

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

COVID-19 Creates Trojan Horse For Increased Smartphone Surveillance

The coronavirus outbreak is proving to be the Trojan horse that justifies increased digital surveillance via our smartphones.

All over the world, starting with China - the suspected origin of the COVID-19 outbreak - governments are increasing surveillance of citizens using their smartphones. The trend is taking off like wildfire; in China citizens now require a smartphone application's permission to travel around the country and internationally.

The application is AliPay by Ant Financial, the finance affiliate controlled by Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. co-founder Jack Ma, and Tencent Holdings Ltd.'s WeChat. Citizens now require a green health code to travel.

If you have been placed under quarantine the government will install CCTV cameras to point at your apartment door to make sure you don't leave.

China isn't the only country looking towards smartphones to monitor their citizens; Israel and Poland have also implemented their own spying to monitor those suspected or confirmed to be infected with the COVID-19 virus.

Israel has gone the more extreme route, and has now given itself authority to surveil any citizen without a court warrant. Israel's security agency Shin Bet is using citizens' cell phone location data to track where they've been so they can enforce quarantine controls and monitor the movements of those infected. Controversially, the data has been collected over the past few years and was intended for counterterrorism purposes.

Poland on the other hand is requiring those diagnosed with COVID-19 ordered to self-isolate to send authorities a selfie using an app. Which, if Poles don't respond back in 20 minutes with a smiling face, they risk a visit from police, Dailymail reported.

Singapore has asked citizens to download an app which uses Bluetooth to track whether they've been near anyone diagnosed with the virus; and Taiwan, although not using a smartphone, has introduced "electronic fences" which alert police if suspected patients leave their homes.

In South Korea, the government used records such as credit card transactions, smartphone location data and CCTV video, to create a system where confirmed cases were tracked. The result was a map that could tell people whether they had gone near a coronavirus carrier.

Meanwhile, here in the U.S. as reported by the Washington Post, smartphones are being used by a variety of companies to "anonymously" collect user data and track if social distancing orders are being adhered to.

Beyond that, the mobile phone industry is discussing how to monitor the spread of COVID-19. If that's not enough, the government wants to work with big social tech giants like Google, Facebook, and others, to track the spread of COVID-19.

A new live index shows the increase of the police state by Top10VPN, a Digital Rights group. Top10VPN lists a total of 15 countries which have already started measures to track the phones of coronavirus patients, ranging from anonymized aggregated data to monitor the movement of people more generally, to the tracking of individual suspected patients and their contacts, known as "contact tracing."

Samuel Woodhams, Top10VPN's Digital Rights Lead who compiled the index, warned that the world could slide into permanently increased surveillance.

"Without adequate tracking, there is a danger that these new, often highly invasive, measures will become the norm around the world," he told Business Insider. "Although some may appear entirely legitimate, many pose a risk to citizens' right to privacy and freedom of expression."

"Given how quickly things are changing, documenting the new measures is the first step to challenging potential overreach, providing scrutiny and holding corporations and governments to account."

That's not the only live index, a company called Unacast that collects and analyzes phone GPS location data also launched one. Except this is a "Social Distancing Scoreboard" that grades, county by county, monitoring who is following social distancing rules.

As Activist Post previously wrote while discussing the increase of a police surveillance state, these measures being put into place now will likely remain long after the pandemic has stopped and the virus has run its course. That's the everlasting effect that COVID-19 will have on our society. The coronavirus is now classified as a pandemic by the World Health Organization, and it may very well be a legitimate health concern for all of us around the world. But it's the government's response that should worry us all more in the long run.

Albert Fox Cahn, executive director of the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project, a nonprofit advocacy group, raised this concern in an interview with CNBC and pointed to the USA Patriot Act which was signed into law after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The legislation gives federal government broad surveillance powers to aid their counterterrorism efforts. But the law, which was initially due to expire in 2005, was renewed and earlier this month, got another short-term renewal until later this year.

"We have absolutely no reason to believe that the government agencies that are eager to expand their power in response to COVID-19 will be willing to see those authorities lapse once the virus is eradicated," Cahn told CNBC.

Pope Francis Invites Political Leaders To Sign 'Global Pact'

By Paul BoisDailyWire.com

Further signaling his acceptance of globalism during an age of increased nationalism, Pope Francis has now invited leaders to sign a "Global Pact" to create a "new humanism."

"The global event, set to take place at the Vatican on **May 14, 2020**, is themed 'Reinventing the Global Educational Alliance,'" reports LifeSiteNews. "The Pope is inviting representatives of the main religions, international organizations and various humanitarian institutions, as well as key figures from the world of politics, economics and academia, and prominent athletes, scientists and sociologists to sign a 'Global Pact on Education' so as to 'hand on to younger generations a united and fraternal common home.'"

On September 12, the Holy Father said in a video message that "universal solidarity" can only be achieved by way of a "global education pact."

LifeSiteNews noted that Pope Francis issued a "strikingly secular message" on the pact that contained just one reference to God and even echoed former First Lady Hillary Clinton's favorite phrase: "It takes a village to raise a child."

"This [Global Pact] will result in men and women who are open, responsible, prepared to listen, dialogue and reflect with others, and capable of weaving relationships with families, between generations, and with civil society, and thus to create a new humanism," said Pope Francis.

The Pope added that an "alliance" must be formed "between the earth's inhabitants and our 'common home,' which we are bound to care for and respect. An alliance that generates peace, justice and hospitality among all peoples of the human family, as well as dialogue between religions."

The Pope's invitation to a "Global Pact" echoes his recent declaration that the "common good has become global" while criticizing the nation-state for being unable to meet this human need. He, however, did not issue a call for a one-world government.

"In the current situation of globalization not only of the economy but also of technological and cultural exchanges, the nation-state is no longer able to procure the common good of its population alone," Pope Francis told the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in May. "While, according to the principle of subsidiarity, individual nations must be given the power to operate as far as they can, on the other hand, groups of neighboring nations — as is already the case — can strengthen their cooperation by attributing the exercise of certain functions and services to intergovernmental institutions that manage their common interests."

In what was seen as a veiled critique of the pope's stance, Cardinal Raymond Burke later told Rome Life Forum that natural law permits patriotism "in accord with the order written upon the human heart" and "does not make just and legitimate a single global government."

"Before the challenges of our time, there are those who propose and work for a single global government, that is, for the elimination of individual national governments, so that all of humanity would be under the control of a single political authority," said Burke. "For those who are convinced that the only way to achieve the common good is the concentration of all government in a single authority, loyalty to one's homeland or patriotism has become an evil."

The virus is real...the panic is orchestrated. – MD

Wake Up! Your Fears Are Being Manipulated

Peter Van Buren

We have a terrifying example in 9/11 of how this goes. Let's calm down and figure out who has what to gain by stirring panic.

I'm not worried about the guy coughing next to me. I'm worried about the ones who seem to be looking for Jim Jones.

Jones was the charismatic founder of the cult-like People's Temple. Through fear-based control, he took his followers' money and ran their lives. He isolated them in Guyana where he convinced over 900 of them to commit suicide by drinking cyanide-laced grape Kool Aid. Frightened people can be made to do anything. They just need a Jim Jones.

So it is more than a little scary that media zampolit Rick Wilson wrote to his 753,000 Twitter followers: "People who sank into their fear of Trump, who defended every outrage, who put him before what they knew was right, and pretended this chaos and corruption was a glorious new age will pay a terrible price. They deserve it." The tweet was liked over 82,000 times.

The New York Times claims that "the specter of death speeds across the globe, 'Appointment in Samara'-style, ever faster, culling the most vulnerable." Others are claiming Trump will cancel the election to rule as a Jim Jones. "Every viewer who trusts the words of Earhardt or Hannity or Regan could well become a walking, breathing, droplet-spewing threat to the public," opined the Washington Post. Drink the damn Kool Aid and join in the panic en route to Guyana.

The grocery store in Manhattan, just after the announcement of the national state of emergency, was pure panic. I saw a fight break out after an employee brought out paper towels to restock the shelf and someone grabbed the whole carton for himself. The police were called. One cop had to stay behind to oversee the lines at the registers and maintain order. To their credit, the NYPD were cool about it. I heard them talk down one of the fighters, saying, "You wanna go to jail over Fruit Loops? Get a hold of yourself." Outside New York, sales of weapons and ammunition spiked.

Panic seems to be something we turn on and off, or moderate in different ways. Understanding that helps reveal what is really going on.

No need for history. Right now, in real time, behind the backs of the coronavirus, is the every-year, plain-old influenza. Some 12,000 people have died, with over 13 million infected from influenza just between October 2019 and February 2020. The death toll is screamingly higher (as of this writing, coronavirus has infected 60,653 and killed 819 Americans). Bluntly: more people have already died of influenza in the U.S. than from the coronavirus in China, Iran, and Italy combined. Double in fact. To be even blunter, no one really cares, even though a large number of bodies are piling up. Why?

The first cases of the swine flu, H1N1, appeared in April 2009. By the time Obama finally declared a national emergency seven months later, the CDC was reporting that 50 million Americans, one in six people, had been infected, and 10,000 Americans had died. In the early months, Obama had no HHS secretary or appointees to the department's 19 key posts, as well as no commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, no surgeon general, no CDC director. The vacancy at the CDC was especially important because in the early days of the crisis, only they could test for the virus (sound familiar?). Yet some 66 percent of Americans thought the president was protecting them. There was no panic. Why?

Of course, Trump isn't Obama. But if you really think it is that black and white, that one man makes that much difference in the multi-leveled response of the vast federal government, you don't know much about bureaucracy. Most of the people who handled the swine flu are now working the coronavirus, from the rank and file at CDC, HHS, and DHS to headliners like Drs. Andrew Fauci (in government since 1968, worked ebola) and Deborah Brix (in government since 1985, prior to corona was an Obama AIDS appointee).

Maybe the most salient example is 9/11. Those who lived through it remember it well, the color threat alerts, the jihadi cells around every corner, the sense of learned/taught helplessness. The enemy could be anywhere, everywhere, and we had no way to fight back. But because the Dems and Repubs were saying the same thing, there was a patina of camaraderie to it (led by Rudy Giuliani and Mike Bloomberg, where are they now?), not discord. But the panic was still very real.

Why? We panicked when people took steps to ensure we would. We were kept calm when there was nothing to gain by spurring us to panic (the swine flu struck in the midst of the housing crisis; there was enough to worry about). After 9/11, a fearful populace not only supported everything the government wanted to do, they demanded more. Nearly everyone cheered the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and not believing the government meant you were on their side. The Patriot Act, which did away with whole swaths of the Bill of Rights, was overwhelmingly supported. There was no debate over torture, offshore penal colonies, assassinations, kidnappings, and all the little horrors. The American people counted that as competent leadership and re-elected George W. Bush. Fear was political currency.

Need a 2020 example of how to manipulate panic? Following fears of a liquid bomb, the TSA limited carry-on liquids to four ounces for years. Can't be too careful! Yet because of corona, they just changed the limit for hand sanitizer only (which, with its alcohol content, is actually flammable, as opposed to say, shampoo) to 12 ounces. Security theater closed down alongside Broadway tonight.

False metrics are also manipulative because they make fear seem scientific. We ignore the low death rate and focus on the number of tests done. But whatever we do will never be enough, never can be enough, the same way any post-disaster aid is never delivered quick enough because the testing is not (just) about discovering the extent of the virus. For those with naughty motives, it is about creating a race we can't win, so testing becomes proof of failure. Think about the reality of "everyone who wants one should get a test." The U.S. has 331 million people. Testing 10 percent of them in seven days means 4,714,285 individuals a day while the other 90 percent hold their breath. Testing on demand is not realistic at this scale. Selective decision-based testing is what will work.

South Korea, held up as the master of mass testing, conducted at its peak about 20,000 a day. Only 4 percent were positive, a lot of effort for a little reassurance. Tests are valuable to pinpoint the need for social distancing, but blunt tools like mass social distancing (see China) also work. Tests do not cure the virus. You can hide the number of infections by not testing (or claim so to spur fear), but very sick people make themselves known at hospitals and actual dead bodies are hard to ignore. Tests get the press, but actual morbidity is the clearest data point.

There will be time for after-action reviews and arguments over responsibility. That time is never in the midst of things, and one should question the motives of journalists who use rare access to the president to ask questions meant largely to undermine confidence. If they succeed, we will soon turn on each other. You voted for him; that's why we're here now. Vote for Bernie and Trump wins and we all literally die. You bought the last toilet paper. You can afford treatment I can't. You're safe working from home while I have to go out. Just wait until the long-standing concept of medical triage is repackaged by the media as "privilege" and hell breaks loose in the ERs. We could end up killing each other even as the virus fades.

At the very least, we will have been conditioned to new precedents of control over personal decisions, civil life, freedom of movement and assembly, whole city lockdowns, education, and an increasing role for

government and the military in health care. Teachers, don't be surprised if less of you, and fewer classrooms, are needed in the virus-free future, in favor of more classes online. It's almost as if someone is taking advantage of our fears for their own profits and self-interest.

There are many reasons to take prudent action. There are no good reasons for fear and panic. The fear being promoted has no rational basis compared to regular influenza and the swine flu of 2009. We have a terrifying example in 9/11 of how easily manipulated fearful people are. Remaining calm and helping others do so is a big part of what your contribution to the disaster relief could be.

That's one way to see this. Too many right now, however, seem to be looking for Jim Jones.

The expiration date of Western culture

Arutz-Sheva

The five steps in the rise and fall of a nation or culture and how one can slow them down and prevent the fall.

"A time to give birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot that which is planted." (Book of Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3, verse 2).

Every individual, nation, and culture has an "expiration date."

Unlike an individual, a nation and culture can postpone their expiration dates for great lengths of time through proper conduct, because they are essentially an intergenerational relay race where the baton keeps being handed off. As long as they work efficiently to preserve their spirit and belief in the justness of their cause, there is no reason why they should collapse.

Famed 14th century historian Ibn Khaldun identified a cycle pertaining to the rise and fall of a state, which consists of five stages: conquest, social cohesion, expansion, contentment, and decline.

Over the course of history, farming societies were conquered by nomadic warrior tribes, who claimed the lands for themselves. The success of these tribes in managing and developing their newly conquered land and subjects relied on their social cohesion.

As time passed on, their descendants became less attached to the ethos on which the society was formed, weakening them from within. This decline in collective self-awareness led to their eventual disappearance, usually by conquest from a force stronger and more focused than themselves.

Long before Ibn Khaldun, Moses fully understood the dangers posed by an erosion of the ethos on which his society was built. In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses notes: "Beware, lest you forget the Lord, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Forgetting the Lord of course entailed all that He had commanded and taught Israel to do in order to maintain their national awareness and internal strength.

Today, there is widespread concern that the West has forgotten, discarded or, disparaged the Judeo-Christian values that made it the leading culture and the strongest nations in the world.

A glaring example of this is the significance of the mass Arab immigration to Europe.

How else is one to explain the phenomenon in which a liberal society that cherishes individual dignity and the freedom of expression welcomes with open arms many who declare their wish to implement Sharia law, which would be a complete negation of the values of its hosts?

The more one studies the current reality of Europe, the more difficult it is to dispute that it is currently poised in the second portion of the stages of Ibn Khaldun's five staged-cycle: contentment, decline, and conquest.

While the underlying circumstances might differ, there are strong parallels in both America and Israel, each of which is struggling with forces that would happily destroy the institutions and the values that made each nation strong, humane, and vibrant.

While such forces are cloaked in the wrappings of "progress," "reform," and "human rights," they are intensely destructive to the nations that have sanctioned the very hatred that now threatens them.

Exhorting your citizens to stay true, to conserve and preserve their values and traditions seems much less exciting than change, even change for its own sake.

Of course throughout the ages, there has also been push back, with powerful voices warning societies against their self-destructive trajectory.

Unfortunately, such figures have always been significantly disadvantaged by the allure and romance of change, especially revolutionary change. Simply stated, exhorting your citizens to stay true, to conserve and preserve their values and traditions seems much less exciting than change, even change for its own sake.

Such change is also very tempting at first because it creates feelings of social unity, unity for change, and also for condemning those who have dared to defend the traditional norms of society.

There is however, one important instance when conservative and traditional forces can rally widespread national support: when foreign invaders threaten to conquer and to overrun a nation. At such a time, it is the conservative and traditional groups, movements and voices that can wield tremendous influence as active patriotic agents of defense. These are typically not the graybeard thinkers, but the younger generations that understand the threat, and are intent on defeating it.

At such times, conservative young "doers" can be as appealing and attractive as their revolutionary contemporaries. Such agents have imbibed and reflect the wisdom of their conservative elders, but combine it with action steps that can energize a society.

Take for example Turning Point USA which has had a strong impact on US campuses, where it reflects the wisdom of conservative thinkers such as Allan Bloom, Thomas Sowell, Milton Friedman, and Jordan Peterson.

In Israel, my own organization, Im Tirtzu, has developed a strong grassroots following on Israel's campuses, reflecting the iconic values of Herzl, Jabotinsky and Ben-Gurion, but also the wisdom of contemporary thinkers such as Rabbi Benny Lau, Daniel Pipes, Asaf Malach, Yoram Hazony, Ran Baratz, Ronen Shoal and Mordechai Kedar.

Combining time-tested wisdom with on the ground activism might be the West's best hope for pushing its national expiration dates far away from the present.