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The laws are silent in the midst of arms.

— Cicero

FUTURE OF FREEDOM

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The Power to Assassinate

by *Jacob G. Hornberger*



The power to assassinate has become so deeply entrenched within the national-security branch of the federal government that hardly anyone gives it a second thought. State-sponsored assassinations now occur on a regular basis, especially in the Middle East. Most everyone, especially the mainstream press, treats them in a nonchalant, hohum way. Hardly anyone questions where this extraordinary power to snuff out a person's life comes from.

It is indeed an extraordinary power, given that it entails the authority to effectively murder a person with impunity. Ordinarily, the victim is not notified in advance of the national-security establishment's intent to assassinate him. He isn't given an opportunity to object or to show that he doesn't deserve

to be killed. There is no trial to determine whether he has committed a death-penalty offense. Under our form of government, the national-security establishment, specifically the CIA and the Pentagon, wield the omnipotent, non-reviewable power to assassinate anyone they want. Theoretically, they target only "bad guys," such as communists and terrorists. But the CIA and the Pentagon, presumably with the consent of the president, make the call on whether an intended victim of a state-sponsored assassination should have his life snuffed out.

Above the law

If it later turns out that the victim wasn't so bad after all or, in fact, was a "good guy," nothing happens to the assassins or to the CIA or the Pentagon. Criminal charges for murder or manslaughter cannot be brought against the assassins or against the CIA and Pentagon. Lawsuits for wrongful death are summarily dismissed. The CIA and the Pentagon, as well as their assassins, are immune from criminal and civil liability arising from their assassinations. Their power to assassinate is total and omnipotent, just as it is in totalitarian regimes.

For their part, the American people are expected to put their

trust in the CIA and the Pentagon that their assassinations are just. The idea is that the national-security establishment's mission is to keep the citizenry safe. To accomplish that, the argument goes, sometimes it's necessary to kill the bad guys before they come over here to the United States to kill Americans. Sure, sometimes mistakes are made, but those are inevitable. What matters is that the CIA and the Pentagon are doing their best to keep us safe, and citizens are expected to place their trust in their officials to act responsibly with this omnipotent power.

For the first 150 years of America's existence, the federal government didn't have the power to assassinate people.

It wasn't always that way. For the first 150 years of America's existence, the federal government didn't have the power to assassinate people. Keep in mind that when the Constitution called the federal government into existence, it was with the understanding that the federal government could exercise only those powers that were enumerated in the Constitution. If a power wasn't enumerated, it could not legally be exercised. If the executive or legislative branches attempted to

exercise a power that wasn't enumerated, it was considered the responsibility of the judiciary to enforce the Constitution. It was expected that the executive and legislative branches would comply with any adverse ruling from the judicial branch.

It is undisputed that the power to assassinate people was not included among the enumerated powers that the Constitution delegated to the federal government. Our American ancestors simply did not want to live under a government whose officials wielded such power.

The Constitution and due process

To ensure that federal officials got the message, the American people ensured the enactment of the Fifth Amendment, which expressly prohibits the federal government from depriving any person of life without "due process of law," which was a phrase whose origins stretched all the way back to the Magna Carta in 1215. Over the centuries, due process of law came to encompass two important principles: notice and hearing. Thus, before the federal government can kill someone, it must first give him formal notice of why the government wishes to kill him. Then, he must be accorded a hearing or trial, where the govern-

ment is required to justify killing him. To ensure that the trial wasn't rigged, our American ancestors guaranteed people the right of trial by jury, with the jury consisting of regular people in the community, rather than having a judge or a tribunal decide the person's guilt or innocence. That's partly what the Sixth Amendment is all about.

Obviously, the power to assassinate runs contrary to the provisions of due process. As I stated above, when the Pentagon or the CIA assassinate someone, there is no advance notice to the victim as to why he is being targeted. There is also no trial at which the victim can show that he doesn't deserve to be assassinated.

There is something important to note about the Fifth Amendment's due process clause: It isn't limited to American citizens. The amendment prohibits the federal government from assassinating anyone, foreigner and U.S. citizen alike. It expressly states that no person be deprived of life without due process of law.

Due process of law was a monumental achievement in the historical development of freedom. Throughout the ages, governments have wielded the omnipotent power to assassinate people. Such power was simply considered to be among

the inherent police powers of government. Hardly anyone questioned it. The principle of due process — that is, notice and hearing — was a revolutionary development because it removed the power of assassination from the hands of the government.

The Fifth Amendment prohibits the federal government from assassinating anyone.

Today, there are governments around the world that wield the power of assassination. Examples include North Korea, Saudi Arabia, China, Russia, and many others. The irony is that when any of these foreign regimes engage in state-sponsored assassinations, U.S. officials, as well as the U.S. mainstream press, go ballistic and wax eloquent on the need to punish such regimes for their "human-rights abuses."

For example, a few years ago Kim Jong-nam, the half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, was assassinated in Malaysia. It was widely believed that he had been assassinated on orders of Kim Jong-un. In response, the U.S. government re-listed North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism and imposed additional sanctions on the North Korean regime.

A few years ago, Saudi dissident and *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi was assassinated while visiting a Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey. The assassination was carried out by Saudi governmental personnel who, it was widely believed, were operating under the orders of Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman. The U.S. mainstream press condemned the assassination and continue to do so to this day.

How is it that the CIA and the Pentagon are exercising this omnipotent power?

Yet, when the U.S. national-security establishment assassinated Iranian Gen. Major General Qasem Suleimani, the U.S. mainstream press reacted nonchalantly or even in a supportive manner. The same was true when the U.S. national-security establishment assassinated Anwar al-Awlaki and his 16-year-old son Abdulrahman, both of whom were American citizens. The U.S. mainstream press simply deferred to the judgment of the CIA and the Pentagon.

So, what happened? Given that the Constitution did not delegate the power of assassination to federal officials and given that the Fifth

Amendment expressly prohibits federal officials from assassinating anyone, how is it that the CIA and the Pentagon now wield this omnipotent power? After all, we all know that the Constitution has never been amended to allow federal officials to assassinate people. How is it that the CIA and the Pentagon are exercising this power?

The rise of the national-security state

The answer lies in what happened after World War II. That was when the federal government was converted from a limited-government republic, which was America's founding governmental system, to a national-security state, which is a totalitarian form of governmental structure. That conversion brought into existence the Pentagon (along with its vast, permanent military establishment), the CIA, and the NSA, which are the three principal components of the national-security branch of the federal government.

From its very beginning, the CIA claimed the power of assassination, regardless of whether it was authorized by the Constitution or not. The notion was that America was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with "godless communism" and was facing an international communist conspiracy that

was supposedly based in Moscow and that extended to Red China, North Korea, North Vietnam, and, later, Cuba, Guatemala, Chile, and elsewhere.

Given this life-and-death struggle, it was believed that America couldn't afford to adhere to constitutional niceties. To do so meant doom, given that communist countries weren't bound by such niceties. If the national-security establishment was to protect America from being taken over by the communists, it would be necessary for U.S. officials to wield and exercise the same omnipotent powers that the communist regimes were wielding.

In fact, the so-called Red Menace was why the U.S. government was converted to a national-security state in the first place. To defeat the Reds, the argument went, we needed to become like the Reds.

One can find online a copy of an assassination manual that the CIA was using as early as 1952. (Google "The Secret CIA Assassination Manual.") It makes for eerie reading. Recognizing that assassinating people is not for the weak of heart, it explains methods of assassination and, equally important, ways to prevent people from discovering that the CIA was behind the assassinations. Making the assassination

look like an accident was one of the methods advocated in the manual.

The fight against godless communism and against the supposed international communist conspiracy was what the Cold War was all about. The notion was that the Reds were coming to get us and we needed to stop them. To prevent America from going Red, U.S. officials began engaging in regime-change operations in which foreign leaders were violently ousted from power and replaced with pro-U.S. regimes. Hardly anyone noticed that the power to initiate regime-change operations, which usually consisted of assassinations and military coups, also weren't among the enumerated powers delegated to the federal government in the Constitution.

Making the assassination look like an accident was one of the methods advocated in the manual.

Unlike today, however, state-sponsored assassinations were carried out in secret and in ways that, it was hoped, could not be traced to the CIA. When the conversion to a national-security state took place, there was an implicit bargain reached between the national-security establishment and the American people. The bargain essentially

held that the CIA and the Pentagon would wield omnipotent power to do unsavory things, like assassinate people, but the CIA and Pentagon would do everything they could to keep their role in the assassinations secret, so that American citizens would not be troubled by any crises of conscience.

In the process, total trust was put into the hands of the CIA to assassinate anyone the CIA considered a communist. Never mind that the Constitution didn't give the CIA the power to assassinate communists. Since communists were hell-bent on destroying America, they made themselves subject to being assassinated.

In 1953, the CIA initiated a coup against the democratically elected president of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz. As part of that coup, the CIA drew up a list of Guatemalan officials who were to be assassinated. The CIA will still not let us see who was on that kill list (citing "national security"), but there is no doubt that Arbenz was at the top of the list.

Why did CIA officials target Arbenz for a coup and, presumably, for a state-sponsored assassination? He was a socialist and possibly even a communist. He had let communists participate in Guatemala's po-

litical system and had even brought some of them into his administration. Worst of all, from the standpoint of the CIA and the Pentagon, he had reached out to the Soviet Union and the communist world in a spirit of peace and friendship.

Those actions sealed Arbenz's fate. He was able to escape the country before they could assassinate him, but this democratically elected president was replaced by a succession of unelected pro-U.S. military dictators who, with the CIA's and Pentagon's support, proceeded to brutalize the socialists and communists who had supported Arbenz. The CIA's coup ended up throwing Guatemala into a 30-year-long civil war that killed and injured more than a million people.

It was the same in Chile. In 1970, the Chilean people democratically elected a socialist president named Salvador Allende. Like Arbenz, Allende reached out to the Soviet Union and the communist world, including Cuba, in a spirit of peace and friendship. Consequently, U.S. officials deemed him to be a grave threat to U.S. national security and decided that he needed to be removed from power and replaced by a pro-U.S. military dictator.

One track of U.S. plans for a regime change in Chile involved a

military coup against Allende. Interestingly, however, the overall commander of Chile's armed forces, a man named Gen. Rene Schneider, said no. His position was that Chile's military personnel had taken an oath to support and defend the Chilean constitution, which provided for only two ways to remove a democratically elected president from office: impeachment and the next election.

The CIA's and the Pentagon's position was that "national security" trumped the Constitution.

The position of the U.S. national-security establishment was revealing. It held that when a democratically elected president of a country was adopting policies that, in the minds of the national-security establishment, posed a grave threat to national security, it was the solemn duty of the national-security establishment to remove him from office and replace him with someone else. The CIA's and the Pentagon's position was that "national security" trumped the Constitution, which thereby empowered the national-security establishment to violently remove the president from office and replace

him. It was a fascinating and revealing position, one that obviously has ramifications in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, who, like Arbenz and Allende, was reaching out to the Soviets and the rest of the communist world in a spirit of peace and friendship just before he was assassinated.

To remove Schneider as an obstacle to the violent removal of Allende from power, the CIA secretly orchestrated his violent kidnapping. During the kidnapping attempt, Schneider fought back and was shot dead on the streets of Santiago. The CIA had prevailed in removing him as an obstacle to removing Allende in a military coup. When the coup occurred on September 11, 1973, the Chilean national-security branch of the government, with the full support of the U.S. national-security branch of the government, did its best to assassinate Allende, first with high-powered rifles fired by infantry troops and then with missiles fired at Allende by Chilean fighter planes. At the end of the battle between the executive branch and national-security branch, Allende was dead, apparently by his own hand, and a pro-U.S. military dictatorship took control. Some 60,000 socialists and communists were rounded up and incarcerated,

torture, or raped. Some 3,000 of them, including two young Americans, Charles Horman and Frank Teruggi, were killed or disappeared. It was all justified under the notion that the victims were communists. In other words, no big deal.

What about the Chilean federal judiciary? Where was it when all this mayhem was occurring? Wasn't it their job to enforce the country's constitution, which did not provide for coups as a way to remove a democratically elected president from office? Recognizing the inevitable — that the new military regime was all-powerful, the federal judiciary went passive and deferential. It was a practical decision. The justices and judges knew that if they ruled against the Chilean national-security establishment, they would have no practical way to enforce their rulings. Many years later, the Chilean federal judiciary apologized for their abrogation of duty.

Our judiciary is missing in action

It was actually no different with the U.S. Supreme Court and federal judges. Knowing that as a practical matter, there was no way they could enforce their rulings against the CIA and the Pentagon, the federal judiciary went silent and passive. The justices and the judges knew,

for example, that the Constitution prohibited state-sponsored assassinations, but the judiciary also knew that the Pentagon and the CIA would never comply with a judicial ruling to cease committing them. Thus, the judiciary came up with all sorts of judicially concocted reasons as to why they could not interfere with actions taken by the national-security establishment.

The federal judiciary went silent and passive.

Consider Cuba. During the 1960s, the CIA entered into an assassination partnership with the Mafia to assassinate Cuban leader Fidel Castro. When the CIA's repeated assassination attempts came to light, hardly anyone condemned them. They were considered normal and constitutionally permissible because Castro was a communist. But since when does a person's political or economic philosophy serve as a justification for murdering him? If the assassination attempts against Castro had come to light when the CIA was still trying to assassinate him, it is a certainty that the federal judiciary would not have interfered. They would have held that the assassination attempts were beyond their purview.

Imagine that the DEA began assassinating suspected drug-war criminals, much like drug-war officials in the Philippines have been doing for the past several years. There is no doubt that the federal judiciary would put a stop to it immediately, based on the Fifth Amendment's prohibition against assassination.

Why not the same position with respect to assassinations carried out by the Pentagon and the CIA? Doesn't the Constitution apply to everyone in the federal government? The reason is that the Pentagon and the CIA are too powerful, and everyone in the federal judiciary knows it. In fact, as Michael J. Glennon, a professor of law at Tuft's University has shown in his excellent and insightful book, *National Security and Double Government*, the fact is that the national-security establishment, being the most powerful part of the federal government, is actually running the show but permits the other three branches to maintain the veneer of power. That's how the Pentagon and the CIA have gotten away with their unconstitutional program of state-sponsored assassinations.

The worst mistake that the American people ever made was to

permit the conversion of the federal government to a national-security state. The Cold War was nothing more than a racket that was designed to bring ever-increasing tax monies and power to the Pentagon, the vast military-industrial complex, the CIA, and the NSA.

In the process, the consciences of the American people became stultified. That's why so many Americans took — and continue to take — a ho-hum position on the U.S. national-security state's policy of state-sponsored assassinations.

What we need is a great awakening in American, one in which people's consciences once again begin to operate. Once that happens, the American people will be able to restore America's founding principle of due process of law and America's founding government system of a limited-government republic.

Jacob G. Hornberger is founder and president of The Future of Freedom Foundation.

NEXT MONTH:
**"Let's End the
Cold War Racket"**
by Jacob G. Hornberger

Corrupt Federal Statistics Cover Endless Cons

by James Bovard



Federal agencies don't count what politicians don't want to know. President Joe Biden and other Democrats perennially invoke "science and data" to sanctify all their COVID-19 mandates and policies. But the same shenanigans and willful omissions that have characterized COVID data have perennially permeated other federal programs.

The rule of experts?

During his update on his Winter COVID Campaign in December, President Biden declared, "Almost everyone who has died from COVID-19 in the past many months has been unvaccinated." This was true from the start of the pandemic in early 2020 until the

vaccines' efficacy began failing badly in recent months. Oregon officially classifies roughly a quarter of its COVID fatalities since August as "vaccine breakthrough deaths." In Illinois, roughly 30 percent of COVID fatalities have occurred among fully vaccinated individuals. According to the Vermont Department of Health, "Half of the [COVID] deaths in August were breakthrough cases. Almost three-quarters of them in September were," as Burlington, Vermont, TV station WCAX summarized.

The Biden administration guaranteed that the vast majority of "breakthrough" infections would not be counted when the Centers for Disease Control in May ceased keeping track of "breakthrough" infections unless they resulted in hospitalization or death. Ignoring that data permitted Biden to go on CNN in July and make the ludicrously false assertion: "You're not going to get COVID if you have these vaccinations." But federal data on fully vaxxed COVID fatalities is far flimsier and less reliable than the numbers compiled by some states. Biden's attempt to define vaccine failure out of existence collapsed spectacularly with the arrival of the omicron variant in December, producing record numbers of COVID cases.

The same policymakers who claim to be guided by data have little or no idea how many Americans have been hit by COVID. According to CDC, there had been 51,115,304 COVID cases in America through mid-December. But a different CDC web page estimates that there had been 146.6 million COVID infections in the United States as of October 2, 2021. That CDC analysis estimated that only one in four COVID infections have been reported, which would mean that, based on the latest official case numbers, more than 200 million Americans have contracted COVID. For Biden policymakers, a potential error of 150 million COVID infections is “close enough for government work.” Relying on the lower number is convenient for policymakers who want to continue ignoring the natural immunity acquired by 199 million Americans who survived COVID infections.

Deceptive federal COVID data is not an anomaly. The same charades permeate the official data guiding both domestic and foreign policies.

The dumbing down of education

Federal education policy has perennially been exempt from the fraud penalties that the Federal

Trade Commission inflicts on private corporations. The No Child Left Behind Act, passed in 2002, promised that federal mandates would make all students proficient in reading and math by the year 2014. NCLB was spurred in part by Washington’s exasperation with decades of coverups of local and state school failures. School test data had been manipulated to allow “all 50 state education agencies to report above-average scores for their elementary schools, with most claiming such scores in every subject area and every grade level,” as former Education Department official Larry Uzzell explained. NCLB promised to prevent state and local politicians and bureaucrats from lying to coverup kids’ educational shortfalls.

A potential error of 150 million COVID infections is “close enough for government work.”

Aside from mandating universal proficiency by 2014, NCLB also required schools to show “adequate yearly progress” for all groups of students. But states were allowed to define “proficient” and set the starting line for measuring progress wherever they pleased. Almost half the states responded to the law’s perverse incentives by “dumbing

down” academic standards, lowering passing scores on tests to avoid harsh federal sanctions. A 2006 report by Education Sector, a non-profit organization, derided NCLB for creating “a system of perverse incentives that rewards state education officials who misrepresent reality.” It was obvious within the first year that the law was backfiring, but the feds covered up the catastrophe to permit President George W. Bush and other politicians to continue lying about saving America’s children. In 2009, Obama’s Education Secretary Arne Duncan denounced the pervasive manipulations spawned by NCLB: “Far too many states dummed down standards. They reduced their standards, and we’re actually lying to children and families and saying they are prepared to be successful, when frankly they weren’t even close. It’s one of the most insidious things that happened.”

Food stamp fraud

Food stamps have been one of the most popular ways for politicians to prove their love of downtrodden Americans. Liberals perennially claim that the food-stamp program has a fraud rate of only 1 percent. But that is based solely on the number of violators who get

caught, and federal rules discourage states (which administer the program) from vigorously pursuing violators. New Mexico Human Services Secretary Sidonie Squier complained in 2013 that the biggest fraud issue in her state was recipients’ selling their food-stamp Electronic Benefit (EBT) Card and claiming that it was lost or stolen. Roughly 70 percent of all the EBT cards issued in New Mexico in 2012 were replacement cards. Squier told Albuquerque’s KOB-TV, “We know that there are some people who lose them four, six, or eight times, and it’s pretty suspicious, but you can’t do anything about it based on the federal rules. They want people to have the cards — they want the card replaced.”

“We’re actually lying to children and families and saying they are prepared to be successful.”

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* revealed that Wisconsin food-stamp recipients routinely sell their benefit cards on Facebook. The investigation found that “nearly 2,000 recipients claimed they lost their card six or more times in 2010 and requested replacements.” USDA rules require that lost cards be speedily replaced. The Wisconsin Policy Research In-

stitute concluded: “Prosecutors have simply stopped prosecuting the vast majority of [food-stamp] fraud cases in virtually all counties, including the one with the most recipients, Milwaukee.” The Obama administration responded by cracking down on state governments’ antifraud measures. Refusing to detect fraud permits politicians to claim there is no fraud — the ultimate scam on taxpayers forced to pay for the she-nanigans.

The fraud of job training

Since the 1960s, politicians have promised that government training programs would provide people with valuable skills. Instead, the programs have generated endless statistical scams. One of the first federal training programs claimed that any trainee who held a job for a single day was “permanently employed.” The Job Corps went one step further, counting as a job placement any recruit who had a job interview scheduled. In the 1980s, some federal job training programs had a 100 percent success rate because they pretended that anyone who was not hired post-training never existed. A federal audit revealed in 2014 that the U.S. Labor Department did not even bother tracking whether trainees

completed training — much less whether they actually became employed in the field for which they were trained. The Government Accountability Office “found training-related employment data unreliable primarily because a significant portion of the data was missing.” Program managers excused themselves by stating that tracking the outcome of training was “resource-intensive.” President Obama admitted in 2014 that federal job training programs rely on a “‘train and pray’ approach. We train them, and we pray that they can get a job.”

The U.S. Labor Department did not even bother tracking whether trainees completed training.

The Peace Corps, one of the most sainted federal agencies, is also guilty of perennially covering up deadly risks to its recruits. The Peace Corps has long acted as if its volunteers’ good intentions are body armor that shield them against all perils. But its basic model — sending inexperienced young college graduates to live and work alone in many of the world’s most dangerous nations — is failing mightily. The Peace Corps routinely buries evidence of rapes suffered by its volunteers. Michael O’Neill, the

Peace Corps' security director from 1995 to 2002, commented, "Nobody wanted to talk about security [for volunteers]. It suppresses the recruitment numbers." After a 29-year-old volunteer was gang-raped in Bangladesh, Rep. Ted Poe (R-Tex.) condemned the agency's reaction: "For political reasons, the Peace Corps did everything it could to ignore and cover up the dastardly deed, blaming the crime on the victim." A 2021 *USA Today* investigation found that the agency continues suppressing evidence even though almost half of the female Peace Corps recruits "who finished service in 2019 were sexually assaulted in some way." But this horrendous failure rarely shows up in the agency's endless press release victory proclamations.

The first casualty of war is truth

Federal statistics cannot raise the dead, but they can make troublesome corpses vanish. The Obama administration vastly increased drone killings of terrorist suspects in many nations and claimed that almost all the victims were bad guys. A *Salon* analysis, summarizing an NBC News report, noted, "Even while admitting that the identities of many killed by drones were not known, the CIA

documents asserted that all those dead were enemy combatants. The logic is twisted: If we kill you, then you were an enemy combatant."

**"The logic is twisted:
If we kill you, then you were an
enemy combatant."**

The *New York Times* revealed that U.S. "counterterrorism officials insist ... people in an area of known terrorist activity ... are probably up to no good." The "probably up to no good" standard absolved almost any drone killing within thousands of square miles in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. Daniel Hale, a former Air Force intelligence analyst, leaked information revealing that nearly 90 percent of people who were killed in drone strikes were not the intended targets. Biden's Justice Department responded by coercing Hale into pleading guilty to "retention and transmission of national security information."

Anyone who is shocked at the chicanery of official statistics on drone killings should take a look at the Vietnam War, during which the U.S. military created incentives that guaranteed the killing of vast numbers of innocent people. In 1974, the Army published a monograph entitled "Sharpening the Combat

Edge: The Use of Analysis to Reinforce Military Judgment.” Deborah Nelson, the author of *The War Behind Me: Vietnam Veterans Confront the Truth About U.S. War Crimes*, summarized the study: “They measured success through an elaborate analysis based largely on enemy body count. Statistics on kills per month, kills per unit, kills per engagement, even rounds expended per kill were collected at the division headquarters to determine what strategies were working and which units were lagging and in need of a ‘visit.” Ret. Lt. Gen. Orwin Talbott observed, “The 9th division insisted on a body count. They didn’t care what body.” There was far more enthusiasm for wracking up body counts than for assuring that the targets were actually enemies. The more that kill ratios determined officers’ promotions, the easier it was to justify treating almost all Vietnamese as enemies. Decades later, Vietnam vet Jerry Mooradian lamented: “The soldier on the ground had to come up with a body count to get to people in Washington so they could justify being there.” Those bogus “body counts” permitted Defense Secretary William McNamara and other honchos to claim that the United States was winning the war.

Political appointees at federal agencies recognize that the best way to protect their bosses’ reputations is to avoid gathering the data that would expose their skullduggery. The refusal to track program failures is buttressed by pervasive secrecy. Federal agencies classify as secret trillions of pages of documents a year — a magic wand that vanishes far more scandals than are ever exposed.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the media has portrayed federal officials like Tony Fauci as America’s “best and brightest.” But Washington, D.C., is full of Towers of Paternalist Babel built on statistical quicksand. Bureaucracies conspire against admitting their failures, and politicians often rig reporting requirements to hide the damage their laws inflict. Anyone who has blind faith in federal data is unfit to judge public policy in the real world.

James Bovard is a policy advisor to The Future of Freedom Foundation and the author of the ebook Freedom Frauds: Hard Lessons in American Liberty, published by FFF, Public Policy Hooligan, Attention Deficit Democracy, and eight other books.

The Libertarian Brand

by *Laurence M. Vance*



While U.S. presidential elections are held every four years, U.S. senators serve a six-year term, and members of the U.S. House of Representatives are elected every two years. A midterm election is an election where the entire House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate are up for election, but the president is not. These elections always occur two years after a presidential election. As they gear up for the midterm elections in November, Democrats have three problems: a historical problem, a retirement problem, and an image problem.

The Democratic brand

Historically, the political party of the president does poorly in the midterm elections. Since 1946, the average midterm loss for the president's party is 25 seats. Democratic

presidents Harry Truman and Bill Clinton both began their first term with Democratic majorities in both Houses of Congress, only to see Republicans take control after the midterm elections. Republican president Dwight Eisenhower likewise began his first term with Republican majorities in both houses of Congress, only to see Democrats take control after the midterm elections. Democrat Barack Obama presided over a devastating loss of Democrats in the House in his first midterm election and in the Senate in his second midterm election. Republican president George W. Bush lost his Republican majority in both Houses of Congress during his second midterm election. Republican Donald Trump saw his Republican majority in Congress evaporate when Republicans suffered a crushing defeat in the House in the midterm elections of 2018. According to the American Presidency Project, only two presidents — Bill Clinton (1998) and George W. Bush (2002) — have seen their party gain House seats in a midterm election.

Democrats also have a retirement problem. As of the end of 2021, one Democratic senator and 19 Democratic House members have announced that they will not be seeking reelection. Democrats

are currently tied with Republicans in the Senate and only have a nine-seat majority in the House. This is troubling for Democrats because congressional incumbents had a 96 percent win rate in the 2020 election. Thirty-eight states had a 100 percent win rate in congressional races.

Indeed, wide name recognition, usually coupled with coffers full of cash, means that few things in life are more predictable than the chances of an incumbent member of Congress winning reelection. Even though Democratic voters now outnumber Republicans by nine percentage points — the largest Gallup has measured since the fourth quarter of 2012 — some Democratic strategists are already predicting a shellacking in the mid-term elections. According to Gallup, “President Biden has lost more public support during his first several months in office than any U.S. president since World War II.”

But what Democrats really have right now is an image problem. The Democrats have always been the party of liberalism, progressivism, collectivism, socialism, paternalism, abortion on demand (at taxpayer expense for low-income women), organized labor, public education, universal health care, higher taxes

on “the rich,” anti-discrimination laws, affirmative action, the welfare state, environmentalism, government-funded child care, increased government regulation of the economy and society, income-transfer programs, and alternative lifestyles. However, over the past few years, the Democratic Party has also embraced the social-justice movement, defunding the police, the transgender movement, critical race theory, cancel culture, wokeism, and, most recently, lockdowns, mask mandates, and vaccine mandates.

Democrats are currently tied with Republicans in the Senate.

The Democrats last year were also embroiled in an intra-party feud over a bipartisan infrastructure bill and the size, scope, and cost of a massive legislative package of social spending priorities. Then they suffered humiliating losses in the “off-year” state elections in Virginia and New Jersey. In analyzing why they lost the Virginia governor’s race, Democratic Party strategists — as pointed out by David Siders, national political correspondent for *Politico* — discovered that “the Democratic Party’s entire brand was a wreck.” According to Douglas Schoen, a political consul-

tant who served as an adviser to President Clinton, “It’s clear that Americans are turning against a Democratic Party that they feel has become more attuned to the priorities of progressives and less focused on addressing the concerns and frustrations of the broader American electorate.”

The truth is that Republicans are philosophically not much different from Democrats.

The *New York Times* editorial board even opined: “A national Democratic Party that talks up progressive policies at the expense of bipartisan ideas, and that dwells on Donald Trump at the expense of forward-looking ideas, is at risk of becoming a marginal Democratic Party appealing only to the left.” *New York Times* columnist Ezra Klein has said that Democrats need to recognize that swing-state voters “are not liberals, are not woke and do not see the world in the way that the people who staff and donate to Democratic campaigns do.” “I think what we have to do as a party is battle the damage to the Democratic brand,” said Democratic National Committee Chairman Jamie Harrison.

Speaking on *PBS NewsHour*, longtime Democratic strategist

James Carville blamed “stupid wokeness” for his party’s disaster in the off-year elections. He termed the “defund the police” idea “lunacy” and suggested that progressive Democrats “need to go to a woke detox center” and “get rid of this left-wing nonsense, this claptrap I hear.”

The Republican brand

Before examining the libertarian brand — which is far and away the best alternative to the Democratic brand — it might be a good idea to briefly look at the Republican brand. This is because most Americans believe that the Republican Party is the polar opposite of the Democratic Party, at least on most issues. Republicans have cultivated this image and maintained this façade by using libertarian rhetoric. The truth, however, is that Republicans are philosophically not much different from Democrats, regardless of how often and how loud they recite their conservative mantra about the Constitution, federalism, the free market, limited government, traditional values, free enterprise, a balanced budget, individual freedom, free trade, property rights, and a strong national defense.

Republicans believe that some Americans should be forced to pay

for the health care of other Americans through Medicare and Medicaid. Republicans support refundable tax credits that give some Americans tax refunds of money paid in by other Americans. Republicans support the government taking money from those who work and giving it to those who don't by means of unemployment benefits. Republicans support federal subsidies to certain occupations and sectors of society. Republicans believe that some Americans should be forced to pay for the education of the children of other Americans. Republicans support the government taking money out of the pockets of Americans who "have" and giving it to other Americans who "have not" via Social Security, WIC, TANF, SSI, food stamps, and Section 8 rent subsidies.

In a nutshell, although Republicans may disagree with Democrats on the amount, they believe that the government should take money from some Americans and redistribute it to other Americans. They have no philosophical objection to government income-transfer programs. No one should ever think that the objections of the Republican brand to the size, nature, scope, and efficiency of government programs is based on any real principles.

The libertarian brand

Contrary to the Democratic and Republican brands, the libertarian brand (not necessarily the Libertarian Party) is intellectually rigorous, moral but not moralist, philosophically consistent, simple without being simplistic, and a bulwark of liberty, property, and peace. "Libertarianism," as concisely stated by Future of Freedom Foundation president Jacob Hornberger, "is a political philosophy that holds that a person should be free to do whatever he wants in life, as long as his conduct is peaceful." This means that, in a libertarian society:

- people are free to engage in any economic enterprise or activity of their choosing without license, permission, restriction, interference, or regulation from government as long as they don't commit violence against others, violate their property rights, or defraud them.
- people are free to accumulate as much wealth as they can as long as they do it peaceably and without committing fraud.
- buyers and sellers are free to exchange with each other for mutual gain any product of their choosing for any price, without any interference from the government.
- charity, relief, and philan-

thropy are entirely voluntary activities.

- people are free to pursue happiness in their own way, provided that they don't threaten or initiate violence against the person or property of others.

- people are free to live their lives any way they choose as long as their conduct is peaceful.

- the voluntary, private, peaceful activity of consenting adults is none of the government's business.

The libertarian brand is known for its simple, consistent, and principled perspective on the issues.

Welfare. All welfare programs should be abolished, from food stamps to job training to unemployment compensation. All charity should be private and voluntary.

Education. All public schools should be closed. Education should be completely separated from the state. All schools should be privately operated and privately funded.

Gun control. All gun control laws should be eliminated, the ATF should be abolished, and the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) should be shut down. Every American has the natural right to possess any weapon on his own property or the property

of anyone else that allows such weapons.

Free trade. All Americans should be able to freely engage in commerce with foreigners without being hindered by tariffs, quotas, barriers, regulations, restrictions, or dumping rules. Free trade needs no trade organizations, trade agreements, or trade treaties.

The free market. The free market is not truly free unless it is completely free of government regulation and interference. Laissez faire is natural, just, and moral.

The minimum wage. The minimum wage should be eliminated. All wages and benefits should be negotiated between employers and employees without any interference whatsoever from the government.

Medicaid and Medicare. Both programs should be abolished. The government should have nothing to do with health care and no American should be forced to pay for the health care of any other American.

Social Security. Not only should Social Security not be saved for future generations, it should be eliminated for current beneficiaries. It is immoral to take money from those who work and give it to those who don't — even if the government does the taking.

Victimless crimes. Because every

crime needs a tangible and identifiable victim who has suffered measurable harm to his person or measurable damages to his property, there should be no laws against prostitution, gambling, pornography, or drug possession, use, and distribution — unless such actions involve violations of the personal or property rights of others.

Foreign aid. No country should receive foreign aid from the U.S. government in any amount, at any time, or for any reason. Like domestic charity, foreign charity — including for disaster relief — should be entirely private and voluntary.

The income tax. The income tax doesn't need to be reformed or made flatter, fairer, or simpler; it needs to be abolished. All Americans are entitled to keep the fruits of their labor and spend their money as they see fit.

Family leave. Government should not mandate that any company provide paid or unpaid family. All benefits should be negotiated between employers and employees without any interference whatsoever from the government.

Farm subsidies. Not only should the government not subsidize farmers (or any other sector of the economy), it should have nothing to do

with agriculture. Farming should be treated as any other business.

Foreign policy. The United States should remain neutral and not intervene militarily or otherwise in any country. All U.S. bases on foreign soil should be closed, and all U.S. troops should be brought home. The military should only be used for defensive purposes and should never fight foreign wars.

Anti-discrimination laws. Since discrimination — against anyone, on any basis, and for any reason — is not aggression, force, coercion, threat, or violence, the government should never prohibit it, seek to prevent it, or punish anyone for doing it.

The Constitution. The federal government should strictly follow the Constitution. Although others may say this, only libertarians have the courage to point out that this would entail a 95 percent cut in the federal budget.

These libertarian principles and perspectives are unchangeable and nonnegotiable. They cannot be compromised without doing irreparable harm to libertarianism.

Harming the brand

Democratic and Republican smears of libertarians are common and to be expected. Libertarians are

said to be naïve and utopian. They lack compassion for the poor. They are isolationists. They are libertines and hedonists. They don't believe in moral absolutes. They disdain organized religion and reject traditional values. They are materialistic. They celebrate greed and selfishness. These are all misconceptions, fallacies, caricatures, or falsehoods.

Libertarianism has nothing to do with anarchy, nihilism, relativism, antinomianism, or hedonism.

Some individual libertarians might be, believe, or do some of these things — just like some Democrats and Republicans might also — but they have nothing to do with libertarianism qua libertarianism. Libertarianism has nothing to do with one's lifestyle, tastes, vices, sexual practices, traditions, values, religion, social attitudes, or cultural norms. Libertarianism is not “rugged individualism,” “unrestrained freedom of speech,” “survival of the fittest,” “unfettered capitalism,” “every man for himself,” or “dog eat dog.” Libertarianism has nothing to do with anarchy, nihilism, relativism, antinomianism, or hedonism.

The libertarian brand should be associated with individual liberty,

private property, peaceful activity, voluntary interaction, laissez faire, personal freedom, financial privacy, individual responsibility, free enterprise, free markets, free speech, free thought, free association, freedom of conscience, and a free society.

Unfortunately, it is often libertarians themselves who harm the libertarian brand. Some libertarians have simplistically defined libertarianism as socially liberal and economically conservative. Others have implied that libertarianism is a particular social attitude or lifestyle. Some insist that libertarians must be in favor of same-sex marriage and abortion. Others maintain that libertarianism is incompatible with religion. Some supported the draconian government response to the COVID-19 “pandemic” in the name of “public health.” Others have defended U.S. military actions overseas in the name of “national security.” Some are nostalgic for Ronald Reagan, even considering him to be “an honorary libertarian.” Others have called for a universal basic income.

There is one issue, though, that most libertarians who deviate from libertarianism have in common: support for “school choice”; i.e., government-funded vouchers for

students to use to pay for education at a school of their parents' choice. Vouchers are touted as a way to rescue children from dangerous and failing public schools and put them in private schools where they can be educated instead of indoctrinated. Although I am not the least bit interested in defending public education, there is nothing libertarian about government educational vouchers. There is nothing special about the business of education that necessitates that the government be involved in it. Parents have the choice right now where and how to educate their children. The fact that they may not have the money to pay for their choice does not mean that the taxpayers should pay for it. Giving one group of Americans the choice of where to spend other Americans' money to educate their children is immoral and unjust. If vouchers were used for anything but education, they would be denounced as an income-transfer program and a subsidy to private industry. Once government vouchers for education are deemed to be acceptable, no reasonable or logical argument can be made against the government's providing vouchers for other services. Education should be completely separated from the state.

A plea

Libertarianism need not and should not be fused with any personal preference, school of aesthetics, or extraneous ideology. It should not be complicated by imposing a slate of approved opinions on top of the core teaching of our philosophy. We simply need plain old libertarianism, with no labels, no caveats, and no apologies. Libertarians need to be consistent and present a united front against statism in all its forms.

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NEXT MONTH:
**“The Latest Media
Assault on Freedom”**
by James Bovard
**“There Is No Federal
Solution”**
by Laurence M. Vance

Paternalists Plan a New International Political Consensus

by *Richard M. Ebeling*



The political paternalists and the social engineers are giddy with hope and anticipation. They are confident that their day has, once again, arrived. The era of even bigger government has returned, and any remaining free-market system is simply out of date. They are full of promises and plans to set the world right, as long as they and the right politicians are in charge.

To bring all this about, there is need for “A New Global Economic Consensus,” or so we are told by Mariana Mazzucato, in an essay on the website of Project Syndicate in late 2021. Dr. Mazzucato holds a professorship at University College, London, in the United Kingdom, and is the founding director of the

Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose. She is also the Chair of the World Health Organization’s Council on the Economics of Health for All, along with being on the United Nations High-Level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs. In other words, she is a “player” on the political paternalist scene.

In the face of the coronavirus crisis and the global warming threat, Dr. Mazzucato insists that the previous global consensus among the leading Western governments that, all things considered, freer markets, fiscal restraint, and limited government intervention were the best policies to ensure greater freedom and wide prosperity for all has been shown to be irrelevant and detrimental to the well-being of humanity.

A new consensus on government planning

There needs to be a new consensus agreed to by the governments of the world for “a radically different relationship between the public and the private sectors to create a sustainable, equitable, and resilient economy.” “Neoliberalism,” with its assertion that free enterprise should be left alone from the regulating and redistributing hand of government, has only resulted in growing

inequalities and political and economic “subordination” of the poorer and less developed countries to the major industrial Western nations, says Dr. Mazzucato.

What is needed, Dr. Mazzucato tells us, is a “revitalizing [of] the state’s role.”

It needs to be pointed out that the term “neoliberalism” is the catchall phrase that these new political paternalists use to cover any and all economic policies of which they disapprove. Such policies are by definition, “free market injustice,” even if the actual policies condemned are really various forms of government intervention that have not turned out the way they wanted. The new political paternalism means “never having to say you’re sorry” for the consequences of your own policies or those of your interventionist predecessors.

These paternalists insist that in the face of, first, the financial crisis of 2008–2009, and now, the pandemic of 2020–2021, neoliberal capitalism has only created “unprecedented risk, uncertainty, turmoil, and climate breakdown.” The governments of the world must agree to “a new international social contract.” What is needed, Dr. Maz-

zucato tells us, is a “revitalizing [of] the state’s role [to] allow us to pursue societal goals, build international solidarity, and reform of global governance in the interest of the common good.” This includes “making the kinds of markets we need to nurture a green economy.”

Measurements of economic betterment such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or financial success of private enterprises are no longer the acceptable benchmarks for this new global economy. Instead, there has to be a focus on “ambitious common goals” to assure “humanity’s survival on this planet.” For this, “The state would coordinate mission-oriented public-private partnerships aimed at creating a resilient, sustainable, and equitable economy.”

A seven-pillar planning program

So, specifically, what does this all mean? In the summer of 2021, Dr. Mazzucato served as a member of a group of international “experts” who prepared a report for the G-7 governments (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the U.K., and the United States) on “Global Economic Resilience: Building Forward Better” (October 2021). Its purpose was to offer the policy plans to remake the world economy

according to the proposed premises of this new political global consensus. It is nothing less than an agenda for national and international government central planning. There would be little left in the world not controlled and commanded by political authorities and their “expert” advisors — those like Marianna Mazzucato.

Offered is a Seven-Pillar planning agenda: Global Health; Climate and the Environment; Digital Governance; the Global Trading System; Investment-Focused Recovery; Labor Standards and Participation; and Supply-Chain and Critical Markets Fragilities.

**There would be little left
in the world not controlled by
political authorities.**

Reading the subsection on the coronavirus crisis, you would never think that a good part of the response to problems during the last two years had very much to do with the governments to which Dr. Mazzucato and her report colleagues wish to assign even more decision-making authority and power. Regulatory delays in preventing the private sector from better developing and providing short-run medical supply substitutes; the confusions

and inconsistencies in approving, denying, and then approving the availabilities of vaccines; the ordering and misplacing of large quantities of vaccines (including in Dr. Mazzucato’s home country of Italy); the closing down of medical facilities to both necessary and important elective surgeries for non-COVID patients; and many other such missteps. None of this has anything to do with the governments who are to be empowered with even more authority.

Government-made supply-chain failures

When the report turns to the global trading and supply-chain problems during the last two years, nary a word is said about the most important policy that brought so much of the world economy to a disruptive standstill: the government lockdowns and shutdowns that commanded factories to stop producing and employees to not work; that prohibited people from leaving their homes for weeks and months on end other than for government-approved limited shopping for food and pharmaceuticals; and the closing down of air and road travel and oceanic shipping.

Those familiar with the “Austrian” theory of capital and invest-

ment understand that not only does all production take time, whether it be days, weeks, months, and sometimes years but that production processes entail interconnected and interdependent stages of production that often crisscross counties and continents. There must be a constant and continuous flow of inputs passing through these stages of production in timely and coordinated fashions for that vast array of finished goods and services that we daily take for granted to be there for our consumer purchases, day-after-day, with few if any glitches along the way.

How will these decisions be made if markets do not determine and guide the process?

Break or block these intricate and time-taking structures of production, and discontinuities and delays are inevitable and inescapable between the respective production stages that connect when production begins and final goods are ready for sale. In addition, the patterns of relative prices and wages that ensure intertemporal and spatial coordination among all the competing and complementary sectors of the global economy are, likewise, distorted and misbalanced

by government price controls and restrictions; this delays the needed rebalancing of what is to be produced, when, and with what combinations of inputs (including labor) in the appropriate places and steps in the global production processes.

Political controls versus markets and prices

What does the report propose in place of freer markets and competitive pricing for inputs and outputs? Nothing less than comprehensive government pre-planning for the next pandemic or financial crises. International government agreements will determine the manufacture and distribution of vaccines and antibiotics; stockpiles and political allocations for global vaccine “equity” will replace markets, prices, and competition for redirecting scarce supplies or entrepreneurial innovation and incentivizing what is to be done, by whom, or where.

How will these decisions be made if markets do not determine and guide the process? There is only one answer, of course, for an “expert” like Mariana Mazzucato: politics. The report talks about equity, social fairness, and inclusiveness. But what do these words mean in the real world of political horse-trading other than the pressure and

power of politicians, overseeing bureaucrats, and the influence of special interest voting groups and ideologues playing the manipulation game to get what they want? Here is a recipe for even more economic irrationality and political corruption, if there ever was one.

The real agenda

This gets to the real ideological bull in the “Economic Resilience” China shop. Guiding the thinking and proposals in all of the report is the hysteria over and the presumption that climate change is so threatening to humankind that all power must be turned over to the governments of the world to plan the destiny of the planet.

The report says that according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), for global temperatures to stay within a 2-degree rise in the decades ahead, the expenditure by the countries of the world of “USD76.9 trillion [in green] investment per year in transport, water, sanitation, energy supply and use is needed every year until 2030.”

It is estimated that global GDP in 2020 came to \$84.5 trillion, with projections suggesting that global GDP may be \$122.4 trillion by 2026. This means that the entire

world would have to get by with just a few trillion dollars of production and consumption not related to “saving the planet.” Who will decide, and how, whose standards of living are to be drastically curtailed to “retool” and redesign everything, everywhere, around the world for years to come?

To “decarbonize” the world, regulations and restrictions will have to dictate and direct everything done by industry and manufacturing. Governments are expected to pick winners and crowd out losers in terms of determining what investments are to be subsidized, supported, or penalized. “The world’s trade and investment will require clear regulatory standards and substantial governmental assistance and coordination,” the report says.

Concerning financing, governments must spend the necessary monies through “guaranteed public purchases and regulatory standards” for chosen solar and wind technologies, as well as other alternative energy sources. Price controls on carbon use and emissions will be designed to crowd out fossil fuels as “renewables” replace them.

Controlling everything and everyone

This “greening” of the world economy will be combined “with a

broader social and environmental justice agenda to ensure good jobs and adequate social welfare.” Furthermore, “To meet their climate ambitions, governments will have to take a leading role phasing out and standing up whole industries, an unprecedented remaking of economies that must take place on a global basis. For this to be successful, changes to the way we produce, work, and trade should be undertaken.”

“Governments will have to take a leading role phasing out and standing up whole industries.”

From technological choices, to bailing out industries and enterprises, to transportation restructuring, to facilitating educational paths considered most conducive to the new green world to come, to redesigning entire cities and how people live, there will be virtually nothing outside of or free from the social engineering hand of governments and the “global green deal” central planners.

A wrong balance, the report says, has too long been in place that has focused too much on “fiscal discipline” imposed on governments that has “crowded out public investment.” Government spending

should be used to get private companies to invest in and produce with the methods of production that result in those final products the political paternalists and social engineers consider best for all.

As part of this, any short-run attention to budget deficit reduction must be ended. In her *Project Syndicate* article, in summarizing these themes, Dr. Mazzucato said that government “public spending must be channeled through new contractual and institutional mechanisms that measure and incentivize the creation of long-term public value rather than short-term private profit.” More government borrowing and increases in the money supply continue to be the order of the day to pay for the coming brave new green world.

Imposing labor unions

This refocusing away from market pricing and free-enterprise profitability is also reflected in the report’s proposals for labor standards and participation. Labor unionization should be fostered and supported, with no mention of whether those expected to join labor unions and pay mandatory dues to the union leaders want union membership or representation. The political paternalists say

unions are “good” for the ordinary working person, so it must be true. Therefore, they are expected or likely even forced into a labor union. End of story.

How will this affect the efficiency and market competitiveness of the businesses upon whom unionization is to be forced? The authors of the “Plan” simply say, “the means [unionization for social justice] must be consistent with our collective values even if they do not produce the lowest cost solution from a financial perspective.”

In other words, this is the abolition of market-based pricing of labor, or any concern with whether people are employed where and how they may contribute their highest value-added services in terms of producing what it is that consumers want and are willing to pay for. Wage and work conditions in the new green economy world will be a matter of what is worked out between union leaders and those making political decisions in government.

More government control over the Internet

Finally, concerning “digital governance,” the authors mask their ideas in concerns about cyber security and Internet terrorism and

blackmail. But it all adds up to a politicization of social media and the worldwide web, in general. Referring to “monopolistic behavior” by digital corporations, they have no hesitancy in turning control over the size, service, and content oversight to the largest and most threatening monopoly in any society — the government and its coercive powers.

The authors mask their ideas in concerns about cyber security and Internet terrorism.

But that’s because the report’s authors likely presume that the “expert” regulators and overseers either will be themselves or people just like them. Surely, the paternalist has a confident and clear conscience that she or someone else with her views and values will always do the right thing for the good of all. So, what is to be feared in giving her or her ideological partners control over the modern means by which humanity increasingly communicates with each other about almost everything?

Oh, and by the way, another reason the digital world must be placed under the controlling wing of government is that “mining crypto-assets is associated with life

threatening levels of pollution” and increasing inequality. To save the planet, governments just have to stop any development of alternative means of payment and exchange outside of their own monopoly paper monies. Stopping the evolution of potential competing monies is, by implication, “for the children” and their future well-being on the planet. What can trump that?

Imposing green planning

The report ends with a summarizing of how much the world and everyone in it needs an agenda like the one they’ve outlined. Without the leading and guiding hand of government and advisors like the authors, the world is doomed. The closing page has a photograph of a wide, blue sky with a formation of military aircraft cutting through the air, with the white smoke streams following in the aircrafts’ wake.

**The collective good, you see,
comes before the good of any one
or any number of individuals.**

In an era of “progressive” paternalists who normally ridicule imageries of militarism and war power, what a subliminal message is offered that standing behind the government’s determination to socially

engineer the remaking of a green new world is the brute force of politics to impose it on everyone, everywhere.

It is not surprising that Mariana Mazzucato is one of the co-authors of this report on Global Economic Resilience. She has long been a proselytizer for what she has called “mission-making,” that is, governments constructing society-wide plans that contain targeted “missions” to which and for which large segments of the population must be expected in their corner of the world to conform, so as to assure the mission’s success. She grandiosely speaks of “social values” that should take precedence over the mere and far less important, self-interested values of the individual members of the global community.

The collective good, you see, comes before the good of any one or any number of individuals. But what is the collective good? Who defines it, and who knows what its shape and content is or should be? Seemingly, some are given these insights and understandings that other mortals do not. Dr. Mazzucato bandies about these and other terms as if no confusion or cloudiness exists in their use. I stopped counting the number of times in this report on Global Economic Re-

silience that there appeared the words, “solidarity,” or “inclusion,” or “equity,” or “social fairness” or “social value,” or “planet saving” goals and purposes.

It is as if the mere repetition of them, over and over again, magically gives meaning and substance to them, like in some primitive religious chant. In fact, they are just the rhetorical ritualism of the modern political paternalists and social engineers who basically believe they know what is right and good for everyone.

Repeating these words does not and cannot hide the fact that they are empty terms that offer nothing other than a linguistic cover for those like Dr. Mazzucato who want to be the political and social dictators of the world. They are on, as she calls it, a “mission” from which no dissent should be offered, because how can anyone disagree with, well, the “good” and the “right” that somehow she and those like her just know to be the case?

Loss of freedom

We have seen this political and ideological euphoria before in the early stages of the various collectivist systems of the last century. Soviet five-year plans, Nazi four-year plans, fascist corporatist “totali-

tarian” plans. Now the Green New Deal paternalist plans to save the planet.

Lost in all this new utopian euphoria is the simple but essential truth and reality that those who dream these planning dreams lack the knowledge, wisdom, and ability to better guide and direct the affairs of billions of people than each of those multitudes of individual human beings themselves. What they lack, including Dr. Mazzucato, is any humility or hesitancy about their coercing paternalism.

In 1960, Austrian economist Friedrich A. Hayek, while participating in a conference on Man’s Contracting World in an Expanding Universe, emphasized:

The problem of social order is predominately a problem of how we can best cope with our constitutional ignorance of most of the facts that guide human action. It is a problem created by the fact that those who determine the social order and who guide policy can know only an infinitesimal fraction of the total human knowledge that should be used.

The chief task of an effective social order is thus to as-

sure the utilization of knowledge that can exist only in dispersed form among millions or billions of individuals. Now, the main point I want to submit to you is that freedom is the most successful method man has found to cope with that constitutional ignorance of all individuals, and to achieve the maximum utilization of knowledge. Coercion is bad precisely because it prevents the individual from making the fullest use of his knowledge and capacities, which are always unique in some respects.

The dilemma, Hayek went on to explain, is that when government intervention, control, and planning are evaluated and judged on a pragmatic case-by-case basis, the rationale for the particular intervention, control, or plan will seem clear cut in terms of a specific goal, target, or outcome that can possibly be achieved with the use of political paternalism on such a pragmatic basis. On the other hand, what is lost or given up is some imaginary alternative and uncertain “might-have-been” if government had left things to the purposes and decisions of multitudes of separate indi-

viduals in their respective corners of society.

Or as Hayek expressed it:

The reasons offered for the restriction of liberty are always the achievement of some concrete and particular aim, whereas the losses that result from the restriction of liberty are almost by definition the unknown things which might have happened had things been left free.... Therefore, in a policy that believes it can balance in every particular instance between liberty and control, liberty is bound to lose out.

Following one pragmatically decided interventionist decision after another can only lead, cumulatively, to the chipping away and the loss of liberty in society as a whole:

If nobody can hope to master more than a small fraction of the knowledge we know that society utilizes, the chief need is increasingly an impersonal mechanism for the coordination of individual actions. The order at which we aim must therefore rest not on specific commands, but on the spon-

taneous adjustment of the separate individuals to each other.

That is, a free-market economy guided by a competitive price system.

Such a rejection of a free-market order accompanied by a blind confidence in the possibilities of political paternalism have been seen already in the 20th century experiments in communism, fascism, and Nazism. Just give “us” the governmental decision-making power and “we” will set all things right in terms of some vision of a bright and beautiful future. One may only hope that the human cost and brutality of this latest variation on the central planning theme comes nowhere near its predecessors.

We can only hope that mass murder and brutal tyranny is somehow avoided this time around. But with the resulting subordination of individual freedom, market competition, and the price system to a Global Green Plan, this new green world will lack the essential ingredients for determining whether or not what is produced is really wanted by the consuming members of society, or whether the scarce resources of the society are in any manner brought allocated and utilized

in a way reflecting the actual opportunity costs of their use in serving preferred consumer ends.

What we may see imposed are arbitrary and economically irrational government designs over the various private means at our individual disposal, with neither our input nor voluntary consent. The political paternalists and social engineers are giddy with dreams of even greater power than they already possess. The rest of us may have to bear the burdens for their command-and-control dreams to come true.

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NEXT MONTH:
**“Can Capitalism Survive?
80 Years After
Schumpeter’s Answer”
by Richard M. Ebeling**

How Government Meddling Ruined Higher Education, Part 2

by George C. Leef



With the expansion of federal loans, the cost of attending college began to increase dramatically. College administrators realized that they could charge students more, since most of them were availing themselves of money that the government dangled in front of them. Tuition and fees rose much faster than the rate of inflation. President Reagan’s education secretary, William Bennett, explained in 1987 that the rapid cost increases were due to the availability of federal student aid money, but Congress just kept on increasing the amount of aid available because it was supposedly imperative to “keep college affordable.” Few politicians

cared that college was becoming unaffordable precisely because of their “generosity” with student aid.

It’s important to note that federal student aid money could be used only by students at colleges and universities that were approved by accrediting agencies designated by the Education Department. Accreditation from those agencies was meant to ensure that students were attending “quality” schools rather than mere degree mills, but obtaining their stamps of approval always entailed scrutiny of inputs and procedures, not whether students were actually learning. In 2011, a book by sociologists Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa entitled *Academically Adrift* showed that at least one-third of American college students were coasting through to their degrees with scant intellectual gains.

Summing up, federal intervention into higher education resulted in a huge increase in the percentage of Americans going to college, a corresponding increase in the cost of college, and a sharp decline in the educational value of a college education.

But wait — there’s more.

Student debt skyrockets

Many of the students who have been lured into college with easy

federal loans amass considerable amounts of debt while pursuing their degrees, which often takes five years or more. Total student loan debt now exceeds one trillion dollars. Default rates have been rising as many students find out too late that the money they can earn after college isn't enough for them to cover the cost of their debt payments. Politicians looked at those circumstances and said, "This is a crisis — the government has to do something!"

Those generous repayment provisions mean that the taxpayers are stuck with the loss.

One thing they have done to ease the supposedly intolerable debt burdens that college students get themselves into is to make repayment easier. The government allows student debtors to sign up for a program whereby they pay a "reasonable" amount each month based on their income, and after paying that amount for 20 years, any remaining balance is wiped out.

If, however, the student takes a "public service" job working for government or many non-profit organizations, his debt is wiped out after only 10 years of payments.

Of course, those generous repayment provisions mean that the

taxpayers are stuck with the loss. Politicians never worry about sticking the taxpayers with debt when they can do something that looks "compassionate."

And if easy repayment and substantial debt cancellation weren't enough, we now have politicians pitching plans for "free college." Such plans would force American taxpayers to fork over yet more money to pay for dubious education.

Credential inflation

Another nasty side effect of the federal meddling in higher education is the phenomenon of credential inflation. What I mean by that is the way employers (including government) demand that applicants have college credentials for jobs that do not call for anything more than basic trainability. Work that has traditionally been done by individuals with high school educations is now blocked off to anyone who doesn't have college credentials — even if their college studies have nothing whatsoever to do with the job. For example, today you often find that job postings for secretarial positions state that applicants must have a college degree.

Credential inflation occurs because, thanks to federal college subsidies, we have a tremendous glut of

people in the labor market who have their degrees. Therefore, employers rule out people with lower educational levels — people who might be less easy to train — since they can fill their personnel needs with people who have at least shown that they can manage to accumulate enough college credits for a degree. I'm not saying that it should be illegal for employers to discriminate against people who don't have "enough" formal education, but it is very wasteful to require that people have gone to college before they can be considered for jobs that most high school kids could easily do.

Colleges go "woke"

College education today has become heavily politicized. When colleges began their big expansion in the late 1960s, they also began hiring new faculty members who were not so much scholars as activists who saw their mission as changing the way students thought. From their point of view, the right way to think was "progressive." (I maintain that a more accurate term is "statist.") They had been schooled mostly by leftist professors themselves and entered the teaching ranks with a dedication to help solve the world's problems through more government. At first, those new faculty members infiltrat-

ed fields such as English and history and the social sciences, where they slanted the material in favor of leftist interpretations wherever possible, and against the ideas of individual liberty, private property, limited government, and so on.

Students who offer "wrong" ideas are rebuked.

Later, new fields were created such as Women's Studies, Black Studies, Hispanic Studies, and others where there was no true body of knowledge but merely a conglomeration of opinions, overwhelmingly hostile to American society. The professors who teach those courses hardly bother to make any pretense of objectivity or scholarly detachment. Students who offer "wrong" ideas are rebuked; those who agree with the professor are rewarded with high grades.

The ideological monoculture of many academic departments has now spread to entire campuses. On many, an intellectual intolerance reigns. Students and faculty members who dare to disagree with leftist notions are likely to be targeted for investigation by "bias incident reporting teams" or threatened with termination. Instead of places where truth can be sought through

research and debate, our colleges and universities more closely resemble medieval churches where heresy was punishable by death.

Not all students succumb to the indoctrination, but many who entered college with statist beliefs leave it as thoroughgoing zealots. Again, the taxpayers are compelled to finance this proselytizing.

In only some 60 years, federal intervention transformed higher education from a rather low-cost service into one that requires prodigious outlays and heavy debt loads, from an efficient forum for teaching and research into a playground where accredited institutions sell increasingly dubious credentials. It catalyzed credential inflation such that people who don't go to college are blocked off from many careers. It spurred the foolish ideas that everyone should have "access" to college and the nation's prosperity depends on putting as many people through college as possible.

Higher education in America has become a hideous, wasteful mess, but what can we do?

Our regrettable status quo is very much to the liking of the statist who are firmly in control. It is helping them achieve their goal of a controlled society. They will not permit any small changes, much

less the radical change we need, which is to get the government out of the business of subsidizing higher education.

Can't those of us who believe in liberty fight back to reclaim our higher education system? I regret to say that it's a lost cause. Most administrators are in league with the statist, and even when they aren't, they prefer the comfortable status quo, selling useless degrees at high cost, to the free market. Very few faculty members remain who would put themselves at risk by arguing for a return to non-politicized education with high standards. Although a few politicians talk about "reforms" in higher education, they have no real clout.

All we can do is to preserve the autonomy of the small number of colleges that don't take federal money and are not under Washington's thumb (the three that come to mind are Hillsdale, Grove City, and Wyoming Catholic) and try to establish new, non-governmental colleges that can offer students true education at lower cost.

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Some feel [the] idea of justice is a cold, heartless concept. They want the state to produce social and economic justice as well. They want justice to include a more equal distribution of the goods of this world. They want charity and sympathy to be effected by the power of the law. In the process of broadening the meaning of justice to include these political activities, real justice is destroyed. The use of force to take from some to give to others is the very opposite of justice. Economic equality or economic redistribution cannot be effected by force apart from an unequal, and thus unjust, treatment of individual citizens. When this becomes the policy of the state, justice no longer prevails.

— Francis E. Mahaffy

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