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Noam Chomsky On The Long History Of US Meddling In Foreign Elections

Noam Chomsky

A wide range of politicians and media outlets have described the alleged Russian interference in the last US presidential election (by way of hacking) as representing a direct threat to American democracy and even to national security itself. Of course, the irony behind these concerns about the interference of foreign nations in the domestic political affairs of the United States is that the US has blatantly interfered in the elections of many other nations, with methods that include not only financial support to preferred parties and the circulation of propaganda but also assassinations and overthrows of even democratically

elected regimes. Indeed, the US has a long criminal history of meddling into the political affairs of other nations — a history that spans at least a century and, since the end of World War II, extends into all regions of the globe, including western parliamentary polities. This interview with Noam Chomsky reminds us that the United States is no stranger to election interference; in fact, it is an expert in this arena.

C. J. Polychroniou: Noam, the US intelligence agencies have accused Russia of interference in the US presidential election in order to boost Trump's chances, and some leading Democrats have actually gone on record saying that the Kremlin's canny operatives changed the election outcome. What's your reaction to all this talk in Washington and among media pundits about Russian cyber and propaganda efforts to influence the outcome of the presidential election in Donald Trump's favor?

Noam Chomsky: Much of the world must be astonished — if they are not collapsing in laughter — while watching the performances in high places and in media concerning Russian efforts to influence an American election, a familiar US government specialty as far back as we choose to trace the practice. There is, however, merit in the claim that this case is different in character: By US standards, the Russian efforts are so meager as to barely elicit notice.

Let's talk about the long history of US meddling in foreign political affairs, which has always been morally and politically justified as the spread of American style-democracy throughout the world.

The history of US foreign policy, especially after World War II, is pretty much defined by the subversion and overthrow of foreign regimes, including parliamentary regimes, and the resort to violence to destroy popular organizations that might offer the majority of the population an opportunity to enter the political arena.

Following the Second World War, the United States was committed to restoring the traditional conservative order. To achieve this aim, it was necessary to destroy the anti-fascist resistance, often in favor of Nazi and fascist collaborators, to weaken unions and other popular organizations, and to block the threat of radical democracy and social reform, which were live options under the conditions of the time. These policies were pursued worldwide: in Asia, including

South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Indochina and crucially, Japan; in Europe, including Greece, Italy, France and crucially, Germany; in Latin America, including what the CIA took to be the most severe threats at the time, "radical nationalism" in Guatemala and Bolivia.

Sometimes the task required considerable brutality. In South Korea, about 100,000 people were killed in the late 1940s by security forces installed and directed by the United States. This was before the Korean war, which Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings describe as "in essence" a phase — marked by massive outside intervention — in "a civil war fought between two domestic forces: a revolutionary nationalist movement, which had its roots in tough anti-colonial struggle, and a conservative movement tied to the status quo, especially to an unequal land system," restored to power under the US occupation. In Greece in the same years, hundreds of thousands were killed, tortured, imprisoned or expelled in the course of a counterinsurgency operation, organized and directed by the United States, which restored traditional elites to power, including Nazi collaborators, and suppressed the peasant- and worker-based communist-led forces that had fought the Nazis. In the industrial societies, the same essential goals were realized, but by less violent means.

Yet it is true that there have been cases where the US was directly involved in organizing coups even in advanced industrial democracies, such as in Australia and Italy in the mid-1970s. Correct?

Yes, there is evidence of CIA involvement in a virtual coup that overturned the Whitlam Labor government in Australia in 1975, when it was feared that Whitlam might interfere with Washington's military and intelligence bases in Australia. Large-scale CIA interference in Italian politics has been public knowledge since the congressional Pike Report was leaked in 1976, citing a figure of over $65 million to approved political parties and affiliates from 1948 through the early 1970s. In 1976, the Aldo Moro government fell in Italy after revelations that the CIA had spent $6 million to support anti-communist candidates. At the time, the European communist parties were moving towards independence of action with pluralistic and democratic tendencies (Eurocommunism), a development that in fact pleased neither Washington nor Moscow. For such reasons, both superpowers opposed the legalization of the Communist Party of Spain and the rising influence of the Communist Party in Italy, and both preferred center-right governments in France. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger described the "major

problem" in the Western alliance as "the domestic evolution in many European countries," which might make Western communist parties more attractive to the public, nurturing moves towards independence and threatening the NATO alliance."

US interventions in the political affairs of other nations have always been morally and politically justified as part of the faith in the doctrine of spreading American-style democracy, but the actual reason was of course the spread of capitalism and the dominance of business rule. Was faith in the spread of democracy ever tenable?

No belief concerning US foreign policy is more deeply entrenched than the one regarding the spread of American-style democracy. The thesis is commonly not even expressed, merely presupposed as the basis for reasonable discourse on the US role in the world.

The faith in this doctrine may seem surprising. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which the conventional doctrine is tenable. If by "American-style democracy," we mean a political system with regular elections but no serious challenge to business rule, then US policymakers doubtless yearn to see it established throughout the world. The doctrine is therefore not undermined by the fact that it is consistently violated under a different interpretation of the concept of democracy: as a system in which citizens may play some meaningful part in the management of public affairs.

So, what lessons can be drawn from all this about the concept of democracy as understood by US policy planners in their effort to create a new world order?

One problem that arose as areas were liberated from fascism [after World War II] was that traditional elites had been discredited, while prestige and influence had been gained by the resistance movement, based largely on groups responsive to the working class and poor, and often committed to some version of radical democracy. The basic quandary was articulated by Churchill's trusted adviser, South African Prime Minister Jan Christiaan Smuts, in 1943, with regard to southern Europe: "With politics let loose among those peoples," he said, "we might have a wave of disorder and wholesale Communism." Here the term "disorder" is understood as threat to the interests of the privileged, and "Communism," in accordance with usual convention, refers to failure to interpret

"democracy" as elite dominance, whatever the other commitments of the "Communists" may be. With politics let loose, we face a "crisis of democracy," as privileged sectors have always understood.

In brief, at that moment in history, the United States faced the classic dilemma of Third World intervention in large parts of the industrial world as well. The US position was "politically weak" though militarily and economically strong. Tactical choices are determined by an assessment of strengths and weaknesses. The preference has, quite naturally, been for the arena of force and for measures of economic warfare and strangulation, where the US has ruled supreme.

Wasn't the Marshall Plan a tool for consolidating capitalism and spreading business rule throughout Europe after World War II?

Very much so. For example, the extension of Marshall Plan aid in countries like France and Italy was strictly contingent on exclusion of communists — including major elements of the anti-fascist resistance and labor — from the government; "democracy," in the usual sense. US aid was critically important in early years for suffering people in Europe and was therefore a powerful lever of control, a matter of much significance for US business interests and longer term planning. The fear in Washington was that the communist left would emerge victorious in Italy and France without massive financial assistance.

On the eve of the announcement of the Marshall Plan, Ambassador to France Jefferson Caffery warned Secretary of State Marshall of grim consequences if the communists won the elections in France: "Soviet penetration of Western Europe, Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East would be greatly facilitated" (May 12, 1947). The dominoes were ready to fall. During May, the US pressured political leaders in France and Italy to form coalition governments excluding the communists. It was made clear and explicit that aid was contingent on preventing an open political competition, in which left and labor might dominate. Through 1948, Secretary of State Marshall and others publicly emphasized that if communists were voted into power, US aid would be terminated; no small threat, given the state of Europe at the time.

In France, the postwar destitution was exploited to undermine the French labor movement, along with direct violence. Desperately needed food supplies were withheld to coerce obedience, and gangsters were organized to provide goon

squads and strike breakers, a matter that is described with some pride in semi-official US labor histories, which praise the AFL [American Federation of Labor] for its achievements in helping to save Europe by splitting and weakening the labor movement (thus frustrating alleged Soviet designs) and safeguarding the flow of arms to Indochina for the French war of re-conquest, another prime goal of the US labor bureaucracy. The CIA reconstituted the mafia for these purposes, in one of its early operations. The quid pro quo was restoration of the heroin trade. The US government connection to the drug boom continued for many decades.

US policies toward Italy basically picked up where they had been broken off by World War II. The United States had supported Mussolini's Fascism from the 1922 takeover through the 1930s. Mussolini's wartime alliance with Hitler terminated these friendly relations, but they were reconstituted as US forces liberated southern Italy in 1943, establishing the rule of Field Marshall [Pietro] Badoglio and the royal family that had collaborated with the Fascist government. As Allied forces drove towards the north, they dispersed the anti-fascist resistance along with local governing bodies it had formed in its attempt to establish a new democratic state in the zones it had liberated from Germany. Eventually, a center-right government was established with neo-fascist participation and the left soon excluded.

Here too, the plan was for the working classes and the poor to bear the burden of reconstruction, with lowered wages and extensive firing. Aid was contingent on removing communists and left socialists from office, because they defended workers' interests and thus posed a barrier to the intended style of recovery, in the view of the State Department. The Communist Party was collaborationist; its position "fundamentally meant the subordination of all reforms to the liberation of Italy and effectively discouraged any attempt in northern areas to introduce irreversible political changes as well as changes in the ownership of the industrial companies … disavowing and discouraging those workers' groups that wanted to expropriate some factories," as Gianfranco Pasquino put it. But the Party did try to defend jobs, wages and living standards for the poor and thus "constituted a political and psychological barrier to a potential European recovery program," historian John Harper comments, reviewing the insistence of Kennan and others that communists be excluded from government though agreeing that it would be "desirable" to include representatives of what Harper calls "the democratic

working class." The recovery, it was understood, was to be at the expense of the working class and the poor.

Because of its responsiveness to the needs of these social sectors, the Communist Party was labelled "extremist" and "undemocratic" by US propaganda, which also skillfully manipulated the alleged Soviet threat. Under US pressure, the Christian Democrats abandoned wartime promises about workplace democracy and the police, sometimes under the control of ex-fascists, were encouraged to suppress labor activities. The Vatican announced that anyone who voted for the communists in the 1948 election would be denied sacraments, and backed the conservative Christian Democrats under the slogan: "O con Cristo o contro Cristo" ("Either with Christ or against Christ"). A year later, Pope Pius excommunicated all Italian communists.

A combination of violence, manipulation of aid and other threats, and a huge propaganda campaign sufficed to determine the outcome of the critical 1948 election, essentially bought by US intervention and pressures.

The CIA operations to control the Italian elections, authorized by the National Security Council in December 1947, were the first major clandestine operation of the newly formed agency. CIA operations to subvert Italian democracy continued into the 1970s at a substantial scale.

In Italy, as well as elsewhere, US labor leaders, primarily from the AFL, played an active role in splitting and weakening the labor movement, and inducing workers to accept austerity measures while employers reaped rich profits. In France, the AFL had broken dock strikes by importing Italian scab labor paid by US businesses. The State Department called on the Federation's leadership to exercise their talents in union-busting in Italy as well, and they were happy to oblige. The business sector, formerly discredited by its association with Italian fascism, undertook a vigorous class war with renewed confidence. The end result was the subordination of the working class and the poor to the traditional rulers.

Later commentators tend to see the US subversion of democracy in France and Italy as a defense of democracy. In a highly-regarded study of the CIA and American democracy, Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones describes "the CIA's Italian venture," along with its similar efforts in France, as "a democracy-propping operation," though he concedes that "the selection of Italy for special attention … was by no

means a matter of democratic principle alone;" our passion for democracy was reinforced by the strategic importance of the country. But it was a commitment to "democratic principle" that inspired the US government to impose the social and political regimes of its choice, using the enormous power at its command and exploiting the privation and distress of the victims of the war, who must be taught not to raise their heads if we are to have true democracy.

A more nuanced position is taken by James Miller in his monograph on US policies towards Italy. Summarizing the record, he concludes that "in retrospect, American involvement in the stabilization of Italy was a significant, if troubling, achievement. American power assured Italians the right to choose their future form of government and also was employed to ensure that they chose democracy. In defense of that democracy against real but probably overestimated foreign and domestic threats, the United States used undemocratic tactics that tended to undermine the legitimacy of the Italian state."

The "foreign threats," as he had already discussed, were hardly real; the Soviet Union watched from a distance as the US subverted the 1948 election and restored the traditional conservative order, keeping to its wartime agreement with Churchill that left Italy in the Western zone. The "domestic threat" was the threat of democracy.

The idea that US intervention provided Italians with freedom of choice while ensuring that they chose "democracy" (in our special sense of the term) is reminiscent of the attitude of the extreme doves towards Latin America: that its people should choose freely and independently — as long as doing so did not impact US interests adversely.

The democratic ideal, at home and abroad, is simple and straightforward: You are free to do what you want, as long as it is what we want you to do.

Note: Some of the material for this interview was adapted from excerpts from Deterring Democracy (Verso).

The Ecotopia 2121 Project

The Ecotopia 2121 Project sets out to represent 100 cities throughout the world as they would appear in the year 2121 — if they've managed to survive and become super eco-friendly.

Over three years of research, fieldwork, seminars, travel, discussion, theorizing, writing, and drawing — a compendium of 100 illustrated stories was assembled together about how 100 cities from around the world can transform into Green Utopias by the year 2121AD. The 100 selected cities include famous places like London, New York and Paris but also some faraway places you've probably never heard of. Also included are mysterious cities like El Dorado, Timbuktoo, Xanadu and Shangri La — which may sound like fantasy and fiction but, actually, they're all real cities.

Go to: http://www.ecotopia2121.com/

Spinoza ~ The Philosopher Of Counter-Radicalization

David Kenning – Foto Gerard Arninkhof – amsterdamsespinozakring.nl

Spinoza Lecture 2016 – Amsterdam, November 27

Part 1 ~ Personal meaning

It's an honour to address the *Spinozakring* in Amsterdam on *Spinozadag*. As a young man, I was living in Belfast during the darkest years of the terrorist Troubles, when I set out for Trinity College, in Dublin to begin 5 years of post-graduate research on the subject: "*Spinoza's Ethics and the Meaning of Life*."

What followed was an unequal struggle – Spinoza was even more challenging than I thought – and I didn't find the meaning of life. In the process, I struggled, mentally. No one I met seemed the slightest bit interested in Spinoza and the more I read and understood *The Ethics*, the more isolated, anxious and remote from everyday life I became – as if I was going in one direction and everyone else was headed in another.

And during those difficult years, I learned new ways of thinking and *Being* – perspectives and insights on life and the human condition. Things that have stayed with me to this day; that made me who I am; and that will – I hope – play an important part in my future. After much difficulty, I learned to see and understand the world the way Spinoza saw it.

Spinoza became my anchor – my reference – for exploring life — a beacon of intellectual strength and independence. '*The Philosopher of Amsterdam*" – became *my* cultural hero in Belfast – not only for his philosophy, *but for his character*. And just as he was an outsider in his community, so was I.

I learned that the concept of Unity – of living with an attitude towards One-ness, cohesion, and cooperation — was central to Spinoza's thinking and that his greatest work, *The Ethics*, described a path to a radical form of mental health through three mutually reinforcing forms of unity, designed to cure three kinds of division.

The first step is to heal and unite the divided self, to overcome conflicted and self-harming emotions, using his psychology; the second, is to unite us with others in strong bonds of friendship, guided by his radical humanism; the third, a cure for

ontological alienation in moments of insight when our drop-consciousness joins in an *oceanic* experience with the eternal.

These three perspectives on human existence – the psychological, the pragmatic and the metaphysical – define why Spinoza's thinking is so powerful.

Part 2 ~ The two truths

And this brings us to the tension at the centre of his *Ethics* – and indeed, the terrible contradiction at the heart of the human condition – one that generates so much religious superstition and metaphysical speculation. I'll try and put this as clearly as possible.

The first self-evident truth of the human condition is the *subjective* truth of Being, how we feel as we look outwards onto the world. We've already beaten *astronomical* odds to arrive as *self*-conscious beings and sense the significance of our moment. The truth of our individual identity – that we are separate and distinct from everything else – places us at the centre of our universe. We instinctively *prioritize our* needs and drives, those we love and care for, and the projects we value. Above all, we want our chance at life to continue.

The second self-evident *truth* – and it *is* just as mysterious — is that none of this matters. From the perspective of timeless eternity, whether we live or die, whether our projects succeed or fail, what we want for ourselves and others, means nothing. Everything we value – including our lives – will be taken from us, often brutally, no matter how hard we fight, how much we care, or how good or valuable we are to Mankind. If you want to believe our lives and hopes matter in some objective way, chose a religion, but don't read Spinoza to find the answer.

These two truths represent life and death, or more accurately, time and eternity. They're at war with each other and define the drama of the human condition. Their conflict inspires great art, writing, theatre and music — acts of courage, love and self-sacrifice. But it also drives the dark side – depression, meaninglessness, war, suicide …. and violent extremism. The conflict is resolved in death, in that the second truth always wins – and we, as individuals – must surrender. *But***,** it's our defiance, our stubborn striving *to hold our identity* in the face of inevitable loss that makes the human condition feel like a restless, if not urgent, roller-coaster ride.

Like many great thinkers, Spinoza tries to reconcile these two truths… and he

does it beautifully. He teaches us how *both* perspectives, both truths can be held and experienced simultaneously. He shows us a way *to bring them together as a lived experience* – purely for the love, strength and peace of mind — it brings us. *This* is his magic.

His *Ethics* has gifted us a strange, extraordinary, philosophy; – *of* this world, and yet *not of* this world – that makes it one of the truly great philosophical masterpieces.

Part 3 ~ What do I do for Amsterdam?
Today, I'm a practitioner in counter-radicalization — not an academic. It was more than 30 years ago – in Jesus College, Oxford – that I last gave a lecture on "*Spinoza's Humanism*" – so forgive me if I am a bit rusty. I'm proud of my role as an advisor to the City of Amsterdam – in particular, for the opportunity to advise a Mayor who is not only a world-class politician – but a considerable fan of Spinoza.

Today, *I'm also speaking for myself*, since I also advise a number of governments and organizations around the world. Most of my work can't be made public. My approach is rooted in witnessing first-hand the community radicalization and violence in Northern Ireland, my training as a psychoanalyst – a decision inspired by reading Spinoza – and the intensity of my work in warzones. *But, what part does Spinoza play? How could ideas which were around 350 years ago, possibly impact on today's very modern and complex issues?*

Well, today – *since it's Spinozadag* – I'm going to present Spinoza as "*The Philosopher of Counter-Radicalization*." So far as I know, this is a world first. There are three ways his philosophy can help us.

The first is to use his theory of human emotions in *The Ethics* to re-think our approach to preventing radicalization
The second is to follow his radical intellectual lead in the Theological-Political Tractatus (TPT) to re-frame the situation the West finds itself in
The third is to use his political philosophy – with its emphasis on social cohesion and the management of hope over fear — to prevent polarization and radicalization.

My 4 axioms
Before I make the case, there are four simple axioms I use everyday that are inspired by Spinoza's thinking.

a) First, understand causes rather than *react*
b) Secondly, "*Do No Harm*" to *our* Here, I follow Spinoza's personal motto "*Caute*" – caution. The history of countering terrorist recruitment is littered with own-goals.
c) Third: if we are to understand decisions and direction, we must understand emotions.
d) My final axiom is, "*Be pragmatic, not ideological – take the path of least resistance.*"

Three kinds of wrong framing
The first question of counter-radicalisation is…. *"What's the most effective way to prevent terrorist recruitment without harming ourselves?"*

Well, Spinoza inspires us to take a bold new approach — as he did himself. At the beginning of the Theological-Political Tractatus he says, "*All men are by nature liable to superstition*" and, since we must re-think where we are, we must first *examine our* own false narratives and superstitions.

Not a "Clash of Civilizations"
The most damaging superstition is the West's default framing of the terrorist conflict as a religious, cultural and ideological war: *a "Clash of Civilizations*". This terrible, delusional, slogan was used to radicalise *and* militarise the West's response after 9/11 – with disastrous consequences.

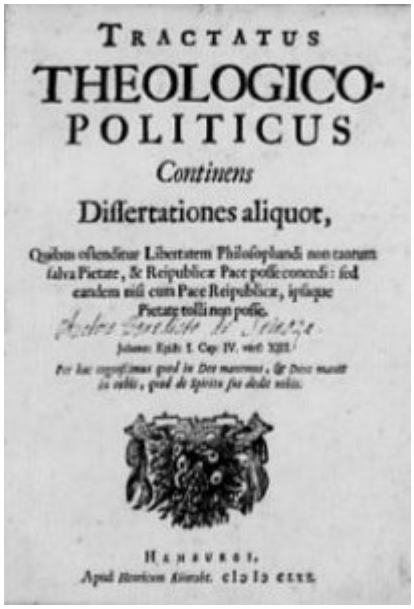
It defined the conflict in binary, emotional, terms – "*You're either for us or against us;*" "*good Muslim v bad Muslim*" — that made conflict more meaningful for terrorist recruits and enabled al Qaeda to claim, "*Islam is under attack".* We've also made the mistake of focusing on radical theology as the cause of radicalisation.

This over-determined the role of religion, fuelled Islamophobia, encouraged populism and helped to drive social and political polarization. In my view, the election of Trump as President of US can be traced directly to the failed overreaction of the US response to 9/11. And any hope that the West can recover from its mistakes has evaporated with Trump's election and his appalling appointments.

Not the ideology
It's no surprise that we're also using the wrong tactics by treating counter-

radicalization as a kind of argument, a "Clash – or *War* of ideas" … as if we could debate facts, apply theological arguments and alleged western values to defeat terrorism. It's called the "counter-narrative" and it has made things worse by drawing attention to the terrorists' point of view, without making any impact.

We're simply talking to ourselves. *Spinoza is very clear about this: true ideas don't have the power to remove obstinate emotions or beliefs simply by virtue of being true.* And realistically, theological debate – as Spinoza would argue — has got nothing to do with truth anyway. Put simply, we can never win this argument – *even when* we're right. It's the wrong argument – and the wrong approach.


TRACTATUS
THEOLOGICO-
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Continens
Dissertationes aliquot,
Quibus ostenditur Libertatem Philosophandi non tantum salva Pietate, & Reipublicæ Pace posse concedi: sed eandem nisi cum Pace Reipublicæ, ipsaque Pietate tolli non posse.
Johann. Epist. 1. Cap. IV. vers. XIII.
HAMBURGI,
Apud Henricum Kunrath. cIↃ IↃ CLXX.

Part 4 ~ Frame the conflict as a psychological war
So if it's <u>not</u> a "*Clash of Civilizations*", *what <u>is it</u>*? Spinoza devotes a majority of *The Ethics* to understanding human emotions. And no emotions are more important in his politics than the interplay of hope and fear. Indeed, the elimination of fear is central to his project. He says, "*a free people is led more by hope than by fear, while a subjugated people is led more by fear than by hope*." That's our clue.

Today, he would recognize that European democracies – not the Middle East – have become the front-line *in a new kind of psychological war***,** around the emotion of fear; fear for security; fear of Muslims and Islam; fear of immigrants; fear of refugees, fear of loss for a way of life – and most importantly, *fear of uncertainty and the future.* In Spinoza's terms, all this impacts our imagination, filling us with negative, passive, emotions – anger and fear.

And we should recognize that warfare today has evolved – for all practical purposes – into knowing and understanding how to influence what people think and feel. Think of the current accusations of cold-war revivalism against Putin for his influence in the recent US elections.

Populists and IS share the same strategic objectives — to divide, polarize and radicalize our populations. We're the *front-line* of this psychological war since this is where the fear of IS and its propaganda meets the amplification of domestic

populism. Populists convert these fears into nostalgia for a lost past using the language of nationalism, racism and Islamophobia. They endow nativism with an almost mystical significance.

The strategic weakness of democracy is that, without strong leadership, it struggles to cope with instability and sudden movements in mass psychology. As Obama said last week – we cannot take democracy for granted. And so Western democracies become weaker and core democratic values come under attack from within. Much of this fear is hysterical and irrational. For example, a majority of Americans now think they or their family members will be killed in an IS attack. In fact, since 9/11, they're almost 300 times more likely to be killed by a police officer – and everyday, more likely to be killed by far-right extremists than jihadists.

The result is that irrational fear has given our body politic an *auto-immune* disease – we're attacking ourselves. As Spinoza tells us (in the TPT) … *Every system of governance is threatened more by its own citizens than by its open enemies.* And IS uses this strategic weakness to press home its psychological attack. And, by this way, populism poses a much greater threat to our democracy than IS ever could.

Spinoza's psychology – it's emotions — not the ideology
One of the major successes of Spinoza's philosophy is that it provides the basis of a modern scientific psychology and psychoanalytic theory. Spinoza's psychology places an enormous emphasis on the power of emotions to subvert everything else in human life, so let's see where that takes us…. And let's look at the facts…..

The terrorist ideology is weak in Europe. It's the best-known ideology in the world yet it inspires recruits only in random ones and twos. IS has never appealed to more than one thousandth of one percent of Muslims and now says to recruits: "Don't worry about ideology. *We are the ideology. That's all you need to know. Obey us."*

Spinoza's philosophy shows us how the path to extremism is likely to be individualistic, psychological and, I will argue, consumerist.

Let's consider first, the relevance of Spinoza's insights into emotions and drives. He says, "*Everyone shapes his actions according to his emotions;"* and, *"Everyone strives to increase his own sense of power, to seek his own advantage."* People

are "*conscious of their desire without knowing the causes of desire.*" "*True ideas are not enough to change negative or obstinate emotions.*" "*An emotion can only be changed by a stronger and contrary emotion*."

To summarize these powerful insights, Spinoza's thinking teaches us that extreme acts and beliefs are expressions of extreme emotions. What people *say* about *why* they hold extreme beliefs is not reliable since they're *not* aware of the real causes of their feelings. Asking a jihadist exactly why he radicalized is unlikely to reveal the truth – even if he was honest.

Every psychoanalyst knows we can vigorously defend, but secretly doubt, what we believe to be our strongest held beliefs – *including* the ones we say we would die for. As John Le Carré's clever spy, George Smiley, says – "*Every fanatic is hiding a secret doubt*." We need a stronger explanation for violent extremism than simply being convinced of a theological argument. Today we would not expect to help someone with an eating disorder by arguing with them about their nutritional needs. Something else, something much more profound is going on. We know it's a psychological condition. It's the same with our efforts in counter-radicalization.

Part 5 ~ What is the emotional attachment mechanism?
The question we now need Spinoza's help to answer is – if theological belief is not the *real* cause of terrorist recruitment – what is?

First, we must understand that European jihadists aren't driven by the same factors as MENA recruits. They're born, raised *and* educated with Western rather than Sunni-Islamic values. IS is a radically violent Sunni-sectarian organization and yet most European recruits have no idea of – and certainly no grievances that relate to – differences between Sunni and Shi'ia Islam. Most are wholly ignorant of the differences. Like Protestants and Catholics in Belfast – sectarianism was an excuse for violence, not a cause.

Like everyone else, European recruits are consumers in a consumer culture, and instinctively relate to how brands use feelings and emotions to influence and communicate symbolic meaning, identity and values. They also face anti-Muslim sentiment – something that doesn't exist in Muslim countries – so there's already a distinct impetus in some towards finding a counter-cultural – anti-Western – identity. If we put these two things together – consumerism and search for identity – we come up with brands.

Consumerism and religion

Consumerism, as a form of identity building and attachment, has taken on many aspects of religious devotion. In the 17th Century *meaning, identity and attachment* were defined by religious belief, sect and congregation. Today, these are replaced by consumer desire, brand loyalty and social-media networks. In the 17th Century, the purpose of this life was to find salvation in the next; in today's celebrity culture, many seek fame and recognition as a form of redemption. (*Could we imagine Spinoza's landlady, today, asking if she'll be* famous *when he dies?)*

Spinoza's thinking tells us to follow the emotions. Unlike theological arguments which deal in ideas, opinions and abstractions, *brands* quickly communicate powerful emotional stories that appeal to fantasies of power, identity and a *sense of belonging*. Because they appeal to unconscious emotions, people identify with – or reject – brands for reasons that are close to love or hate – feelings that they cannot explain rationally. As the poet says, "*The heart has its reasons, of which reason knows nothing*." In Spinoza's words, we are, …"*conscious of desire but not the hidden causes of desire."*

In the "*Korte Verhandeling*" Spinoza writes, *"We could not exist without enjoying something with which we become united and from which we draw strength."* As we shall see, for the European jihadist – where the radicalization process has become faster and faster — the union he draws strength from is *not* Allah, or the worldwide *umma, or* the Caliphate, but the powerful *"fast-food* " – the instant gratification – of the "*off-the-shelf*" jihadist *brand*. In this way, he *buys into IS as a consumer* rather than as a genuine religious believer or convert.

The IS brand

This doesn't happen by chance. IS projects its carefully managed brand package into the West to target alienated desire and lost identity — preferring recruits who have a violent criminal background – and almost 70% have. There is *no battle of ideas* on the part of IS or genuine effort to convert – simply a push for media exposure and connection.

It's a symbiotic relationship. The IS brand narrative offers a transformed life – a second chance: a sense of victimhood redeemed; becoming a player in a world-historical struggle and the promise of recognition that means, in the end, his life

can be a success – a marriage of victimhood and celebrity. This is Western, not Islamic: a diet based on the values of reality TV, Hollywood revenge movies and social media profiles. And they're fixated by all of these.

Even Spinoza – in the 17th Century – recognized the devious attraction of the all-too-human weakness for fame. And in terms of branding strategy, it's exactly how the Trump campaign operated – all emotion and unspoken fantasy, an imagined, shared backstory, vague promises of greatness but lacking genuine ideological content. It works.

The point is, none of this requires *belief* in – or even the existence of — an ideology. Western recruits aren't being pulled-in by theological argument, but by their *imagination* and a series of *passive emotions and empowering fantasies*. The ideology today can be reduced to shouting "Allahu Ahkbar", and is simply one more branded product – like the black flag, a ski-mask, an unopened copy of the Koran (or, if you're French, the burkini).

If we look at this through the lens of Spinoza's theory of emotions we can see the mechanism of radicalization more rationally – it's about a mess of emotional needs and drives being matched by carefully crafted fantasies of meaning, identity, purpose, revenge, and fame.

Part 6 ~ Fear, superstition, uncertainty and Amsterdam
Social cohesion has become hugely important in preventing community radicalization and maintaining state security. In this regard, the actions of populists driving polarization by manipulating public fear are a direct threat to our security. This is why IS celebrated the election of Trump.

Spinoza recognizes that public fear of uncertainty causes conflict and breaks social cohesion – and that people who swing wildly between hope and fear can believe almost anything. He argues that political and religious rulers took advantage of fear of uncertainty to impose standardized and manipulative belief systems. Fundamentalists and populists exploit fear of uncertainty in a self-defeating way – namely, they need to encourage fear if they are to stay relevant. It's ironic that they quickly produce *too much* certainty – that is, *in*tolerance and *in*stability.

Spinoza knows uncertainty can be a negative force yet he offers a radical solution

– not "*How can we remove it?*" — (we can't) – but how can we use it to help improve social interaction. I think he learned something very important here from his experience as a merchant in Amsterdam.

The city's cultural DNA is rooted in an independent – pragmatic – *state of mind***,** a product of internalizing the habit of negotiation from trade, and trust in commercial procedures, together with the cooperation inherent in the polder model.

Rather than fear of uncertainty, Amsterdam's citizens used "*constructive uncertainty*" and risk-management as a way to increase interaction by negotiating their everyday practical certainties. In this way, the positive interplay of hope and fear enabled them to embed core democratic values – in particular, pluralism, tolerance of "The Other" and a skepticism towards the brittleness of fundamentalist thinking. *The key was the development of the flexibility inherent in the democratic mindset.*

At the core is the *realpolitik* of compromise and this, Spinoza recognized, goes to the heart of the democratic process – surrendering our natural rights to gain freedom *from* fear and the security of state protection. It's a win-win situation for citizens and the state, and fundamentalists and extremists, simply cannot do this. They have to *win on their terms only* – and everyone else has to lose. This is simply not the Amsterdam way.

In terms of cooperation, Spinoza tells us that people "… *without mutual help live miserable lives….life (he says) should not be controlled by individuals, but by the* power and will of everyone*….and…. Men ….. should defend their neighbour's rights as their own."*

He also saw that the politics of group identities are both divisive and destructive of individual freedom and social cohesion. Spinoza was more focused on defending and protecting individual freedoms than the freedom of organized religious worship.

Towards the end of the TTP, Spinoza describes how the relationship between freedom, tolerance and the state will work. He's not describing an abstract idea or Utopian vision. He's writing about the Amsterdam he knew and loved. He says, "*In this* thriving and splendid city state*, people from* all nations *and with all possible beliefs* live together harmoniously… *religion and sect are of no*

importance for it has no effect before the judges in winning or losing a cause…"

In this way, the city's cultural DNA plays an important role in enabling Spinoza's emphasis on social cohesion and how it relates to counter-radicalization.

Part 6 ~ Finale
I want to finish by briefly mentioning two aspects of his life that are important for how we remember him.

For Spinoza, the social class, religion, nationality or ethnic group we are born into has no intrinsic value, because, as he puts it in *The Ethics*: *"All men are born ignorant of the causes of things."* Life is a process of *becoming* – a struggle to see *what you make of yourself* — and we all have exactly the same hill to climb.

Spinoza was given the name Bento at birth. So far as we know, he never referred to himself as Baruch. We do know that from the age of fourteen he signed and called himself Bento. With his name change – from Bento the Merchant, to Benedict/us the philosopher – he quite deliberately re-invented himself – sometime in his mid-twenties – for the next phase of his life – and it was a philosophically significant moment. It was about much more than a name. It was an entire identity — a brand – complete with a motto – "Caute" – and the symbolic logo of the rose.

He *now* belonged to *Mankind*, transcending the passive accident of birth. We should respect his decision and refer to him by the *only name he ever chose for himself*, that he used in his correspondence and conversation with others, and took with him to the grave. He signed his name – *Benedict* de Spinoza.

I want finally to focus on one feature of Spinoza's life that is truly inspirational. He had courage. As a young man, he stood up to the bullying of his community to conform, and in later life he endured attacks and abuse from the equivalent of today's far-right populists and ecclesiastical bullies. With the murder of the de Witts he experienced the destructiveness of populism and violent extremism. It did not stop him protesting it.

What is impressive is his inner-strength and courage even as he became weak and sickly. He argues that often it is the wisest and most peace-loving who are the targets of moral crusades and intolerance and just as often, it's the stupidest and most obnoxious who lead such campaigns. Are you listening *Geen Stijl*?

I talk to people today who feel intimidated by populists, idiot commentators and cowardly bloggers. When we remind ourselves that in the space of a few years, four people close to Spinoza were executed, murdered or died in prison because of what they believed, what we face today is nothing by comparison.

I think he would be a bit alarmed at the way the democratic centre is under pressure today but I also think he would immediately clear his thinking and get on with the fight to protect democratic values. And so must we.

Forty years after I first began to read Spinoza, he is still a ghost in my life, and standing here today, he seems closer than ever. Time has no real value in Spinoza's philosophy – nothing, he says, is more perfect for living longer.
And speaking of time, I'm sure there are many in this room who would gladly give up a *year* of their life to have the privilege of spending just *one day* in conversation with him — in the beautiful city of Amsterdam.

Thank-you for listening, and the privilege of speaking to you today.

Monika Palmberger ~ How Generations Remember. Conflicting Histories And Shared Memories In Post-War Bosnia And Herzegovina

From: *Introduction: Researching Memory and Generation*

[…] The title of this book, *How Generations Remember*, is an allusion to the title of Paul Connerton's seminal book, *How Societies Remember* (1989). In his book, Connerton opens up a timely discussion going beyond the textual and discursive understanding of remembering by concentrating on embodied/habitual memory and ritual aspects of memory. In terms of the study of generations he thus mainly discusses generations as transmitters or receivers of group memory. Although Connerton's pioneering contribution to the study of memory is unquestioned, by focusing on how memory is passed down through the generations he primarily answers the question of how group memory is conveyed and sustained. This emphasis on transmission and persistence leaves open the question of where to locate the individual, the agent, the force and possibility for reflexivity and change (Argenti and Schramm 2010; Shaw 2010). My study, in concentrating on the role of generational positioning, reveals that past experiences inform present stances, but also shows that it is the actor in the present that gives meaning to the past. This is also true for narratives of the past that are passed on from older to younger generations, and are then scrutinised and contextualised by the latter. It is suggested that people's sense of continuity can deal with the inconsistencies that arise with this transfer between generations. It is this field of tension between collective and personal, and between persistence and change that is central in the discussion of generational positioning in this book.

Dowload book: http://link.springer.com/book/

Noam Chomsky: The US Health System Is An "International

Scandal" ~ And ACA Repeal Will Make It Worse

Changes are coming to America's health care system. Not long from now, the Affordable Care Act could be history. President-elect Donald Trump wants to repeal so-called Obamacare, although he is now urging Republicans to repeal and replace it at the same time. But replace it with what?

The political culture of the most powerful nation in the world is such that it vehemently defends the right of people to buy guns but opposes the right to free and decent health care for all its citizens. In all likelihood, the Trump health care plan will be one based on "free market principles." Under such a plan, as Noam Chomsky notes in the interview for *Truthout* that follows, poor people are likely to suffer most. In other words, the scandalous nature of the US health care system is bound to become even more scandalous in the Trump era. Welcome back to the future.

C.J. Polychroniou: Trump and the Republicans are bent on doing away with Obamacare. Doesn't the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) represent an improvement over what existed before? And, what would the Republicans replace it with?

Noam Chomsky: I perhaps should say, to begin, that I have always felt a little uncomfortable about the term "Obamacare." Did anyone call Medicare "Johnsoncare?" Maybe wrongly, but it has seemed to me to have a tinge of Republican-style vulgar disparagement, maybe even of racism. But put that aside…. Yes, the ACA is a definite improvement over what came before — which is not a great compliment. The US health care system has long been an international scandal, with about twice the per capita expenses of other wealthy (OECD) countries and relatively poor outcomes. The ACA did, however, bring improvements, including insurance for tens of millions of people who lacked it, banning of refusal of insurance for people with prior disabilities, and other gains

— and also, it appears to have led to a reduction in the increase of health care costs, though that is hard to determine precisely.

The House of Representatives, dominated by Republicans (with a minority of voters), has voted over 50 times in the past six years to repeal or weaken Obamacare, but they have yet to come up with anything like a coherent alternative. That is not too surprising. Since Obama's election, the Republicans have been pretty much the party of NO. Chances are that they will now adopt a cynical [Paul] Ryan-style evasion, repeal and delay, to pretend to be honoring their fervent pledges while avoiding at least for a time the consequences of a possible major collapse of the health system and ballooning costs. It's far from certain. It's conceivable that they might patch together some kind of plan, or that the ultra-right and quite passionate "Freedom Caucus" may insist on instant repeal without a plan, damn the consequence for the budget, or, of course, for people.

One part of the health system that is likely to suffer is Medicaid, probably through block grants to states, which gives the Republican-run states opportunities to gut it. Medicaid only helps poor people who "don't matter" and don't vote Republican anyway. So [according to Republican logic], why should the rich pay taxes to maintain it?

Article 25 of the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) states that the right to health care is indeed a human right. Yet, it is estimated that close to 30 million Americans remain uninsured even with the ACA in place. What are some of the key cultural, economic and political factors that make the US an outlier in the provision of free health care?

First, it is important to remember that the US does not accept the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — though in fact the UDHR was largely the initiative of Eleanor Roosevelt, who chaired the commission that drafted its articles, with quite broad international participation.

The UDHR has three components, which are of equal status: civil-political, socioeconomic and cultural rights. The US formally accepts the first of the three, though it has often violated its provisions. The US pretty much disregards the third. And to the point here, the US has officially and strongly condemned the second component, socioeconomic rights, including Article 25.

Opposition to Article 25 was particularly vehement in the Reagan and Bush 1 years. Paula Dobriansky, deputy assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs in these administrations, dismissed the "myth" that "'economic and social rights constitute human rights," as the UDHR declares. She was following the lead of Reagan's UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, who ridiculed the myth as "little more than an empty vessel into which vague hopes and inchoate expectations can be poured." Kirkpatrick thus joined Soviet Ambassador Andrei Vyshinsky, who agreed that it was a mere "collection of pious phrases." The concepts of Article 25 are "preposterous" and even a "dangerous incitement," according to Ambassador Morris Abram, the distinguished civil rights attorney who was US Representative to the UN Commission on Human Rights under Bush I, casting the sole veto of the UN Right to Development, which closely paraphrased Article 25 of the UDHR.The Bush 2 administration maintained the tradition by voting alone to reject a UN resolution on the right to food and the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (the resolution passed 52-1).

Rejection of Article 25, then, is a matter of principle. And also a matter of practice. In the OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] ranking of social justice, the US is in 27th place out of 31, right above Greece, Chile, Mexico and Turkey. This is happening in the richest country in world history, with incomparable advantages. It was quite possibly already the richest region in the world in the 18th century.

In extenuation of the Reagan-Bush-Vyshinsky alliance on this matter, we should recognize that formal support for the UDHR is all too often divorced from practice.

US dismissal of the UDHR in principle and practice extends to other areas. Take labor rights. The US has failed to ratify the first principle of the International Labour Organization Convention, which endorses "Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise." An editorial comment in the American Journal of International Law refers to this provision of the International Labour Organization Convention as "the untouchable treaty in American politics." US rejection is guarded with such fervor, the report continues, that there has never even been any debate about the matter. The rejection of International Labour Organization Conventions contrasts dramatically with the fervor of Washington's dedication to the highly protectionist elements of the misnamed "free trade

agreements," designed to guarantee monopoly pricing rights for corporations ("intellectual property rights"), on spurious grounds. In general, it would be more accurate to call these "investor rights agreements."

Comparison of the attitude toward elementary rights of labor and extraordinary rights of private power tells us a good deal about the nature of American society.

Furthermore, US labor history is unusually violent. Hundreds of US workers were being killed by private and state security forces in strike actions, practices unknown in similar countries. In her history of American labor, Patricia Sexton — noting that there are no serious studies — reports an estimate of 700 strikers killed and thousands injured from 1877 to 1968, a figure which, she concludes, may "grossly understate the total casualties." In comparison, one British striker was killed since 1911.

As struggles for freedom gained victories and violent means became less available, business turned to softer measures, such as the "scientific methods of strike breaking" that have become a leading industry. In much the same way, the overthrow of reformist governments by violence, once routine, has been displaced by "soft coups" such as the recent coup in Brazil, though the former options are still pursued when possible, as in Obama's support for the Honduran military coup in 2009, in near isolation. Labor remains relatively weak in the US in comparison to similar societies. It is constantly battling even for survival as a significant organized force in the society, under particularly harsh attack since the Reagan years.

All of this is part of the background for the US departure in health care from the norm of the OECD, and even less privileged societies. But there are deeper reasons why the US is an "outlier" in health care and social justice generally. These trace back to unusual features of American history. Unlike other developed state capitalist industrial democracies, the political economy and social structure of the United States developed in a kind of *tabula rasa*. The expulsion or mass killing of Indigenous nations cleared the ground for the invading settlers, who had enormous resources and ample fertile lands at their disposal, and extraordinary security for reasons of geography and power. That led to the rise of a society of individual farmers, and also, thanks to slavery, substantial control of the product that fueled the industrial revolution: cotton, the foundation of manufacturing, banking, commerce, retail for both the US and Britain, and less directly, other

European societies. Also relevant is the fact that the country has actually been at war for 500 years with little respite, a history that has created "the richest, most powerful¸ and ultimately most militarized nation in world history," as scholar Walter Hixson has documented.

For similar reasons, American society lacked the traditional social stratification and autocratic political structure of Europe, and the various measures of social support that developed unevenly and erratically. There has been ample state intervention in the economy from the outset — dramatically in recent years — but without general support systems.

As a result, US society is, to an unusual extent, business-run, with a highly class-conscious business community dedicated to "the everlasting battle for the minds of men." The business community is also set on containing or demolishing the "political power of the masses," which it deems as a serious "hazard to industrialists" (to sample some of the rhetoric of the business press during the New Deal years, when the threat to the overwhelming dominance of business power seemed real).

Here is yet another anomaly about US health care: According to data by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the US spends far more on health care than most other advanced nations, yet Americans have poor health outcomes and are plagued by chronic illnesses at higher rates than the citizens of other advanced nations. Why is that?

US health care costs are estimated to be about twice the OECD average, with rather poor outcomes by comparative standards. Infant mortality, for example, is higher in the US than in Cuba, Greece and the EU generally, according to CIA figures.

As for reasons, we can return to the more general question of social justice comparisons, but there are special reasons in the health care domain. To an unusual extent, the US health care system is privatized and unregulated. Insurance companies are in the business of making money, not providing health care, and when they undertake the latter, it is likely not to be in the best interests of patients or to be efficient. Administrative costs are far greater in the private component of the health care system than in Medicare, which itself suffers by having to work through the private system.

Comparisons with other countries reveal much more bureaucracy and higher administrative costs in the US privatized system than elsewhere. One study of the US and Canada a decade ago, by medical researcher Steffie Woolhandler and associates, found enormous disparities, and concluded that "Reducing U.S. administrative costs to Canadian levels would save at least $209 billion annually, enough to fund universal coverage." Another anomalous feature of the US system is the law banning the government from negotiating drug prices, which leads to highly inflated prices in the US as compared with other countries. That effect is magnified considerably by the extreme patent rights accorded to the pharmaceutical industry in "trade agreements," enabling monopoly profits. In a profit-driven system, there are also incentives for expensive treatments rather than preventive care, as strikingly in Cuba, with remarkably efficient and effective health care.

Why aren't Americans demanding — not simply expressing a preference for in survey polls — access to a universal health care system?

They are indeed expressing a preference, over a long period. Just to give one telling illustration, in the late Reagan years 70 percent of the adult population thought that health care should be a constitutional guarantee, and 40 percent thought it already was in the Constitution since it is such an obviously legitimate right. Poll results depend on wording and nuance, but they have quite consistently, over the years, shown strong and often large majority support for universal health care — often called "Canadian-style," not because Canada necessarily has the best system, but because it is close by and observable. The early ACA proposals called for a "public option." It was supported by almost two-thirds of the population, but was dropped without serious consideration, presumably as part of a compact with financial institutions. The legislative bar to government negotiation of drug prices was opposed by 85 percent, also disregarded — again, presumably, to prevent opposition by the pharmaceutical giants. The preference for universal health care is particularly remarkable in light of the fact that there is almost no support or advocacy in sources that reach the general public and virtually no discussion in the public domain.

The facts about public support for universal health care receive occasional comment, in an interesting way. When running for president in 2004, Democrat John Kerry,The New York Times reported, "took pains .. to say that his plan for expanding access to health insurance would not create a new government

program," because "there is so little political support for government intervention in the health care market in the United States." At the same time, polls in The Wall Street Journal, Businessweek, The Washington Post and other media found overwhelming public support for government guarantees to everyone of "the best and most advanced health care that technology can supply."

But that is only public support. The press reported correctly that there was little "political support" and that what the public wants is "politically impossible" — a polite way of saying that the financial and pharmaceutical industries will not tolerate it, and in American democracy, that's what counts.

Returning to your question, it raises a crucial question about American democracy: why isn't the population "demanding" what it strongly prefers? Why is it allowing concentrated private capital to undermine necessities of life in the interests of profit and power? The "demands" are hardly utopian. They are commonly satisfied elsewhere, even in sectors of the US system. Furthermore, the demands could readily be implemented even without significant legislative breakthroughs. For example, by steadily reducing the age for entry to Medicare.

The question directs our attention to a profound democratic deficit in an atomized society, lacking the kind of popular associations and organizations that enable the public to participate in a meaningful way in determining the course of political, social and economic affairs. These would crucially include a strong and participatory labor movement and actual political parties growing from public deliberation and participation instead of the elite-run candidate-producing groups that pass for political parties. What remains is a depoliticized society in which a majority of voters (barely half the population even in the super-hyped presidential elections, much less in others) are literally disenfranchised, in that their representatives disregard their preferences while effective decision-making lies largely in the hands of tiny concentrations of wealth and corporate power, as study after study reveals.

The prevailing situation reminds us of the words of America's leading 20th-century social philosopher, John Dewey, much of whose work focused on democracy and its failures and promise. Dewey deplored the domination by "business for private profit through private control of banking, land, industry, reinforced by command of the press, press agents and other means of publicity and propaganda" and recognized that "Power today resides in control of the

means of production, exchange, publicity, transportation and communication. Whoever owns them rules the life of the country," even if democratic forms remain. Until those institutions are in the hands of the public, he continued, politics will remain "the shadow cast on society by big business."

This was not a voice from the marginalized far left, but from the mainstream of liberal thought.

Turning finally to your question again, a rather general answer, which applies in its specific way to contemporary western democracies, was provided by David Hume over 250 years ago, in his classic study of the First Principles of Government. Hume found "nothing more surprising than to see the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and to observe the implicit submission with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When we enquire by what means this wonder is brought about, we shall find, that as Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. `Tis therefore, on opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular."

Implicit submission is not imposed by laws of nature or political theory. It is a choice, at least in societies such as ours, which enjoys the legacy provided by the struggles of those who came before us. Here power is indeed "on the side of the governed," if they organize and act to gain and exercise it. That holds for health care and for much else.