition is correct, because management and control do not necessarily coincide with order and discipline. No one has put it so clearly as the Italian police officer, who, after the Genoa riots in July 2001, declared that the government did not want for the police to maintain order but for it to manage disorder.*

The management of disorder — this becomes the main paradigm of government under neoliberalism. Rather than directly confronting the underlying causes of political instability, ecological catastrophe or endemic social ills, the state of control considers it “safer and more useful to try to govern the effects.” And so, instead of fighting the obscene inequalities of wealth and power at the heart of financialized capitalism, it increasingly resorts to policing the precariat. Instead of overturning the social exclusion and economic marginalization of historically oppressed minority groups, it has long since resolved to harass, murder and incarcerate them. Instead of ending poverty and war, it now undertakes to erect new walls and fences to keep out the unwanted migrants and refugees. In short, instead of trying to address the mul-

tifaceted conflicts and crises facing humanity at their root causes, the state of control is content just to manage them.

If there is one image that has come to define this emerging paradigm of control, it is the phalanx of militarized riot police — armed with assault rifles and flanked by armored personnel vehicles — squaring off against mostly unarmed local populations in places like Rio de Janeiro, Diyarbakir and Standing Rock. From the visual appearance of the officers to the weapons and tactics deployed on the ground, these images clearly show how the world's internal spaces of segregation have increasingly begun to resemble an occupied warzone. The resemblance is of course no coincidence: not only does law enforcement receive extensive surplus material from the military-industrial complex, including arms and vehicles that would otherwise have been deployed in actual warzones, but it has also begun to apply military methods of counter-insurgency to the policing of protest and urban space more generally. In fact, two of the four riot squads deployed to Ferguson during the riots of 2014 received their training in crowd control from Israeli police, whose skills were honed in the occupied territories of Palestine. Under neoliberalism, in short, the methods of military occupation abroad and of local policing at home are increasingly starting to blend into one.

The same type of fusion occurs at the threshold between private interests and public authority, or between corporate and state power. Just as the exigencies of Wall Street melt into the policy priorities of the US Federal Reserve and the US Treasury Department, and just as the interests of the weapons manufacturers continue to feed into the policy decisions made inside the White House and the Pentagon, so Silicon Valley's capacity for data-mining and algorithmic control is rapidly becoming integrated into the US security and intelligence apparatus. Meanwhile, Western armies have increasingly come to rely on private military contractors to take on combat support and even active combat roles, just as private security personnel are taking over the role of

the police, with the former now outnumbering the latter two-to-one globally. In other words, as the neoliberal state dramatically expands its control over increasingly restive populations at home and abroad, well-connected companies are successfully inserting themselves into the business of “managing disorder” for private gain.

All of this is topped off by the development of powerful new technologies — from the smartphones in our pockets to the drones hovering overhead — that allow for an unprecedented intrusion of the public-private power nexus into all corners of the globe and all aspects of our lives. Never before have a handful of private companies and state agencies had such unlimited access to the communications and whereabouts of so many unsuspecting citizens. And never before has a US president had so much control over such a sophisticated and versatile remote-control killing machine for his extrajudicial assassination campaigns. Now, with an authoritarian and racist oligarch moving into the White House, and equally dangerous right-wing demagogues awaiting in the wings across Europe and much of the rest of the world, the question inevitably arises how we will defend ourselves from this all-seeing and all-consuming state of control, with its intrinsic drive towards continuous self-expansion and its complete disregard for even the most basic human rights or political freedoms.

The fourth print issue of *ROAR Magazine* considers this question in light of the deeply troubling developments of recent years. It looks at various new methodologies of state control, and the innovative forms of resistance emerging against them. Tracing the contours of authoritarian neoliberalism as it rears its ugly head across the globe, it offers both a dystopian assessment of our current political moment, as well as a radical vision for collective liberation and social transformation beyond the state of control. If everything we were once supposed to fear about communism has now come true under capitalism, the time may be ripe to start thinking of democratic anti-capitalist alternatives.

**Jerome Roos**

FOUNDER AND EDITOR



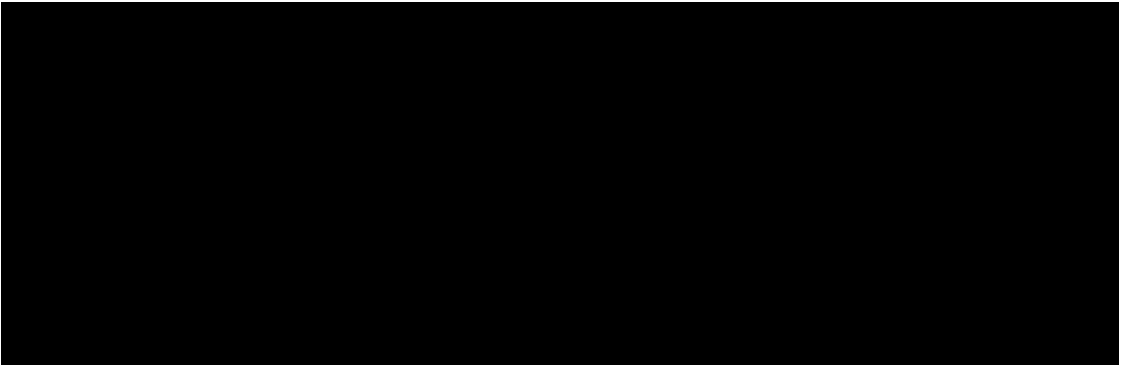


All original illustrations by  
**Mirko Rastić**

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**From:** H [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, November 26, 2016 11:09 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]@state.gov  
**Subject:** Re: Fw: Fw: New ROAR Magazine coming out in December

Absolutely unbelievable. This whole issue makes me sick. And have you seen what they are planning for next year? A special issue on anti-fascism?! These guys are becoming a real pain in the ass. They [REDACTED] and also [REDACTED] We're pretty concerned this might stir up some [REDACTED]



----- Original Message -----

**From:** [REDACTED]@stratfor.net  
**Sent:** Friday, November 25, 2016 01:25 PM  
**To:** H [REDACTED]  
**CC:** the\_donald@trump.com, [REDACTED]@kremlin.ru, imtheoldest@kockbrothers.com, billy@pizza.net  
**Subject:** Fw: New ROAR Magazine coming out in December

FYI

ROAR Magazine is releasing a new issue on the "State of Control" this December. Do we have any SIGINFO on that?

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, November 25, 2016 04:20 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** New ROAR Magazine coming out in December

Hey [REDACTED]

I picked up some intel via [REDACTED] It looks like those pricks from ROAR are working on a new issue, supposedly on us this time. Between you and me, I love what they're doing, but we have to be really careful that [REDACTED]

---

**From:** GS [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 29, 2016 04:21 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]@state.gov”  
**Subject:** Fw: TOC drafts - PRISM (2) - Exact numbering

FYI

ROAR magazine [REDACTED] any  
[REDACTED]

5. Editorial — Managing Disorder
14. Ian Bruff — Authoritarian Neoliberalism
28. Elliot Sperber — The Concept of the Wall
38. Laurie Calhoun — Drone Assault on Democracy
50. Jeremy Kuzmarov — The New Merchants of Death
66. Adam Elliot-Cooper — Neoliberalism’s Dog-Whistle Racism
78. Chris Spannos — Mass Surveillance and “Smart Totalitarianism”
90. Alfie Bown — Algorithmic Control and the Revolution of Desire
100. Joris Leverink — Neoliberalism’s Crumbling Democratic Façade
108. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor — Black Awakening, Class Revolt

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, November 28, 2016 01:12 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]@state.gov”  
**CC:** the\_donald@trump.com, [REDACTED]@kremlin.ru, imtheoldest@kockbrothers.com,  
**Subject:** TOC drafts - PRISM

Dear [REDACTED]

We managed to scrape the table of contents, there are no significant findings except [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] and titles are not yet confirmed 100%

1. Editorial — Managing Disorder
2. Ian Bruff — Authoritarian Neoliberalism





CARVED FROM EMPTY WORDS



*Ceci n'est pas un  
hand of the*



# AUTHORITARIAN

*and the Myth of*

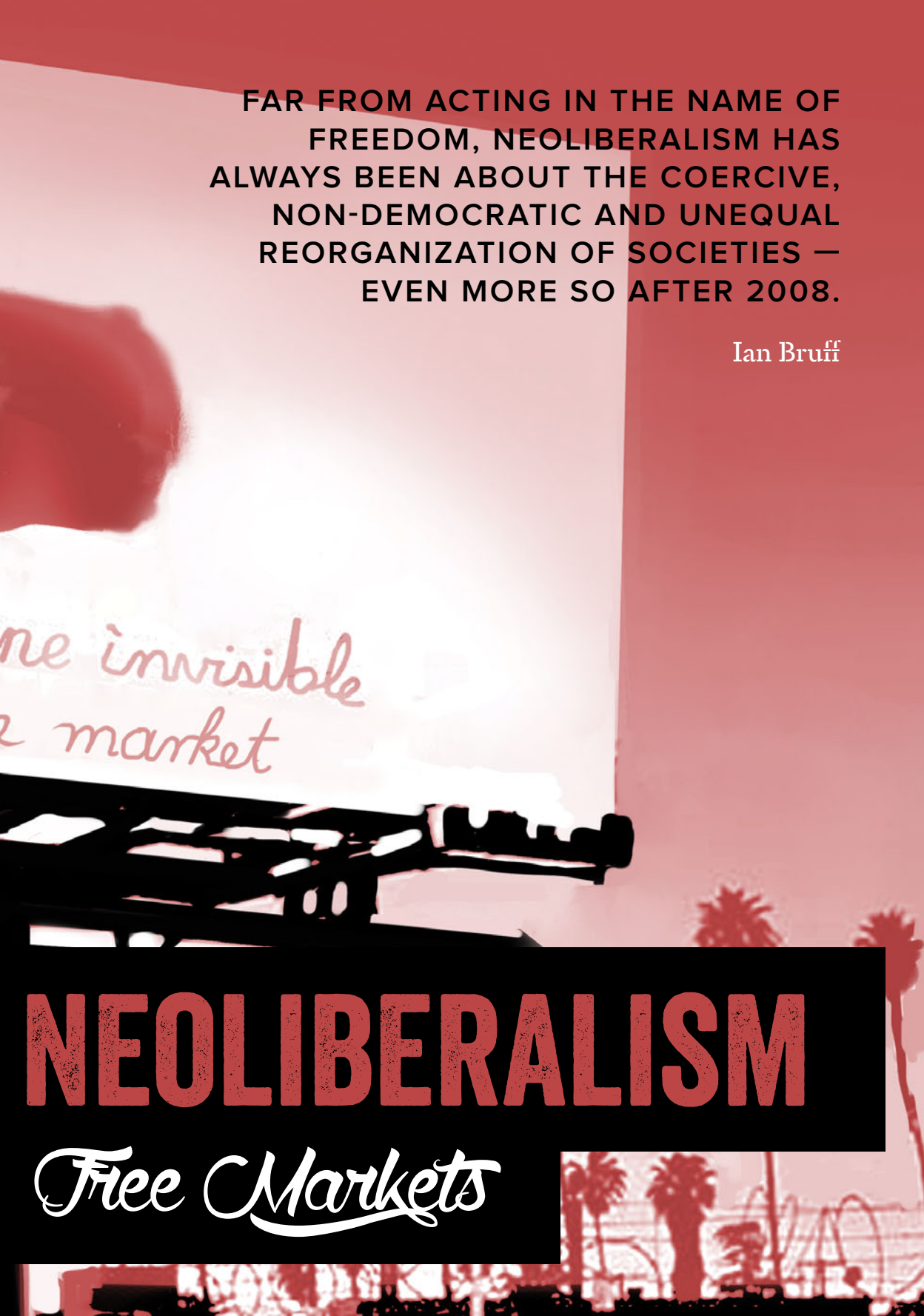
FAR FROM ACTING IN THE NAME OF  
FREEDOM, NEOLIBERALISM HAS  
ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT THE COERCIVE,  
NON-DEMOCRATIC AND UNEQUAL  
REORGANIZATION OF SOCIETIES —  
EVEN MORE SO AFTER 2008.

Ian Bruff

*the invisible  
market*

**NEOLIBERALISM**

*Free Markets*



Since the inauguration of the so-called War on Terror in 2001, but especially since the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2008, there has been much talk of the “return of the state.” At first, this notion was related to the increasing ubiquity of security themes after 2001, and later it was invoked in commentary on the massive bailouts of financial institutions. But while it is clear that state activities did become more visible after the turn of the century, misleading conclusions have been drawn about what this means for how we think about contemporary societies.

Most obviously, “the return of the state” has been invoked to declare a crisis of neoliberalism, with various commentators arguing that it is essentially a broken ideology, intellectually discredited by years of crisis and a permanently higher level of “exceptional” state interventionism. This argument has become increasingly widespread in the last few years, with the rise to power of a range of leaders and parties openly hostile to what are viewed as axioms of neoliberalism, such as free trade globally and free markets domestically. In other words, surely it is only a matter of time before neoliberalism withers away under the pressure of political opposition?

## IN THE NAME OF MARKETS

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This question is all the more pertinent in the aftermath of Donald Trump’s election victory. Trump appears to be the antithesis of neoliberalism, promising to tear up accords such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, calling for protection of American industries and workers, and indulging in nationalist and at times explicitly racist rhetoric. Moreover, he is just the latest, and most high-profile, example of right-wing populist leaders and parties to have assumed power on

the back of such a platform — think of Putin in Russia, Modi in India, Abe in Japan and Erdogan in Turkey.

Yet it is only possible to consider such leaders opponents of neoliberalism if neoliberalism itself is defined in an unacceptably narrow and misleading manner — as an ideology and political program characterized by the valorization of free markets. The aura surrounding neoliberalism leads us to assume this to be so, but it is dangerous and foolhardy to buy into this. Otherwise, we perpetuate a key and crippling deficiency in the left’s default mode of thinking about neoliberalism.

Currently, the unspoken assumption is that the fight against neoliberalism is synonymous with the fight against free markets. This means that, every time a politician of the right — be it Trump, Putin, you name it — says something critical about free markets, supporters of progressive and radical politics are on the back foot. How else could it be, if everyone seems to be in agreement about the need to limit and constrain markets? What is the point of the left in that case, apart from its asking for a “nicer” form of constraint on the market?

There is a surprisingly simple and liberating way out of this. Instead of tying ourselves in knots about how to oppose free markets when governments of all stripes seem to be doing just that, we could do something quite different. That is, call out neoliberals, both intellectuals and their proselytizers in politics and the media, for the fiction that they uphold. The rhetoric about free markets is just that: rhetoric.

This may surprise some people, but all it takes is to choose a sample of neoliberal intellectuals — Friedman, Hayek, Müller-Armack or whoever — and actually read what they



wrote, without preconceptions. And here we find, quite consistently, the invocation of the free market as an abstract principle followed by the clear preference for certain types of markets to prevail in practice. Hence, neoliberalism is about the creation and maintenance of the kinds of markets that it wishes to see, with a central role accorded to the state in this process. Not in a democratic way, to be sure, but in a manner that is consistent with certain types of markets.

*The left should call out neoliberals for the fiction that they uphold. The rhetoric about free markets is just that: rhetoric.*

This should be only the start of our critique, but unfortunately these observations — which are commonplace among critical scholars and activists — are taken to mean that neoliberalism has simply got lost along the way. Indeed, some on the right agree, with the well-known Adam Smith Institute recently choosing to call itself neoliberal rather than liberal, in an attempt to strengthen the connection between what it calls free market libertarianism with neoliberalism. The problem is that even this stance lets neoliberalism off the hook, as if we cannot let go of assumption that, even if it all goes wrong in practice, neoliberalism in principle is somehow, deep down, committed to free markets.

So, let's put this bluntly: neoliberalism has nothing to do with markets as commonly conceived, and everything to do with the orchestration of social relations *in the name of* markets. As a result, neoliberalism in principle *and* in practice is fundamentally about the coercive, non-democratic and unequal reorganization of societies along particular lines. And what are those lines? The intensification and extensification of the differences, inequalities, hierarchies and divisions which pervade capitalist society, as delivered by authoritarian states and global corporations. Therefore, we must always keep in mind that neoliberalism, as an ideology and as a set of “real-life” practices, is a way of seeing the world that is carved from the empty words “free” and “markets.”

## THE RISE OF AUTHORITARIAN NEOLIBERALISM

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What does this mean, then, for what I have termed the rise of authoritarian neoliberalism? Clearly, to add the prefix “authoritarian” to what I have already defined as coercive, non-democratic and unequal in

orientation, requires some explanation. The term neoliberalism was coined by the German ordoliberal Alexander Rüstow in 1938 at the Walter Lippmann Colloquium, organized to plan and agitate for the renewal of classical liberal principles such as “free enterprise.” The “neo” part recognized the different conditions in the mid-twentieth century compared to those of the nineteenth, with three factors in particular having grown in importance during the intervening period: trade unions, left political parties and state-provided public services such as social welfare. Hence, neoliberalism’s genesis in these socio-historical conditions meant that the project was, especially in so-called capitalist democracies after World War II, primarily focused on the erosion of *substantive* rights.

What I mean here is the reversal of social and economic gains made during the twentieth century via the presentation by neoliberals of *alternatives* at elections and through other forms of political participation, which emphasized themes such as individual liberties, “liberalization” of the economy from the dead hand of the state, and the need to reduce the power of so-called vested interests such as trade unions.

As we moved into the twenty-first century, the scope of neoliberalization began to widen to include *formal* rights, with *alternations* of different neoliberal governments as the only choice seemingly on offer. Building on successes in parts of the Global South, where there was greater scope for wrenching, sudden change in countries such as Chile, Indonesia and Uganda (through coups and imposed structural adjustment programs), and in parts of the post-socialist group of countries (such as Poland and Russia), where “shock therapy” was implemented in the early 1990s, growing demands were made of the so-called mature capitalist democracies as well.

## MAKING AUTHORITARIAN NEOLIBERALISM POLITICALLY INEVITABLE

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The attacks of September 11, 2001 and the collapse of Lehman Brothers on September 15, 2008 were key catalysts for the erosion of formal as well as substantive rights, and these events did *not* contravene neoliberal principles because of the greater role for the state that they seemed to usher in. This famous quote from Milton Friedman, first articulated in 1982, is a more appropriate for understanding what unfolded:

“ Only a crisis — actual or perceived — produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable.

After September 11, 2001, the “politically inevitable” development was the much more visible and extensive intertwining of commercial and security forms of power, leading to considerably greater possibilities for state control over populations. Two key aspects can be drawn out: (1) the explicit promotion of public-private partnerships (PPPs) within areas of the state such as defense and policing that are normally seen as beyond the reach of neoliberalization, at least regarding the role of private companies; and (2) the corporatization of everyday life by these PPPs in the name of security.

PPPs had emerged during the 1980s and especially the 1990s as potential “win-win” solutions to perceived problems connected to

renewing existing or investing in new public infrastructure. In essence, national and local states would contract out these tasks to the private sector, which would cover upfront costs (for example, construction of buildings and roads) in return for annual payments from the state over a fixed number of years. In the context of lower levels of economic growth and higher levels of unemployment, it was argued that PPPs would benefit the population through a set of legal obligations that allowed public infrastructure to be less affected by other competing demands on the state budget. On the other hand, private companies would benefit from guaranteed returns on their capital investments and from the credibility accrued from providing a public service.

It is now well known that these idealized projections rarely occur in reality. Much more likely is that private companies enjoy considerable and sustained profits due to the significant gap between the cost of their investments and the total payments that accrue from the state, frequently delivering poor-quality infrastructure in the process. Moreover, in cases where the cost-income differential is lower, PPPs usually make it possible for firms to walk away from their legal obligations, leaving the state to pick up the bill. Another key issue is the relative absence of democratic oversight due to “commercial confidentiality” clauses — hardly something in the public interest.

Yet despite the mountain of evidence to the contrary, PPPs have become a normal part of state activity across the world because of the continued insistence on the likelihood of a “win-win” outcome. At this stage, left commentators often decry the tarnishing of “public” goods by “private” actors, demanding the expulsion of the latter from the provision of the former. However, this implies that all that is needed is for governments to realize the



MILTON FRIEDMAN

*“There is an intimate connection between economics and politics ... Only certain combinations of political and economic arrangements are possible.”*




ALFRED MÜLLER-ARMACK

*“Only if we succeed in incorporating the individual as a human being in an order of freedom, can we overcome the deep distrust of many towards orders of freedom.”*



FRIEDRICH HAYEK

*“All coercive actions of government must be unambiguously determined by a permanent legal framework.”*

A black and white photograph of the World Trade Center towers. A large, dense plume of smoke or dust rises from the right tower, partially obscuring it. The sky is filled with smaller, scattered clouds. The towers have a distinctive ribbed facade.

*After September 11, 2001, the “politically inevitable” development was the intertwining of commercial and security forms of power, leading to considerably greater possibilities for state control over populations.*



errors of their ways and turn their backs on marketization. Missing from such criticisms is the possibility that a new form of state is being constructed, regardless of efficiency or other similar considerations.

This also means that the explicit promotion of PPPs within defense and policing was already taking place before September 11, 2001. As documented by Naomi Klein, Donald Rumsfeld's transformational project was underway as soon as he became US Secretary of Defense in January 2001. The internal controversies that this generated were swept aside in the name of the War on Terror, with the waging of war becoming a permanent and necessary part of life — enduring military conflict abroad and the homeland security state at home. Under the mantra that governments (and therefore the general public) would benefit from the efficiency and innovation provided by private enterprise, intervention into other countries and intervention into citizens' lives became increasingly subject to PPPs: think of companies such as Bechtel and Booz Allen Hamilton.

Klein calls this a market for terrorism, but it should be clear by now that, while it may have looked that way, no such market existed — at least in the common understanding of markets. It was instead the intensification and extensification of the ongoing project to reorganize societies in coercive, non-democratic and unequal ways. More intensive because of the penetration of the state's repressive apparatus by the project; more extensive because of the increasingly visible and diverse states of control which this penetration made possible.

A key outcome has been the deliberate blurring of the lines between military and security functions in the form of the explosive growth of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs), operating across borders and in

situations ranging from active involvement in war to routinely preventing public access to public spaces in cities. Of course, the Obama administration has done nothing to check these developments, let alone reverse them, with the rise of drone warfare and surveillance being only the most obvious examples. It is thus not surprising to learn that states worldwide have followed the lead of the US, with PMSCs becoming massive global organizations in the process.

## ATTACKING DEMOCRACY TO “PROTECT” IT

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This last point on preventing public access to public spaces connects the intertwining of commercial and security forms of power with other states of control. Far from being defeated by the eruption of global crisis in 2008, neoliberalism has in some respects become even more firmly entrenched — and in a more intensely and more explicitly anti-democratic form as well. In addition to the above, we have witnessed, across the world, a sustained attempt to erode formal rights in the name of “good capitalism.”

Once the threat of imminent global collapse had receded by the end of 2008, neoliberal intellectuals and proselytizers quickly moved to relocate responsibility for the crisis away from financial institutions, meaning that the key challenge was not to reform capitalism, or even finance, but states. The inability to regulate appropriately either consumers or financial institutions resulted in the “immoralization” of finance and consequently states’ own budget deficits because of the bailouts of the banks.

Hence, states were declared guilty of permitting the massive excesses in the finance sector,

meaning that the only way to prevent this from happening again was to impose self-binding constraints on states in the name of economic “necessity.” Since 2008, a whole raft of constitutional and legal changes has been introduced, explicitly seeking to subordinate the state to rules and procedures that constitutionalize austerity and normalize the ongoing degradation of public provision as a “neutral” objective. The best-known examples can be found in the European Union, where the rush to self-flagellate has led to the imposition of drastic forms of restructuring, especially on Greece — all in the name of the European *social* model. But it is a common theme across the world.

What this all means is that it is difficult for the population to overturn such constitutional and legal mechanisms, because of the supermajorities needed in parliament to do so. While constitutions are often associated with political and social rights, one always has to ask “what kind of constitution?” Otherwise, these deliberate acts of self-disempowerment form the basis for further rounds of de-democratization. This is especially the case when protests emerge in response to, for instance, the constitutionalization of austerity, which are then met with violent policing tactics *in the name of democracy*.

Take, for instance, the so-called “gag” laws introduced in Spain in the summer of 2015, which significantly restrict and to a degree criminalize the freedom of assembly and protest. This includes being disrespectful to police officers and trying to prevent an eviction from taking place — activities far removed from more traditional notions of “public disorder.” For a similar set of legal provisions and restrictions, consider Canada’s C51 Bill, passed in 2015.

We could also reflect on the routine practices of police violence and the illegal mobilizations



*Far from being defeated by the eruption of global crisis in 2008, neoliberalism has in some respects become even more firmly entrenched — and in a more intensely and more explicitly anti-democratic form as well.*

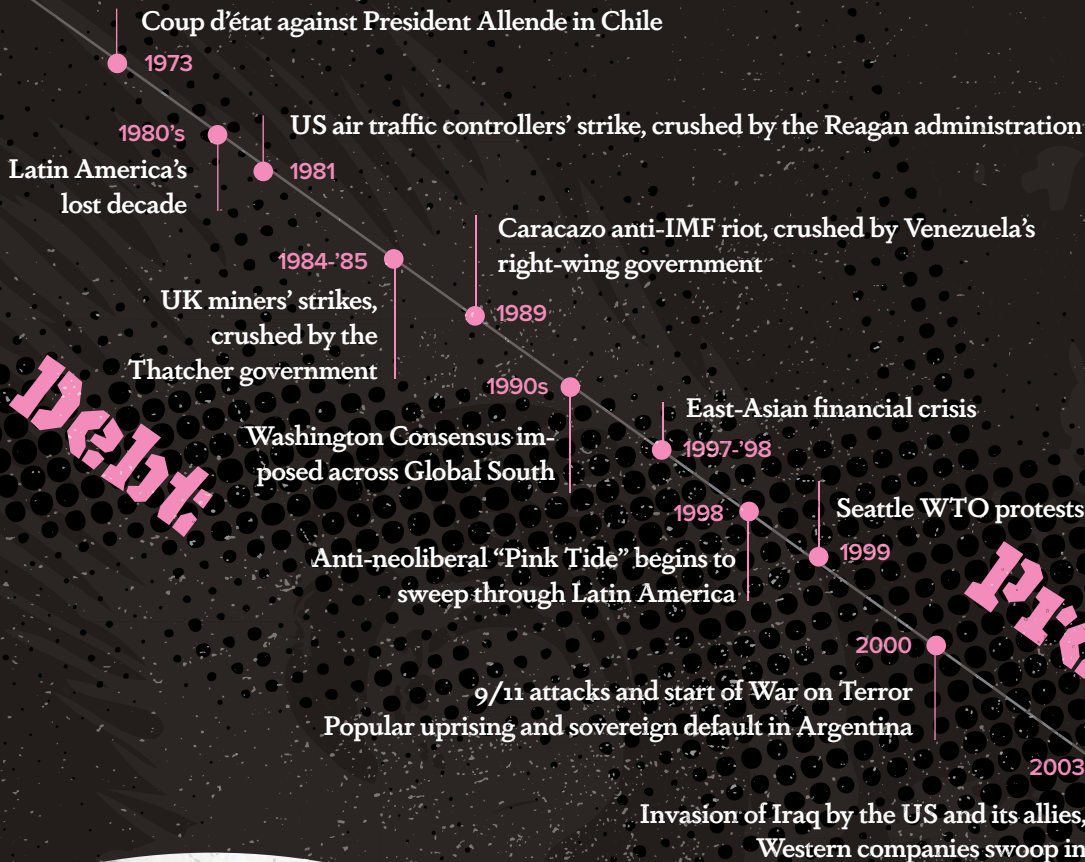
of juridical power across the globe, be it the repression of the Occupy movement in the US in 2011, the massacre of striking miners in South Africa in 2012, the violent crackdown on the Gezi Park protests in Turkey in 2013, or the kidnapping and mass killing of students in Mexico in 2014. Consider, too, how the protests, strikes and resistance movements have been framed: as an “extremist” attack on “democracy,” thus justifying or at least explaining away the coercive reaction.

## THE MASK SLIPS

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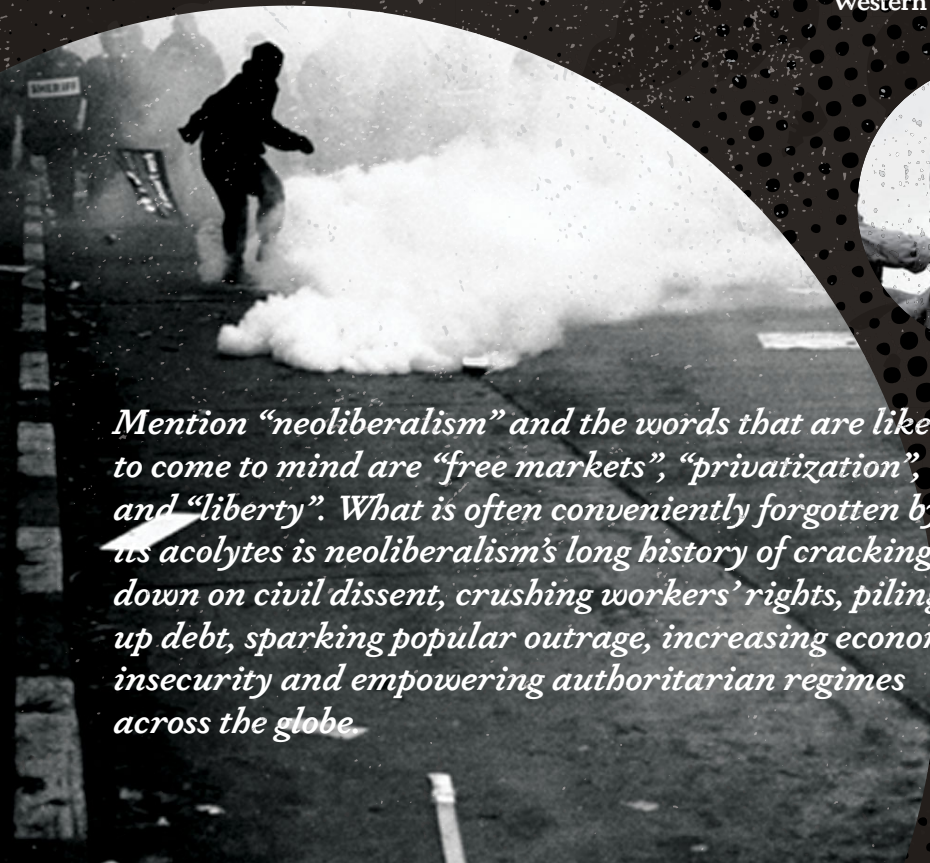
This all paints a bleak picture: an ideology that actively promotes the coercive, non-

democratic and unequal reorganization of society seems to have had repeated successes in eroding substantive and formal political and social rights. Since 2001, this process has been driven by the much more visible and extensive intertwining of commercial and security forms of power. Since 2008, these developments have been aligned with constitutional and legal changes that explicitly seek to restrict democratic rights in the name of economic necessity, meaning that protests against such restrictions can be labeled as “extreme” and therefore “justifiably” responded to in coercive fashions in the defense of democracy. Central to both has been the continued extension of PPPs into hitherto unexplored parts of the state and the ongoing



Debt

Protest



*Mention "neoliberalism" and the words that are likely to come to mind are "free markets", "privatization", and "liberty". What is often conveniently forgotten by us acolytes is neoliberalism's long history of cracking down on civil dissent, crushing workers' rights, piling up debt, sparking popular outrage, increasing economic insecurity and empowering authoritarian regimes across the globe.*



# Repression in disguise

*A brief overview of the trail of destruction that authoritarian neoliberalism has left in its wake — and some of the explosions of popular resistance it has spawned.*



Strike

Strike

Populism

2008  
Collapse of Lehman Brothers, global financial crisis, start of Great Recession

2010  
Eurozone debt crisis

2011  
Arab Spring and start of Syrian civil war  
15-M demonstrations in Spain,  
Greek anti-austerity protests,  
Occupy Wall Street movement,  
England riots after police killing of Mark Duggan

2012  
Marikana miners' strike, SA  
Start of BLM in the US

2013  
Gezi Uprising in Turkey  
Mass protests in Brazil

2015  
Right-wing parliamentary  
coup in Brazil  
Turkey post-coup  
crackdown  
Populist backlash: Brexit  
referendum in the UK  
Donald Trump elected US  
president

2016  
Greek anti-austerity referendum crushed



corporatization of everyday life in the name of security by PMSCs.

Nevertheless, these processes and developments are highly contradictory. The increasingly naked assault on substantive and formal rights, the ever-clearer sense that rhetoric about security and liberty means the corporatization of life, the growing recognition that talk of the “free market” no longer masks the centrality of governments to the (re)production of massive inequalities, all indicate that the state — for so long assumed to embody the will of the people in democratic and non-democratic societies alike — is

part of the problem and needs to be challenged rather than relied upon to deliver the public or social goods.

Neoliberalism has always been about the *reconceptualization* and not the amputation of the state, according it a central role in producing the kind of society that neoliberals wish to see. However, it is less possible nowadays to mask this with the empty words “free” and “markets,” meaning that as the state becomes seemingly stronger and more authoritarian, it simultaneously evolves into a more fragile and delegitimized entity.

The strengthening and simultaneous weakening of capitalist states in times of authoritar-

ian neoliberalism makes them an increasingly direct target of a range of popular struggles, demands and expressions of discontent by way of the pressures emanating from this contradictory process. The problem for the politics

of the left is that such developments are multi-form, ranging from radical right-wing populism to those favoring a return to classical social democracy and again to autonomous movements seeking to prefigure a better world.

Furthermore, the first of these, right-wing populism, is more than capable of allying with more mainstream forms of authoritarian neoliberalism (see Trump in the US and vari-

ous governing coalitions in Europe); the second, classical social democracy, is discredited in the eyes of many for its compromises since the 1980s; and the third, autonomous movements, have yet to reckon fully with the increasingly visible and diverse states of control discussed above (additional examples here include Genoa in 2001, Zuccotti Park in 2011 and the 2016 coup in Brazil).

Nevertheless, there are new opportunities for resistance, alliance and prefigurative self-organization, and there are already plenty of examples that explicitly recognize what the state of play is. These point us towards a more equitable world in which states and societies are transformed in the name of values such as

“  
*The strengthening and simultaneous weakening of capitalist states in times of authoritarian neoliberalism makes them an increasingly direct target of a range of popular struggles.*  
”

equality, justice, dignity and solidarity. But, as noted earlier, a formidable obstacle stands in the way: the continued, instinctive equation of neoliberalism with free markets. Given that many commentators view neoliberalism as a “living dead” worldview that is intellectually discredited yet still dominant, the question has to be asked: how do we stop viewing neoliberalism and “free markets” as synonymous?

*It is essential that we remove our preconceptions and call out neoliberal intellectuals and proselytizers for what they are: disseminators of fiction about freedom and markets who actually value, above all else, coercion, de-democratization and grotesque inequalities*

To answer that question, it is essential that we remove our preconceptions and call out neoliberal intellectuals and proselytizers for what they are: disseminators of fiction about freedom and markets who actually value, above all else, coercion, de-democratization and grotesque inequalities, central to which are global corporations and authoritarian states. Rather than allow others to carve a vision out of empty words, we ought to drag ourselves onto our own path. ★

IAN BRUFF



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GLOBALIZED INSECURITY



# THE CONCEPT OF THE WALL

Elliot Sperber



# IN CONTRAST TO NEOLIBERALISM'S IDEOLOGY OF FREEDOM AND OPENNESS, WALLS — ENCLOSING RICH AND POOR ALIKE — ABET PRIVATIZATION AND PRECARIETY THE WORLD OVER.

**T**he Berlin Wall came down in 1989 — exactly 200 years after the walls of the Bastille fell to French revolutionaries in Paris. And just as the French were led to believe that the enlightenment ideals of equality and liberty would be achieved via a capitalist economic system, members of the former Soviet bloc were led to believe that the turn to capitalism would usher in equality and democracy. Yet, nearly three decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the hegemony of global capitalism has led to a generalized state of insecurity.

In 2014 alone, nearly 60 million people — more than ever recorded — were displaced by war, according to a 2015 report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In 2015 this number, which excludes the millions displaced by economic deprivation and ecological devastation worldwide, increased to 65 million. The response to this unprecedented level of insecurity? Rather than addressing human insecurity at its root causes, wealthy people and wealthy states alike are protecting themselves from the harms they have created as they have for thousands of years: by building walls.

## THE WALL AND THE POLIS

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As a constitutive aspect of political life, walls and politics are practically indistinct. Not only did the concept of politics as such emerge from


the organization of social life in cities (the Greek *polis*), but from the development of the earliest city-states until well into modernity, these cities were nearly invariably surrounded by walls. Indeed, the very word *city* stems from *citadel* — a structure that is nothing without its walls. As such, it is hardly surprising that, even as politics has expanded to involve the organization of social life on a planetary scale, walls continue to play a central role in politics today.

Delimiting and regulating space and movement, walls are key to controlling and administering territory, comprising an elementary tool in the general administration of security. In contrast to neoliberalism's ideology of freedom and openness, walls — as well as their virtual analogs — not only obstruct movement and intensify state control, but in enclosing rich and poor alike they also abet privatization and precarity the world over.

Sealing off the practically self-sufficient gated communities, or “off-worlds”, described by Mike Davis in his book *Planet of Slums*, walls enclose affluent as well as impoverished spaces in cities across the globe. In Buenos Aires and Lagos, among others, walled highways cut through sprawling slums to connect walled “off-worlds” to city centers. Behind such walls, in the work camp of Sonapur beneath the skyscrapers of Dubai, for instance, captive workforces labor in conditions described by many

as twenty-first century slavery. In present-day Baghdad and other war-ravaged cities, walls transform urban spaces into innumerable security zones. And yet walls are hardly restricted to enclosing gated communities, plots of land, prisons and other sites within countries. As political theorist Wendy Brown put it in *Desiring Walls, Waning Sovereignty*, a “frenzy of nation-state wall-building is occurring” at national borders between countries as well.

Indeed, as generalized insecurity stemming from the conjoined phenomena of neoliberal privatization, militarism and ecocide has advanced internationally, so have the walls designed to contain the consequences. From Israel’s notorious West Bank wall, euphemistically described as a “security fence,” to Morocco, Botswana and South Africa, on to where Asia blends into Oceania along the Thai border with Malaysia, border walls are becoming ubiquitous. In Europe, Norway recently constructed a wall along its border with Russia. And Hungary, Greece, Turkey and other states have built or are building fences along their borders to prevent refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and other lands from entering their territory — flows of people that their own policies, and those of their allies, did much to create.



*As generalized insecurity stemming from the conjoined phenomena of neoliberal privatization, militarism and ecocide has advanced internationally, so have the walls designed to contain the consequences.*

Further east, in the Eurasian heartland, Uzbekistan has been walled off from Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. And as Pakistan has been walled off from both Iran and India, the second most populous country on the planet, India, has built walls separating its neighbors in Myanmar and Bangladesh. Covering over 2,100 miles of the 2,541-mile border between India and Bangladesh, this lethal barrier is only growing deadlier as more and more people are prevented from fleeing ecological catastrophes in the low-lying, flood-prone region.

But border walls are hardly confined to Africa and Eurasia. Less than a year after the Berlin Wall crumbled, and long before belligerent calls for renewed wall building were issued by Donald Trump and other nationalist demagogues, construction began on the so-called “San Diego

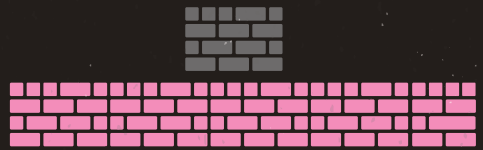
fence.” Intensified after the passage of the 2006 Secure Fence Act, by 2009 the wall extended over 500 miles along the US-Mexico border. Functioning like other walls of the neoliberal world order, it allows goods to flow freely between nations while blocking the flow of people — illustrating the anti-labor bias in the ideology of economic globalization, which excludes labor from the dogma of free trade.

Supporting the advance of globalization, as wealth has polarized and the natural environment has grown warmer, more polluted and less hospitable, border walls have multiplied across the board. As the geographer Reece Jones has documented, in the less than three decades since the conclusion of the Cold War, the number of border walls has jumped over fourfold — from 15 in 1989 to close to 70 today. And as sea walls impotently attempt to hold back rising oceans, heated by the relentless drive for profit, and as more and more prison walls, border walls and fences are built to contain national and international “superfluous populations” seeking work or fleeing the slums and wars created by our biophagous political-economic system, the world’s generalized state of insecurity is only likely to further worsen.

## THE WALL’S ESSENCE

From providing shelter and partitioning interior spaces to bearing loads and damming rivers, walls have long performed a variety of basic security-related functions. Although there is some degree of conceptual overlap, historically the irenic and protective functions of the wall have been secondary to its martial, coercive ones. This primacy is reflected in language itself. In German, for instance, exterior and interior walls are designated by two different words: *mauer* refers to the former, whereas *wand* designates the latter. Between

## Did you know that...



**1989: 15 BORDER WALLS**  
**2016: 70 BORDER WALLS**



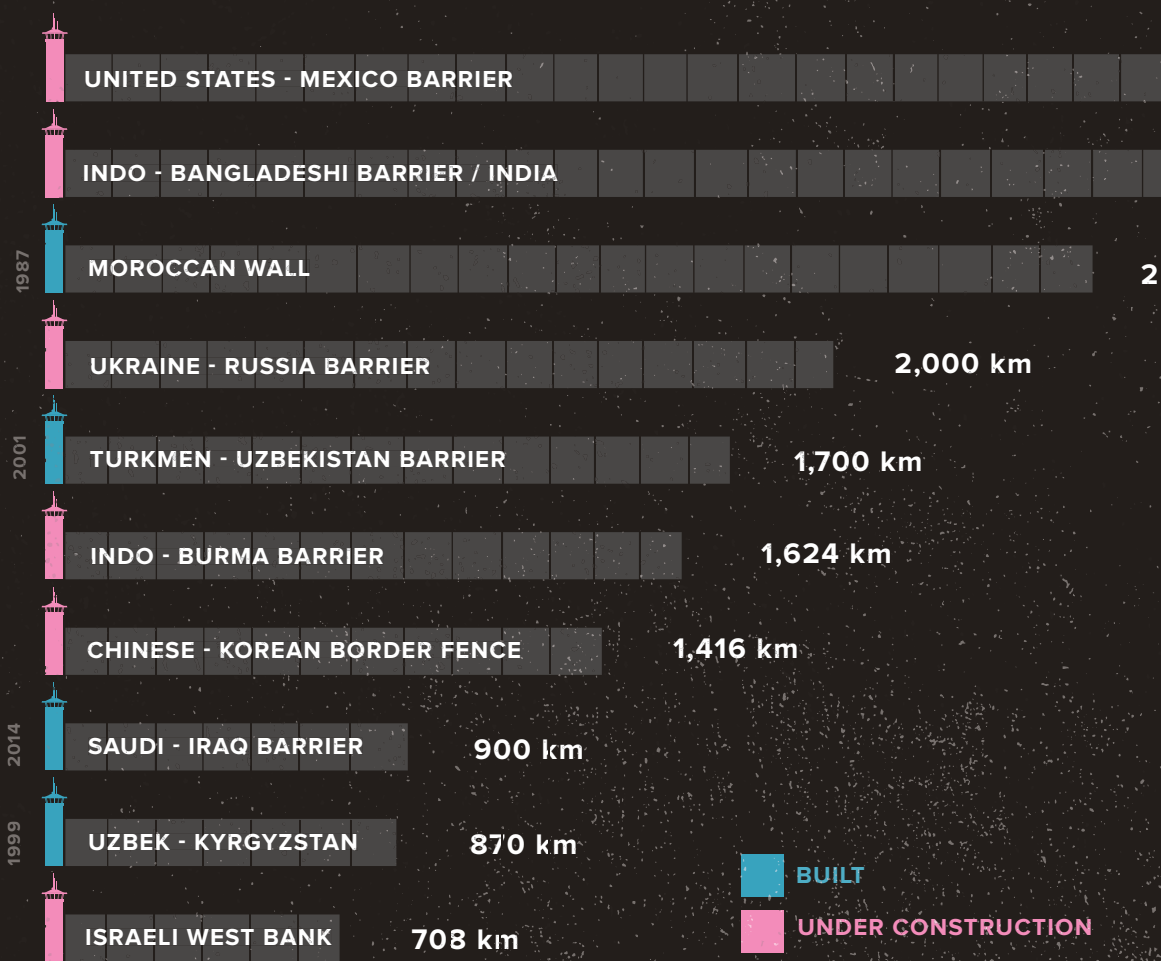
**THE OLDEST WALLED CITY IN THE WORLD IS JERICHO, IN PALESTINE, WITH FORTIFICATIONS DATING BACK TO 8,000 B.C.**



**THE ENGLISH WORD “WALL” COMES FROM THE LATIN VALLUM, MEANING RAMPART, WHICH IS DERIVED FROM THE LATIN WORD FOR STAKE, VALLUS.**



# The 10 Longest Border Walls







3,360 km

3,268 km

,700 km

It's a telling fact that of the ten longest border walls and barriers in the world, six are still being constructed today. The only barrier that pre-dates the fall of the Berlin Wall is Morocco's Western Sahara Wall – the third longest in the world – which was built in six stages between 1980 and 1987 and separates the areas under state control from those in the hands of the Polisario Front.

the two, it is the word *mauer* — with its martial lineage — that is primary. This distinction is expressed in other languages as well, like the Italian *muro* and *parete*, the Irish *mur* and *fraig*, or the Lithuanian *muras* and *siena*. In each of these designations, the exterior wall — related to fortresses and war — functions as the primary designation.

As for the English word, which refers to interior and exterior walls alike, it derives from the Anglian *wall*, for rampart, a term that evolved from the Latin *vallum* — the Roman wall, such as Hadrian's. Aside from the brief existence of the Antonine Wall, Hadrian's Wall marked the northernmost extent of the Roman imperial presence in Great Britain. Its very function illustrated the political reality that, even if a fortress or boundary wall is said to serve a defensive function, like China's Great Wall or Israel's purported "security fence," insofar as that wall maintains a conquered territory this ostensibly defensive structure may well be regarded as manifesting an intrinsically offensive function as well.

The wall, however, also manifests itself in less obvious ways. As a phenomenon, the wall is hardly restricted to the vertical or even stationary form of the conventional wall. In addition to the brute walls of fortresses and settler cities, less obvious, invisible, conceptual walls partition the planet into so many territories, regulating the movements of people and resources. Manifesting itself in the transient front-line and the phalanx of soldiers, the wall also materializes in the imaginary boundary lines of maps, not to mention in computer programs and in the inverted, negative form of the trench. Penetrating the social imaginary, the wall shape-shifts, taking flight in flying fortresses, weaponized drones and other high-tech permutations.

Like the wall, these technologies do not create stasis or block movement so much as they direct

it. And, just as the walls of a maze determine, limit and concentrate movement, whether it is the Neolithic corral or the Anthropogenic Facebook wall or the censorial firewall, in directing energy walls not only harness force, they also create — as well as neutralize — power. Whether it is in the form of the drone, the dam, the traffic sign or the sea wall, the wall's essence — the structural regulation of space, populations and resources — does not simply mark the limit of a given political-economic entity; it enables such an entity to maintain, control and extend its territory as well.

## THE MUTATION OF THE WALL

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While the walls of many quintessentially modern cities, such as Paris, seemed to disappear after World War I, in actuality they did not. They mutated. In eighteenth-century Europe, the demands of early-modern economic circulation caused the feudal mode of social regulation by wall to shift to the enlightenment notion of regulation via surveillance. Continuing this trend, the disappearance of city walls after World War I took place not because of the purported openness of modernity, but because superior new technologies — bomb-dropping airplanes foremost among these — rendered the simple defensive wall obsolete. And so walls evolved into the more effective, rarefied ramparts of national regulations, international treaties, modern technologies and new modes of surveillance.

One key example of this new mutation of the wall is the free-trade agreement. Akin to peace treaties, which do not establish peace so much as dictate the terms and conditions for the distribution of resources according to the interests of a dominant party or parties, free-trade agreements regulate the movement

of resources and terms of exchange between peoples. Unlike peace treaties, however, free-trade agreements do not conclude wars between states, nor are the dominant parties in free-trade agreements strictly states. Like the tribunals they create to resolve their conflicts, these agreements are *supranational* as well, advancing the interests of transnational elites. In this respect, free-trade agreements may be likened to peace treaties of sorts in the war between classes, employing the state to dictate relations between the global rich and poor.

Determining the movement and distribution of people and resources, free-trade agreements and other treaties are responsible for the current shape of the political and economic world order. For the past century now, much of this shape has stemmed from the treaties concluding the two World Wars. In addition to post-WWII treaties ensuring the hegemony of the United States and its allies through the creation of institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, the UN and NATO, the order-shifting period of the Great War and its immediate aftermath saw the maps and borders of Europe and its colonies transform radically. Notably, with only a few exceptions along its periphery, the borders of post-WWI Europe are replicated today in the borders of the states comprising the European Union.

But much more than simply mutating into less concrete forms after World War I, walls also expanded. Illustrating Jean Baudrillard's observation in *Simulacra and Simulation* that today "it is the map that precedes the territory," France and Britain — represented by Messrs. Sykes and Picot — extended their respective walls into the territories of the former Ottoman Empire, creating boundaries that continue to determine and shape the conflicts of the Middle East today. Stressed by the poverty, war and refugees this order has created, and for



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decades has recreated, these walls are presently crumbling. The Kurdish struggle for regional autonomy and the battle against the so-called Islamic State, whose political program expressly includes rolling back the Sykes-Picot Agreement, are only two of the most obvious examples of this.

In light of the weakening of these twentieth-century structures and their post-Cold War supplements, the current geopolitics of the neoliberal world order may be interpreted as a shoring up of its straining walls. Designed to enclose the eastern and western extents of Eurasia, the TPP and TTIP trade agreements amount to nothing short of a grand containment effort. Moreover, the ongoing wars in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East, not to mention the military buildup along

NATO's expanded eastern border, represent such a buttressing effort as well. It is only one of many ironies that these physical and virtual walls, these facets of neoliberal globalization, have come to be symbolized by a particular, historical wall — a wall that, though long since dismantled, continues to haunt not only lower Manhattan, but the rest of the planet: Wall Street.

## THE WALL AND SECURITY

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An outgrowth of imperialism and the beginning of the conquest of North America, it is a fitting coincidence that Wall Street refers to a historical security or border wall as well as to the *essence* of the wall — not just in terms of trade deals, stocks, securities and securitiza-

tion, but in terms of security itself. Whether it involves national security or housing security, economic security or food security, security is always the animating essence of the wall.

A constitutive aspect of the nation-state, and arguably of politics as such, security is a particularly ambiguous concept. Denoting both irenic and martial security, the wall — or the secured territory within it — always already implies an area immediately beyond it that remains unsecured. More than implying insecurity, this *polis/xenos* complex implies infinite threat — threats and anxieties that lead to police killings on one side of the world as much as they lead to drone strikes on the other.

Hardly distinct from xenophobia, the fear of the stranger threatening to breach the wall, border, frontier or any other demarcation line or sign of order, extends from the very concept of security and of the *polis* itself — irrespective of whether any actual stranger exists. As such, while today's nationalist and isolationist right-wingers are at least as concerned with the "undermining" of "national security" by terrorists and "treasonous plots" as they were when Richard Hofstadter wrote *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, paranoia as such is both deeper than a stylistic quality and spread out much more broadly throughout the public. Though it manifests itself in conspiracy theories on both the political left and right — in the stories of 9/11 Truthers, Birthers and Birchers — the state of being terrified and terrorized emanates from the very concept and structure of security.

A fixture of political thought since at least 1789 when, along with rights to property, liberty and resistance to oppression, security was enshrined in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, as well as in the 4th Amendment to the US Constitution and other documents, the

concept of security reflects multiple, competing tendencies. Described by the Utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill as a "primary right," "the first needs of society," and "the most vital of all interests," the history of the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries amply demonstrates that Mill's "vital interest" is in actuality a *conflict* of interests.

The "national security" of one nation-state, for instance, typically conflicts with the "national security" of others. And, rather than rectifying a problem that stems from the concept of sovereignty — namely legitimized, arbitrary violence — this problem is at best superficially addressed by the more general, post-Cold War notions of "collective security" and "global security" overseen by the United Nations; an institution aptly referred to by Jacques Derrida as the "dictatorship of the Security Council."

Such narrow conceptualizations of security consistently produce situations in which the pursuit of things like "energy security" leads to practices, like fracking, that directly destroy the far more "vital interest" of "water security." And, just as the "economic security" of property owners systemically exacerbates the "economic insecurity" of working people, the "economic security" of the agro-industrial, energy and military industries, as well as the real estate and finance industries intertwined with them, prevails by design over the general security of the public, which is deemed to be of lesser value, since value in this neoliberal society is defined primarily as monetary worth.

In addition to these conflicts of interest, the contradictions intrinsic to the concept of security are reflected in the word security itself. Derived from the Latin *se cura*, or "without care," security can be understood not only as freedom from care, worries or attention — of being carefree — but also as being *careless*. And

it is only one of several ironies that carelessness, failing to pay sufficient attention to or care for one's surroundings, tends to produce conditions inimical to wellbeing, or safety.

Contrary to the ancient Greek notion of *eudaimonia*, which involves contemplation, security in this sense amounts to the absence of contemplation or critical thought — a lack of attention and submission to hegemonic norms. This is arguably the opposite of the awareness of the absence of knowledge that distinguished, for instance, the figure of Socrates as wise. Akin to the wonder from which philosophy — according to Aristotle — begins, the astonishment or perplexity of recognizing that one exists within an absolute mystery, in which very little is known at all, obliges one to be the opposite of careless. Compelling one to move with care, it demands a critical attentiveness that, contrary to the ideology of security, does not conjure the threatening, emotionally charged notion of the “alien” or “enemy” so much as it recognizes a more objective figure: the neighbor.

*As we hurtle toward ecological collapse, exacerbating the consequences by building ever more walls, perhaps the neighbor and the social relation of neighborhood can point us toward a political economy beyond the market, the nation-state and the dead-end of security.*

As we hurtle toward ecological collapse, exacerbating the consequences by building ever more walls, perhaps the neighbor and the social relation of neighborhood — which implies mutual support, as opposed to exchange and exploitation — can point us toward a political economy beyond the *polis/xenos* complex, beyond the market, beyond the nation-state, and, finally, beyond the dead-end of security. ★

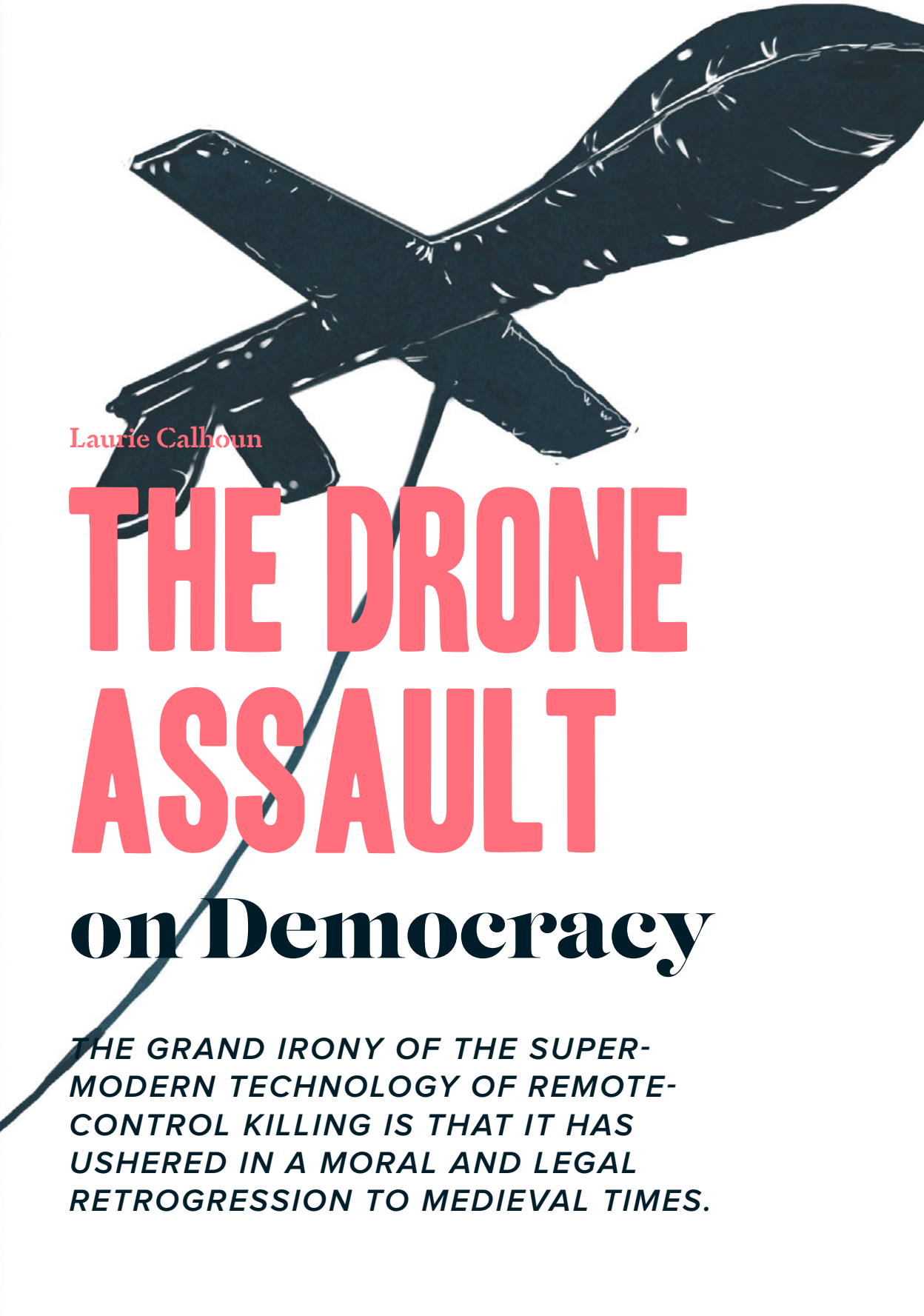
ELLIOT SPERBER



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REMOTE CONTROL





Laurie Calhoun

# THE DRONE ASSAULT on Democracy

*THE GRAND IRONY OF THE SUPER-MODERN TECHNOLOGY OF REMOTE-CONTROL KILLING IS THAT IT HAS USHERED IN A MORAL AND LEGAL RETROGRESSION TO MEDIEVAL TIMES.*



What do Reyaad Khan, Ruhul Amin, Samir Khan, Abdulrahman al-Awlaki, Junaid Hussain and Micah Xavier Johnson have in common? All of these young, brown-skinned males were killed extrajudicially through the use of remote-control technology under authorization by their very own government.

British nationals Reyaad Khan and Ruhul Amin had traveled to Syria to join up with ISIS (the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) in response to Western military intervention in the Middle East. Both were killed by the Royal Air Force (RAF) in August 2015 using lethal drones, even though the British parliament had voted down Cameron's call for war in Syria. Ironically, in the year of the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta, the prime minister chose to deploy missiles to destroy these compatriots without indicting or trying them for crimes. Following the precedent set by US President Barack Obama four years earlier, Cameron claimed to be acting in national self-defense. Obama had authorized the drone killing in Yemen of US citizen Anwar al-Awlaki, an outspoken opponent of US militarism and an advocate of jihad.

Al-Awlaki was said to be an operational leader of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), but no evidence of his alleged crimes has ever been released by the US government. Shortly after September 11, 2001, the Muslim cleric gave speeches in which he denounced the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks carried out on that day and warned that the US government needed to be careful to avoid being perceived as waging a war on Islam. In the period following 9/11, he himself was harassed by the FBI, and imprisoned for more than a year in Yemen at the US government's request. Ultimately, Al-Awlaki came to sympathize with the very radical Islamists whom he had earlier decried.

After being released from the prison where he was detained without charges, Al-Awlaki was eliminated by US drone on September 30, 2011, along with Samir Khan, also a US citizen, who had been putting out pro-jihad propaganda. Two weeks later, Al-Awlaki's son, Abdulrahman, who had only just turned 16 years of age (making him a "military age" male) was eliminated by a US drone as well, also in Yemen. Was the son intentionally killed? Or did a missile just happen to land in the remote village where he and his friends were preparing to enjoy their evening meal? The US government has declined to comment on the case, citing State Secrets Privilege under a pretext of national security.



## A RETROGRESSION TO MEDIEVAL TIMES

Most criticism of remote-control killing abroad has focused on the extent of non-combatant casualties. The lowest estimates derive from the US government's "Summary of Information Regarding U.S. Counterterrorism Strikes Outside Areas of Active Hostilities" of July 1, 2016, which claims that somewhere between 64 and 116 civilians were killed by 473 drone strikes in unoccupied territories from January 2009 through December 2015.

Perhaps such implausibly low estimates are to be expected from an administration which gloated in 2011 that no civilians at all were killed by US drones in Pakistan during the previous year, despite vigorous protests against the drone killing and maiming of women, children and innocent men in that very same year. The US government's explanation for the large disparity between their civilian death toll and those of NGOs, whose numbers range from hundreds to thousands, is that everyone but the killers themselves has been tricked by the propaganda of terrorist factions. Only the drone warriors know who the real terrorists are, the implication being that many of the people thought by locals to have been innocent were in fact guilty as charged of capital crimes.

If this schema of "justice" sounds vaguely familiar, that's because it basically describes the situation in human societies before the 1215 Magna Carta, when modern procedural justice and conceptions of human rights were unheard of. In ancient and medieval times, those in power could decree people to be guilty and "justice" would be meted out accordingly. Transparency, due process, *habeas corpus* (the right to be charged with a crime before being locked up), and the right to a fair and speedy trial are all modern advances said to be championed by Western democracies. The grand irony of the super-modern technology of remote-control killing is that it has ushered in a moral and legal retrogression to medieval times.

In the early years of the Drone Age, only named suspects or insurgents who posed a

threat to soldiers on the ground were targeted with drones. However, President Barack Obama succeeded over two terms in office in normalizing the targeted killing of persons designated as state enemies on the basis of their patterns of behavior. In what are termed "signature strikes," military-age males have been intentionally hunted down and slaughtered for such behaviors as carrying a rifle in a remote-tribal region or riding

around in the back of a truck "in the manner of insurgents." Allegedly "mortal enemies" have also been identified through drone surveillance

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*The US government's extrajudicial drone assassination campaign reflects the situation in human societies before the 1215 Magna Carta, when modern procedural justice and conceptions of human rights were unheard of.*

by their manner of dress, whether they pray several times a day, and whether they stand or squat to urinate.

It is in some ways difficult to comprehend how President Obama, a brown-skinned American male, came to champion what is tantamount to a flagrant policy of racial profiling. Yet he opted not only to continue but to expand the use of signature strikes to cover more and more territories, including countries such as Libya, Syria, Yemen and Somalia, with which the United States was not officially at war when he assumed the presidency. What appears to have happened is that every angry dissident in remote tribal regions where jihadists are believed to seek refuge is assumed to pose a threat as grave as that of Osama bin Laden. Yet most of them are poor and may not even possess passports.

## THE DRONE ASSASSINATION ASSAULT ON DEMOCRACY

Since 2001, the US government has struck deals with monarchic regimes in Yemen and elsewhere to effectively cede their country's sovereignty, allowing the drone "warriors" to kill targets in exchange for military aid. Many tribesmen pegged for death with the assistance of local intelligence operatives are far more likely to be political dissidents than international terrorists, given that they openly oppose their central government authority. These modes of government collaboration can be expected to prevent the democratization of countries run by autocrats with access to lethal drones.

The intentional drone killing of US and British citizens illustrates that the lethal power of the state has dramatically augmented in the

Drone Age. Remote-control technology has made it possible to eliminate targets without risking the lives of compatriot soldiers, and this makes it much easier for the president or prime minister to kill. Lethal drones seem to offer the possibility of defending the nation without sacrificing any troops, and have been successfully marketed to politicians as tools of "smart war." In truth, risk is not being eliminated but transferred to civilians on the ground. The UK human rights group Reprieve has documented that many named suspects were claimed by officials to have been killed multiple times before finally being eliminated by a drone-delivered missile. Who were the people mistakenly killed in their stead?



*The intentional drone killing of US and British citizens illustrates that the lethal power of the state has dramatically augmented in the Drone Age*

The persons intentionally executed by lethal drones while living in their own civil societies have been denied all human rights codified in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including Article 11, the "innocent until proven guilty" clause. But their neighbors, many of whom are not even suspected of complicity with terrorist groups, have also been wronged, for they have been terrorized by the specter of unpredictable death delivered by capricious killers who decree territories "outside areas of active hostilities" to be "bat-

tlegrounds” before firing missiles upon them. The people living in such places have no way of knowing when, why or against whom the next missile will thunder down from the sky. Small wonder that a form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) afflicts not only bereft survivors and persons maimed by missiles, but also those who have heard about victims destroyed without warning and for reasons never disclosed.

Westerners tend to assume that collateral damage is exhausted by body count, and arguments over the precise number of dead victims have served to distract from the other, in some ways more insidious, moral and political problems with drone assassination. The fear instilled in tribal communities living under drones, which leads persons to avoid meeting in groups, not only terrorizes and angers entirely innocent people — some of whom are radicalized as a result, along with sympathizers in the West — but also undermines freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, both of which are essential to flourishing societies and cornerstones of democracy.

## ACTING AS POLICE, JUDGE, JURY AND EXECUTIONERS

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The ongoing denial by officials of the magnitude of harm done to people living under lethal drones underscores what is most troubling of all about this form of state-delivered homicide: the killers act as the police, judge, jury and executioners, while also penning the official story of what they have done. They get the last word. “He said, she said,” but the one with the missile is always right. Does *might* make *right*? Throughout history, people in power have presumed as much, but dissidents who rise up to speak truth to power know very

# Drone Dictionary

## COLLATERAL DEATHS

In 2014, human rights group Reprieve discovered that in an attempt to kill 41 suspected terrorists in Pakistan and Yemen, the US launched 128 drone strikes that killed a combined total of 1,147 people, among them dozens of children. This amounts to an average of 27 collateral fatalities per target.

## COMBATANT

Each military-aged male killed in a drone strike is listed as an “Enemy Killed In Action”, unless his innocence is proven posthumously — often a near-impossible task.

## KILL LIST

Developed under the Obama administration and officially known as the Disposition Matrix. The so-called Kill List gathers enemies of the United States who are believed to pose a threat to the country. Once a suspect is on the list, US forces have 60 days to carry out the strike and kill the target.

## SIGNATURE STRIKE

Targets are selected based on their patterns of behavior and often killed without their identity being known to their killers.



GETMILITARYPHOTOS VIA SHUTTERSTOCK

well that the annihilation of people who inconveniently disagree in no way demonstrates that they were wrong.

British citizen Junaid Hussain, for example, appears to have understood the conclusions of the government-commissioned 2016 Chilcot Report, which sharply criticized Britain's role in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Hussain was convicted of having hacked into former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's email. After serving six months in prison, Hussain fled to Syria to join up with ISIS. Characterized by one anonymous military analyst as "a nuisance," he was perhaps closer to the propagandist Samir Khan than to someone like Mohammed Emwazi ("Jihadi John"). Unfortunately, the 21-year-old hacker, whose anger about the 2003 invasion was indeed righteous, came to collaborate with ISIS and to advocate the use of violence to counter violence. He was killed by a US drone, but British intelligence was used to hunt him down.

Given that a primary means to conflict resolution deployed by powerful governments with every tool of diplomacy at their disposal has become homicide, perhaps it should be unsurprising that factions and individuals with no institutional power should take up arms as well. Junaid Hussain was nine years old at the time of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Do not Western governments bear responsibility for inculcating in such young people the idea that conflicts are best resolved by killing?

US citizen Micah Xavier Johnson, who was said to sympathize with the Black Lives Matter movement, among other activist groups, was killed on July 7, 2016, in Dallas, Texas. Infuriated by the many police-inflicted deaths of African Americans in US cities, Johnson's confused response was to turn the tables and carry out a shooting spree which culminated

in the deaths of five Dallas policemen. The police chief then opted to deploy a robot strapped with explosives to blow up Johnson, as though he were a condemned building — perhaps the most flagrant desecration of a human body ever to be carried out by law enforcement officials in the United States.

The capture of Johnson was said by his killers to be “infeasible,” echoing the justifications of drone warriors. No one appears to have considered the possibility of using tranquilizers to knock out the suspect so that he could be tried for his crimes. Was the perpetrator, a military veteran, temporarily insane as a result of psychotropic medication or PTSD — or both? The case was closed by state execution.

## CRUSHING DISSENT WITH DRONE KILLING

The United States has from its inception been a constitutional republic grounded, at least nominally, in democratic principles. As a result, complacent citizens take for granted some of their most fundamental rights, including the right to a fair trial and to be convicted of a capital crime before being executed by the state. What the remote-control killers have failed to appreciate is that the very human rights which they proudly claim to champion are being denied whenever a person is stalked and slain. One of the seldom-recognized rights being denied is the right to express dissent from the policies of one’s government.

*One of the seldom-recognized rights being denied through the turn towards remote-control killing is the right to express dissent from the policies of one’s government.*

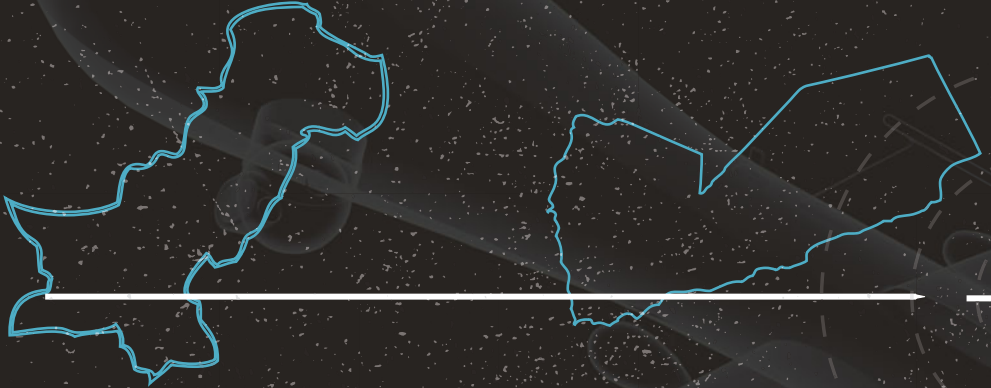
Micah Johnson, like the British and American men who came to support jihad before being intentionally destroyed by remote control, was protesting state-inflicted homicide in his own misguided way. He followed the grisly example of his own government by killing even more. Because all of these men were annihilated, rather than allowed to stand trial, the basis for their dissent was forever erased — just as happened in the case of Osama bin Laden, who was executed point blank by US Special Forces in Abbottabad, Pakistan, rather than being captured and imprisoned to stand trial.

## PAKISTAN

2004 onwards US Drone Strikes

## YEMEN

2002 onwards US Drone Strikes



TOTAL STRIKES	424
TOTAL KILLED	2,499-4,001
CIVILIANS KILLED	424-966
CHILDREN KILLED	172-207
INJURED	1,161-1,744

TOTAL STRIKES	157
TOTAL KILLED	581-848
CIVILIANS KILLED	65-101
CHILDREN KILLED	8-9
INJURED	100-235

# DRONE DEATHS

ALL DATA VIA THE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM, VISITED 28 NOVEMBER 2016

# SOMALIA

2007 onwards US Covert Action

# AFGHANISTAN




2015 onwards US Drone Strikes



<b>TOTAL STRIKES</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>TOTAL KILLED</b>	<b>242-318</b>
<b>CIVILIANS KILLED</b>	<b>3-10</b>
<b>CHILDREN KILLED</b>	<b>0-2</b>
<b>INJURED</b>	<b>5-24</b>

<b>TOTAL STRIKES</b>	<b>851</b>
<b>TOTAL KILLED</b>	<b>2,319-3,042</b>
<b>CIVILIANS KILLED</b>	<b>124-181</b>
<b>CHILDREN KILLED</b>	<b>6-23</b>
<b>INJURED</b>	<b>292-344</b>

On September 28, *The Guardian* ran a story about a drone strike against Islamic State in Afghanistan that “killed 15 militants and three civilians,” according to a local police chief. A day later, the story had changed. The victims were no longer believed to be ISIS militants, but rather civilians visiting a local leader who had returned from a pilgrimage to Mecca. Over a dozen innocent people murdered. This is just one of many examples of the thousands of people — among whom hundreds of civilians — who have been killed extrajudicially by the US drone assassination program.

16	 100mm
100	 30mm
300	 20mm

These violent dissidents all chose the wrong means to protest state killing, which was then used to silence them forever, cementing the government's account as the history of what transpired. Propaganda lines such as "they hate us for our freedom" are much easier for people to accept than that their taxes are being used to destroy families and terrorize entire communities with the ominous threat of death delivered from the sky. Among the sources of Bin Laden's own anger were the 500,000 children in Iraq who died as a result of crippling sanctions imposed after the bombing of water treatment facilities during the 1991 Gulf War. More recent advocates of jihad have explicitly cited drone strikes as the reason they decided to fight back.

The recent call by CIA director John Brennan for the removal of all of Anwar al-Awlaki's sermons from the internet — some of which were critical of Western intervention but did not advocate jihad — suggests that the abandonment of basic principles of justice (transparency and due process) occasioned by the advent of lethal drones will further erode seemingly stable democracies by muffling dissent. The announcement in 2011 by the Pentagon that it would counter cyberattacks using military means signaled a broadening of targeting criteria to include nonviolent dissidents who undertake only to expose war crimes and do not call for jihad. Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reportedly asked whether Julian Assange, the founder of Wikileaks, could not be taken out by a drone. The very threat of military responses to obviously nonviolent dissenters can itself be expected to suppress criticism as well — just as effectively as the harsh punishment of whistleblowers in the United States.

With the drone industry boom now well underway, the capacity to kill by remote-control is spreading all over the globe, to democratic

and nondemocratic nations alike. Pointing to the United States, Britain and Israel as their role models, every petty despot is now able to eliminate political dissidents by labeling them "terrorists." There is no way to check the spread of summary execution in places such as Nigeria and Pakistan, where drones have already been used by the government to kill compatriots in their homeland. Those in power naturally say that enemies of the state deserve to die, but the summary execution without trial of persons who disagree is the *modus operandi* of tyrannical not democratic regimes.

## DRONE ASSASSINATION AS POLITICS BY OTHER MEANS

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We should expect to see a further expansion of remote-control killing both at home and abroad as politicians awaken to the idea that dissidents need not be violent in order to endanger the status quo privilege of power elites. When drones come to be used in domestic contexts to eliminate "nuisance" hackers akin to Junaid Hussain, then not only will this technology prevent other countries from developing into democracies, it will also degrade those already in existence, as dissidents' rights continue to be denied primarily as a means of preventing them from expressing dissent. Drone assassination is not merely a tactic or tool used to fight terrorism. It has become "politics by other means", destroying not only people but also the possibility of change.

Moral indignation leads far more often to activism and the vocal expression of dissent than it does to murder. We do not know that Abdulrahman al-Awlaki would have taken up arms to avenge his father's death. If in fact he was intentionally targeted, then he was snuffed out under the racist assumption that he would



develop into a radical Islamic terrorist and seek violent revenge for his father's extrajudicial execution by the US government. He might, instead, have made history by calling for a halt to the madness of killing on both sides. The nihilistic use of drones to destroy brown-skinned suspects who might possibly decide at some point in the future to undertake jihad in response to the unjust killing of states represents a disturbing devaluation of human life.

***Western governments have failed these young men not only by stripping them of all of their rights, but also by teaching them to counter homicide with more homicide. And then killing them for following their advice.***

The elimination of young people who follow the example of political leaders in advocating violence as a form of conflict resolution will continue to remove some of the best and brightest from Muslim and black communities. Western governments have failed these young men not only by stripping them of all of their rights, but also by teaching them to counter homicide with more homicide. And then killing them for following their advice. ★

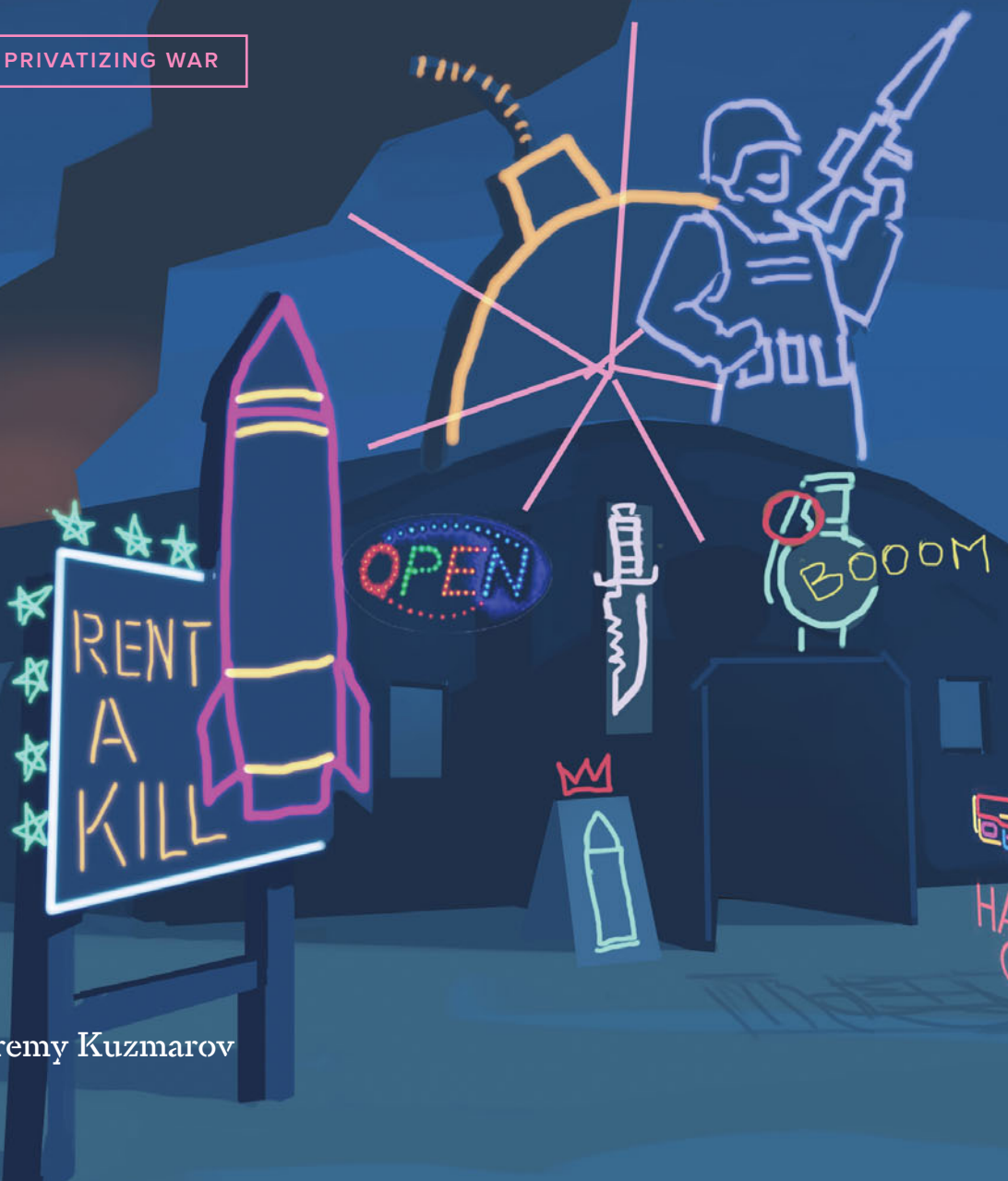
LAURIE CALHOUN




*Laurie Calhoun, a philosopher and cultural critic, is the author of We Kill Because We Can: From Soldiering to Assassination in the Drone Age (Zed Books), War and Delusion: A Critical Examination (Palgrave Macmillan), and Philosophy Unmasked: A Skeptic's Critique (University Press of Kansas). She is currently working on a new book manuscript entitled Laminated Souls.*

# The New Merchants of Death

PRIVATIZING WAR



Jeremy Kuzmarov



## *SOCIAL MOVEMENTS OUGHT TO PLACE PRIVATE MILITARY CONTRACTORS AT THE CENTER OF A BROADER CRITIQUE OF AUTHORITARIAN NEOLIBERALISM AND AMERICA'S PERMANENT WAR ECONOMY.*

**I**n August 2016, the Pentagon announced that Six3 Intelligence Solutions, a private intelligence company recently acquired by California Analysis Center Incorporated (CACI), which was implicated in the Abu Ghraib scandal, had won a \$10 million no-bid army contract to provide intelligence analysis services inside Syria. They were to work alongside the roughly three hundred US troops fighting against the so-called Islamic State and to depose Russian-backed Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad.

Hiring a company with as checkered a record as CACI is bound to ignite a backlash against US interference within Syria, and may empower the very forces the US is fighting. The logic underlying the use of private military contractors (PMCs), however, and American foreign policy in the Middle East more broadly, is not a rational one. It is shaped by a political structure beholden to corporate interests who see opportunity in political instability and endless war. CACI's executive board includes a former CIA Deputy Director and head of its clandestine services after

9/11, a Lockheed executive, and a commander of army training doctrine and command. The company spends over \$200,000 annually on lobbying, giving over \$94,000 in campaign contributions to Super PACs this election cycle as of September, according to OpenSecrets.org, and \$162,021 in 2012 (85 percent of it to Republicans).

CACI embodies two trends that have gravely hindered democratic political development in the United States over the last generation: an incestuous relationship between military contractors and government officials who end up serving on the executive boards of companies they dole out lucrative contracts to; and the ability of the same companies to finance political campaigns, which carries them favor alongside their lobbying efforts. These tendencies have helped to entrench a system of military-Keynesianism and resulted in an irrational foreign policy that fuels the global political instability that politically connected companies profit from.

## HISTORICAL ROOTS AND POLITICAL UTILITY

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Mercenaries have long been part of American war making, employed particularly to carry out covert operations the public may not have been keen to support. During the Cold War, General Clare Chennault set up a private airline, Civil Air Transport (CAT), to ferry supplies to proxy armies fighting on the front-lines against communism, and companies like DynCorp International and Vinnell Corporation, which later came to play a prominent role in the Global War on Terror, built military bases, performed combat support roles and helped to run black operations.

The Vietnam War was a turning point in modern American history when the consensus in favor of military intervention began to wane. As a result of pressure by a sizeable antiwar movement, the US government was forced to abolish the draft. Policy planners in Washington and the interests associated with the so-called military-industrial complex, however, were bent on sustaining US military hegemony. They championed high-tech weapons systems including remotely piloted vehicles (RPVs, or drones) as a substitute for boots on the ground, and pushed for the subcontracting of counterinsurgency to strategic allies. At a time when corporate power was becoming more entrenched, private military contractors were greatly valued as a means of distancing military intervention from the public and keeping a light American military footprint to prevent a reawakening of the antiwar movement.

A particularly controversial aspect of US foreign policy in the 1970s was support for the Saudi Royal family, which provided the US access to cheap oil at a time when the OPEC embargo had raised global prices, and demanded payment for all its oil sales in American dollars. In return, the Nixon administration and its successors agreed to provide for internal security by arming and training the National Guard. They hired Vinnell Corporation, which in 1979 provided the tactical support needed by the Saudi Princes to put down a leftist rebellion and recapture the Grand Mosque at Mecca.

In 1981, Executive Order 12333 gave US intelligence agencies the right to enter into contracts with private companies for authorized intelligence purposes, which need not be disclosed. This provided a basis for some of the arms smuggling operations using private airlines in the Contra war in Nicaragua.

The 1990s was a key growth period for the private military industry because of factors that included the waning of public support for military intervention following the end of the Cold War, a proliferation of ethnic conflicts that the United Nations and United States were seemingly incapable of dealing with, and the growth of corporate lobbying power in an age of neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism in theory, as political economist David Harvey has noted, proposed that human wellbeing could best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets and free trade. The main goal of the state in this system is secure property rights and the proper functioning of markets. In practice, however, neoliberalism has transferred power from public to private hands, hence eroding democratic standards and resulting in the entrenchment of corporate power. It has intensified inequality and suppressed labor rights and been accompanied by systematic state repression, epitomized in the United States by the intensification of the War on Drugs and the mass incarceration state.

The privatization of law enforcement and military functions is an important manifestation of neoliberalism, which embodies how, as Ian Bruff puts it in his introductory essay, “the intertwining of commercial and security forms of power leads to considerably greater possibilities for control of populations.” The reason centers in part on a lack of public transparency and capacity for proper regulations and oversight of private corporations and their use of coercive force and social control technologies as they become one with the government. There is also new opportunity to manipulate public opinion to further private interest centered on maximizing profit at the expense of human consideration.

***As governments gradually became more beholden to private interests in the neoliberal era, legal and democratic constraints on repressive state power have increasingly been lifted.***

States like the US have traditionally deployed their repressive powers against political undesirables who threaten elite privilege either at home or abroad. However, these efforts have at times been constrained by international and domestic legal considerations and

domestic constituencies valuing civil liberties, peace and human rights. As governments gradually became more beholden to private interests in the neoliberal era, such constraints have increasingly been lifted as citizens are asked to bear less sacrifice, and have less of a stake and even knowledge of what their government is doing abroad. Citizens at the same time may be conditioned to care only about the individual accumulation of wealth, leading to the further erosion of civic consciousness and prospects for engagement with social movements.

## THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR AS A SUPER BOWL FOR PMCS

From 1994 to 2002, the Pentagon signed more than 3,000 contracts with US-based firms valued at \$300 billion. These totals increased following the declaration of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), which was considered the “Super Bowl” for PMCs that had made over \$100 billion in Iraq alone by 2008.

Upon his appointment as defense secretary by President George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld had set about reducing the wasteful Pentagon bureaucracy and revolutionizing the US armed forces by moving towards a lighter, more flexible fighting machine and harnessing private sector power on multiple fronts. He wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that “we must promote a more entrepreneurial approach: one that encourages

people to be proactive, not reactive, and to behave less like bureaucrats and more like venture capitalists.”

As resistance to US occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq intensified, the military became overstretched and, in the absence of a draft, began lowering its recruitment standards to include ex-criminals and even neo-Nazis. A number of soldiers refused redeployment for second and third tours. Private contractors filled an important void, performing key military functions such as protecting diplomats, transporting supplies, training police and army personnel, guarding checkpoints and other strategic facilities including oil installations, providing intelligence, helping to rescue wounded personnel, dismantling IEDs, carrying out interrogation and even loading bombs onto CIA drones. A British mercenary pointed out that military commanders “do not like us, [but] tolerate us as a necessary evil because they know that if it wasn’t for us, they would need another 25,000 to 50,000 troops on the ground here.” And politically,

after Vietnam, this was impossible to arrange.

At various points in the 15-year war in Afghanistan, the number of military contractors actually outnumbered US troops. As of April 2016, there were at least 30,000 private contractors still there. There are also approximately 7,100

contractors currently supporting US government operations in Iraq, doing jobs from washing laundry and providing security on

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*At various points  
in the 15-year war in  
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US troops.*

# Private Military Criminals

PRIVATE MILITARY COMPANIES HAVE BEEN INVOLVED  
WITH NUMEROUS CRIMES AND SCANDALS



On September 16, 2007 employees of the company formerly known as Blackwater went on a shooting spree in downtown Baghdad, Iraq, killing 17 and injuring 20 others. Between 2005 and 2010 Blackwater employees were involved in shooting incidents on a near-weekly basis. In almost 80 percent of the cases they fired the first shots.

Several employees of these two companies were involved with cases of abuse and torture in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq in 2003. In 2004, 256 Iraqis sued both companies for war crimes and crimes against humanity, amongst other things. So far, both L-3 and CACI have successfully claimed immunity because of their status as government contractors.



The former UK-based private military company managed by former British army Lt Col Tim Spicer was hired by the ex-president of Papua New Guinea to lead a military assault on the separatist rebels of Bougainville island. When the secret deal was brought to light the mission was called off and President Chan was forced to resign.

In 1999, DynCorp employees in Bosnia were allegedly involved with human trafficking, sex with minors and enslavement, among other criminal activities. No one has yet been prosecuted.



GETMILITARYPHOTOS VIA SHUTTERSTOCK

bases to training police and military officers to advising the Kurdish regional government in Erbil and the Iraqi government in Baghdad. Some of the money comes from a reported \$52 billion CIA black budget disclosed in 2013 by Edward Snowden.

Shawn McFate, author of *The Modern Mercenary: Private Armies and What They Mean for World Order*, told the *Daily Beast* that “contractors encourage mission creep because they allow the administration to put more people on the ground than they report to the American people.” They also enable executive secrecy by performing covert operations the American public may not support, like aspects of the drone war they are involved with and the smuggling of arms to the rebels in Syria purchased from al Qaeda militia leaders in Libya.

Representatives from PMCs at the same time often play an instrumental role in manipulating public opinion by selling wars they profit off. Since 2001, former four-star General Barry McCaffrey has been a military analyst at NBC News where he has often supported American military interventions. McCaffrey also happens to serve on the Board of Directors of DynCorp, which received a billion dollar contract for training the Afghan and Iraqi national police.

## PROBLEMS WITH PRIVATE MILITARY CONTRACTORS

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Proponents of PMCs claim that they can offset the weakness of state security forces in impoverished countries and will operate in areas like West Africa to halt genocide or other human rights atrocities that national armies will not venture into. They also claim that PMCs provide more efficient security





*A major danger associated with the privatization of security is that security becomes the domain of only the wealthy — that is, for those who can pay for it.*

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services, epitomized in Blackwater founder Erik Prince’s boast about revolutionizing the industry like FedEx had the mail service.

Congressional investigations, however, uncovered numerous cases of fraud and dangerously poor construction by PMCs in Afghanistan and Iraq, resulting in the deaths of at least eighteen troops, including a Green Beret who was electrocuted in a shower installed by Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR), whose war contracts totaled \$39.5 billion. Over 25,000 soldiers got sick after KBR did not properly chlorinate the water at Camp Ramadi owing to cost-cutting measures and because they burned waste in environmentally unsound ways with little oversight. A police-training academy built by DynCorp was so poorly constructed that

urine and feces fell on its students. These occurrences show the delusions of neoliberals in their belief in the inviolability of private business, extending to the realm of security.

A major danger associated with the privatization of security is that security becomes the domain of only the wealthy — that is, for those who can pay for it. PMCs operating in Iraq, for example, were given lucrative contracts to guard Iraq’s ravaged oil fields, which were opened up to foreign multinationals, though the Iraqi police force was underfunded and unable to protect the public from sectarian violence and insurgents. Parallels can be seen in other places like Latin America, where PMCs guard oil pipelines or mining companies when public security is generally poor.

# PMSC'S WORLDWIDE

TOTAL VALUE OF PRIVATE SECURITY INDUSTRY IS \$200 BILLION.  
PRIVATE SECURITY PERSONNEL OUTNUMBERS POLICE 2:1



424



## UNITED STATES

*3,689 private contractors working for Department of Defense died between 2001-2015*

## ISRAEL

*G4S is complicit in Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine, provides services and systems to prisons, detention centers and checkpoints.*

75

LOADING...

## EUROPE

Total number of PSCs: 41,300  
Combined yearly turnover: €34,5 billion

## UK

British G4S is the largest PSC in the world,  
with 632,000 employees and a yearly revenue  
of \$10 billion

## AFGHANISTAN

1,664 private contractors killed since 2001  
Private security guards employed by US  
Army:

2008: 2,745  
2012: 28,686

## JAPAN

Private security  
guards  
1975: 70,000  
2003: 460,000

## INDIAN OCEAN

Maritime PSCs store their weapons at "floating  
armories" stationed in international waters

## SOUTH AFRICA

Private security guards  
1997: 115,000  
2010: 390,000

## IRAQ

1,631 private contractors have been killed  
in Iraq between 2001 – 2015.

A lack of government oversight and transparency magnifies the capacity for contractor abuse. DynCorp employees were implicated in illegal arms smuggling and involvement in the child-sex slave trade in Bosnia and a host of abuses in Afghanistan including drunken disorderly conduct, torture and hiring teenage “dancing boys.” In 2007, Blackwater operatives in Nisour Square infamously killed 17 unarmed civilians, including women and children, and wounded at least 24 in a shooting rampage.

While atrocities in war are frequent, the propensity was magnified by the fact that PMCs had legal immunity and were not subject to either Iraqi law or the Uniform Military Code of Justice, nor the Geneva Conventions. Many companies also did not follow rigorous recruitment methods or training standards and allowed employees to take steroids. In addition, there was a culture of militarized masculinity that appears greater than that of the military itself. One Triple Canopy employee told a reporter that: “It was like romanticizing the idea of killing to the point where dudes want to do it... Does that mean you’re not a real man unless you’ve dropped a guy?” While such comment could be made by someone in the army, the possibility of court martial there can help constrain excessive violence.

## **MANIPULATION OF INTELLIGENCE AND PERMANENT WARFARE**

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The most damaging aspect of PMCs is undoubtedly the possibility for manipulating intelligence. In Afghanistan, the army contracted with American International Security Corps, headed by former CIA agent

Duane “Dewey” Clarridge, convicted of lying to Congress about Iran Contra, who investigated Hamid Karzai’s alleged addiction to heroin and the-drug related corruption of his brother Ahmed Wali for the purpose of keeping them more pliable or to plot a coup. Clarridge also provided reports that were in some cases dubious to Fox News commentators, including his old comrade Oliver North, with the goal of supporting a more aggressive military policy. His actions epitomize the danger of privatizing intelligence, in that private citizens can take advantage of the chaos of the war zone to advance their own agendas or feed misinformation to the military or public.

On the eve of the Iraq War, Science Application International Corporation (SAIC), which earned the moniker “NSA-West” for spearheading a surveillance program called Trailblazer that involved the mining of personal records, ran a program that fed disinformation to the foreign press and set up a media service in Iraq, which served as a mouthpiece of the Pentagon. SAIC’s chief operations officer from 1993-2006, Duane Andrews, was a protégé of Dick Cheney who provided fake satellite photos showing a build-up of Iraqi troops on the Saudi Arabian border as a staff member on the House Intelligence Committee in 1991. Another board member, General Wayne Downing, was a close associate of Ahmad Chalabi, an Iraqi exile whom the US promoted as Iraq’s next leader and who proselytized hard on television for an invasion of Iraq. The FBI at one point even suspected an SAIC employee for the 2001 anthrax mailings, which did so much to create a climate of fear enabling support for the War on Terror and passage of the USA Patriot Act, a bonanza for SAIC, which recorded net profits of over \$8 billion per year by 2006.

Much like with Iraq and Afghanistan, the private military industry was salivating at the prospect of massive reconstruction contracts following the 2011 US-NATO war on Libya. The head of the security contractor network based out of Alexandria, Virginia wrote on his blog about the new post-Qaddafi context in which there was an “uptick of activity as foreign oil companies scramble[d] to get back into Libya [after Qaddafi had nationalized considerable portion of the industry]. This means an increase in demand for risk assessment and security related services... Keep an eye on who is winning the contracts. Follow the money and find your next job.”

British-based G4S, the world’s third-largest private employer, which provides surveillance equipment to checkpoints and prisons in the Israeli-occupied territory, was one of the bigger winners along with Aegis Security headed by the legendary soldier of fortune Tim Spicer and Blue Mountain Group — another British firm hired to guard the US embassy in Benghazi. Equipped mainly with flashlights and batons instead of guns, the Blue Mountain Guards were ill-equipped to deal with the September 11, 2012 insurgent attack that led to the death of US Ambassador Christopher Stevens.

Meanwhile, an FBI probe into Hillary Clinton’s emails uncovered that one of Clinton’s top aides, Sidney Blumenthal, a longtime family fixer and \$10,000 per month employee of the Clinton Foundation, used his direct access to the then Secretary of State to promote his business interests in Libya. Prior to and during the war, Blumenthal would frequently email Clinton with intelligence information derived from the off-the-books intelligence spy networks that may have encouraged Clinton’s strong backing for an expanded

US military role in Libya. Blumenthal at one point enthused to Clinton about opportunities for private security firms that could “put America in a central role without being direct battle combatants.”

A key firm wanting to get in on the action was Osprey Global Solutions, which Blumenthal had a financial stake in. According to Tyler Drumheller, an ex-CIA agent and Osprey executive, Blumenthal was to receive a finder’s fee for helping to secure State Department approval and arrange a contract for training security forces and building a floating hospital and schools in the war-torn country. At one point, Blumenthal even proposed bringing in, as an adviser to the fledgling post-Qaddafi government, a man named Najib Obeida, whom he hoped would finance Osprey’s operations in Libya.

Though the deal eventually fell through, the conflict of interest with Blumenthal and Osprey epitomizes how the lure of private contracts and monetary gain could help skew intelligence and push the United States or any other country towards war. Policy-makers like Clinton themselves saw great utility in using private contractors to feed them information that would rationalize a hawkish position and help open up opportunities for foreign investors who would line their political coffers come election season.

## **PMCS AND THE CORRUPTION OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY**

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During his 2016 Democratic Party presidential campaign, Bernie Sanders condemned the overweening influence of money on politics and the corruption bred by corporate power. However, Sanders focused most of his critique on the big pharmaceutical, fossil fuel

and investment banking firms, only rarely discussing the so-called military-industrial complex and never the private military industry. But more than anything else, this \$200 billion industry epitomizes the corruption of the two-party system in the era of Citizen's United. It is also key to the US global strategy of maintaining a worldwide network of overseas military bases and waging endless wars for access to natural resources, which most of the public would not want to risk its life fighting in.

Rather than protecting open markets as in neoliberal ideology, the government in the United States today functions to enrich its corporate benefactors who profit off the chaos bred by endless war. Along-

side major defense contractors, PMCs spend huge sums of money annually in lobbying, and are staffed by former and future government employees who consider public service as a means to obtaining private wealth. They donate huge sums to Super PACs, dividing between Democrats and Republicans. Since 2012, DynCorp International, which received the most lucrative contracts for training the Afghan and Iraqi police, has spent over \$800,000 on House and Senate races, for example. CACI has spent well over \$200,000 and has been amply rewarded, recording net profits of \$350 million in 2005 and \$3.7 billion in 2012 when it was hired to run counter-narcotic operations in Afghanistan.

In a 2012 essay entitled "America's Permanent War Economy," the late Columbia University economist Seymour Melman emphasizes the social and human costs of militarism in US society for the domestic population, suggesting it resulted in neglect for public education, public health and infrastructural development programs

and skewed the national economy by creating artificial debt and depleting the manufacturing sector by channeling investment away from productive industry.

The increasing stature of PMCs in the last generation has tipped the balance even further away from a more sensible distribution of national wealth, while exacerbating economic prob-

lems and contributing to national decline. Imperialist powers like the United States have always found motives to intervene militarily in sovereign countries or support covert missions, to be sure — however, civil strife in places like Syria, Afghanistan and Libya today is increasingly considered as a business opportunity for PMCs, whose representatives can skew intelligence or trumpet intervention on television while financing political candidates who will do their bidding. The consequence is a state of permanent, endless war that is fueling tremendous blowback and instability around the world, and that could lead to national self-destruction.

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*Rather than protecting open markets as in neoliberal ideology, the government in the United States today functions to enrich its corporate benefactors who profit off the chaos bred by endless war.*



# Empires, arms and mercenaries

When WatchGuard International Ltd. was founded in London in the mid-1960s, it was the first organization of its kind: a private military company run by former special forces that would come to represent a new era in British foreign policy. In the following years, WatchGuard mercenaries — many with a background in the SAS, the British special forces — would serve as private armies to African and Middle Eastern rulers whom the British government wished to protect but could not openly support.

WatchGuard was the brainchild of Colonel David Stirling, founder of the SAS and fervent conservative with an aristocratic background. Stirling saw it as his duty as a British citizen to help restore Britain's former, imperial glory after the major losses suffered during the war. He was determined that Britain should continue to play a prominent role on the global stage — if not in the spotlights, then at least in the shadows.

In 1962, Stirling offered to train and support Saudi troops who were fighting the Soviet-backed Egyptian army in Yemen. In the process, he not only protected British regional interests where the government was unable to do so, but also laid the foundations for the modern arms trade between Britain and the Middle East. Three years later, he would set up the biggest export deal in British history when Saudi officials agreed to buy dozens of fighter jets and radar systems, worth about £1.6 billion in today's prices.





## WHAT CAN BE DONE

Existing social movements ought to include PMCs at the center of a broader critique of authoritarian neoliberalism and capitalism more generally. In the United States, a push for Congressional investigations along the lines of the 1930s Nye commission on corporate war profiteers (“merchants of death,” as they were then called) and 1970s Church committee hearings on CIA abuses would be a welcome start in raising public awareness about the threat to democracy bred by the privatization of military and intelligence functions. They could in turn lead to legislation that properly regulates or even outlaws PMCs, making war far less likely in turn by removing the profit motive.

*Existing social movements ought to include private military contractors at the center of a broader critique of authoritarian neoliberalism and capitalism more generally.*

A 1989 United Nations treaty prohibits the recruitment, training, use and financing of mercenaries or combatants motivated to take part in hostilities by private gain, though the United States never signed and PMCs have claimed exclusion on the grounds that they play a combat support role. The 2008 Montreux document supported by 46 nation states and the European Union describes international humanitarian law and human rights law as it applies to the activities of PMCs during armed conflict and provided recommendations for better oversight and means of holding them accountable for criminal acts. The document, however, is non-binding and according to analysts “lacks legal teeth.”

It will take large-scale pressure from below to push the United States and EU countries to give Montreux some legal teeth and get them to sign onto the existing UN treaty. This is an urgent task which should go hand in hand with the promotion of alternatives to neoliberal capitalism and the corporatized world order whose adverse consequences PMCs embody. ★

JEREMY KUZMAROV



*Jeremy Kuzmarov is author of Modernizing Repression: Police Training and Nation Building in the American Century (Massachusetts, 2012) and a contributor to The Huffington Post and Z Magazine among other publications.*

RACE AND POLICING



Adam Elliot-Cooper

*WITH THE RISE OF NEOLIBERALISM, THE STATE — AND ESPECIALLY THE POLICE — HAS DEVELOPED NEW, MORE SUBTLE ARTICULATIONS OF RACISM WHILE ENTRENCHING EXISTING RACIAL INEQUALITIES.*

# The Dog-Whistle Racism of the Neoliberal State

Cockroaches, swarms and sexual predators — just some words that have been used to describe migrants in the British press. A 60 percent increase in hate crimes since Brexit, particularly towards Muslim women, has left many feeling that anti-racism is failing us. Compounded by a Trump victory in the United States, post-Brexit Britain is ringing with echoes of the 1970s, when fascist groups such as the National Front and the violence they peddled were a daily reality for Britain’s black and South Asian communities.

Pushing the far-right to the peripheries of political debate can provide some respite from the overt bigotry and violence we associate with it. But state institutions, particularly the police, have developed new ways of articulating racism. As anti-racism gained traction in the 1970s, overt bigotry became increasingly marginalized. But by borrowing ideas from the US, a “neoliberalized” racism emerged in Britain, where the state increasingly employed dog-whistle racism while entrenching existing racial inequalities.

## NEW WAYS OF ARTICULATING RACISM

One way of reproducing neoliberal racism is through the way crime is depicted. In the United States, “muggings” became a term used by government and police to describe street crimes they associated with young black men. This racial trope soon spread to Britain. The moral panic around the black mugger was famously deconstructed by Stuart Hall and his colleagues in *Policing the Crisis* in 1979. Their analyses showed how the press, government and police developed a racist “moral panic” surrounding young black men in urban areas. This moral panic led to the “sus” laws, which enabled officers to stop and search any individual they suspected of committing a crime.

The resultant police powers, which did not require reasonable suspicion, were disproportionately used against black people, and led to the urban revolts across cities in England in 1981. Hall and his colleagues demonstrated how racist language could be shifted away from familiar bigotry towards racialized tropes that framed targeted groups as deviant. It was part of the prelude to neoliberalization, which ushered in an environment where overt racism became framed as running counter to the

meritocracy of the market. Distortions to this meritocratic Britain (a black minority) must be repressed in order to protect the freedoms of others (the white majority). It is through this logic that neoliberalism was able to remain simultaneously committed to both the emergent entrepreneurship of the so-called free-market *and* the racialized social control of the pre-neoliberal era.

The latest permutation of this black folk-devil is the gangster, and it has shaped the

anti-crime rhetoric of government and the increasing power of police in Britain over the last decade. Like the racist trope of the mugger, this has been intensified by comparable moral panics around gangs in the US, where the term is also used to criminalize black people and articulate a dog-whistle racism. This was put to use following police killings of African Americans, such as the case of Antoine

Sterling, who was identified as a gangster with a criminal history by police and the press.

Prime Minister David Cameron declared an “all-out war on gangs and gang culture” in the summer of 2011. Media outlets played images of burning buildings and masked youths on a seemingly continuous loop. In the midst of the panic were the images of

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Mark Duggan, a man of African-Caribbean heritage from Tottenham in North London. According to the police, he was wanted, armed and one of the 48 most dangerous gangsters in Europe. The month of August that year saw the most widespread instance of civil revolts seen in England for 30 years. Over 2,000 arrests were made and countless raids, stops, searches and other instances of police violence and harassment ensued.

In the wake of the unrest, both the state and corporate media outlets alerted the public to a moral crisis. Responding to the unrest, David Cameron identified a “gangster culture” with which he was determined to go to war. Yet even those belligerent comments appear almost mild compared to the bigotry and racial hatred that was released post-Brexit. While the language of “swarms” and “cockroaches” has been routinely denounced by the left, the comments made by the police and David Cameron about “gangs” in the summer of 2011 received much less criticism. Rather than identifying black people overtly, police and government used covert racist language, a dog-whistle racism, to communicate a racist message. While Brexit has certainly intensified racism in Britain today, understanding the seemingly unspoken racisms in the undercurrents of neoliberal policies and rhetoric can offer us a possible way forward in tackling racism both old and new.

## THE BIGGEST GANGS IN LONDON

Neoliberalism has simultaneously presented itself as an economic project and as a withering away of racialized inequalities through the meritocratic nature of the market. Conservative and centrist policymaking identifies crime, particularly violent crime, lack of

## Did you know that...



**IN 2009-'10, BLACK PEOPLE WERE 6.3 TIMES MORE LIKELY — AND ASIANS 2.5 TIMES MORE LIKELY — TO BE STOPPED AND SEARCHED THAN WHITE PEOPLE.**



**WHEN FOUND IN POSSESSION OF CRIMINALIZED DRUGS, BLACK PEOPLE ARE SIX TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE ARRESTED THAN WHITE PEOPLE.**



**IN 2010, AFRICAN-CARIBBEAN PEOPLE MADE UP 2.8 PERCENT OF THE UK POPULATION, BUT 10 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S PRISON POPULATION.**



PHOTO BY GAVIN LAUHLAN, VIA FLICKR

households with male breadwinners, lack of strict discipline and moral values, and lack of work ethic as the root causes of social ills. The black conservative tradition has a significant support base in the United States, from Booker T. Washington to Bill Cosby and Ben Carson. Likewise, the intersection between black identity and conservative values has gained increasing influence in Britain over the past decade. While David Cameron was Prime Minister, his advisor on youth and crime, Shaun Bailey, wrote:

“ *A culture of dependency rules the working class. The first wave of migrants from the West Indies never had this, they fended for themselves. My mom knew that she couldn't cope with me and my brother when we were teenagers. But unlike other people she never acted as if it was society's fault.*

This neoliberal logic of hard work and meritocracy is coupled with a necessity for a more controlling state. Bailey goes on to claim: “At the moment prison is a boon because it is nice and boring. It encourages young people to be lazy.” It is within this climate of neoliberal rhetoric that state security became increasingly punitive. In the mid-1970s, the prison population in England and Wales was around 40,000, but by 2016 this figure had more than doubled to over 85,000. Black conservatives such as Bailey helped to legitimize not only the policing and imprisonment of working-class communities, but also the disproportionate impact that this neoliberal securitization had on black communities.

It is widely accepted that African and African-Caribbean people are disproportionately stopped and searched by police in Britain. The existing data show that in 2009-‘10, black people in Britain were stopped and searched



*This neoliberal logic of hard work and meritocracy is coupled with a necessity for a more controlling state. It is within this climate that state security became increasingly punitive, disproportionately impacting black communities.*

for drugs at 6.3 times the rate of white people, while people identified as Asian were stopped and searched at 2.5 times the rate of whites. But it does not end here: when found in possession of criminalized drugs, black people are six times more likely to be arrested than their white counterparts, and if found with cannabis, black people are five times more likely to be charged than white people.

Black people are also over four times more likely than white people to be taken to court if found in possession of drugs; over four times more likely than white people to be found guilty in court; and five times more likely than whites to be taken into immediate custody. This disproportionality extends to other offenses too, black people being 38 percent more likely than white people to be sentenced

to prison for public order offenses or possession of a weapon, with this figure rising to 44 percent for driving offenses.

These patterns of policing and court decision-making are evidence of institutional racism, as the normal functioning of these organizations produces (possibly unintended) racist outcomes. Unsurprisingly, this pattern of racial injustice is reflected in incarceration rates. According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, figures in 2010 show that African-Caribbean people make up 2.8 percent of the UK population, but 10 percent of its prison population. Police in England and Wales also have a database of the DNA of everyone taken into their custody, including those eventually found innocent and even those wrongfully arrested. Roughly 10 per-

cent of white males in Britain are currently on this DNA database, but this figure jumps to 30 percent for black British men.

In 2014, only 1 percent of the nearly 8,000 complaints of racism against police in England and Wales were upheld. A year later, London's Metropolitan Police failed to uphold a single complaint of racism, claiming that such criticisms are generally "a simple misunderstanding or poor communication." Reports from the Institute of Race Relations and Inquest found that 69 racially minoritized people were killed by the British state between 2002 and 2012, 18 percent of the total amount killed, despite constituting only 7 to 13 percent of the British population during that period.

The Metropolitan Police have had a number of "gang" units, such as the "Trident Gang Crime Command," which focused "primarily on gun crime and homicide within the black community" and which was responsible for organizing the killing of Mark Duggan in 2011. Conferences in London's City Hall discussed the need for new approaches, weapons and powers to repress those identified as gang members. One example of such police advocacy saw a £1 million annual fund to provide, among other extended police and judicial powers, "dedicated gang prosecutors," in order to ensure that those accused were more likely to receive a conviction.

A recent study found that, while 81 percent of the people identified as gang members in London are black, only 6 percent of the cases of serious youth violence (the crimes generally associated with gangs) in the capital are carried out by black people. In Manchester, in the north of England, the pattern is similar: 72 percent of identified gang members are black, yet they constitute only 27 per cent of those

involved in serious youth violence. These police data show that, rather than gang members being identified with the crimes they are associated with, the most frequent correlation is that of race.

The press in Britain's capital has been a key ally in reproducing the moral panic surrounding the "gang." As part of its "Gangs of London" campaign, the *London Evening Standard* newspaper ran a series of headlines claiming: "Turf wars among London's 250 gangs account for half of all shootings and a fifth of stabbings and have fuelled this epidemic of violence." These sensational stories were published by both the police and the press in the same week as the inquiry into the killing of alleged gangster Mark Duggan. Readers were told that "these young gangsters have lost so many friends, they've stopped going to their funerals," further devaluing black life in the weeks and months which coincided with the inquiry into the death of Mark Duggan.

In the end, there appeared to be no crimes linking Mark Duggan to being part of a gang. He had no serious criminal record, and was unarmed when shot dead as he stepped out of a minicab. While a gun was found 12 feet (4 meters) from his body, neither Duggan's fingerprints nor his DNA could be found on it, and no witnesses (including the police), could explain how it got there. Despite this, Duggan's killing was deemed lawful by a jury in 2014 — a conclusion no doubt shaped more by the moral panic of the gangster than by the evidence presented in court.

## BEATEN WITH A BLUNT IMPLEMENT

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Operation Blunt 2 was a police operation that took place in London between May



2008 and April 2011. It was designed to combat the “gang” violence associated with gun and knife crime in the capital. The primary power used by police in this operation is called Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 — a power for maintaining public order. The power was originally introduced for the policing of football matches, where police believed that there was a high likelihood of violence. It enabled police to designate any geographical area, like a football stadium and its surroundings, as an area in which they can stop and search any individual, without requiring reasonable suspicion. The powers were then extended to other contexts that the police identified as prone to violent disorder.

In 2008, the Metropolitan Police divided London into three categories: Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3. Tier 1 represented those boroughs which police intelligence indicated had the highest likelihood of gun and knife crime (not the boroughs with the actual highest levels of such crime). Section 60 stops were increased dramatically in these areas for the three years, during which Operation Blunt 2 took place. Tier 2 boroughs were deemed less at risk, and so Section 60 stops were increased slightly. Tier 3 boroughs were identified as posing no serious threat, and Section 60 stops and searches were not increased in these areas. Figure 1 gives an idea of how much the use of Section 60, the power to stop and search an individual without requiring reasonable suspicion, increased over the course of the operation.

Within a year, the Metropolitan Police were celebrating the success of the campaign, identifying an 11 percent drop in gun and knife crime in the capital. The commander in charge of the operation commented:

“ *We targeted the dangerous places where knife crime is most prevalent and young people are most concerned. Stop and search has helped create the environment where the carrying of knives is now less common than when we started. Seizures are substantially down despite maintaining the high level of activity. Officers carried out 287,898 stops and searches since May last year.*

However, the tier system employed by the Met allows us to look more closely at the “effectiveness” of Operation Blunt 2 by comparing different areas. While it is true that gun and knife crime across London decreased by 11 percent, violent crime fell across every tier, including in those areas with minor or no increase in Section 60 stop and searches. An analysis of the operation in its entirety, carried out by the HMRC, found that:

# Operation Blunt 2

“REDUCED” CRIME, INCREASED INSECURITY

In 2008 the Metropolitan Police launched Operation Blunt 2 designed to combat the “gang” violence associated with gun and knife crime in London. The capital was divided in three zones — Tier 1, 2 and 3 — where police powers were extended to stop and search any individual, without requiring reasonable suspicion. Tier 1 included those boroughs which police intelligence indicated had the highest likelihood of gun and knife crime — and where the stop and searches dramatically increased — and Tier 3 boroughs were identified as posing no serious threat.

Data shows that between May 2008 and April 2011 gun and knife crime across London decreased by 11 percent in all three zones, indicating that extended police powers have no positive effect on reducing crime. On the other hand, police harassment was cited as a key impetus for people who participated in the 2011 riots after the killing of Mark Duggan.

FIGURE 1

## Recorded monthly weapons searches, average per borough, by tier, 2005-15

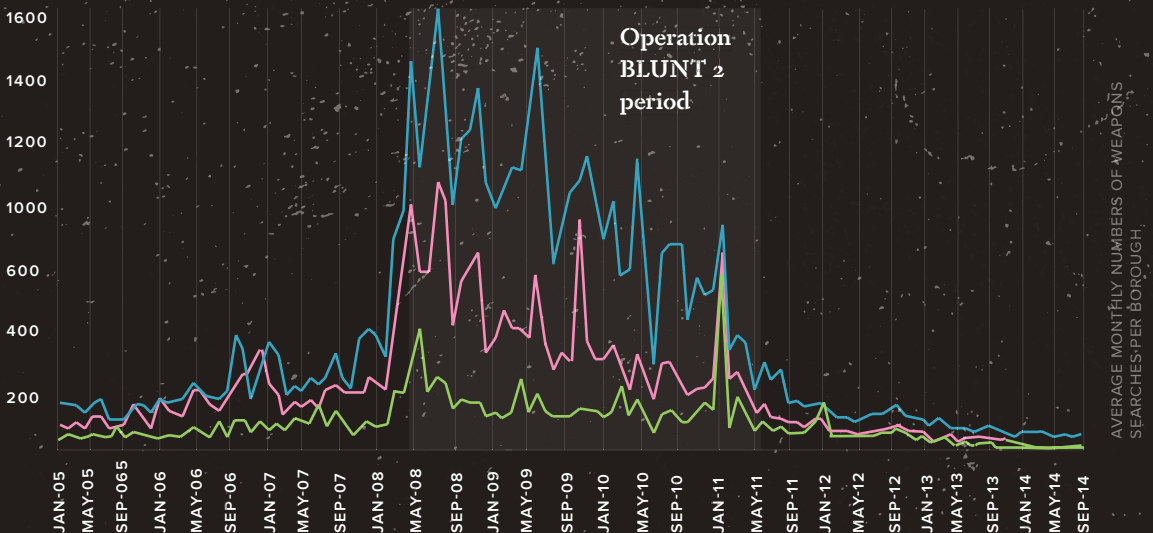
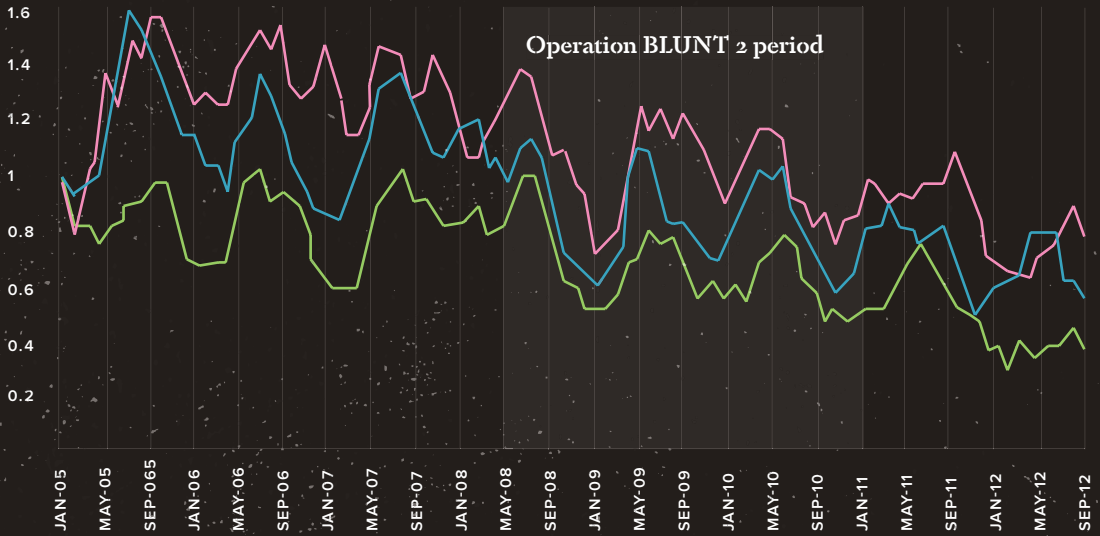


FIGURE 2

# Indexed assaults involving knives, by tier, three-month rolling average, 2005-12

TIER 1  
TIER 2  
TIER 3

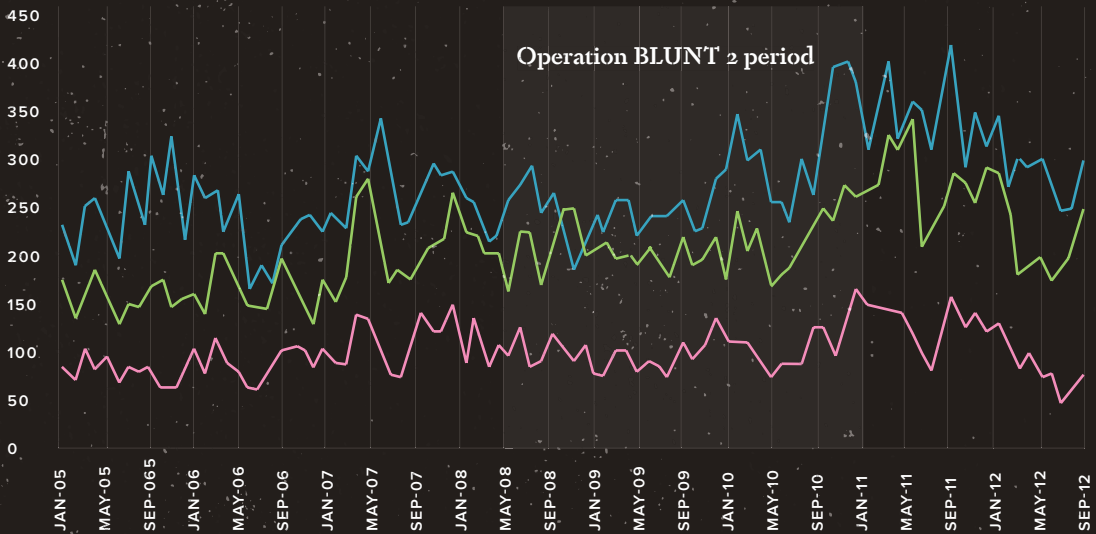


INDEXED ASSAULTS INVOLVING KNIVES JAN 2005 = 1

FIGURE 3

# Monthly robberies involving knives, by tier, 2005-12

TIER 1  
TIER 2  
TIER 3



ROBBERIES INVOLVING KNIVES

“ *A conditional difference-in-difference regression analysis found no statistically significant crime-reduction effect across 11 offence types from the increase in weapons searches, when comparing boroughs with the biggest increases in stop and search activity with those that had much smaller increases (see Figure 2).*

In fact, there appears to be a small increase in robberies involving knives over the three-year period in which Operation Blunt 2 was active as shown in Figure 3.

This is of course not to say that Section 60 stop and searches lead to an increase in violent crime, but what we can certainly say is that these police powers have no positive effect on robberies involving knives. Yet there is another vital point to be made about Operation Blunt 2. It took place in the three years leading up to the civil unrest of August 2011, winding down just

three months before the unrest. While the killing of Mark Duggan sparked an initial revolt, interviews with those implicated in the unrest cited police harassment as a key impetus in participating in the revolts that spread across England for four days. So Operation Blunt 2 should be understood as a precursor to the violence of 2011, just as the “sus” laws of 1981 led to the uprisings of that year.

## THE URGENCY OF TRANSNATIONAL RESISTANCE

While the fallout from Brexit and the election of Trump has seen a resurgence in the nasty racism that many thought had been left behind after the 1970s, with hate crimes on our streets, slurs in the press and immigration dominating political debate, it is vital that we do not lose sight of the newer, more subtle, neoliberal racisms that have been with us ever since the 1980s — on both

sides of the Atlantic. Luckily, however, it is not only new articulations of racism that have made transatlantic connections: expressions of anti-racist resistance in the United States are also gaining currency in Britain today. The slogan “Black Lives Matter” has been echoed across anti-police violence marches, black justice campaigns and the multiple BLM chapters that have sprung up across

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Britain.

This network of activist collectives seeks to escalate existing actions, from community police monitoring projects, court actions and marches, to viral videos, subverting and direct action. In 2014, 76 people were arrested following a direct action that shut down London’s biggest shopping center a few weeks before Christmas. Following

migrant solidarity actions across three cities in 2016, disrupting spaces of transit, a number of activists faced arrest, charges and possible imprisonment. These direct actions do not simply challenge the racial violence reproduced by neoliberalism, but also disrupt the logistical circuits of distribution and spaces of consumption upon which its economic power relies. By disrupting these flows of capital, groups like Black Lives Matter counter both the multiple avenues of power deployed by neoliberalism and the new wave of anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim nationalist racism that has marked the latter part of 2016.

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While there are many differences between the forms of racism in the United States and Britain, there are also consistent parallels between the old center of empire and its most successful settler colony. As a political moment defined by Brexit and Trump compounds the neoliberal racial violence already underpinning these two nations, coordinated resistance has never been more urgent. ★



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**MASS SURVEILLANCE  
&  
"SMART TOTALITARIANISM"**

## *UNDER NEOLIBERALISM, STATE AND CORPORATE POWER HAVE FUSED TO IMPOSE NEW FORMS OF SOCIAL CONTROL, USING TECHNOLOGY TO TRANSFORM PRIVATE LIFE INTO A SYSTEM OF TOTAL DOMINATION.*

Chris Spannos

Standing outside the Topography of Terror in Berlin, looking at its grey neutral exterior, it is hard to comprehend the magnitude of Nazi horrors that emanated from these grounds. Today's hop-on, hop-off buses ferry tourists to and from the museum to visit Cold War graffitied remnants of the Berlin Wall, the nearby kitschy Checkpoint Charlie and the historic but modernized Bundestag building. On these grounds, however, stood institutions that were central to systems of Nazi persecution and terror.

From 1933 through 1945, before being destroyed and dismantled, buildings here housed the Secret State Police (Gestapo), the leadership of the SS (Protection Squad of the Nazi Party) and the Reich Security Main Office. These institutions used cold and brutal methods to serve cold and brutal purposes. Following World War II, Communist Party secret police in East Germany surveilled people's mail, telephone calls and foreigners. With 500,000 professional and civilian informants — and estimates as high

as 2 million (if occasional informants are included) — to monitor a population of 17 million, the Stasi have been described as among the most intrusive surveillance organizations in world history.

Totalitarian regimes in Germany made widespread use of mass surveillance in order to dominate freedom and carry out horrific crimes. It is no surprise then that Germany is today a top-ranking country globally for data privacy and protection laws, that Berlin has evolved to become one of the world capitals for hackers and data privacy advocates, and that one of the first peer-to-peer computational platforms to guarantee user privacy against unwanted electronic surveillance, Enigma, is named after the tool that the Nazis used to broadcast coded messages from. Yet, ironically, the power of today's mass surveillance systems — like those of the NSA, brought to light by Edward Snowden's revelations — far exceed what previous totalitarian regimes could have imagined. Surveillance has spread like a pandemic.

## SNOOPING ON ORDINARY CITIZENS

Mass surveillance, Privacy International explains, is the subjection of a population or significant component of a group to indiscriminate monitoring. “Any system that generates and collects data on individuals without attempting to limit the dataset to well-defined targeted individuals is a form of mass surveillance,” it writes.

The NSA, above all, has deployed egregious techniques for mass surveillance and cyber warfare. Thanks to Snowden we now know about the secretive “Five Eyes” alliance, a multilateral surveillance arrangement between the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand that enables each participating state to spy on its own citizens by farming out the task to other participating states. More recently, in August 2016, an entity known as the “Shadow Brokers” leaked controversial NSA cyber weapons that a former NSA staff member described as the “keys to the kingdom.” Through malware infections and security exploits the NSA used these tools

for years to hack individuals, companies and governments. The agency exploited vulnerabilities in widely used corporate security software systems, such as Cisco, without ever informing the company about their security problems.

Widely used metaphors for understanding today’s mass surveillance — such as references to Nazi Germany, the Stasi or George Orwell’s Big Brother — run the risk of distracting attention from the horrors and crimes of past totalitarian regimes. But as measures against present abuses of power, like the fact that the NSA can collect 5 billion cell phone records per day, such comparisons can offer important insight. The Germany-based OpenDataCity compared the volume of records that the Stasi stored to the NSA’s capacity to store data. They determined that Stasi files would fill 48,000 filing cabinets, while just a single NSA server would fill 42 trillion filing cabinets. The organization concludes that the NSA can capture 1 billion times more data than the Stasi could.

It is not just the NSA that snoops on ordinary citizens, however. In October 2016, the United Kingdom’s investigatory powers tribunal ruled that the country’s security services (GCHQ, MI5 and MI6) illegally collected huge quantities of communications data, “tracking individual phone and web use and other confidential personal information, without adequate safeguards or supervision for 17 years.” The security services no longer have to be concerned

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about the legality of their actions, however, because the very next month the Investigatory Powers Bill — also known as the “snooper’s charter” — was approved, thus legalizing mass digital surveillance in the country.



## CONTROLLING CRITICAL JUNCTURES

Today, governments and corporations control critical junctures of the web, including domain mapping, underwater cables, software and hardware, programming code, and data centers. This means that the web is now highly centralized, surveilled, studied, manipulated, and subject to damaging data breaches. Many are concerned that because of the emerging Internet of Things — including “smart homes”, “smart cities” and wearable technologies — there will soon be an explosion in collectable personal data, from your expired milk to your blood pressure, and more. This has opened doors to a plethora of ethical problems.

The collection and centralization of personal data has already enabled extraordinary social experiments. The US Department of Defense has studied extensively how to influence users on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Kickstarter to understand social connections and how messages spread among networks. These messages included news relating to Occupy Wall Street and the “Arab Spring” uprisings. And separately, Facebook controversially sought to learn how to influence user emotions by manipulating its news feed.

The World Wide Web has entrenched systems of power by enabling them to strategically and surreptitiously influence networks and “nudge” populations in one direction or another. This is what Luciano Floridi, Professor of Philosophy and Ethics of Information, describes as the new “grey

power.” Grey power is not ordinary socio-political power or military power, Floridi explains. It is not the power to directly influence others, but rather the power to influence those who influence power.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the industrialists in grey suits were the ones who held grey power, Floridi argues. Today, it is those controlling the social networks, the search

engines and the industries around digital technology who hold grey power. The Google Transparency Project, for instance, has identified 258 instances of “revolving door” activity between Google and the US Federal Government, Congress and national political campaigns during President Obama’s eight-year term in office. These revolving doors move between White House officials, former national security, intelligence and Pentagon officials who left the administration to work for top positions in Google, and Google executives who joined top echelons of power in the White House and the Department of Defense.

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*The dangerous power of mass surveillance does not reside only with the totalitarian regimes of the past. Modern forms of surveillance are used by companies and governments alike, sometimes working ubiquitously together.*



The dangerous power of mass surveillance therefore does not reside only with the totalitarian regimes of the past. Modern forms of surveillance are used by companies and governments alike, sometimes working ubiquitously together to exploit, manipulate and influence the general population. No matter the motivations behind these invasive systems, it is clear that they are always dangerous, especially if they fall into the wrong hands.

## THE WRONG HANDS

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The threat of a far-right white supremacist movement rising to the surface in the US has long been a possibility. But few could have imagined that billionaire businessman Donald Trump would *actually* win the US presidential election. That possibility alone was hard to accept. He had no prior experience holding public office. But the sobering reality is starting to sink in. As US “commander-in-chief,” this dangerous man will have his hands on the levers of power overseen by the previous administration of Barack Obama. This includes the powers of mass surveillance and weapons of mass destruction.

Writing in *Time Magazine* the day after Trump’s upsetting victory, transgender and digital rights activist Evan Greer observed that Obama has “a matter of weeks to do one thing that could help prevent the United States from veering into fascism: declassifying and dismantling as much of the federal government’s unaccountable, secretive, mass surveillance state as he can — before Trump is the one running it.” On November 10, Edward Snowden tweeted: “The powers of one government are inherited by the next. Reforming them is now the greatest responsibility of this president, long overdue.” Snowden continued: “To be clear, ‘this president’ means *this* president, right now. Not the

next one. There is still time to act.” Insurgent publisher WikiLeaks tweeted a reminder to those in the US who “let Obama legalize” assassinating anyone, spying on everyone and prosecuting publishers and sources alike. “It’s all Trump’s in 69 days,” they warned.

During his election campaign, Trump shot off a litany of verbal missiles that should have sunk his own candidacy. Echoing darker periods in US history, such as the FBI’s COINTELPRO which carried out covert, violent and illegal actions against domestic groups, Trump called for surveillance of mosques, suggested he might direct his attorney general to investigate the Black Lives Matter movement, and threatened journalists and freedom of the press. These threats by Trump, as worrisome as they are, are not new. After the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, New York City police systematically surveilled Muslims. The FBI surveilled the Black Lives Matter movement in Baltimore following the death of Freddie Gray in April last year. And during his eight-year term, Obama has persecuted more whistleblowers under the archaic 1917 Espionage Act than all previous presidents combined.

*There are good reasons to be deeply concerned about what Trump will do with his newfound presidential authority.*

Trump has promised to bring back waterboarding interrogation methods and even apply “unthinkable” torture techniques. He has expressed his wish to fill the Guantánamo Bay prison camp in Cuba with more prisoners. He demanded that Apple help the FBI unlock the iPhone belonging to a San Bernardino shooter. He will oversee Obama’s drone program. Trump’s list of vile promises and possibilities spans from the dark and macabre to the dark and comedic. Even those of Dr Strange Love proportions instil a macabre sobriety about the situation. Ten former US nuclear launch officers have expressed concern about Trump gaining access to nuclear weapons. These officers, who were responsible for executing nuclear launch orders, signed a letter warning that Trump should not have his “finger on the button” because of his volatile temperament.

There are good reasons to be deeply concerned about what Trump will do with his newfound presidential authority. He has, after all, vowed to take revenge on his adversaries. Whether he means this threat or was playing up the hatred of his xenophobic electoral base to whip up votes is unknown. But what we do know is that Trump’s election brings us into dangerous and uncharted territory.

## FIRST THEY CAME FOR THE HASHTAGS...

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Before the US presidential election, in April 2016, members of more than 90 Native American nations converged on Standing Rock in North Dakota to protect sacred tribal sites and their water supply. They gathered to protest the construction of the Dakota Access oil pipeline threatening to run through the grounds. By November, there had been reports of direct monitoring including ground and air surveillance. Protesters reported low-flying helicopters frequently hovering over camps, sometimes shining bright spotlights in the middle of the night. Activists were concerned about invasions of privacy including conversations being recorded even when they were uncertain of being monitored at any given moment.

The concern about constant surveillance at Standing Rock continued to threaten protesters in late October, when a Facebook post emerged that the Morton County sheriff's department was using Facebook check-ins to target people at the protest camp. A campaign started on the social networking platform calling on people to "check in" at Standing Rock, and to share this request with their networks, to overwhelm and confuse police. Just over 24 hours after the call more than one million people had checked in to the Standing Rock reservation. Some are concerned that police could use the check-in data to track networks of people sympathetic with the groups protesting.

Recent research confirms that police use of social media surveillance software to glean personal information that we publish on our networks is escalating. In September 2016, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) received thousands of public records reveal-

ing that law enforcement agencies across the state of California "are secretly acquiring social media spying software that can sweep activists into a web of digital surveillance." The software monitored "threats to public safety" by tracking hashtags such as #BlackLivesMatter, #DontShoot, #PoliceBrutality and more.

The ACLU reports that, of 63 law enforcement agencies in the state, twenty have acquired powerful social networking surveillance tools such as MediaSonar, X1 Social Discovery and Geofeedia. Worse still, the ACLU notes that they found no evidence that these law enforcement agencies intend to give public notice, hold debate, gather community input or lawmaker votes about use of this invasive technology. No agency "produced a use policy that would limit how the tools were used and help protect civil rights and civil liberties." It is seemingly and unfortunately common that police forces surveil communities without seeking public consent first. Perhaps they anticipate public objection.

## EYES ACROSS THE SKIES

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Standing outside the Circuit Court for Baltimore City in late June, two dozen people held signs demanding justice for Freddie Gray. Gray, a 25-year-old black man, died in police custody in April 2015. Inside the court, the prosecution argued that officer Caesar Goodson had driven his police van recklessly through the city deliberately tossing Gray's body around in the back of the van. The reckless ride broke Gray's neck.

Outside the court, a man standing with the protestors wondered why, with hundreds of street-level cameras around, Baltimore City police did not have video of the incident that led to Gray's death. Not only were there many

cameras that could have recorded something but the city's police had been testing, without informing the public, an aerial surveillance system adapted from the US military surge in Iraq. An investigation by Bloomberg revealed that the surveillance system uses wide-angle cameras to capture about 30 square miles at any given moment, sending images in real-time to analysts on the ground. The footage is then stored and available for review, weeks later if necessary. The judge acquitted officer Goodson of all charges in the case of Gray. And yet the aerial surveillance system Baltimore police are testing hovered above those protesting outside.

While cameras were not reported to have captured the events that led to Gray's death, the FBI has released their own video footage confirming surveillance of the Black Lives Matter movement. The FBI recordings date from April 29 to May 3, 2015, and were shot from piloted aircraft and drones. These and other reports, such as the FBI's surveillance of earlier Black Lives Matter protests that erupted after the 2014 police shooting of 18-year-old black man Michael Brown in Ferguson Missouri, contradicts claims by FBI officials who say that the Bureau does not use spy planes to monitor peaceful protests.

In fact, an investigation by the *North Star Post* in 2015 revealed that at least 100 aircraft are being used by US law enforcement to spy

on citizens. These aircraft are equipped with advanced, very high-resolution imaging and video technology — specifically StingRay, the secretive bulk cellular phone-tracking technology, and likely infrared or other night-vision hardware. The Associated Press reported that over just a 30-day period it had traced at least fifty aircraft back to the FBI and had identified more than one hundreds flights in eleven states. But the FBI kept this secretive operation hidden from the US public by registering the aircraft to shell companies that do not exist.

Like the Greek mythological monster, Argos Panoptes, the FBI has placed its eyes across the skies of the nation to mass surveil the public and spy on protesters. Panoptes — from the Greek “Πάν” (all) and “οπτικός” (seeing) — was all-seeing because he had a hundred eyes

covering his body from head to toes. This monster was the inspiration for utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham's proposed correctional prison, the “Panopticon.” Using the model as a metaphor, French philosopher Michel Foucault argued that it illustrated defining power relations in everyday life. Authorities hope that if there is a spying camera overhead — via aircraft, drone, CCTV, any electronic

device, or geolocation technology in your maps and social networks — that you will self-correct your behavior. Even if they are not actually spying on you, the threat of someone doing so will go a long way toward maintaining order.

“  
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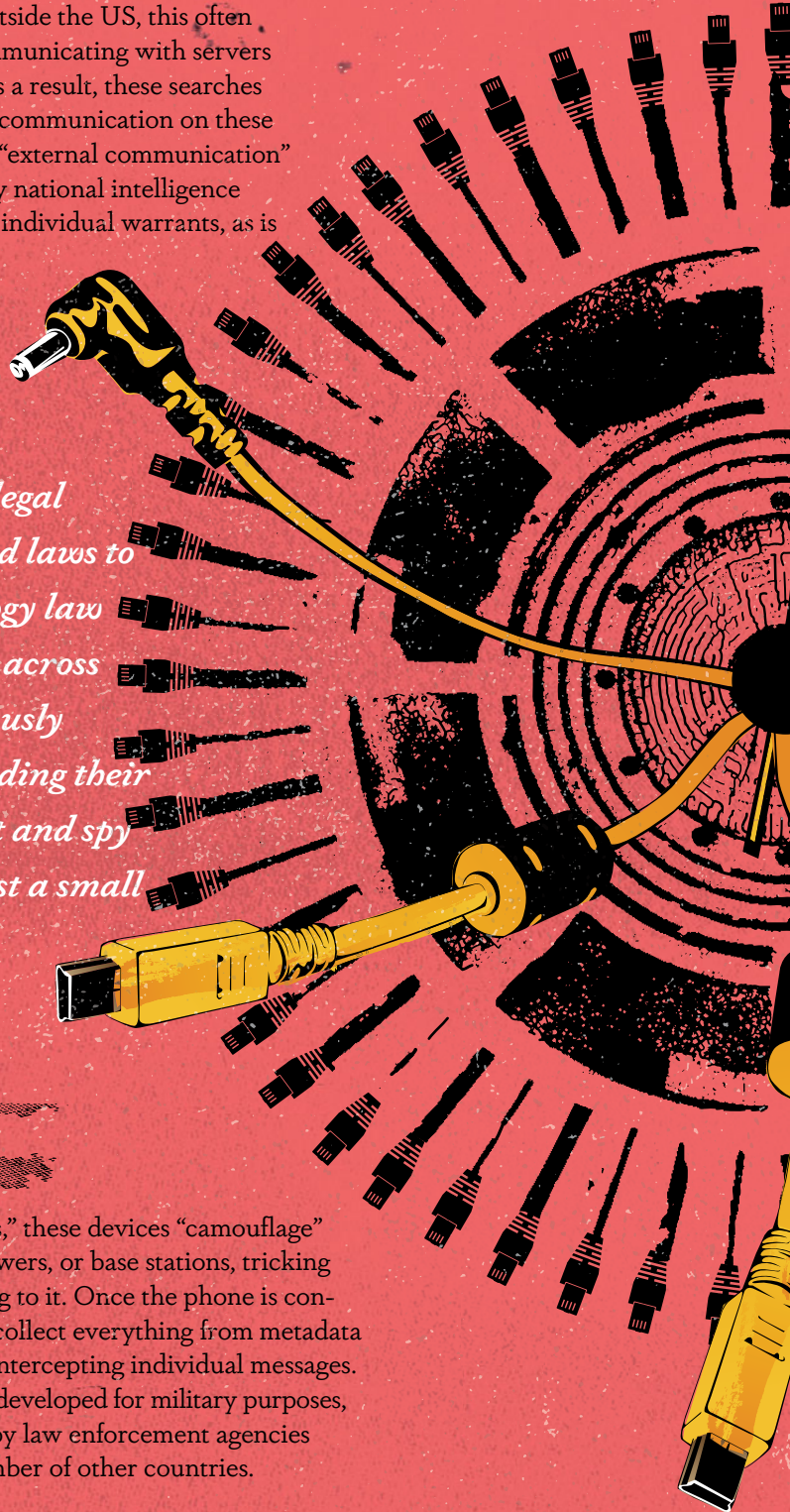
When you search for anything on Google, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube from outside the US, this often means that your device is communicating with servers located abroad (in the US). As a result, these searches — as well as any peer-to-peer communication on these networks — can be labeled as “external communication” and can thus be intercepted by national intelligence agencies without the need for individual warrants, as is the case in the UK.


## SOCIAL MEDIA

*Using anything from legal loopholes and outdated laws to ultramodern technology law enforcement agencies across the globe are continuously improving and expanding their means to track, target and spy on civilians. Here's just a small selection.*

## IMSI CATCHERS

Popularly known as “stingrays,” these devices “camouflage” themselves as common cell towers, or base stations, tricking mobile phones into connecting to it. Once the phone is connected, the stingray can then collect everything from metadata about calls and data usage to intercepting individual messages. These devices were originally developed for military purposes, but are now commonly used by law enforcement agencies across the US and a small number of other countries.





Automated License Plate Readers are computer-controlled, high speed camera systems that are able to scan up to 1,800 license plates per minute. The Electronic Frontier Foundation has discovered that the LA Police and Sheriff's Departments alone can collect data on 3 million vehicles every week. This system is non-selective; it collects and stores mass data indiscriminately, not exclusively targeting individuals suspected of any wrongdoing. A number of private companies has been known to apply the same technology to collect data on behalf of insurance companies and credit reporting agencies.

## ALPR TECHNOLOGY

# WHO'S LOOKIN' ... AT WHAT?

## FACIAL RECOGNITION

In May 2016 it was revealed that the FBI has access to hundreds of millions photos of US citizens from a wide range of government databases. In combination with new — and almost completely unregulated — facial recognition technologies that can identify people in real time using surveillance cameras, this paves the way for an end to public anonymity. Before long, we could be tracked in real life in a similar fashion to the way we are already being tracked online.

## THE ECONOMICS OF SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM

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In his 1964 book, *One-Dimensional Man*, philosopher Herbert Marcuse argued that in technologically advanced societies totalitarianism can be imposed without terror. This occurs through the transformation of private life into part of an overall system of domination. For Marcuse, the sphere of mass consumption, for instance, went beyond fulfilling basic needs to provide more comfort, luxury and affluence. These incentives not only mask the everyday oppressions that people experience, but they also act as a veneer that traps people's imaginations from envisioning a different, possibly better way of living.

In today's technologically advanced information and communications driven world, the process of transforming private life into an overarching system of domination occurs surreptitiously — even if the final product appears everywhere. Yahoo, for example, is aiming to patent “smart billboards” that will be placed next to freeways, in airports, on ferries, in bars and hotels, public transit systems, intersections and in other public and private spaces. These digital billboards will rely on a range of invasive surveillance technologies such as cell towers, mobile apps, images, video cameras, vehicle navigation, satellites, drones, microphones, motion detectors and “biometric sensors” such as fingerprint, retinal and facial recognition devices. Yahoo's smart billboards will aim to identify specific individuals, and those who are in the same place at the same time, to determine their demographic data and socio-economic status. They will build profiles on people in their surroundings before serving personalized ads to them. Yahoo has termed this process “grouplization.” Others have labeled this exploitation of personal data for corporate gain as “Stasi

capitalism.” New social theories are rapidly emerging in this area.

The process through which technology responds to individuals and groups to surveil and modify human behavior in scalable and profitable ways has been described by Shoshana Zuboff, Professor Emerita at Harvard Business School, as a new sub-species of capitalism known as “surveillance capitalism.” Zuboff describes surveillance capitalism as “a new logic of accumulation.” It is “a novel economic mutation bred from the clandestine coupling of the vast powers of the digital with the radical indifference and intrinsic narcissism of financial capitalism and its neoliberal vision that have dominated commerce for at least three decades, especially in the Anglo economies.”

The incredible evolution of computer processing power, complex algorithms and leaps in data storage capabilities combine to make surveillance capitalism possible. It is the process of accumulation by dispossession of the data that people produce. It occurs in both profound and seemingly benign ways.

## BEYOND VIRTUAL REALITY TO REAL LIBERATION

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Technologically advanced societies produce ever more personalized lifeworlds. Responsive algorithms suggest the next Netflix video series we can binge watch. Amazon Prime recommends products we might like delivered the next day. Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality games, which supplement and provide revolutionary digital possibilities, are on the rise. This drive towards personalization combines with the latest developments in technology to provide a sense of choice and life satisfaction in a world full of overwhelming inequality and injustice.



The appearance of affluence, the sensation that all knowledge and virtual possibilities are available on the web, at our fingertips, in the palm of our hand, surrounding us wherever we go, is a pixilated distraction from the structural oppression embedded in the totality of everyday life. It is an intoxicating distraction from those who struggle to protect their communities, such as the indigenous peoples at the Standing Rock occupation and the Black Lives Matter movement. It is a distraction from sexism, disempowerment, environmental decay, class rule and racism, while in many ways it also galvanizes these same problems.

*What is required today is radical imagination to re-envision how powerful technological change could be repurposed to feed and house the poor, decentralize societies and achieve democratic autonomy.*

What is required today is radical imagination to re-envision how powerful technological change could be repurposed to feed and house the poor, to provide health, education and culture to everyone, to decentralize societies and achieve self-governance, classlessness and democratic autonomy. The number of active virtual reality users is forecast to grow to 171 million by 2018. For people who imagine whole new worlds all the time, imagining just one new world — our own — in which there are ecologically friendly smart homes, smart cities, smart schools and smart hospitals for everyone should not be too difficult. The technology exists. Achieving “communal luxury” for everyone is now more possible than ever.

Yet large firms and state institutions have appropriated and transformed information and communications technology into some of the most powerful tools for social control the world has ever known. Their networks, platforms and surveillance apparatuses have enabled a dangerous fusion of corporate and political power and are clearly designed to cement their own positions of privilege and domination. It is up to us, the people and communities most affected, to actively fight for the re-appropriation, decentralization and re-creation of these technologies in order to make possible new and better ways of living. ★



CHRIS SPANNOS


*Chris Spannos is Digital Editor at New Internationalist.*

*NOT ONLY DO OUR DEVICES  
KNOW OUR DEEPEST DESIRES,  
THEY ALSO REPROGRAM WHAT  
WE WANT AND HOW WE GO  
ABOUT GETTING IT — KEEPING  
US TO CONFORMIST PATHS.*

Alfie Bown



COMPUTED CONFORMITY



ALGORITHMIC  
CONTROL +

*the Revolution  
of Desire*



Last year, Stanford University published a study confirming what many of us may long have suspected: that your computer can predict what you want with more accuracy than your spouse or your friends. Your digital footprint betrays the truth not only about what you “like” but about what you really *like* — or so the argument goes. But what if our digital footprints, besides revealing our desires, are also responsible for the very *construction* of these desires? If that were the case, we would need to display a far deeper level of suspicion towards the complex patterns of corporate and state control found in contemporary cyberspace.

There is little doubt that innovations in mobile technologies are part of emerging methodologies of social control. In particular, games and applications that make use of the Google Maps back-end system (including *Uber*, *Grindr*, *Pokémon Go* and hundreds of others) which should be seen as one of the most important technological developments of the last decade or so, are particularly complicit in these new regulatory practices. Putting the well-publicized data collection issue aside, such applications have two powerful ideological functions. First, they construct the new “geographical contours” of the city, regulating the paths we take and mapping the city in the service of both corporate interest and the prevention of uprisings. Second, and more unconsciously, they enact what Jean-Francois Lyotard once called the “desirevolution” — an evolution and revolution of desire, in which that what we want is itself now determined by the digital paths we tread.

## THE PSYCHO-GEOGRAPHICAL CONTOURS OF THE CITY

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In 1981, the French theorist Guy Debord famously wrote of the “psycho-geographical

contours” of the city that govern the routes we take, even when we may feel we are wandering freely around the physical space. At that time, it was Debord’s topic — architecture — that was the dominant force in reorganizing our routes through the city. Today, however, that role is increasingly taken up by the mobile phone. It is *Uber* that dictates the path of your taxi, *Maps* that dictates the route of your walks and drives, and *Pokémon Go* that (for a summer at least) determined where the next crowd would gather.

Other similar map-based application programming interfaces, or APIs, dictate our jogging routes (*MapMyRun*), our recreational hikes (*LiveTrekker*) and our tourist activities (*TripAdvisor Guides*). *Pokémon Go* attracted some publicity because it accidentally and humorously gathered crowds in weird places, but this should only alert us to its potential ability to gather crowds in the *right* places (to serve corporate interest) or to prevent the gathering of crowds in the *wrong* ones (to prevent organized uprisings, for instance). Such applications should be seen as a testing phase in the project of Google and its affiliated corporations as they work out how best to regulate the movements of large populations via their phones. *Pokémon Go* players were the early cyborgs, complete with hiccups and malfunctions — a beta version of Google’s future human. These future humans will go where instructed.

On a smaller scale, this point can be seen in concrete terms with a case study of London. A recent Transport for London talk discussed the possibility of “gamifying” commuting. In order to facilitate this possibility, Transport for London have made the internet API and data streams used to monitor all London Transport vehicles open source and open access, in the hope that developers will build

London-focused apps based around the public transport system, thus maximizing profit. One idea is that if a particular tube station is at risk of becoming clogged up due to other delays, TfL could give “in-game rewards” for people willing to use alternative routes and thus smooth out the jam.

*In the “smart city” of the future, it won’t just be traffic jams that are smoothed out. Any inefficient misuse or any occupation of public space deemed dangerous by the authorities can be specifically targeted.*

While traffic jam prevention may not seem like evidence that we have arrived in the dystopia of total corporate and state control, it does actually reveal the dangerous potentiality in such technologies. It shows that the UK is not as far away from the “social credit” game system recently implemented in Beijing to rate each citizen’s trustworthiness and give them rewards for their dedication to the Chinese state. While the UK media reacted with shock to these innovations in Chinese app development, a closer look at the electronic structures of mapping and controlling our own movements shows that a similar framework is already in its development phase in London too. In the “smart city” of the future, it won’t just be traffic jams that are smoothed out. Any inefficient misuse or any occupation of public space deemed dangerous by the authorities can be specifically targeted.

## THE CORPORATE SURVEILLANCE STATE

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When it comes to these developments in technology, state and corporate forces work more closely with each other than ever before — and much more closely than they are willing to admit. Srećko Horvat has pointed out the short distance between the creators of *Pokémon Go* and Hillary Clinton, despite her odd and unsolicited recent public claim that she didn’t know who made the game. Likewise, Julian Assange’s strangely under-discussed 2014 book *When Google Met WikiLeaks* showed the shocking proximity of Google chief Eric Schmidt and the Washington state apparatus. In terms of surveillance and the use of big data, it has become impossible to sustain the distinction between state control and the production of wealth, since the two have become so irrevocably intertwined. As such, old arguments that “it’s all just about money” need to be treated with greater suspicion,



*Far from simply channeling  
and transforming our movements,  
recent technological developments  
also channel and even transform  
our desires.*

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since major firms today are so closely tied to the state. Various aspects of state organization should likewise be considered equally suspect because of their corporate underpinnings.

Of course, when it comes to the mapping applications that promise to help us access the best quality objects of our desire with the greatest efficiency and the least cost, these tempting forces of joint corporate and state control are entered into willingly by participants. As such, they require something else in order to function in the all-consuming way that they do. Far from simply channeling and transforming our movements, they also need to channel and even transform our *desires*.

We are now firmly within the world of the electronic object, where the mediation of everything from lovers and friends to meals and activities via our mobile phones and computers makes it virtually impossible to separate physical from electronic objectivity. Whilst the electronic Pokémon or the “in-game rewards” offered by many applications may not yet have the physicality of a lover who can be accessed via Tinder, or a burger that can be located via JustEat, the burger and the lover certainly have the electronic objectivity of the Pokémon. We can therefore see a transformation in the objects of desire taking place by and through our devices, so that we are confronted not only with a change in how we

get what we want, but with a change in what we want in the first place.

Italo Calvino once wrote of the “amorous relationship” that “erases the lines between our bodies and *sopa de frijoles*, *huachinango a la vera cruzana*, and *enchiladas*.” While in such a moment food and lover become one in a kind of orgy of physical consumption, in the same novel Calvino warned of a time “when the olfactory alphabet, which made them so many words in a precious lexicon, is forgotten,” and in which “perfumes will be left speechless, inarticulate, illegible.”

It is this world that we find ourselves desiring in, where an orgy of electronic objects with no olfactory physicality blurs the distinction between lovers, meals and “in-game” rewards. The purpose of this shift, of course, is to increase the power of technological corporations by giving them a new sort of control over the way we relate to our objects of desire. If the boundaries between the way we search, desire and acquire our burgers, lovers and Pikachus are dissolving, it is not so much the old point that everything has become a commodity, but a new point that this kind of substitutional electronic objectivity endows corporate and state technologists with unprecedented power to distribute and redistribute the objects of the desire around the “smart city.”

## DATA CENTRALIZATION IN CHINA AND THE WEST

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There is, moreover, a significant centralization of power underpinning these developments. Like the social credit idea, the Chinese phenomenon of *WeChat* — developed in 2011 by Tencent, one of the largest internet and mobile media companies in the

## Niantic: from gaming to crowd control?

Years before hordes of aspiring Pokémon trainers began roaming around the streets, their faces glued to the screens of their phones, another augmented reality game was launched: *Ingress*. The company behind this game was a Google start-up, Niantic Inc., founded in 2010 — the same company that is also behind *Pokémon Go*.

As a game, *Ingress* is heavily dependent on Google’s digital infrastructure — including apps like Google Maps, Hangouts and G+. For the first two years it was exclusively available for Android phones. Niantic detached itself from Google in late 2015, but remained financially dependent on the tech giant.

*Ingress* players use their phones to locate so-called “portals” in the real world, which need to be “captured”. Companies can pay Niantic to have their shops and locations turned into “portals”, directing crowds of gamers to wherever the highest bidder wants them to go. Is this the future of “gaming”?



Owning dozens of companies, Alphabet is one of the biggest tech conglomerates and the world's second largest company by market value. Founded in late 2015 as Google's new parent company, it plays a central role in many aspects of our daily lives. From automated homes and delivery drones to self-driving cars, Alphabet is working hard to build — and control — our future.

A

**ANDROID**  
OPERATING  
SYSTEM

B

**BOSTON  
DYNAMICS**  
ROBOTICS DESIGN  
COMPANY

C

**CALICO**  
BIOTECH  
COMPANY

D

**DEEPMIND**  
ARTIFICIAL  
INTELLIGENCE  
COMPANY

E

**EARTH  
MAPS**

H

**HOME**  
HOME VOICE  
ASSISTANT

I

**INVITE MEDIA**  
ADVERTISING  
COMPANY

J

**JIGSAW**  
THINK TANK

K

**KNOWLEDGE  
GRAPH**  
KNOWLEDGE  
DATABASE

L

**LIFE SCIENCES  
OR VERILY**  
RESEARCH  
COMPANY

O

**OFFERS**  
ELECTRONIC  
COMMERCE

P

**PICASA**  
ONLINE  
IMAGE HOSTING

Q

**QUIC PROTOCOL**  
WEB PROTOCOL  
TO SPEED UP  
INTERNET

R

**RE:BRIEF**  
ADVERTISING  
EXPERIMENT

S

**SKYBOX  
IMAGINING**  
MICRO-SATELLITES

V

**VENTURES**  
VENTURE CAPITAL  
INVESTMENT

W

**WING**  
DRONE DELIVERY  
PROJECT

X

**X**  
SEMI-SECRET  
RD FACILITY

Y

**YOUTUBE**  
VIDEO-SHARING  
WEBSITE

Z

**ZAGGAT**  
RESTAURANT  
RATINGS



FIBER

HIGH-SPEED  
INTERNET &  
CABLE TV

GOOGLE GLASS

EYEWEAR  
COMPUTER

MAKANI POWER

WIND  
ENERGY KITES

NEST LABS

HOME  
AUTOMATION  
COMPANY

TITAN  
AEROSPACE

SOLAR-POWERED  
DRONES

URL BUILDER

PART OF  
GOOGLE  
ANALYTICS

# Alphabet's Alphabet

world — has received concerned media coverage in the West. *WeChat* is the first truly successful “SuperApp,” the basic premise of which is that all applications like *WhatsApp*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *OpenRice*, *Tinder*, *TripAdvisor* and many more, are rolled into one cohesive application. All for our convenience, of course.

As a result, however, there is now a new level of cohesion between the data-collection and movement monitoring going on in the mobile phone as a whole, where all data is now directly collected in a single place. More than half of the 1.1 billion *WeChat* users access the app over 10 times per day, and many users simply leave it on continuously, using it to map, shop, date and play. This means that the app sets a new precedent for continually monitoring the movements of a whole nation of citizens. *WeChat*’s incredibly strange “heat map” feature actually lets users — and authorities — see where crowds are forming. The claim is that this has nothing to do with crowd control: the objective is simply to help us access the least crowded shopping malls, doing nothing more than helping us get what we want.

*WeChat* is already the most popular social media application in China, but it will soon have huge significance worldwide, with an international version now available and many replica “SuperApps” in production. What the Western media finds to be so concerning about *WeChat* is once again something that already exists here in the West, at least in beta form, without us knowing it. *WeChat* actually offers us a glimpse into an Orwellian future in which companies and governments can track every movement we make. While in China the blocking of Google means that *WeChat* uses Baidu Maps as its API, the international version

of *WeChat* simply taps into Google Maps, showing just how deeply integrated these corporate technologies already are.

What emerges from Western media coverage of these developments is the continued insistence on an apparent division between the public and the private sphere in the United States and Europe.

When it comes to digital surveillance and the monitoring of movement, the situation is almost certainly better in the West than it is in China at this moment. Yet from an analysis of recent developments in China we learn not only that we need to be attentive to similar dangers here in the West, but also that there are powerful ideological mechanisms at play to obscure these developments by pre-

senting China and the US as fundamentally opposed to one another. Whilst in China the links between the new SuperApps and the state are commonly accepted, in the US the illusion of privacy remains paramount. Although data is often shared between different corporations and between the public and the private sectors, this fact is generally obscured. The continued expressions of shock at the more openly centralized state control visible in China serve only to further consolidate the impression that these things are not happening in the US and Europe.

Furthermore, *WeChat* reveals more than the dangers of mass data collection and new levels of technological surveillance. It also embodies the power of the phone over the objects of desire. Since one single app can successfully market us food, lovers, holidays, events, blogs and even charities, the connections between such “objects” become more important than the differences.

While the structural similarities between *Grindr*, *Pokémon Go* and *OpenRice* become apparent via analysis of both their surfaces and back systems, *WeChat* makes the connections plain to see. The various forms and objects of each individual’s desire no longer represent discreet and separable elements of a subject’s life. Instead we enter a fully cohesive libidinal economy in which we are increasingly

regulated and mapped via the organization of what and how we desire.

## THE DESIREVOLUTION

So what do we do when faced with this revolution — a technological revolution that is not overthrowing any existing power structures but rather transforming the world in the service of private corporations and the state? Often, the response of those concerned by such developments is to express hostility or distrust towards technology it-

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*The continued expressions of shock at the more openly centralized state control visible in China serve only to further consolidate the impression that these things are not happening in the US and Europe.*

self. Yet to break this corporate organization of desire, we need not nostalgically yearn for a desire that is free of politics and technology, for no such desire is possible. On the contrary, what we need is to recognize that desire is necessarily and always controlled by both politics and technology.

*The principal concern of those who own the apps — perhaps even more powerful than data collection — is to transform desire itself. At the very least, we can make visible the complicity of such technologies in producing the perfect conformist modern citizen.*

This awareness would be the first step towards ensuring that the centralized corporate and state organization of desire malfunctions — and, ultimately, it would be the first step towards its potential reprogramming. The corporate desirevolution depends on our blindness to the politics of its technologies, asking us to experience our desires as spontaneous yearning and our mobile phone and its powerful apps as just tools for our convenience, helping us get what we want in the easiest way possible. We need to recognize that this is far from the case. The principal concern of those who own the apps — perhaps even more powerful than data collection — is to transform desire itself. At the very least, we can make visible the complicity of such technologies in producing the perfect conformist modern citizen. ★

ALFIE BOWN

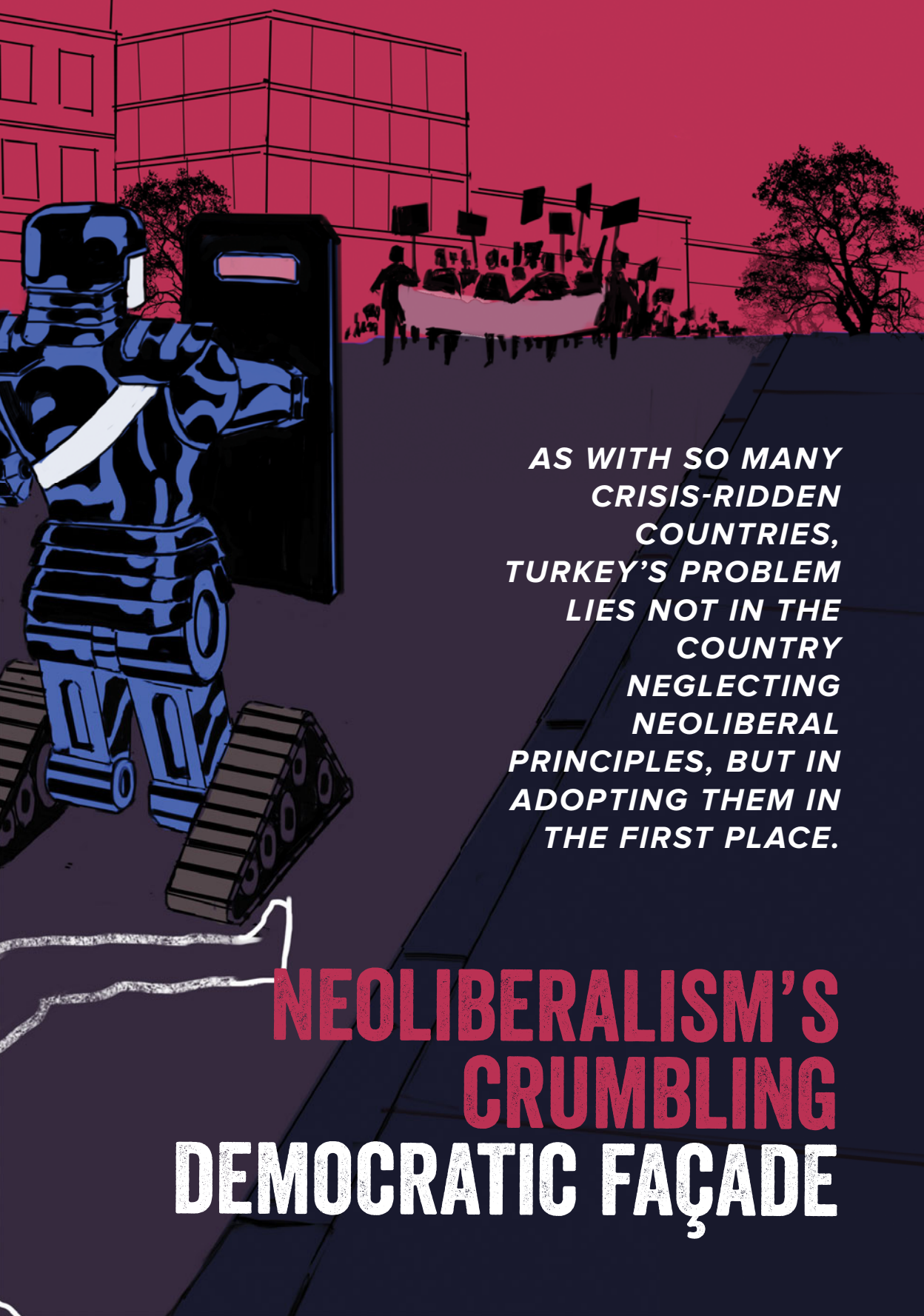


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BOILING POINT



Joris Leverink



*AS WITH SO MANY  
CRISIS-RIDDEN  
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THE FIRST PLACE.*

**NEOLIBERALISM'S  
CRUMBLING  
DEMOCRATIC FAÇADE**

**Y**ears from now, when we look back at the 2010s, what will be the images that come to mind? Will we recall the wealth and prosperity brought to us by free markets and private investment? The freedom and democracy we enjoyed under our neoliberal governments? Or the ways in which we bravely protected our cultural and natural heritage, safeguarding it for future generations?

Most likely not. When we think of the 2010s, we will remember the protesters in the streets, the wars ravaging the Middle East, causing entire populations to leave home and hearth behind, and the millions of people across the globe risking their lives just to make a living somewhere else. We will remember the xenophobic attacks, the racist politicians, the gag orders and the crackdowns. But perhaps most of all, we will look back in disbelief, unable to understand how we could idly stand by and witness the slow but steady destruction of our planet — blindly burning, digging and slashing our way beyond the point of no return.

To be sure, the state's response to the global financial crisis has been swift and determined: banks were bailed out, protesters beaten back and border fences put up. The economic recession, the popular uprisings and the increasing political instability of recent years encouraged neoliberal governments around the globe to discard their democratic pretenses and let their authoritarian nature come to the fore. These developments have

been particularly acute in Turkey, whose anti-democratic turn in recent years provides one of the most striking examples of authoritarian neoliberalism. As a strategic NATO ally, a former Islamic darling of the West and a long-time contender for EU membership, Turkey's current state of emergency is in fact not the exception, but the rule pushed to its natural extreme.

## TURKEY'S BOILING POINT

The curtain first began to fall on Turkey's neoliberal success story in the summer of 2013, when the Gezi protests combined with intensifying economic pressures to produce a powerful catalyst for the country's authoritarian turn.

Since then, the violent escalation of the Kurdish question, rising tensions with the Gülen movement and the attempted coup d'état of July 2016 appear to have driven these developments to their logical conclusion: the move towards an authoritarian state

presiding over the steady erosion of hard-fought social rights and political freedoms.

Back in 2013, the millions of people who expressed their discontent with the government during the Gezi protests caught Erdoğan's AKP-led government by surprise. Until then, the AKP had been all but basking in praise and support, enjoying a privileged position as the West's Muslim prodigy in the region, working hard and successfully to tick all the

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*Turkey's current state of emergency is in fact not the exception, but the rule pushed to its natural extreme.*”

boxes and join the neoliberal club of capitalist democracies. What it had failed to recognize was that more and more people felt like their neighborhood, city and society were no longer theirs; they had become strangers, outsiders in their own lives, victims of the structural violence that had bulldozed their homes, taken away their jobs, destroyed their theaters, cut their trees and killed their hopes.

Faced with a significant share of the population that refused to buy into the neoliberal myth of progress and prosperity, the government responded in the only way it knew how: it sharpened the bayonets and launched a war on its own people.

After a very violent police crackdown on the street protests — in which hundreds were arrested, thousands were injured and over a dozen protesters were killed, including the 15-year-old Berkin Elvan — the state then continued its repression in less overt but no less authoritarian ways. Activists, artists and academics who had expressed support for the protests were accused of supporting terrorism, and in many cases charged as such. Teenagers were sent to jail for posting a tweet, and teachers lost their jobs for trying to analyze and discuss the social relevance of the largest popular uprising in the country’s history in their classes.

## *The post-Gezi crackdown and subsequent political repression did not constitute a breaking point with the past, but a boiling point*

Many foreign observers have described the violent response of the Turkish state as the AKP’s “authoritarian turn.” While it is true that the government now acts in a more authoritarian manner than before the Gezi uprising, it would be misleading to present this development as a break with the past. The post-Gezi crackdown and subsequent political repression did not constitute a *breaking* point with the past, but a *boiling* point — the culmination of many years of structural violence and oppression, which have long been so characteristic of neoliberal regimes across the globe.

### **FREEDOM-LOVING “TERRORISTS”**

In the years since Gezi, the reach of state control has expanded dramatically, while civil liberties and freedom of speech have been cur-







tailed and the general state of the economy has continued to decline. Meanwhile, Turkey's Western allies have failed — or refused? — to intervene or speak up in name of the values they profess to hold dear.

Even as the Turkish state massacred its own people in the predominantly Kurdish southeast, NATO jets continued to take off from Turkish airbases to launch bombing campaigns against the so-called Islamic State in Syria. While hundreds of thousands of Kurds fled their homes, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel paid a friendly visit to President Erdoğan to discuss a highly controversial refugee deal that effectively appointed Turkey as the regional gatekeeper of Fortress Europe.

In the summer of 2015, the war between the Turkish state and the Kurdish PKK escalated anew, barely two months after the leftist Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), with its roots in the Kurdish freedom movement, had booked a historic victory in the general elections by passing the exceptionally high 10 percent parliamentary threshold.

The two events were intricately linked. The pragmatist AKP had never really seen the country's oppressed Kurdish minority as anything but an electoral asset, and the AKP's earlier attempts at brokering peace with the PKK had never come from a sincere intention to address the Kurds' long-standing grievances relating to the historical denial of social, cultural and political rights. Rather, its rapprochement with the Kurds stemmed from a belief that the only thing required to solve the Kurdish question was to turn them into model citizens in the neoliberal sense of the word — indebted, enslaved and forever precariously employed. In the post-2013 context, however, the AKP came to realize that it had more to gain politically from appealing to



*Turkey, a country that was once hailed as an example to its neighbors of what an Islamic democracy could look like, has come to rely on increasingly harsh methods of state repression to strengthen the ruling party's grip on power and supposedly protect the country from "disaster."*

its nationalist constituency and attacking the Kurds, than by continuing to try to resolve the Kurdish issue.

Ever since this shift in political strategy and the escalation of the war with the PKK, the Turkish state has shifted its authoritarian drive into second gear. In an attempt to legitimize its full-fledged crackdown on all forms of political dissent — whether in the press, in the streets or through a simple petition — the government has resolved to frame anyone who dares to disagree with its policies as a “terrorist.” The HDP leadership has since been jailed and thousands of the party’s cadres have been detained, arrested, fired from

their jobs or forced to flee abroad. All stand accused of “abetting terrorism,” or in other words, of having demanded the official recognition of Kurdish rights and culture.

The failed coup attempt in the summer of 2016 has provided the AKP with the necessary pretext to purge tens of thousands of civil servants, judges, lawyers, teachers and security personnel from its ranks. Over a hundred media outlets have been closed down, and in its December report the Committee to Protect Journalists claims that 81 journalists are currently in jail in Turkey — a number local activists claim is even higher. All in all, Turkey, a country that was once hailed as an ex-

ample to its neighbors of what an Islamic democracy could look like, has come to rely on increasingly harsh methods of state repression to strengthen the ruling party's grip on power and supposedly protect the country from "disaster."

## STARING INTO THE ABYSS

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The Turkish case shows us what lurks behind the fairytale façade of neoliberalism, and what happens when its authoritarian nature comes back to the fore. Turkey's adoption of the neoliberal framework as its guiding principles on the one hand allowed for the country's political and financial elites to build, bet, bulldoze and brawl to their heart's delight, and on the other it threw up a smokescreen of high growth rates and profitable investment opportunities that permitted business to continue as usual without outside intervention.

In his introductory essay, Ian Bruff writes that "neoliberalism is about the creation and maintenance of the kinds of markets that it wishes to see, with a central role accorded to the state in this process." Perhaps Turkey takes us even a step further: in successfully creating and maintaining the "kinds of markets it wishes to see," the neoliberal Turkish state grows ever more dominant — both vertically, in its relations with its own citizens, and horizontally, with respect to other countries. In the process, it turns into an ever more controlling entity at the command of its ruling elite. If these elites then happen to be xenophobic populists with an authoritarian streak, it will not be long before the country finds itself staring into the abyss. ★



JORIS LEVERINK

*Joris Leverink is a political analyst, writer and editor for ROAR Magazine.*



**Black  
Awakening,  
Class  
Rebellion**

**“A BETTER WORLD IS POSSIBLE.  
IT’S CALLED SOCIALISM AND  
IT WILL REQUIRE A MULTIRACIAL  
WORKING-CLASS REBELLION  
ORGANIZED ON THE PRINCIPLES  
OF SOLIDARITY AND WITH  
ANTI-RACISM AT ITS CORE.”**

George Ciccariello-Maher  
*interviews*  
Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor



BLACK LIBERATION

**K**eeanga-Yamahtta Taylor has written the most important book of 2016. Published by Haymarket, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* has struck a chord nationwide, garnering major awards but more importantly sparking necessary debates. Like all militant texts, it walks the fine line between Marx’s “ruthless critique of everything existing” — in this case, not only the white supremacist power structure, but also the abject failure of Black elites and the Obama “illusion” — and the revolutionary optimism coalescing in the streets from Ferguson to Baltimore and beyond. By showing us how we got here, to a society in which “colorblind” rhetoric provides cover for not only racist continuity but also the dispossession of the poor as a whole, Taylor’s book is a compass for charting a different course altogether.



*George Ciccariello-Maher: The introduction to your book — “Black Awakening in Obama’s America” — is a reference to Robert Allen’s 1969 classic Black Awakening in Capitalist America, which in its attentiveness to the complex interplay of race and class arguably represents a predecessor to your own book. To what extent do you see your work as a sequel to Allen’s analysis of a prior generation’s struggle?*

*Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor: Allen captured the way that the Black movement had the capacity to shake the American state to its core. The Black Awakening was not just an issue for Black people — it was a threat to the system itself. And the system reacted accordingly. Allen pays particular attention to the repeated attempts of capital to absorb, usurp and in some cases coopt the Black movement. In the*

aftermath of the rebellions in 1966 and 1967, business makes a concerted effort to insinuate itself into Black urban neighborhoods as the friendly face of capital after Black people had been burning and looting business operations. For some, the overtures of business were welcomed. The promise of black-owned businesses and greater access to American affluence was alluring. But for the majority of Black people, it was the struggle that promised a greater future.

The Black eruption of 2014 was not just a replay of events that preceded it 45 years earlier. It was a reaction to crises that went unresolved and continue to dog working-class and poor Black people. There have always been class tensions among African Americans, but they were magnified in the late 1960s and 70s as the political establishment and business class combined in their efforts to develop a Black middle class that could be called on to manage Black cities and the people who lived in them. In part, the Black movement today is a response to the failure of that strategy. Its most spectacular collapse was in Baltimore. Allen anticipated these developments and we have much to learn from him.

*When Obama was elected, there was serious talk about a “postracial” America. A few short years later, this idea that we have transcended race seems more like the punch line to a bad joke. You understand Obama as emblematic of Black leadership that is nevertheless “post-Black” — actively complicit in the colorblind narrative that has brought us to where we are today. How do you interpret what you call the “illusion” of the Obama years, and have Black Americans “awakened” from that slumber?*

When Obama was elected, 70 percent of Black people believed that King’s dream had been

achieved. There were enormous expectations that a Black president would mean real improvement in the lives of ordinary Black people. Obama cultivated that belief through the course of his presidential campaign. He linked his candidacy to other upsurges from below that upset the status quo; he talked about the abolitionist movement, the sit-down strikes of the 1930s, the Stonewall Uprising for LGBTQ liberation, and of course, he invoked the civil rights movement and situated his electoral victory as the ultimate fruit of that struggle. But from the beginning, Obama then went out of his way to distance himself from Black demands, even though Black voters were the reason he won the White House.

Obama had promised very little, other than the ability to forge a new atmosphere in Washington, but he delivered even less. Perhaps more perniciously, however, he preserved the space where Black people were continually blamed for their own condition. He mocked poor parents' eating and reading habits while parroting right-wing mythologies about Black fathers and that Black students think success means acting white. Meanwhile, not only is life not improving, but Black unemployment, underemployment, housing security and other barometers of the quality of life were deteriorating. All the while, Obama was overseeing the deadly status quo within the criminal justice system. All of this combusted in the summer

of 2014 when Michael Brown was murdered in the streets of Ferguson. Enough was enough.

*A group centering on Adolph Reed has recently criticized you for claiming that, "When the Black movement goes into motion, it throws the*

*entire mythology of the United States — freedom, democracy, and endless opportunity — into chaos." But isn't this point — which as you write was shared by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Richard Nixon alike — just transparently true? From Radical Reconstruction to the Civil Rights Movement to Black Lives Matter, isn't it sim-*

“  
***Obama had promised very little, but he delivered even less. Perhaps more perniciously, however, he preserved the space where Black people were continually blamed for their own condition.***

*ply undeniable that, just as white supremacy is the linchpin of US capitalism, Black movements have always catalyzed broader anti-capitalist resistance?*

It is patently true, which made the negative reaction to the statement bizarre. The US is a deeply ideological society — mainly because it is so completely and thoroughly unequal. The tiny clique that controls resources and the political class in this country relies on its well-rehearsed myths about social mobility, the American Dream and the “exceptional” and unparalleled greatness of the United States. The Black movement derails that entire train of thought. We are talking about a people brought here in slavery and then when slavery ended, a people subjected to one hundred years of legal subjection and second-class citizenship, and

and then for the last fifty years a people segregated in poor and under-resourced neighborhoods, terrorized by police and then disproportionately imprisoned.

If the world understood the ways that Black people have been victimized by the US, this country's authority — which flows through its self-promotion as the world's greatest democracy — to impose its will on the rest of the world would be called into the question, as it was in the aftermath of World War II. It is why the Black movement has been the foundation for the emergence of other liberation movements as it was during the rebellion of the 1960s.

*Built into this criticism is the suggestion that you somehow uphold a simplistic understanding of the Black community that neglects class contradictions, and yet — again like Allen's critique of Black capitalism — you dedicate an entire chapter to "Black Faces in High Places," borrowing a potent phrase from Amiri Baraka. You offer a searing critique of Black mayors from Carl Stokes to Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, and you show how Black elected leaders bet on pragmatism and the community lost. Against this failed wager, you bet on what Malcolm X called the "little people" against the "big people." What has been the role of Black elected officials and economic elites historically, and what is that role today?*

The most significant development in Black life over the last 45 years has been the emergence of the Black political class. By the end of the 1960s, white political machines could no longer govern Black majority cities. The political establishment believed that Black elected officials could contain the Black rebellion and, more importantly, impose austerity in ways that white officials believed they no longer

could. With some exceptional examples, this had largely been true before the explosion in Baltimore in April of 2015. If Obama is the greatest example of the failure of formal Black politics to address the needs of ordinary Black people, there are hundreds of smaller, local examples of this same phenomenon. Black officials uphold a status quo that is institutionally racist and incapable of delivering the goods to Black people.

*Donald Trump has been elected — in no small part because poor people stopped showing up for a Democratic Party that doesn't represent them. Against accelerationist arguments, this isn't a good thing, but the reality is that people are fed up with the Democrats and in the streets ready to fight. What does this mean for Black struggle and for the broader movement for revolutionary change?*

Exactly. Liberals expect poor and working-class people of all races and ethnicities to just suffer, but suffer in silence for the sake of the Democratic Party. Clearly, Trump will be a disaster for the working class, but the Democrats have been a disaster in slow motion. Inequality has increased, as has brutality and injustice. There is only so long people will just continue to allow a party that consistently insists that it is the "party of the people" to ignore their basic needs and only offer not being a Republican as the alternative.

But we cannot underestimate the challenge — the crisis — Trump represents for the Black movement and working-class people in general. He is now populating his cabinet with racists, retreads and reactionaries who want to roll the clock back. He wants to put a segregationist in as chief law enforcement officer in the country, as the Attorney General. This man has declared the Black Lives Matter



**Police  
Terror!**

**REVOLUTION,  
NOTHING  
LESS!**

movement to be terrorist and the groups that populate the movement as terrorists. So these are significant challenges.

*We have to be in the streets confronting the Trump agenda and the fascist menace he has awakened. But we have to also articulate a political vision for the kind of world we want and the kind of politics that can win.*

The number one priority right now is that the left must grow and must be ideologically combative as well as politically combative. When I say the left must grow, it means that our activism cannot only be with hopes to return Congress to the Democrats in 2018 or to “get back to” the good old days of the “normal” slow drip of neoliberalism as opposed to the tidal wave promised by Trump. We have to fight for something different, another way out of the two-party duopoly. We have to be in the streets confronting the Trump agenda and the fascist menace he has awakened. But we have to also articulate a political vision for the kind of world we want and the kind of politics that can win. A better world is possible. It’s called socialism and it will require a multiracial working-class rebellion organized on the principles of solidarity and with anti-racism at its core. We have to fight like we’ve never fought before. Our lives and the planet depend on it. ★

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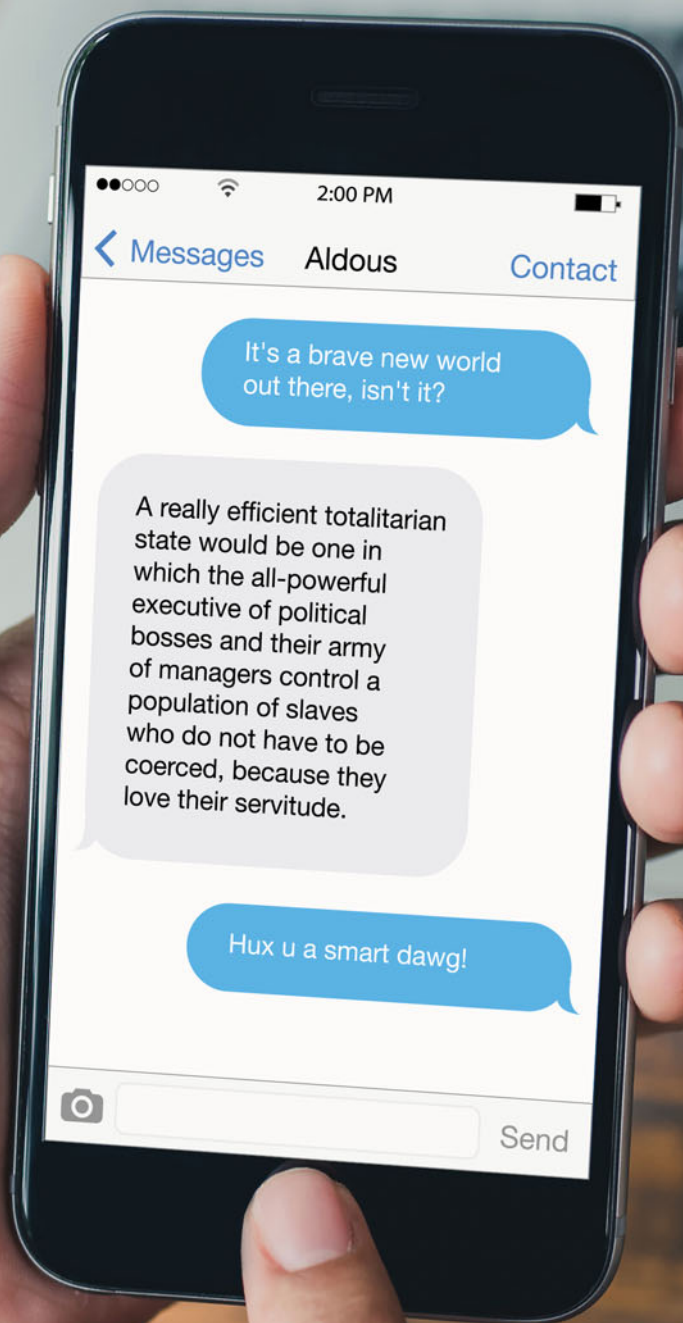
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