

## Five Hundred

Posted By [Richard Fernandez](#) On June 12, 2015 @ 3:19 am In [economy.Governance](#) | [14 Comments](#)

If the 20th century proved that democracy could beat totalitarianism, the history of 21st so far suggests that dedicated totalitarians can beat the living daylights out of half-baked ones. All over the world, countries have put their trust in elites. Now, in the globalized world of 2015, when every economy aspires to be a crony capitalism — a “mixed economy” to you, the deciding factor in international contests appears to be whether my totalitarian is better than your totalitarian.

After all, the elite are all that matter now. [Ezra Klein at Vox](#) <sup>[1]</sup> expressed his dissatisfaction with the Great Unwashed in a recent article: “Why the most informed voters are often the most badly misled.” In it he argues that additional information only confirms people in their prejudices.

In 2006, the political scientists Christopher Achens and Larry Bartels presented a paper titled “It Feels Like We’re Thinking: The Rationalizing Voter and Electoral Democracy.” In it, Achens and Bartels make a point that is so obvious we often forget its implications: “Very few politically consequential facts are subject to direct, personal verification.”

In other words, an informed voter rarely knows anything firsthand, the way we know the sky is blue and the sun rose this morning. Everything she knows is taken on trust; an informed voter is only as good as her information sources. And because we all get to choose which information sources to believe, voters with more information are not always more informed. Sometimes, they’re just more completely and profoundly misled.

The answer, he argues is universal voter registration, which will moderate the influence of people who’ve already acquired a point of view. What happens when everyone has been registered and opinionated he does not explain. Fortunately the ignorant and bigoted masses are being retired from any real role in decision making. In every part of the world the Enlightened are in taking charge. They even meet occasionally to exchange notes at Davos and in Climate Change events. The rise of the few was inevitable since Marxist-democracy and Islamic-democracy are alike contradictions in terms where nothing after the hyphen can contradict what came before. Ideologies are jealous; there’s no elite like an ideological elite.

Both Marxism and Islamism are [deductive forms of thinking](#) <sup>[2]</sup> in which little truths flow from sacred premises and which alone can provide the level of certainty that ideologues or fanatics crave. Democracy on the other hand, is unfortunately based on [inductive reasoning](#) <sup>[3]</sup> where everyone gets an equal chance to puzzle out what reality, the facts or God — whichever term you prefer — is really saying and to make money from it. “While the conclusion of a deductive argument is certain, the truth of the conclusion of an inductive argument is probable, based upon the evidence given.”

Given that it deals only in relative probabilities, democracy is unsatisfying to the committed individual. Democracy often changes its mind, is full of uncertainties, never says “yes” or “no” but only “maybe”. Worst of all democracy recognizes no human institution as the permanent repository of truth, assigning that attribute to God alone, an idea of limited usefulness because no one can definitely figure out what God wants. All of this sucks for the career superior man.

For all those reasons elitism thrives best in totalitarianism. Once things come down to that then ruthlessness and professional skill are of paramount importance. In that industry [the Red Star](#) <sup>[4]</sup> or the [Black Standard of Mohammed](#) <sup>[5]</sup> remain the premium trademarks, while the [Red Rose](#) <sup>[6]</sup> of social democracy continues to be the off-brand.

This was demonstrated only the other day when [Chinese hackers](#) <sup>[7]</sup> made off with the crown jewels of the Federal Government. J. David Cox, president of the American Federation of Government Employees said in a letter to OPM director Katherine Archuleta that “we believe that the Central Personnel Data File was the targeted database, and that the hackers are now in possession of all personal data for every federal employee, every federal retiree, and up to one million former federal employees.”

The union said it is basing its assessment on internal OPM briefings. The agency has sought to downplay the damage, saying what was taken “could include” personal file information

such as birth dates.

Samuel Schumach, an OPM spokesman, said that “for security reasons, we will not discuss specifics of the information that might have been compromised.”

The Office of Personnel Management is also a repository for extremely sensitive information assembled through background investigations of employees and contractors who hold security clearances. OPM’s Schumach has said that there is “no evidence” that information was taken. But there is growing skepticism among intelligence agency employees and contractors about that claim.

They know where they live, literally. According to [David Sanger, Julie Hirschfeld Davis and Nicole Perloth of the New York Times](#) <sup>[8]</sup>, the only remaining mystery is what took the Chinese so long. “The inspector general at the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), which keeps the records and security-clearance information for millions of current and retired federal employees, issued a report in November that essentially described the agency’s computer security system as a Chinese hacker’s dream.”

By the time the report was published, Chinese hackers had already downloaded tens of thousands of files on sensitive security clearances and were preparing for a much broader attack that obtained detailed personal information on at least 4 million current and former government employees. The agency is still struggling to patch vulnerabilities. ...

OPM did not possess an inventory of all the computer servers and devices with access to its networks. It did not require anyone accessing information from the outside to use the kind of basic authentication techniques that most Americans use for online banking. It did not regularly scan for vulnerabilities in the system and found that 11 of the 47 computer systems that were supposed to be certified as safe for use last year were not “operating with a valid authorization.”

The problems were so severe for two systems that hosted the databases used by the Federal Investigative Service — which does background investigations for officials and contractors who are issued security clearances — that the inspector general argued for temporarily shutting them down because the security flaws “could potentially have national security implications.” ...

As one senior former government official who once handled cyberissues for the administration, who would not speak on the record because it could endanger the person’s role on key advisory committees, said Friday: “The mystery here is not how they got cleaned out by the Chinese. The mystery is what took the Chinese so long.”

The administration isn’t doing any better against that other brand of totalitarianism, Islamism. Faced with a refusal by Iran to allow an inspection of its nuclear stockpile, the [White House](#) <sup>[9]</sup> is reportedly “searching for compromise” on Tehran’s offer to substitute “managed access” in its place. After all, a bad agreement is worse than no agreement. Deductive logic, remember?

Not that “managed access” actually means anything other than surrender. [Retired Lieutenant General Michael Flynn](#) <sup>[10]</sup> testified a few days ago before Congress that “‘managed access’ to nuclear facilities, and only with significant prior notification ... makes it nearly impossible, as a matter of full transparency, to have real ‘eyes on’ the state of Iranian nuclear development to include their missile program.” He went on to call out the play on the field.

Just look at the cooperation with North Korea, China and Russia. Connect those dots, and you get the outline of a global alliance aimed at the U.S., our friends, and our allies. Russian assistance is part of a broader pattern. After all, the Iranian nuclear reactor at Bushehr is Russian-built, the two countries work very closely together in Syria, and Russia is providing Iran with an effective anti-aircraft system that could be deployed against any aircraft seeking to destroy the nuclear program. The North Korean cooperation is also very significant, as the two countries (North Korea and Iran) have long traded expertise, not least regarding nuclear and possibly EMP weapons.

Their totalitarians are not only holding their own against our totalitarians, they are pulling wedgies on them. The KGB, the Chinese Secret Service and Islamist 5th column are running circles around the unionized, politicized federal bureaucracy. This is not in the least bit surprising. Both [Xi Jinping](#) <sup>[11]</sup> and [Vladimir Putin](#) <sup>[12]</sup> have risen through the pitiless school of hard knocks. Xi has managed to imprison, suborn or kill thousands of rival, hard-core bureaucrats on his bloody climb to the summit of China. Putin has done the same. Watching Putin and Xi go up against Barack Obama calls to mind the scene in the movie Knockaround

Guys, where a legitimate tough guy walks up to a wannabe in the middle of a barroom floor and starts this monologue.

Five hundred. ... 500 fights, that's the number I figured when I was a kid. 500 street fights and you could consider yourself a legitimate tough guy. You need them for experience. To develop leather skin. So I got started. Of course along the way you stop thinking about being tough and all that. It stops being the point. You get past the silliness of it all. But then, after, you realize that's what you are.

The problems we are witnessing are the result of the fact that Xi, Vladimir and the Ayatollahs have already done their 500 fights. They've stomped over whole cemeteries full of rivals. They are genuine tough guys. And against them all Barack Obama can set are his sealed academic records, a couple of books which may or may not be his, a "present" voting record, no job experience and a string of failures dating back to the day he was elected. In the contest of totalitarians, America is overmatched. The "elite" — determined to play the power game — are in over their heads.

The mismatch did not exist back when America was a country content to be run by its citizens; that didn't aspire to be run by elites who were nothing but media creations. The earlier America didn't need an experienced thug for president. It could rely on its freedom to be a superior, productive society as a trump. For it was the country — not the elites — that beat its rivals. When you let America be itself it simply overwhelmed the opposition. All the cleverness of Hitler or Stalin did them no good. They still lost the Second and Cold Wars to an America of ordinary free people.

An American president simply needed to understand his limits, which he could remedy by surrounding himself with country's matchless talent pool. Ronald Reagan knew this, but then he was smart enough to know he was dumb. On the other hand a president dumb enough to think he's smart starts imagining himself as some kind of messiah and starts making speeches in front styrofoam columns while Xi and Vladimir laugh.

In any geopolitical contest America will beat Russia. It may even beat China. But once the nation wants an aristocracy it will start playing a game it can't win by redefining the contest as between America's so-called elite versus the KGB or the Chinese Communist Party. It's a losing game ten times out of ten.

The crazy thing is that everyone in America knows their aristocracy is bogus. A [60 Minutes/Vanity Fair poll](#) [13] showed that the federal government was America's least trusted institution. "Thirty-eight percent of Americans chose the federal government as the most corrupt institution in American society followed by the news media 17 percent, banks and financial institutions 16 percent, the police 11 percent and organized religions 7 percent." Yet every TV show and Hollywood movie would portray the reverse. In their narrative the problem with America is flyover country, a condition that can only be cured by the feds.

The response to the Chinese hacking of government's personnel database follows the typical pattern. What did the Chinese take? Nothing of importance. Like what happened at Benghazi? Nothing worth mentioning. As with the impact of losing Libya, Mosul, Ramadi, Yemen and Syria, nothing anyone should worry about. Deny, deny, minimize, spin. That's all people who don't fear reality, facts, actualities, God — whatever you want to call it — know how to do. In this respect even the most atheistic totalitarian is a comparative believer. Xi and Putin understand the necessity of deception and the danger of self-deception. They understand facts have consequences more than our elites.

In the end anyone who wants to win must recognize, however dimly, that the world can't be spun. That there's always stuff that there's no use denying. How does the saying go?

Keaton always said, "I don't believe in God, but I'm afraid of him." Well I believe in God, and the only thing that scares me is Keyser Soze.

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[2] deductive forms of thinking: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deductive\\_reasoning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deductive_reasoning)

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[9] White House: <http://www.jpost.com/International/US-seeks-a-compromise-on-managed-access-to-Iran-military-sites-405773>

[10] Retired Lieutenant General Michael Flynn:

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[11] Xi Jinping: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xi\\_Jinping](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xi_Jinping)

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