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## **DEMOCRACY, THE NUDGE UNIT, “PSYOPS” AND CORPORATE STATE POWER**

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**Psychological operations (PSYOP)** are **operations** to convey selected information and indicators to audiences to influence their emotions, motives, and objective reasoning, and ultimately the behaviour of governments, organisations, groups, and individuals. It is in this sphere that the British Government’s “nudge unit” the *Behavioural Insights Team* operates. Some of its members were working at **the Institute for Government**, where they were commissioned by the Cabinet Office to write a report on influencing public behaviour. The Report \*\* was called “**MINDSPACE – – influencing behaviour through public policy**” which in a world of elitist corporate State monopoly power, increasingly unaccountable to democratic process, is a dangerous development.

**Government taxation, allowances and social legislation allow Government to “achieve desired public policy outcomes”. Now we need to persuade people, say the authors of the Report “to change their behaviour, their lifestyles and their existing habits”!**

It is but a dangerously short step from this list to changing “their attitudes, their language, their views, their choices, their politics, their voting”. Goebbels’ Nazi Propaganda Ministry would be proud of their logic!

Such arrogance and control freakery would not be a threat in a genuine democracy where the representatives of the people were the chief power in deciding public policy. But the leftist/corporatist State political system which has emerged over recent decades has bypassed the voter and consumer, the parliament and the nation to create an elitist un-sackable corporate and State (and Superstate) paid class which feed off each other economically and politically. It not only feels able to act politically without reference to

voters but to expect their ideas to be put into effect ABOVE the heads of parliament and the people.

The chief source of many of these power structures and ideas are those most remote from nations, democracies and elections – supranational government like the EU and the UN and their various agencies. Sometimes the peoples’ own governments conspire to create these blatantly fascist systems – although they are as adept at promoting corporatist fascism in eg the European Union as they are at imposing Marxist Gramscian social policies on powerless families, communities and educational and media systems.

These power structures are today so out of control and their operators enjoy such self righteous dominance that they feel they can treat their peoples as behavioural toys to be manipulated “for their own good”, not as emancipated voters and free consumers whom they must serve.

## **COVID STATE ELITISM**

As it happens we have seen in the COVID crisis the utter incompetence of the supranational corporatist, leftist view of the world and the openly dismissive attitude of governments to parliament and people. The nodding through, without parliamentary debate, of draconian lockdown legislation, the attacks on legitimate demonstrations, the arrest and abusive treatment of people in public places, increasing attacks on free speech, and the postponement of elections in New Zealand by a far left administration whose fellow ideologists attacked Trump for suggesting the same for the US elections and for exactly the same reason – the COVID crisis.

The very title of the MINDSPACE report is an admission of mass psychological treatment – a short step from “conditioning”. At the very front of the report is a pear shaped illustration of the words and concepts they associate with their Mindspace programme. I list them here:

Mood, intent, motivation, choice, reciprocity, framing, influence, resources, affects, design and then in large boxed letters:

**AFFECT**

**MESSENGER**

**PRIMING**

**COMMITMENT**

**SALIENCE**

**HABIT**

**EGO**

**NORMS**

## INCENTIVES

## DEFAULTS

## NORMS

## DANGEROUS GOOD INTENTIONS

Of course most if not all those involved start from democratic principles, a desire to do good and to make Government policy effective. But computer companies built personal data systems in the 1930s which were then used by the Nazis to identify and round up Jews and political opponents. In the 1930s and 1940s British and American big business collaborated with Nazis to increase trade and business links but thereby sustained an evil and murderous regime.

Today in the COVID crisis personal data and DNA are being collected by Governments – but with little parliamentary debate and public scrutiny. Who knows to what uses they will be put?

The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

It is significant how in recent years in the UK, in the Brexit crisis and now in the COVID crisis it has been academics, civil servants, lawyers and State agencies which have driven the decisions which have angered the people. Politicians, being dangerously inexperienced and poorly qualified individuals have gone along with the unelected “experts” – or rather they have chosen which experts to listen to! They did not listen to the Swedish experts but rather to Professor Niall Ferguson who said that 85,000 Swedes could die (when the outcome so far is 6,000 – a lower death rate than in the UK which followed his advice).

This MINDSPACE behavioural change programme started with a summit in 2009

*“which brought together senior policy, strategy and insight officials **from across government**, alongside a number of external experts.”*

The report

*“.....is grounded in a series of interviews with senior civil servants, academics and behaviour change experts”*

**And the good intentions are framed in relatively uncontroversial areas:**

*“For policy-makers facing policy challenges such as crime, obesity, or environmental sustainability”*

Just like facial recognition technology is sold as “catching crooks” and “if you have not got anything to hide why should you worry?”. But it is of course the State which has potentially much to hide – not least its infamous lack of control of its own data and the selling of

information to others, never mind the political and economic manipulation of voters/consumers for reasons of politics and profit.

So what is important is not the promoted reasons for this kind of psychological method of making government effective but the psychological methods themselves. So when this Report refers to:

*sophisticated communications techniques.*

and

*existing tools such as incentives and information can be greatly enhanced by new evidence about how our behaviour is influenced.....Tools such as incentives and information are intended to change behaviour by “changing minds”.*

Now that is the extreme danger. For “changing minds” has of course two meanings. Firstly and simply that when presented with an argument individuals could, of their own volition, “change their mind” and do something different – and then perhaps “unchange it” again.

Secondly and most insidiously (with the effect of the total resources of monopoly Government behind the programme) it could mean changing the human mind itself by conditioning it to react in specific ways in future in a way pre-determined by Government or the State apparatus. Individuals, families, communities and nations would effectively lose their free will and become mere tools of the State. The “psych ops” would not have to be 100% effective – just enough so that the unaffected were intimidated as powerfully as the majority were conditioned.

The good intentions of those who wrote this MINDSPACE Report are evident in words like the following:

*Government legitimacy rests on the fact it represents and serves the people, and thus it is vital that their views are **taken into account** when considering any attempt to influence their behaviour.*

But “taken into account” is not very re-assuring when combined with the following:

*Government needs to take a lead on issues despite public opposition, since these public attitudes may actually shift in response to the introduction of the policy.*

**And who measures the “shift”? – the very powers including the corporatist media who are dependent on corporate and political patronage.**

## **CHANGING INDIVIDUALS THROUGH CORPORATIONS**

Of particular interest – given the corporatist State power base to which we have referred above – is the following distinction between Individuals and companies:

*On the one hand, there is a good case that the freedoms of people, rather than institutions, count the most – and government can change the behaviour of companies in ways it could not for private citizens.*

A good example is the way in which companies and their employees are now being subsidised by the State to adopt electric cars. Employees will not be taxed on the benefit of their company car – if it is an electric one! This is a big subsidy! We know that people in general are not buying such cars but here we have a classic corporatist pincer movement between business and State to co-erce people into doing what they would other wise not do (and covertly paying for it in higher taxes!)

So whether it is health, COVID, freedom of expression or electric cars the problem is not that such matters are the concern of Government but that unaccountable elites of business and politics have accrued such power at the centre (and neutered the votes and voices of parliamentary democracy and even national sovereignty itself) that psychological and behavioural manipulations of the populace are so dangerous. Such programmes in the hands of a powerful elite, even with good intentions, will inevitably gravitate towards totalitarian systems.

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**The Report: “MINDSPACE – influencing behaviour through public policy”**

<https://www.bi.team/publications/mindspace/>