

All.Net Analyst Report and Newsletter

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Cyberspace vs. Covid-19 - Propaganda

I don't know if you noticed, but all of a sudden over the US Memorial Day weekend, almost nobody died of COVID-19. Or so it appears. What really happened?

Propaganda!

Have you noticed that on Sundays and holidays, the reporting of COVID deaths has always been lower than during weekdays. It's not because people aren't dying. It's because the reporting process has changed. But that's not all...

- Today (May 27), CNN reports less than 100,000 US deaths (99,783). But on Saturday, 5 days earlier, the number was over 99,000, and more than 2,000 people were reported as having died every day at that point for some time.
- Johns Hopkins today reports 693 deaths since yesterday, and yet somehow the 100,000 number is not being reached! Updates are now daily instead of as they arrive.
- The Google search that gave reports updated every few hours all of a sudden no longer returned the same information, instead going to a different format and not providing the graph or numbers.
- MSNBC on the other hand is now in excess of 100,000 deaths. But their map never gets to 100,000...

So what happened that all of a sudden, with about steady numbers of cases over the past month, almost nobody died for the last 5 days? Here are a few theories:

- Trump was right – all of a sudden, the virus just disappeared.
 - This seems unlikely. People were still getting sick and moved into hospitals. In fact, hospital emergency rooms and intensive care units in several states were full, to the point where people needing intubation are unable to get it. And yet nobody is apparently being reported as a COVID-19 death. More people keep getting sick from it and yet almost none are apparently dying of it! And there is no treatment.
- Reporting stopped or was otherwise slowed or interfered with.
 - I suspect that reporting has changed because the major networks are showing different dashboards not including the death counts or updating them as often. But the more obvious indicator is that Trump is being very pushy threatening governmental action over private industry and insisting on his right to say anything he wants, regardless of how it may harm others. For example, he claimed that Joe Scarborough killed someone after Joe indicated that Trump was responsible for a significant number of the COVID-related deaths we are now experiencing. Trump and his followers are magnifying their individual influence using Fox News and their other assets (including foreign sourced ones) to smear anyone involved in limiting their propaganda. The so-called bully pulpit works, and is amplified by death threats and other harassment of anyone who expresses something Trump dislikes.

- How they were counted changed.
 - This seems to be clearly the case, as there are a number of reports of people whose relatives have died but were not reported as COVID-19 deaths. Apparently they were reported as likely COVID-19 deaths – because the cause of death was not definitively associated with COVID-19 – even though they had COVID-19 and died when on intubation.
 - Also, certain states seem to be reporting far less deaths than infections with proper delays, etc. This relates to the denials we are starting to see out of South America from countries with oppressive regimes who seem to have almost no deaths attributed to COVID despite night burials of large numbers of corpses. Different standards and reporting processes, different presentations of data and delays, etc. are being used and have been reported on by media via whistle blowers in several states – with likely more to come. If this reminds you of China’s apparent reduced numbers and denials, it should be no surprise.

Finally, on May 27, the official (Johns Hopkins that it – the US Government doesn’t tell us the facts) count went over 100,000 for all of the major media outlets.

- And on May 28 it was revealed that state health departments in some states are only reporting deaths as from COVID-19 if the patient was diagnosed with the disease and died in a hospital. Of course this eliminates all the elder care facility deaths that dominated the numbers.
- Which brings us to Stalin who is widely quoted (by whom I am not certain) as saying:

“Elections are not won the the voting booth.

They are won in the counting room.”

And which states are reporting these numbers in which way? Take a guess. Yes – it’s not mandated by the Federal Government. Each state makes its own count in its own way. Republican leaning (particularly southern) states who are opening up more quickly seem to count fewer of the deaths while Democratic leaning states who are being more cautious are counting more of the deaths.

I have more theories but few facts

Here’s the problem with all of these theories. They are largely just theories with limited (or no) supporting facts. And what we need in order to fight against propaganda is facts.

- As a substitute for facts, we can also use reputation.
 - So propagandists try to damage the reputation of their competitors and of course tell their fans that they are being falsely accused all the time (fake news) so they don’t need to act with integrity while they push others to do so.
- All lies are not equal and more lies are worse than fewer lies.
 - While lies get half way around the Earth before the truth can get its pants on, an army of fact gatherers and truth tellers can overwhelm liars by weight of numbers and evidence.

But what we have is armies of liars, including the bully pulpit of the Presidency, several large media outlets, some social media platforms using pay to play as their monetization strategy, and clearly more desire for entertainment than for serious discourse.

Getting away from the facts

Once we get away from fact-based reality, we face a serious problem. Influence operations when separated from facts and checking leads to destruction of realism and that leads to falling prey to the dangers of the World we live on.

- Science is about matching claims (theories) to facts (empirical observations).
 - When they don't match, the claims are dropped.
- Propaganda is about matching facts to claims.
 - When they don't match, the facts are dropped (and lies are often substituted).

I am not personally able to spend the time to sort through all of the lies and facts of what is going on, and that is why I need – and presumably you need – many voices of people seeking facts and truth and reporting it to us – along with the basis for any conclusions.

- Sadly, this is not what we mostly get today in the US media. We see pundits and equal treatment of points of view based on lies with those based on facts, and little real explanation of the basis for conclusions.

I would love to see something where you can click on something and the Internet would tell you if it is truth or lies, and I think it is in fact feasible, but as we should know by now, power corrupts. The power to declare the facts inevitably corrupts those given such power and the facts and the truth fall by the way side. As such, we need to retain communities of people who review each others' work and retry experiments to get at facts and truths, in the manner of science.

Free Speech vs. Science

I am a huge fan of free speech. As much as I disdain lies and frauds and hate speech and disgusting sicknesses of the human mind spread across the Internet, and as much as I would like to stop that speech, I recognize that their free speech is also my free speech.

- But that is where the problem lies today. The “free speech” of those who dominate the media has the net effect of making my speech less meaningful. Artificial amplification of speech of some, combined with their attempts to suppress my speech, eliminates free speech as a social capacity. And as soon as those in power start to say they can speak freely and you and I cannot, we face the collapse of freedoms for all of us.
- The free speech of the President is being used to abuse the decision-making of individuals who in fact have little or nothing to do with the things Trump complains about. But propagandists don't care about truth or facts, just impressions.

Science is the name of a methodology that is intended to fix this problem, and it should not be in opposition to free speech. But it is currently placed in such opposition because science, which tends to sort out fact from fiction and truth from lies, in fact is successful at doing that. As a result, propagandists always start by assaulting science and scientists, who usually don't know how to fight back against lies and smears.

- The social science of influence is exploited by those undertaking deception to overwhelm the science of medicine (in the case of a pandemic). As more and more people die, bigger and bigger lies come along, and suppression of facts becomes more and more important.

When the US Centers for Disease Control puts out watered down recommendations clearly supportive of political narrative instead of scientific analysis, which they very recently did, then their previous announcement just days earlier regarding not really being able to get COVID-19 from surfaces so much (yes it was not really very clearly or definitively stated) then we should reasonably assume that this is also a political lie.

- We cannot now believe the US CDC, and the World Health Organization (WHO) is branded corrupt!
- **And thus science is destroyed.**

The propagandists have systematically destroyed the ability to check them by placing more and more of their people in charge of the “deep state”. They corrupt from the top, and because Trump was not held accountable by the Republican dominated Senate, he will continue to corrupt without recourse, ultimately seeking to destroy the very heart of limitations on his power, the election system and the counting rooms.

None of this is new and it should not be a surprise

It's as old as the play book gets. Take control of the media in order to take over a country. The highly distributed nature of the Internet makes this a lot harder, as we have seen from country after country trying to do it. In the US, there are so many redundant paths and hobbyists who can bypass controls that it will be a serious battle in cyberspace to take control.

So Trump releases his increasing attempts to take control over the Internet by trying executive orders, exploiting his control over the Justice department for his own benefit, replacing people in key spots in the government to have them try to enforce things he wants even when they are against the law, using his Federal judicial appointments facilitated by the Senate to try to get rulings in his favor, and so forth.

Given enough time, he will make enough changes to succeed, even against the enormous momentum of the US and its history of self-correction. And that's just the way it is in the world. But take solace in the opportunity you still have to express yourself. And do so. If you don't like what Trump says, respond in massive numbers. Bury him in your tweets and Facebook postings and wherever else you find a desire to express yourself.

What makes your speech free is that you use it.

Your silence is what allows them to silence you further.

Next thing you know, they will be arresting journalists! ... Oh... that has started.

Conclusions

There's a huge problem when propaganda is combined with suppression of free speech. I lean on the side of free speech always, no matter how much it hurts. But I am also a huge fan of integrity. So I am also in favor of clearly marking lies as lies and liars as liars. If you want to listen to lies, I think that's your right. If you want to hear facts and truth, you should be able to readily find them and know that they are what they claim to be. But that's not how it is now.