

Newsbytes

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

...and the planet continues it's prophesied lurch to the left...global dictatorship coming. Regardless, this guy is scary - MD

Red Britain Looms

Theodore Dalrymple

Brexit chaos and Tory failures make a Jeremy Corbyn-led government—and flat-out socialism—more likely.

Thanks to the current imbroglio over Brexit, Britain could soon be Venezuela without the oil or the warm weather. The stunning incompetence of the last two Tory prime ministers, David Cameron and Theresa May, might result in a Labour government, one led by Jeremy Corbyn, a man who has long admired Hugo Chavez for having reminded him—though not the people of Venezuela—what governments can do for the poor and the achievement of social justice.

Corbyn's second in command, John McDonnell, would, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, be in charge of the economy. Only five years ago, he said that the historical figures he most admired were Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky, and though he later claimed that he meant it as a joke, he is not otherwise known as an ironist.

Two days ago, speaking to the party faithful in London, he argued for the nationalization of land. He also favors nationalizing railways and public utilities, which can be done only through rates of taxation so high that they would amount to the nationalization of everything—with a resultant economic collapse—or by outright confiscation, thus destroying any faith in the rule of law for generations. It could also be done by agreeing on a price of sale and then inflating the currency afterward, so that billions will not buy you an egg.

An economic disaster, far from deterring such a government, would be of enormous advantage to it, if you assume that its purpose is the exercise of control in the name of irreversible social and political change. In his speech, McDonnell, who is fluent in Soviet-style langue de bois, said:

“The state is a set of institutions; it's also a relationship, it's a relationship of dominance, particularly a dominance of working class people about how they have to behave, how they can receive any forms of support or benefits from the state, the parameters in which they operate or even the parameters in which they think, to conform to the existing distribution of wealth and power within our society.”

McDonnell's nationalized industries will be owned and run by the workers, just as they were supposed to be owned and run after the Russian Revolution. The state will wither away, as in Marxist theory, though not in Soviet practice, once all power has been handed to him: "The role of politicians is to open the doors of [the state] and transform the relationship from one of dominance into one of democratic engagement and participation. It's that whole idea that you gain power to empower."

McDonnell's own party will not be just another political party in a competitive, pluralistic polity. Rather, it will be modelled on vanguardist movements from the glorious history of the twentieth century. "We've got to convert ordinary members and supporters into real cadres who understand and analyze society and who are continually building the ideas," explained our future economic minister.

For McDonnell, ideas are "built" rather than thought—the better to be imposed. Not an ignorant man, he knows perfectly well the totalitarian connotation of the word "cadres" in this context; but in any case, he makes clear his commitment to and desire for socialist monomania. Answering Oscar Wilde's criticism that socialism requires too much of its adherent's time in the evenings, McDonnell said: "We can't lose this opportunity by lack of commitment . . . If we waste this opportunity, in 10 or 15 or 20 years, you will be kicking yourself, thinking, 'Why did I miss that opportunity because I just wanted another night in?'"

It isn't difficult to predict what will happen. The arrival in power of such men will produce an immediate crisis, which they will blame on capitalism, the world economic system, the Rothschilds, and so forth. They will use the crisis to justify further drastic measures. Already, a Labour Member of Parliament, sitting for a constituency in one of the richest areas of Europe, argues for the wholesale, de facto confiscation of houses. It is but a short step to communal apartments or the nationalization of bathrooms, justified by the bad housing conditions that some people undoubtedly endure. Other charming proposals include the erection of tower blocks of public housing apartments in old villages and leafy suburbs, à la Ceausescu. If everyone cannot enjoy beauty, why should anyone?

Under the British electoral system, this could all be brought about by the vote of 35 percent of the adult population, which would give Corbyn, McDonnell, et al. constitutional legitimacy to do whatever they want. They want to reduce the voting age to 16. They believe not only the Leninist slogan, "the worse the better," but, where the electorate is concerned, "the more ignorant the better." This is their one original contribution to socialist theory.

None of this is inevitable, but thanks to the bungling of Brexit, it is considerably closer. For the moment, only Theresa May stands between us and the full socialization of Great Britain—that's a bit like taking refuge from a hurricane behind a wet bus ticket.

Theodore Dalrymple is a contributing editor of *City Journal*, the Dietrich Weismann Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, and the author of many books, including *Out into the Beautiful World* and the recently published *Grief and Other Stories*.

If you caught my update last month on China's Social Credit System, this should serve as a chilly warning that it's coming to the West too:

Your Credit Score Isn't a Reflection of Your Moral Character ...But the Department of Homeland Security seems to think it is.

By JOSH LAUER

NOV 23 Future Tense

Your credit score is an attempt to answer this question: what kind of person racks up debts and doesn't pay them? These important three-digit numbers summarize our statistical risk for lenders. The allure of the credit score is its clarity: It cuts through appearances and converts our messy lives into an easily readable metric. The difference between a score of 750 and 600 is obvious. One is an excellent bet for a lender to make; the other is not. On balance, credit scores have made borrowing more convenient, and fairer, for consumers.

Credit scores are specialized algorithms designed for one purpose only: to predict future bill-paying delinquencies, for any reason.

But the U.S. Department of Homeland Security wants to use credit scores for an entirely different purpose, one they were never built for and are not suited for. The agency charged with safeguarding the nation would like to make immigrants submit their credit scores when applying for legal resident status.

The new rule, contained in a proposal signed by DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, is designed to help immigration officers identify applicants likely to become a "public charge"—that is, a person primarily dependent on government assistance for food, housing, or medical care. According to the proposal, credit scores and other financial records (including credit reports, the comprehensive individual files from which credit scores are generated) would be reviewed to predict an applicant's chances of "self-sufficiency." The proposal is open for public comment until Dec. 10.

Setting aside the proposal's moral abdication when it comes to the needy, we should be troubled by another injustice: its abuse of personal metrics.

The proposal's "totality of circumstances" framework offers few specifics as to exactly how credit scores would figure into immigration decisions. Tables in the document suggest that an applicant's credit score would be one of many factors viewed holistically and in relation to other heavily weighed pieces of information, such as whether the individual is employed, has received public benefits, or has an expensive medical condition. A "good" credit score—one at or above the national average, according to the proposal—would be considered a positive factor in the application. (The current average FICO score is just over 700.) A low credit score would be treated as a "negative finding."

Makes sense, right? People with low credit scores are loafers and can't be trusted to take care of themselves. Unfortunately, this is not what traditional credit scores measure. They are specialized algorithms designed for one purpose: to predict future bill-paying delinquencies, for any reason. This includes late payments or defaults caused by insurmountable medical debts, job loss, and divorce—three leading causes of personal bankruptcy—as well as overspending and poor money management.

Credit scores do not distinguish between these various causes. A person whose score plunges because of sudden unemployment is the same as a person sunk by foolish spending sprees. Credit scores can also

be wrong if the underlying data in credit files is flawed. A Federal Trade Commission study found “potentially material errors” in 1 in 5 credit reports.

DHS’s proposed use of credit scores points to a much larger problem involving metrics. As more of our everyday interactions produce data, more of our lives can be quantified and turned into scalable measures. Our productivity, health and fitness, internet searches, and consumer behavior are all converted into behind-the-scenes metrics. Our social connections—numbers of friends, followers, likes, and retweets—are displayed as public tallies. We even score each other, Black Mirror–style, on ride-sharing apps.

Metrics save time and effort by reducing complexity to something simple and comparable. Why read through dozens of contradictory reviews when you can look at an overall star rating? The problem is that these metrics, though useful in one context, are easily transposed to others. At worst, they can become proxies for judging a person’s overall trustworthiness and value.

Credit scores are a classic example of this kind of metric creep. Developed in the late 1950s, statistical scoring systems were designed to replace the subjective decision-making of credit managers. Prior to credit scoring, borrowers were interviewed in person by credit managers, who took their applications and assessed their moral character. Credit scores not only sped up the evaluation process but also eliminated the bias—notably, the sexism and racism—that plagued credit decisions.

Though credit scores would turn creditworthiness into an objective financial metric, the scores themselves remained deeply connected to assumptions about moral character. This view is pervasive in ads for credit monitoring services. Their caricatures of clueless twentysomethings repeatedly make this point: People with low scores are immature and irresponsible.

This view is also reflected in the insurance industry’s use of credit scores to set premiums. What, you ask, is the logical relationship between credit scores and car wrecks? According to insurers, the kind of people that submit accident claims are the same kind of people that don’t pay their bills. Here the common moral denominator is cloaked in statistics: guilt by correlation. (Several states have banned this use of credit scores.)

DHS’s proposed use of credit scores involves a similar moral syllogism, and it illustrates the problem of metric creep. Credit scores do not predict whether an individual will become a public charge. And they do not predict financial self-sufficiency. They are only useful in this context if one believes credit scores reveal something about a person’s character. In other words, if one believes that people with low credit scores are moochers and malingerers. Given the Trump administration’s hostility toward (brown-skinned) immigrants, this conflation of credit scores and morality is not surprising.

In a world awash with data, it will become increasingly tempting to make sweeping judgments about others—especially strangers—with these kinds of metrics. They might include generalized consumer scores, fitness scores, or social media scores. Credit scores already serve as implicit measures of our personalities, whether used by insurance companies to identify reckless drivers, landlords to screen tenants, or dating sites to pair couples. (Yes, this is a thing.)

The current apotheosis of quantified reputation, however, is China’s social credit system. Described in the Western press as an Orwellian national credit score, the program ranks Chinese citizens according to their performance as borrowers, consumers, and fellow citizens. Those with poor rankings—public smokers, slow taxpayers, people who spend too much on video games, among other red-flagged behaviors—are deprived of access to jobs, travel, discounts, and other social perks. You can’t ride a train without being reminded of the system’s perpetual judgment.

The totalizing ambition of the Chinese system is startling, but we should be just as concerned with the slippery slope toward our own metrified society. In the United States, our dystopia will not consist of a centralized government system but of private platforms, perhaps several of them, whose gamified metrics become de facto summations of our reputations.

Barring a sudden backlash, the DHS proposal will skate into practice next month. This is a mistake, and it sets a terrible precedent. As black-boxed algorithms mediate more of our relationships—with government, businesses, and one another—we must resist the impulse to treat people as the sum of their numbers. Metrics, when well-conceived and applied as designed, can offer useful predictive power. When abused, they are nothing more than cheap moral litmus tests.

Future Tense is a partnership of Slate, New America, and Arizona State University that examines emerging technologies, public policy, and society.

Statement on the Election of a New Interpol President

by Garry Kasparov and Members of the Standing Committee of the Free Russia Forum
November 21, 2018

On November 21, the election of a new President of Interpol will take place. The leading candidate for this post is the representative of the Russian Federation, Major General of the Russian Police Alexander Prokopchuk. The Standing Committee of the Free Russia Forum expresses its categorical protest against the election of this candidate to the post of head of Interpol. Such an influential organization as Interpol cannot be led by a representative and functionary of an unfree nation that violates the rights and freedoms of its own citizens, violates its international obligations, annexes the territories of other states, and is currently the protagonist of several wars of aggression.

It is well-established that Russia has abused Interpol as a tool to persecute abroad the political opponents of the ruling Russian regime who have been forced to emigrate. Critics and other targets of the Putin regime residing outside of Russia have repeatedly been victimized by Interpol mechanisms such as Red Notices and "diffusion" notices, as a result of which they were detained and put through lengthy legal procedures before they managed to convince Interpol of the political nature of their persecution — often requiring political intervention on their behalf.

A few examples: members of the Standing Committee of the Free Russia Forum Leonid Nevzlin and Ilya Ponomarev, founder and CEO of the Hermitage Capital Management investment fund William Browder, employee of the Anti-Corruption Foundation Nikita Kulachenkov, anti-fascist Peter Silaev, Voina activist Oleg Vorotnikov, Izhevsk journalist and activist Andrei Nekrasov, Ulyanovsk blogger Sergey Kryukov, former head of the Tutaevsky municipal district of the Yaroslavl region Jan Andreev.

This list could be continued. The election of the official representative of the Russian Federation to the leading position of Interpol will reinforce the negative trends in the work of the international police. In the hands of an operative of the Russian police, Interpol can become a dangerous weapon in the Kremlin's deadly campaign against representatives of the Russian opposition abroad and other opponents of Putin's regime outside of Russia.

Of special concern is that Interpol can be used against citizens of other states who find themselves in the territories annexed by the Russian Federation. For example, pro-Ukrainian activists who lived or are now living in the territory of the illegally-annexed Crimea, and who were subjected to illegal persecution by the Russian occupation authorities, could become victims of international prosecution. Would Interpol target these people on Russian request? It is difficult to imagine otherwise should a Russian official becomes the

head of Interpol.

The candidate for the post of the head of Interpol also raises questions. Alexander Prokopchuk is a major general of the Russian police, an organization known for its corruption and persecution of representatives of the Russian opposition. Prokopchuk is directly subordinate to President Vladimir Putin and, of course, is an obedient tool in his hands. In addition, over the past few years, Prokopchuk headed the Russian National Interpol Bureau. It was during his tenure at this post that cases of unlawful use of Interpol mechanisms for targeting opponents of the Putin regime outside Russia became more frequent.

There is no doubt that should he become the head of Interpol, this Russian official will only intensify the persecution of opponents of the Russian authorities. The Russian Federation is not a democratic, legal state. There is no independent judiciary, no concept of fair application of justice. A dictatorial regime has been formed inside Russia and is pursuing its opponents both inside the country and abroad. Political repression, the murder of political opponents, the use of chemical weapons on the territory of other states, interference in the internal political processes in Western countries and other hybrid operations are just a few of the illicit methods used by the Putin regime against its enemies.

To entrust a representative of this regime with such an important function as the leadership of the international police is absolutely intolerable. The Standing Committee of the Free Russia Forum appeals to the members of the General Assembly of Interpol to abandon any support for the representative of Russia for the post of head of Interpol.

<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/13333/interpol-president-election-russia>

Ok...seriously?:

Scientists have proposed a new method to fight global warming: sun-dimming aerosols released into earth's atmosphere.

Research from scientists at Harvard and Yale universities was recently published in a journal called Environmental Research Letters which proposes using a technique called stratospheric aerosol injection to fight against climate change. The proposed technique would see scientists launching sulfate particles into the Earth's lower stratosphere at altitudes up 12 miles high.

Currently, the technology exists but there are no aircraft suitable to carry the particles and "developing a new, purpose-built tanker with substantial payload capabilities would neither be technologically difficult nor prohibitively expensive," the researchers stated. The researchers have estimated that it would cost \$3.5 billion to launch a system in 15 years time and would cost \$2.25 billion a year to maintain over the course of those 15 years.

"We make no judgment about the desirability of SAI," the report states. "We simply show that a hypothetical deployment program commencing 15 years hence, while both highly uncertain and ambitious, would indeed be technically possible from an engineering perspective. It would also be remarkably inexpensive."

The report also acknowledges that cooperation between multiple countries around the world would be needed in order to make the project viable. The report also conceded that the technique is not without its downsides: it could negatively affect crop yields, lead to droughts or cause even more extreme weather.

The proposal does not discuss the issue of greenhouse gases which are reportedly a leading cause in climate change.

The authors of the report themselves were quite skeptical, Philippe Thalmann of the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, states: “From the point of view of climate economics, solar radiation management is still a much worse solution than greenhouse gas emissions: more costly and much more risky over the long run.”

David Archer of the Department of Geophysical Science at the University of Chicago commented: “The problem with engineering climate in this way is that it’s only a temporary Band-Aid covering a problem that will persist essentially forever, actually hundreds of thousands of years for fossil fuel CO2 to finally go away naturally. It will be tempting to continue to procrastinate on cleaning up our energy system, but we’d be leaving the planet on a form of life-support. If a future generation failed to pay their climate bill they would get all of our warming all at once.”

Lucas Nolan is a reporter for Breitbart News covering issues of free speech and online censorship.