

SCI-FI FILM FIESTA

**The Lost Last Volume 12:
Speculations & Ruminations**

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Dedications

**Dedicated in loving memory of my wonderful parents:-
Konstantinos (Dino) & Rosemary Christopoulos**

The SCI-FI FILM FIESTA eBook series is intended as a salute to the pioneering work of science fiction film makers. May future generations have the privilege of enjoying your work and never stop wondering....What if?

Dedicated also to you, the reader who appreciates these classic gems from the golden age of sci-fi film-making. It is you who help to keep such films alive for future generations to enjoy.

The Complete Sci-Fi Film Fiesta series:

Volume 1: “Here Be Monsters”

Volume 2: “Into Space”

Volume 3: “Other Worlds”

Volume 4: “Journeys Within”

Volume 5: “Alien Contact”

Volume 6: “Alien Invasion”

Volume 7: “The End Is Nigh!”

Volume 8: “Big Bugs & Crazy Critters”

Volume 9: “Accidents & Experiments”

Volume 10: “Supersized & Miniaturized”

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Sci-Fi Film Fiesta The Lost Last Volume 12 “Speculations & Ruminations”

Introduction

Well, I did indicate in Volume 11 that it would be the final volume in the *Sci-Fi Film Fiesta* eBook series and that was in fact my intention. But no, the final odd figure of 11 did not sit comfortably with me. Every fibre of my being cried out for a nice round even number of 12 - a psychically delightful dozen. After all, we have a dozen eggs, 12 knights of the round table, 12 days of Christmas, 12 months of the year and so on.

I then remembered that I had bits and pieces of articles and posts filed away and previously posted on my sci-fi blog that dealt with various implications, themes and ideas that often arise out of the world of science fiction films and literature referenced in the other volumes of this eBook series.

All of this material has been included in this 12th Volume – “Speculations & Ruminations.” It is organised into four broad sections:

Part 1: “Going Forward”

Part 2: “Dystopia Now”

Part 3: “Poetic Ponderings”

Part 4: “Sci-Fi Future Is here & Now”

I hope the content of this volume encourages a bit of thought and debate about the world we live in, the kind of future we would (and wouldn't) wish for ourselves and for future generations, along with an appreciation of the sometimes abused, tenuous and fragile nature of what many of us take for granted such as freedom of thought and speech and our system democracy. Just in the last 6 or 7 years both natural and human created factors have managed to shake our certainties to the core, but self-interest, complacency and self-denial still seem to have a way of managing to rise to the surface to blot out our memories and dampen our anger and perception of danger signals.

Some of the references in the articles below do refer to events and happenings in the Australian context of the last few years, but I suspect that they probably do have their equivalent counterparts in other countries. Also, for what it's worth, all the poems included below are my own.



Part 1: “Going Forward”

GOING FORWARD

The often over-used phrase “going forward” tends to be employed by politicians and those in authority to deflect attention away from whatever mess is currently

taking place and which they have most likely been responsible for having created in the first place.

Science fiction writers and sci-fi films also deal with matters of “going forward” with a view of allowing us to actually look forward into the future and contemplate what may be in store for us. By doing so, they also enable us to reflect on our present condition.

Let's start off with a poem which attempts to make use of the now hackneyed phrase, “going forward” to highlight some developments we see in society today and consider their possible implications in the future.....a future which is in our hands to do something about right NOW!

GOING FORWARD

“And so...*going forward*”

Off we go on linear leaps
Forward toward a fantastic future,
Where all will be well and so shiny
In a social media virtual stupor.

“And so...*going forward*”

Or so we convince ourselves
As we wade through the mess we made,
And hope that no-one will notice
The price for our folly to be paid.

“And so...*going forward*”

To a time where the blind can see,
All but what is in front of their eyes
And where many will live forever,
To endure an eternity of lies.

“And so...*going forward*”

We launch into a race into space,
But with whom, why and where?
For national pride and to win!
Lebensraum! We don't care!

“And so...*going forward*”

We all get carried along apace,
And the silent majority fall in line;
Our progress checked and monitored
Hup, two, three, four, we march in time.

“And so...going *forward*”

**An empire fades and another rises,
While fools play pretend presidents,
And tweet out their egos and paranoia
Like petulant infantile malcontents.**

“And so...*going forward*”

**Ensnared in a net and a web
All together, all of us connected,
Hauled along by codes and algorithms
To whose cruel rule we are subjected.**

“And so...*going forward*”

**We stride on followed, friended and liked,
Arm in arm with like-minded tribes,
Clutching cherry-picked facts to our breasts,
With which to beat others with insults and gibes.**

“And so...*going forward*”

**We reel from Earth’s blast furnace breath,
And stagger back into stinking waters
Lapping and rising about our feet,
While millions are forced to float over borders.**

“And so...*going forward*”

**We swap good sense with A.I. nonsense
And live in smart cities and smart homes,
Knowing less about more while feeling alone,
Dependent on Alexas and smart phones.**

“And so...*going forward*”

**To a place where all is commodified,
To a time where “freedom” is just a word,
To a life lived and liked as a valued consumer,
And where “privacy” is a notion just too absurd.**

“And so...*going forward*”

**Our evolution is taken in hand,
Man and machine merge into one,
While genes are shuffled and sorted
And all the old certainties are undone.**

“And so...*going forward*”

Like Luddite apes with minds held fast
By rusted chains anchoring us to our past
Can we be sure we wont trip over in haste?
“Wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast.”

And so... *Watch where you're going!*



Who Will Be To Blame?

The recent Covid-19 pandemic highlighted for us a possible disturbing future direction our society *could* take, along with the question as to whose fault it would be should things turn out that way. It is certainly the kind of premise that is often dealt with in science fiction films and literature. I know we would prefer to wipe recent events from our minds and engage in a collective form of amnesia and submerge ourselves in calmer waters of smug complacency. Still, it might be worth our while to consider how easy it is for certain events and social, economic, political, ecological and technological forces to materialise that have the effect of up-ending our lives, demolishing old certainties and setting us on a path toward a future we hadn't counted on or even foreseen.



Scenario 1:

A man in his mid-to-late '60s goes off on his weekly visit to a cemetery to pay his respects to his deceased parents. He stops off at the cemetery's florist to purchase flowers for their grave-site as he has done for the last decade. He then proceeds to waddle up to the entrance to be greeted by a 20-something door "marshal" who requests that a QR code be scanned for Covid trace and tracking purposes. Annoying yes, but the task is completed and the rationale behind it can be understood but is somewhat debatable as of late, not mention its mass surveillance implications.

Ah, but the "marshal's" eagle eye has noticed that the digital vaccination passport has not yet been presented. The "marshal" is calmly told that the mid-to-late 60's now obviously illegal and unauthorised alien, who although fully vaccinated, does not wish to participate in a system that actively discriminates against individuals and groups of people and as a result refuses to download or present said passport.

The marshal's Sunday morning is suddenly thrown into disarray. Will the mid-60s transgressor go 'angry old man' all over his ass? Will he have to call the

authorities? All he can say is that he's sorry and that it's "mandatory." A bit like saying, "the computer says 'no.'" Functionaries do try to keep the wheels turning.

The mid-to-late 60s recalcitrant tells the agitated and perplexed "marshal" that he's so sorry but he just can't help the young fella with his current dilemma and proceeds to wander off minus the flowers for his parents' grave and away from a shop he would normally do business with on a weekly basis.

Is this the kind of society we want? Is this the future we're heading towards? Who or what is to blame? The virus? The mid-to-late 60s bloke? The 20 something "marshall?" The passport-cleared compliant customers in the nearby cafe sipping their cups of smug decaf self-satisfaction? The government and its issuing of nonsensical edicts? Individual complacency? Our collective addiction and dependence on technology and the kind of tyranny it can help to perpetuate? Fear of punishment, sanction and social ostracism?

It seems like there's enough blame to go around for how things turn out now and in the future. If such a scenario can occur just once, then who is to say it could not happen again should circumstances arise. But for now for most of us it's a case of out of sight out of mind.

Scenario 2:

Having been denied entry to the flower shop, the mid-to-late '60s man, decides to do some shopping on the way home and drops in at the supermarket only to discover that there's no QR code scanning evident, not everyone is wearing a mask and there are no "marshals" posted to check vaccination passports, supermarkets having been deemed an essential business. No contradictions evident so far, *right?*

After picking up his required items and passing the vaccinated and possibly non-vaccinated alike, the mid-to-late 60s man approaches the checkout. On this occasion however, he finds that the personnel, some of whom he knows by name, are no longer there! In their place are automated "self-service" aisles with only one harried young lady showing those who are obviously confused and inept the correct procedure for processing their goodies.

It isn't too long, however before the customers manage to adopt the *oh* so efficient mechanical clockwork and robotically efficient motions necessary to perform the privilege of sorting, scanning, packing and paying for their own goodies.

Hup, two, three four -
Bag it, tap it and out the door!
It's here to stay, so say no more,
A new normal you can now be sure.

Could it be that in the interests of cost-saving and profit maximisation, people are being increasingly removed from the equation and replaced by technology? The mystery remains: where do the people go? Where do the jobs go? Will such jobs as they performed no longer be available for young people in the future? And who or what is surveilling the customers as they pack their groceries?

No doubt the unblinking eye of the supermarket's security camera captures the image of a man in his mid-to-late '60's wandering disconsolately out of the store lugging his supposedly (as we are assured by opportunistic green-washing corporations) reusable and recyclable laden shopping bags. A perfectly good Sunday clouded by concern for what the next day and the days after might bring, and suspecting who and what might be to blame....



What If? Sci-Fi Film Scenarios

For close to three years many people around the world hunkered down in lock-down conditions and wondered when the Coronavirus crisis would pass. I for one couldn't help wondering what kind of future world would be left in its wake.

A real-life global pandemic such as the recent spread of the Covid-19 virus could have well provided food for thought for science fiction writers and film makers as they tried to imagine 'What If?' scenarios based on the crisis.

Imagine now that we had finally been given the go-ahead to gather in cinemas once again, and were confronted by trailers proclaiming "IN A WORRRRLD WHERE....."

Rationing of goods is the new norm and ration cards and coupons are issued to citizens with which to buy the necessities of life. Those deemed to be hoarders of goods are given mandatory jail sentences and in some jurisdictions may even face execution.

People no longer greet each other with handshakes, hugs, kisses on cheeks or close physical contact in public. Surveillance, monitoring and issuing on-the-spot-fines ensure compliance. People are far more wary of one another.

No-one is permitted to congregate in groups of more than five people and 'Move-on' laws are in wide-spread effect.

The old economic order and its assumptions and our economic relations based on the endless cycle of consumption and production and continuous growth is replaced by a system of bartering of goods and exchanging of services. Items and goods, especially old tech are routinely repaired or repurposed. People, whether they be unemployed or underemployed are sustained by what is laughingly called a 'living' wage payment. Full-time positions by and large no longer exist.

People live in a constant state of fear of the next pandemic, social disorder and unrest, violence and crime, food and other shortages, irrespective of whether such fears are based on fact.

The death of large numbers of minority groups based on age, race, ethnicity and other criteria is tolerated and deemed to be necessary if it is felt that it serves the interests and survival of the majority of the population. If a few people are allowed

to be infected by a virus in order to maintain the “herd immunity,” then so be it – or so the thinking might go.

Utilitarianism becomes the order of the day. A person’s worth or value is based primarily on his or her usefulness to society and is a determining factor in matters of life and death.

Xenophobia is widespread and tolerated so long as it does not destabilise the existing social order and can be conveniently used to direct people’s anger and criticism away from the ruling class and its abuses of power.

Autocratic nation-states replace the previous moves toward a more liberal globalist approach toward world affairs, and where even individual nations are replaced by the re-emergence of self-contained and frequently feuding walled-off principalities and autonomous city states.

Economic patriotism is the new order of the day. Procurement by whatever means of “foreign” goods is seen to be an act of treason and is punished accordingly.

Nearly every action and policy advocated or undertaken by the ruling elites is framed by references to declarations of war. It seems that every sector of society is on a constant war footing and preparedness for war in some form.

Boarders are largely closed off and overseas travel is prohibited to most people. Censorship and regulation of people’s access to information on the internet is conducted by each country and region.

Approved streaming services with sanctioned content keep the citizenry entertained and distracted. Very few now know what else to do with their spare time.

Leaving the house and spending time out of doors and mixing with other people publicly is discouraged and frowned upon.

A More Detailed Possible Film Scenario:

“The Spread Of Future Fears”

While the superpowers snipe childishly at each other and their fingers itch to strike a blow, while the number of global infections from a viral Pandemic climbs into the millions and while more areas around the world are clambering to open up and relax restrictions, minds are beginning to turn towards what life will be like in a post-Pandemic world

It almost feels normal now to see people wearing face masks, having temperature checks and undergoing testing for the virus. It seems that people are prepared to trade some of their individual freedoms and personal privacy in exchange for improved community health and safety. For instance, many are more than willing to have apps downloaded to their smart phones allowing them to communicate with other phones of people they engage with or pass via Bluetooth. Data involving such encounters are then stored thereby enabling health authorities to determine if an individual has been in contact with someone who has tested positive to the presence of the virus, where the contact took place and for how long. Aren’t there

supposed to be laws governing the use of such technology in terms of access to the data and its use? Few remember, know or even care.

On the surface, such technologies seem to be a useful tool for the containment and eventual eradication of the viral pandemic. What is worrying though are other more dubious uses that such tracking technologies are put to by an increasingly authoritarian regime that no longer respects its citizens' rights and liberties.

Personal freedoms and liberties have been eroded by what were once considered liberal democratic governments: From the use of physical hard-copy forms of identification, to personal data stored on credit cards and mobile phones, to surveillance and monitoring via CCTV cameras, to government and corporate access to personal data from internet use, to facial recognition technology and along with bio-metric identification technology such as retinal and palm print scanning.

Much of the above has crept into people's way of life quite stealthily but even more disturbingly much of it with their willing compliance. People have simply allowed this intrusion into their lives to happen often for the sake of personal convenience. It has become such a part of people's lives now so much so that they find they are unable to function in their society unless they are prepared to hand over control of much of their personal lives to corporate, government and bureaucratic entities.

Not only is it becoming a normalised part of life, it is actually becoming gradually integrated within each individual – literally! The Pandemic threat has provided the above entities the means and justification to increase their level of intrusion into and invasion of the very minds and bodies of the citizenry in order to better control us and ensure compliance.

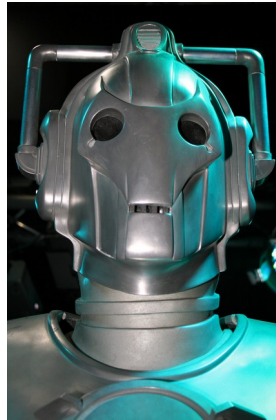
A person can now find themselves fronting up to their workplace and having to undergo regular temperature checks and may even find themselves excluded from services and activities unless they provide proof of negative medial test results.

Now that working from home has become more widespread, the employer now has recourse to remote monitoring of their employees' activities! The employer is able to monitor their home-based staff member's key-strokes, their mood during Zoom and Skype sessions, their location, level of productivity, emails and certain key words and phrases that provide vital information about their state of mind.

Sounds just like science fiction? All this capability and more does exist and much of it has been put into effect. All that's needed is the justification to put it to use, as we have to an extent recently seen with the recent global Covid-19 Pandemic.

Of course many of the above speculative scenarios are very bleak and extreme, but they serve to illustrate what a single event in human history *could* generate in terms of the many and varied possible paths that humanity could take if it is not careful. Besides, such scenarios in film and fiction are far more dramatic and entertaining than one in which humanity drops its differences and comes together to overcome adversity and emerges from a crisis stronger than ever to live happily ever after. Still, I sincerely hope that the latter will be the one to emerge in the long run from our recent real-life global crisis.

YOU WILL COMPLY – RESISTANCE IS FUTILE!
Or is it?



“Dorothy, in the land of OZ, a land of freedom and democracy, a dangerous path leads away from the yellow brick road. Under no circumstances should you tread this path as it will lead you into the clutches of a wicked witch who lies in wait for those too blind or stupid enough to lose their way. If she gets hold of you, you will face a life of always being told what you can and cannot do and what you should and should not think. If you don’t be good and obey her she will punish you!”

A number of classic vintage science fiction movies have raised the issue of threats to personal privacy, liberty and democracy. Some science fiction films and literature have explored what happens when too much power is handed over to the State, its institutions and big corporate entities. It is a scenario that is all too real for those who live under the rule of totalitarian, repressive and one-party regimes whereby compliance and compulsion is a central feature of governance.

In a western democratic country people are fortunate to be able to express their views in many formats and can at least exercise their right to select who governs them. Sure, there are many shortcomings in such a system, but many people world wide would give their right arm to be able to think what they wish, say what they want to say (short of inciting hatred and violence), see what they want to see and organise their lives in their own way.

The danger for democratic nations, however is the slow and inexorable eroding of liberties, freedoms and personal privacy by governments, bureaucracies, institutions, powerful corporations and certain socio-political groups. I’m not saying that there is some evil secret cabal plotting and conspiring to enslave the populace as some conspiracy nutters would have us believe. Rather, the diminution of our freedoms and personal privacy is part of a process that almost takes on a life of its

own – as if it were somehow organic and one in which all of us individually and collectively play a part.

At the heart of this process is POWER – the acquisition of power, the holding and exercise of power and the acquisition of even more power. It is this power that is concentrated in the hands of a power elite via the use of force, corruption, manipulation and social engineering along with the almost willing and eager compliance of those being governed.

In my own country, certain recent developments took place which if permitted to be implemented without stringent oversight and adequate checks and balances could have serious implications for our citizens' personal privacy and freedoms. Would we prove to be too apathetic to care? Would we know if and when the wool is being pulled over our eyes?

THE FOLLOWING IS NOT SCIENCE FICTION.....

New powers proposed for Australia's cyber security agency, the Australian Signals Directorate?

An email from the Home Affairs Department Secretary to the Defence Department was leaked in which there was a suggestion involving *increasing the powers* of our foreign intelligence collection agency, the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD). This would have involved the ASD gaining access to emails, bank records and text messages.

On the surface it might be reasonably suggested that such a proposal would "support law enforcement agencies in fighting online cybercrime and cyber-enabled threats." In today's climate, it might be felt that few would argue with that aim.

Of course, the national government would be quick to deny there were any plans to expand the ASD's powers to enable it to spy on Australian citizens and that there would be no need to expand ASD's powers as the current laws would safeguard the privacy of Australians. Under our laws, the ASD *cannot gather intelligence on Australian citizens*. In addition, the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation can investigate citizens *with a warrant*. So, should we feel reassured? Can we rely on the Power Elite's justifications and reassurances? Are our laws resilient enough to prevent their intrusions into our lives?

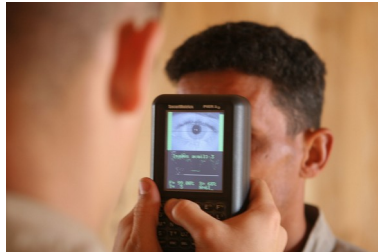
[Spying shock: Shades of Big Brother as cyber-security vision comes to light
[@https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/spying-shock-shades-of-big-brother-as-cybersecurity-vision-comes-to-light/news-story/bc02f35f23fa104b139160906f2ae709](https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/spying-shock-shades-of-big-brother-as-cybersecurity-vision-comes-to-light/news-story/bc02f35f23fa104b139160906f2ae709)

Peter Dutton confirms Australia could spy on its own citizens under cybersecurity plan
[@https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/aug/06/peter-dutton-confirms-australia-could-spy-on-its-own-citizens-under-cybersecurity-plan](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/aug/06/peter-dutton-confirms-australia-could-spy-on-its-own-citizens-under-cybersecurity-plan)

Image: By Keven Law from Los Angeles, USA - Resistance is futile..., CC BY-SA 2.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22482761>

.....

Biometric Technology & Government Surveillance



There has in recent years been considerable concern expressed about a proposed facial recognition system and the identity-matching services bill giving the Home Affairs super ministry powers that were deemed to be too broad and far-reaching.

The fear centred around the need for safeguards to prevent the possible “illegitimate and disproportionate uses” of facial recognition technology. There was also concern that the bill would allow access to information by the private sector and local governments.

Once again, the intrusion into people’s privacy and acquisition of their personal data by the government can easily be justified on the grounds of national security and the need for adequate law enforcement capabilities.

On the surface it seems reasonable to permit federal and state police real-time access to such things as passport, visa, citizenship and driver’s licence images for a range of criminal investigations through a system to be run by the Home Affairs department.

What if, however, by giving government agencies the ability to identify a face in a crowd it results in CCTV footage being used to prosecute “low-level unlawful conduct” such as jay-walking. Instead of merely detecting a would-be terrorist reconnoitring a site for a potential attack, the proposed technology could be employed for a range of activities that the authorities regard as unacceptable.

Without appropriate checks and balances, it would be too easy for our society to normalise government surveillance of citizens and accept the notion that limits to the right to privacy are the price we have to pay for effective national security and law enforcement data sharing.

Our compliance in matters such as the use of identity-matching technology comes about when government and private-sector services make this a requirement for our participation. In this, we are led to believe that we have given our “consent.” For those intending to obtain a driver’s licence, give a thought about what use will be made of the information you provide, including your biometric data!

Co-operate.... Or Else!

It is imperative that we all keep on the look-out for government and corporate intrusion into our lives, and of measures to compel people to comply. We cannot just simply trust our government's and the corporate sector's assurances when it comes to collection, retention and use of our personal data. The recent hacking and data theft from the Optus telecommunications, the Medibank health insurance and Latitude finance companies in Australia underscore the folly of such trust.

Data collection, retention and analysis in the modern world is more and more becoming a self-generating industry. By hook or by crook our personal information is being levered out of us and our right to privacy is under threat. Information is power and in certain circumstances and in the wrong hands it can be used as an instrument of control.

The Right To Have No Choice But To Choose

The bizarre system of *compulsory* voting is ostensibly aimed at ensuring that all eligible voters cast their votes and that capable candidates are selected. Although the right of citizens to choose who will govern their country is an essential requirement for a democracy, if it is implemented by means of compulsion and coercion then it may ultimately defeat its primary purpose and intention resulting in a dilution of democracy.

Just because people are forced to cast a vote does not mean that voters automatically cast a meaningful ballot or evaluate the candidates' suitability to perform effectively. In turn, neither does this ensure that the most suitable candidate is selected. In fact, compulsory voting may increase the chances of voters casting informal or "donkey" votes.

There is something quite hypocritical in the notion of forcing people to vote in a system that is deemed to be democratic. How can infringing peoples' liberty and rights be seen as being a cornerstone of a democracy? *Compulsory* voting in a democracy is merely a contradiction in terms.

Under such a system of compulsory voting, if someone registered to vote in say a federal, state or local election decides not to vote then they are likely to be hit with a fine. Why devote time and law enforcement resources to penalise those who have broken such ridiculous compulsory voting laws?

Compulsory voting systems serve to foster laziness in our political system and the spread of ignorance throughout the community. It's appalling to discover how little is known concerning voters' own political system and of their nation's history beyond the myths and falsehoods purveyed by sections of the media and by self-serving politicians. This is not a sound basis for a properly functioning democracy. Under a *voluntary* system of voting it would be crucial that people are educated from a young age about their system of government and their nation's history so that they become informed voters.

It also ought to be incumbent on the education and political systems to work hard to encourage people to appreciate the importance of casting an informed vote as a

means of ensuring a meaningful and fulfilling life for themselves and future generations.

Ultimately, being *compelled* (except in extreme matters pertaining to society's health, safety and security) whether it be to vote or in most other matters is a violation of our rights and should not have a place in a society that claims to be free and democratic.

On the surface, the above examples (most of which have now disappeared from most people's consciousness) seem to be quite trivial, but taken together they can serve as a warning for any democracy to be vigilant and to push back against those forces of power, control and compulsion that erode our individual rights and liberties – The same type of message and warning arising from other scenarios often conveyed by some of the best science fiction films and stories! If we don't pay attention NOW, who knows what shape the future will take? In Part 2, let's see if we have indeed been paying attention or will we just sleepwalk into a future world we never would have believed possible?

[Australian Identity-Matching Services Bill @<https://ainowinstitute.org/regulatingbiometrics-goldenfein-mann.pdf>

'Mass surveillance'? The facial recognition bill explained @<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/mass-surveillance-the-facial-recognition-bill-explained-20191029-p5358t>



Digital Dictatorship



You wake up in your small apartment and wait for your left eye lid to slowly scrape open. Yet another day squats over the city enveloped in a thick almost impenetrable shroud of smog which not even the faintest futile sliver of sunshine can manage to find passage.

You are a single individual in a mega-city of tens of millions in a nation of over a billion souls. It is a society in which speech, association and other civil rights have been increasingly regulated by the Party that does not simply rely on enforcement by moronic thugs. It is far more sophisticated and insidious than that.

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