

Covid-19 and Our Society's Current Predicament

by Dr. Andrew Combs

In a seriously minded "what the heck just happened" piece, [Is Maoist America Here to Stay?](#) in "The American Thinker," Joel Gilbert describes what is going on all around us in



the US - a nation catapulted into a shutdown of our society resulting in widespread violations of fundamental civil liberties, carried out by many throughout government and society at large who seem to feel entitled to arbitrary and unlawful tyrannies.

And all of this happened out of fear of a virus. Unfortunately, by believing in medical experts hamstrung by limited data (and possibly seeing no choice as he might fear being driven out politically otherwise) I believe President Trump has blundered into a very dangerous place. It is because in the US we have followed

the Chinese totalitarian model of "forced mitigation" (an approach recommended by, among others, the too narrowly focused and increasingly self-important Anthony Fauci, and his tunnel-visioned mentee Deborah Birx). This method defers infections (thus deaths) in the near term while it avoids solving the virus problem (inevitable infections from a highly contagious respiratory pathogen) in the long term. Its purpose is to avoid overwhelming the health system (and buy time to develop a good vaccine), but it has cost us our civil liberties as a side-effect - relative health safety at the price of transient totalitarianism.

I use the term "tunnel-visioned" because forced sheltering as a prescription has severe side-effects: financial stress, spousal abuse, drugs and drinking, suicides, and the "models" of viral spread don't take that into account. Neither do the models of disease spread, nor seemingly do Fauci and Birx – but they should know better. I am sure they both pride themselves on a person's whole health – how about the population's whole health?

The forced mitigation model our nation has embarked on is not the only approach to minimize negative health consequences. In fact, it stands in stark contrast to the more benign Swedish model which is based on the guidance of their chief epidemiologist Anders Tengell. The Swedish method deals head-on with the virus itself. Its purpose is to eliminate the virus from the population by establishing herd immunity (where 60-80% of population gains antibodies so the virus can't easily infect the next person – i.e., lowering the "R" or "replication" factor below one) while at the same time keeping society open and isolating/protecting the most vulnerable. Commerce and business proceeds mostly as normal, children go to schools, people are out and about enjoying life.

The Sweden model incurs suffering, sure - people get sick, many have died as in America. Surprisingly, however, the deaths per capita population are not much different than in the US – Sweden is at 0.014%, the US at 0.011% (i.e., about 14 and 11 per 100,000 respectively). Indeed, Sweden is doing better than many of our states that have sheltered in place. This very curious fact may in part due to what is increasingly believed to be a key source of virus transfer - not only from surfaces, or from touching, but from breathing an atmosphere in enclosed spaces for long times with an infected

person or persons who literally pollute the air not only by coughing, but by speaking or even breathing. So, being outside is fine – closing parks and open spaces looks increasingly stupid. (And today I learned of the announcement by the People’s Republic of the Bay Area in California that one must wear masks at all time if one leaves home – even for a walk in the fresh air of our suburban neighborhood. Hmm ... I thought it was all about social distancing ...)

As a result of our choices in the US, what we are enjoying a taste of what a Maoist, or any Marxist, society experiences with central control with the worst of human nature coming to the fore in petty tyrants running amok all over society - from the governors, to the mayors, police and police chiefs, to heads of businesses down to the local "police" who keep people spaced "properly" and maintain the lines at Costco, Target and Safeway.

So, now, We now have long lines at stores, increasingly empty shelves not getting restocked (increased hoarding, causing the supply chain to falter), unconstitutional unlawful crackdowns on assembly, religious practice (to the point of non-legislative criminalization by executive fiat punishable by fines or 14-day imprisonment by house arrest) and gun purchasing (even "lawn item" purchasing in Michigan) by self-appointed autocrats who have decided what is essential and what is not ... It is even being discussed to require that people carry "papers" to certify if we can go back to work or not (based on established immunity) and likely also, who will be able to travel and to where. (In communist states, “privacy” and the “private life” is dead.) Such a dystopian vision reminds me of a WWII era movie of a Nazi Gestapo agent approaching an individual to threateningly demand in a thick German accent “Your papers please!”. Some government executives have even encouraged citizens to report neighbors they think are violating distancing or stay-at-home orders. This “encouraging one to inform” on one’s neighbor was an extraordinarily effective approach perfected by the Gestapo which instills mistrust of one's own neighbor (talk about social distancing!) and an overall atmosphere of paranoia.

Yet, all of this avoids solving the underlying problem which is our vulnerability to the virus itself. Tengell of Sweden, and Knut Wittkowski, epidemiologist formerly of Rockefeller University, say establishing herd immunity is the **only** way to deal with such a highly contagious respiratory disease, short of an effective vaccine. Expose the population, protect the vulnerable, and you'll be done with it for good in a couple of months. Mitigation, on the other hand, actually impedes herd immunization. It prevents the health-care system from being overwhelmed – true – but it doesn’t prevent infections. The virus’s contagiousness is sufficiently high that it will almost certainly find its way into every nook and cranny of life until it saturates (to 60-80% of the population) and self-extinguishes.

And where are we now regarding the herd? Current data based on pregnant women in New York City (NYC) indicates about 15% of the population of NYC has immunity already (that is about 12 times the case infection rate - this also implies mortality is much closer than we thought to the seasonal flu)¹. That means herd immunity has a factor of 4-5 to go before NYC is really immune to new cycles of infection. If that factor were applied to US infections as a whole, it implies only 2% of the US population has developed immunity. Based on the forced mitigation precedent, we can expect to be shut down again and again in waves until herd-immunity stops it - it is insanity! Mass

hysteria! ... It could continue this way until a vaccine is available (which is a year and a half off at minimum according to health experts). And the longer it goes on, the more likely the mutations will be, and the more difficult to get a comprehensive vaccine.

And, while surely God wants to inspire leaders of the world, and has surely inspired Donald Trump throughout his Presidency, leaders have no choice but to look to others who are experts. But, if the experts are wrong, then great error can happen. I am increasingly convinced the health experts Trump has listened to are wrong, and it caused him to (with all good intentions - though we know how that often pans out) push mitigation under Fauci's and Birx's guidance which has been disastrous to civil liberties and our republic, to say nothing of people and enterprises having been pushed out of work ...

It should also give us pause about who is right when we realize the major media outlets have been pushing us to do more mitigation, more extreme measures and nationwide shutdowns, severely questioning the wisdom of opening our society too soon. The liberal media is almost always wrong and nearly always pushes us toward a bad direction ... and Fauci is speaking of getting back to normal after, and I paraphrase his public statement "when we get down to around zero new cases" (when will that be ... many months?!). Can our freedom loving capitalist society bear this? Can we (will we) continue to bear the insults and harm done to our freedoms by (mostly) liberal petty tyrant executives?

I hope I'm wrong. It may be that mitigation is a benign, necessary, massive move little or no permanent damage to our republic. But the short-term damage is already there - judges and legislators are for the most part sheltering in place - missing in action. It is the executives that can act (and have acted) unilaterally and often destructively. Worse, this is precedent setting ... the left has used climate change and poor early modeling results to predict extreme, apocalyptic consequences without getting much movement over decades to control society, but by scaring us with death (as per the leftist Club of Rome's stated methods) we've established a Maoist-like society in 30 days!

It is like Mao's and Ayers' Prairie Fire (see the Gilbert article) - the single event that can realize a revolutionary change overnight. And what is the next event that would mobilize our executives to issue fiat orders for? A warm spell or drought that triggers shuttering of gas stations as they pose an "existential threat" to our environment? Large protests of violations of our civil liberties that might be seen as a "danger to public safety" leading to military like crackdowns, fines, imprisonments (based upon no established law)? Civil disobedience of churchgoers who physically assemble in New York in spite of Mayor DeBlasio's threat to close their places of worship *permanently*. Instances of "hate speech" (whatever that is) where citizenry is encouraged to report it using 911? (that is happening in Seattle as reported on Fox recently). Or "suspicious activity" spun out of whole-cloth by leading to the destruction of lives by a government's abuse of power in order to investigate and punish political opponents (Communism 101, Nazism 101) ... Oh wait ... I forgot, we've experiencing this since mid-2016 in the Russia hoax, the Mueller report, the Ukraine fiction - even earlier with the Obama administration's use of the IRS against conservative non-profit applications, and what appears to be complicit oversight of intelligence and law enforcement abuses of our institutions to spy on and dis-inform our electorate about our President ...

Again, I hope I'm wrong, but I worry that we may have to fight yet again for our freedom as our fathers and fore-fathers have ... through the courts, or en-masse in public outcry (take a listen to this remarkable interview - Judge Napolitano on Tucker Carlson's show [Napolitano slams leaders: We're witnessing slow death of civil liberties](#))

PS - To their credit, Drs Fauci and Birx have consistently bemoaned the lack of data. Based on initial estimates of mortality, the case mortality rate seemed to be running between two and ten percent. But there was the “denominator problem”: we knew the deaths (despite being skewed by the “assigning cause of death” problem) but didn’t have enough testing to know the true infection rate. This led Fauci to claim during a televised press conference that Covid-19 is 10 times as deadly as the Flu (scaring the bleep out of people). Furthermore, lacking facts, they relied on models (computer simulations), which turned out to be highly inaccurate to the high side (doubly scaring the bleep out of people) – reminiscent of many computer models predicting wildly inaccurate forecasts of global warming. The models (even those that include mitigation) have now dropped predictions of total deaths from as much as 240,000 to about 60,000 (as they were adjusted to reflect real time data). That is a big factor off ... Fauci has been patting his (and America's) backs to say "mitigation works" - but not so fast - it could be that the models themselves were bad (beyond bad, but destructively inaccurate) due to poor assumptions – the evidence is not yet clear. Furthermore, “flattening the curve” doesn’t impact direct mortality – only incidental mortality due to overwhelming the health system. Direct mortality (i.e., given patients are “well cared for”) is just drawn out in the mitigation model – not suppressed. That is, mitigation saves lives only by avoiding a healthcare services crises, not by avoiding infections. We will get infected to about 60-80% cumulatively. Without a vaccine, there is no avoiding it.

¹Update - Interestingly, as reported by Tucker Carlson on Fox News, tests just done in Santa Clara California show that, relative to the total population, the “real infection rate” is 50-85 times the “confirmed case” infection rate. These tests go to the denominator problem – the denominator of the mortality rate may be 50-85 times bigger, so the real mortality rate would be 0.2% to 0.02%!! That puts it in flu territory as far as its real mortality rate (or even possibly much **less** deadly than the flu).

In the US the confirmed case rate is about 2 out of a thousand of total population (0.2%); if we are actually a factor of 50-85 more in infections, it is 10% to 17% of the population. Unfortunately, that still leaves us well short of herd infection (60-80%), which is what we need to avoid new of outbreaks. In summary, covid-19 may have mortality on the order of or significantly less than, the seasonal flu. Based on the guidance of models and experts acting on little data, we have acted precipitously based more on fear than reason.

People such as Fauci and Birx should’ve been able to advise us better relative to the “denominator” problem and the limitations of models. They should’ve advised our leaders, especially the President, that it was unclear that the Swedish model would do any worse than the Chinese totalitarian model. That they haven’t has cost us dearly and will continue to cost us if we don’t wake up to the efficacy of the Swedish model that avoids “mitigation’s” downside of financial stress, even ruin, and its terrible consequences that are hurting so many in our land.