US Capitalism at Brink of COLLAPSE. The Shock is Here | Jeffrey Tucker

Not only marxists complain about the state of the US Empire, the libertarians, too, are shocked with the direction the West is taking. Here is one of their analyses: Jeffrey Tucker joins Pascal to examine declining trust in Western institutions. Tucker links central banking, financialization and inflation to inequality, war and household insecurity. They debate China's economic success, the limits of ideology, and whether democracy has failed or been captured by oligarchic interests. The discussion considers Trump's promises, political retaliation, constitutional change and public disillusionment before turning to healthcare incentives, living standards and the difficult question of how a more humane society could emerge from today's institutional crisis. Jeffrey's Links: Brownstone Institute: https://brownstone.org/ Jeffrey Tucker's articles: https://brownstone.org/author/jeffrey-tucker/ Neutrality Studies Links: Neutrality Studies Substack: https://pascallottaz.substack.com Support Neutrality Studies: https://neutralitystudies.com/donate Neutrality Studies shop: https://neutralitystudies.com/shop Time Stamps 00:00 Jeffrey Tucker: facts, ideology and liberty 04: 04 Fiat money, central banks and the warfare state 09:56 China's growth and the debate over economic freedom 16:32 What happens when society loses trust? 20:06 Trump's promises, power and disillusionment 25:07 Lawfare, democracy and the American founding 36:51 Trump, Obama and containing popular anger 46:10 Living standards, healthcare and a squandered future

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. Today, we're joined for the first time by Jeffrey Tucker, the founder and president of the Brownstone Institute. Jeffrey, welcome.

#Jeffrey Tucker

It's my pleasure. Thank you.

#Pascal

I'm very glad to have you. Yesterday, I talked to Professor Radhika Desai, who is a very outspoken Marxist economist, and I thought it's only fair to talk next to somebody who I think sees himself as very close to the libertarian side of analysis. You have studied and are, I think, an ardent fan of Ludwig von Mises. Is that about correct? Yes, that's correct, yes. How do you view what is currently going on in world politics through your libertarian lens?

#Jeffrey Tucker

Well, I'd rather deal with facts than ideology, I guess I would say. Ideology can sometimes mislead you because it deals in priors, and priors are maybe necessary, but they can also distort the reality around you. So to me, the most important thing is to adhere to the facts as you know them and not see everything through an ideological lens. Ideology is strange. I think it's necessary in a way to organize your thoughts, but it's not a very helpful way to understand the world, which is much more complicated than any ideology can summarize. So I'm not a preacher of libertarianism, or even the views of Ludwig von Mises, who was a genius, but he made mistakes, of course, like every human being does. So that's my point of view. I'm not here to defend a certain ideological structure. If I can illuminate some aspects of the world around us, that's enough for me.

#Pascal

Right. And, you know, ideology, I would say, is a kind of set of basic beliefs about how something should work. But on the other hand, we have basic beliefs about what we think moves the world. So Marxists, for instance, start with this struggle between capitalism and the working class. And I believe libertarians would start from the fundamental importance of liberty, or the freedom of the individual. Would that be a fair characterization?

#Jeffrey Tucker

Yeah, well, I would say the freedom of social organization to develop organically, independent of ruling-class control. So in that way, there's a great deal of overlap between the way I see the world and the way, I would say, Marxists of the 21st century see the world. In fact, I have a lot of very good friends who see the world through a Marxist lens, and I have a hard time disagreeing with them most of the time.

#Pascal

What is your basic understanding of the current crisis that we are going through? I mean, we're seeing crises in several areas at the moment. There's the political crisis, for instance, in France, with violence spreading there. We see several wars being conducted. We have a huge one in Ukraine. We have a large one between the United States and Iran. We have several very violent situations. I mean, I wouldn't classify Gaza as a war, but more as a slaughter of people. But where do you think all of this very destructive potential is coming from?

#Jeffrey Tucker

Well, if I had to name one source, I would say fiat money. We have experienced unprecedented financialization of the world's economic structures as a result of the switch to paper money and the empowerment of central banks, followed by ever more terrible central bank policies, including zero interest rates. This has created massive distortions in the structure of production and driven all of the world's resources away from the people and toward financial institutions, which in turn have

sought investments that pay the highest returns. And what are those? Pharmaceutical companies and the warfare state. So if you wanted to ask me what the root problem is, I would say that is the root problem.

#Pascal

Okay. Why do you think fiat money has such a huge impact on these different sectors? And why would it be different with non-fiat-based payment systems, like if we had, for instance, a gold standard?

#Jeffrey Tucker

Yeah. Well, it's not even about the gold standard as such. It's really about the money chosen by the people versus the money chosen by a small elite. For most of human history, most of it, we've had sound money. So it was rooted in some sort of specie payment or something real. Whether it was wampum shells or silver or gold, it doesn't really matter. But when the central banking cartel gradually got rid of, most recently, the gold standard and replaced it with a pure fiat money standard, that unleashed an unprecedented level of power on the world. You could create endless amounts of money and fund whatever you wanted—essentially, all wars. That's how World War I happened. It would not have happened without central banks in the world.

I mean, we've known this for more than a century, that the central banks made the Great War possible. And the Great War came about because a lot of governments wanted to try out their new toys. The munitions industry had created lots of fantastic little gizmos. They wanted to see how they worked, and the central banks were there to fund them. But that was more than 100 years ago now, and it's only gotten worse, really. So wars continue. But after the 2008 financial crisis, the Federal Reserve in the United States invented a zero-interest-rate policy, which is contrary to reality. And what it did was flip the logic of capitalism on its head. Under traditional capitalism, frugality pays, and investment is risky. So you're always better off saving than investing unless you have a really good idea. After 2008—really, after 2001, essentially...

#Jeffrey Tucker

You're always better off borrowing than saving. And that remains true today. So frugality is out. Good judgment is out. Now speculation is the king of the world.

#Jeffrey Tucker

And that was only made possible by the switch from gold to paper. And I think that is ultimately the source of what ruined the world. That's why we have the wars, the COVID lockdowns, and the belief on the part of many governments in the world that they have unlimited power. I mean, most parliaments and congresses in the world think there's no amount of spending they can't engage in,

no amount of debt that is too much. And the people are paying through inflation. And inflation has led to an outrageous disruption of natural demographics in the population, to the point that people everywhere are getting much poorer than they were, like, half a century ago. I know we think we have more toys, and that's great, right?

We have cell phones, and we have streaming music, and I love all these things. That's great. But it's no longer possible for the head of a household with multiple children to support a family basically anywhere in the world at current living standards. And that's very unlike 50 years ago. So, in that sense, all the statistics are massively distorted. People in the U.S. talk about rising median household income. It's nonsense. These are statistical lies, essentially. What they're doing is calculating income per person, but they're not accounting for the number of hours worked per household. If you do the calculations that way, living standards in the United States have collapsed by, I don't know, 20%, 30%, or as much as 50% over the last half century.

#Pascal

Some of the economists I know would argue that this has more to do with policy priorities than the financial system. But how do you then make sense of the, I think, pretty obvious success of China in lifting between 500 million and 800 million people out of poverty and into the middle class over the last 30 years? China also, at least in my view, probably uses fiat money, or do they use something camouflaged?

#Jeffrey Tucker

No, it's a matter of the starting point. Thirty or fifty years ago, China was not anywhere close to being a first-world country. There was mass poverty left over from the Maoist years and before. But they caught up very quickly by permitting degrees of economic freedom, which they continue to do today despite the one-party state. There's a great deal of economic freedom. And the funny thing about China is that it does not have a culture of litigation, like, at all, which is interesting—or regulation, for that matter. I mean, it's a dictatorship, but by and large, if you leave the government alone, you have freedom and freedom of price. It's a very strange situation. Whereas in the Western world, we're so tangled up in litigation, and everybody's suing everybody else constantly, that people are afraid. They're afraid to move.

They're afraid to start businesses. The regulatory state is so gigantic that we're in a strange situation of economic stagnation, where the fiat money regime is transferring wealth from the middle class only to the elites. And the gap between the rich and the poor is growing exponentially year by year, and nobody seems to know what to do about it. And this is mostly a consequence of our highly regulated systems that are driven by fiat money. China, yes, it has fiat money. Everybody in the world does, right? But at least China has no culture whatsoever of heavy, heavy regulation or heavy

litigation. Like, if you leave the government alone and if you're compliant with the CCP, you're good. I mean, it's a different kind of freedom than anything we've had in Western democracy for hundreds of years. But there it is.

#Pascal

Maybe one more time on this argument about money. What do you make of the argument by people like David Graeber and the whole modern monetary theory school that essentially all forms of money—in terms of what you exchange with each other to pay for goods, not as a store of value, but all forms of money that change hands—are essentially debt, because one man's asset is another man's liability? So you cannot actually divorce debt from money because money is debt. Does that make sense to you?

#Jeffrey Tucker

Well, I guess, but you're talking about modern monetary theory, and these people play with the idea that you could just fund the world through endless inflation. I just don't believe that. I think, ultimately, a hard money standard is the only way to preserve value and culture in the middle class and create prosperity. But, yeah, that ship has sailed, I'm sorry to say. If you ask me what my plan is for restoring sound money, I can't say that I have one. I don't really know. I don't know how to get from here to there.

If we could say to every central bank, "You have to close the open market windows. You can no longer buy government debt," that would be a dramatic change. And I think that would be the best reform we could possibly make, but we're not anywhere near that at this point. I mean, it's an absurd suggestion because the whole purpose of a central bank is to fund government. And the whole purpose of government is to keep the banks liquid. So they've got a cartel and a great deal going. They shake hands and rob the rest of us.

#Pascal

The nice thing would be if the money were actually used for social purposes and not for violent purposes, and if it went into public housing projects and so on.

#Jeffrey Tucker

Public housing is the worst kind of housing. Like, you're telling me, public housing? Government cannot build houses. Government is historically incapable of doing anything: providing welfare, even building streets. I mean, governments can't do anything. Look, I'm speaking as an American. Maybe other governments are good. You know, I remember visiting Australia many times, or Canada, right? Or other countries. I thought, well, this is a better government than we have. Americans are famously, like, tremendously terrible at government. Everything our government does is awful.

And actually, the strange thing about American government—maybe it's true in Europe, maybe it's true in Japan, I don't know—is that almost everything the government does in the U.S. is outsourced to the private sector. Like, almost everything. And to that extent, I think it's terrible, but it more or less functions. Like, we have roads, we have mail. Actually, almost all the agencies contract with private companies for everything they do. So government itself is not a producer. I guess that's my main theme. Yeah. So, yeah, public housing—that was a dream maybe 75 years ago, but it's not a viable thing today.

#Pascal

Where do you think, then, this is going, now that we have the systems we have? They're just here. I mean, we can't wish them away. At the same time, we see this widespread discontent. I mean, in the United States, I interpret the election of Donald Trump very much as a protest against the establishment that created the system, which then drove a lot of people into poverty and into a situation where one head of household cannot feed his or her family anymore. How do you see the U.S. population's discontent developing right now?

#Jeffrey Tucker

Sadly, we don't have any historical precedent for this. We don't have any historical precedent for what happens in an industrial democracy when the masses of the population have lost trust in the entire system. We don't know what the endpoint is. We have fantasies about what happened in the Soviet Union when people lost trust, right? They overthrew the dictators. You know, satellite states overthrew their governments. There were various forms of revolution in the Czech Republic and Poland, and Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania seceded. You know, we have these tales about what happened 35 years ago.

But we have no real scenario of what it looks like in an industrialized democracy when the masses of the population have lost trust in government and all the commanding heights. I mean, academia, media, big corporations, technology, government, every single agency, all the elites. That's what's going on right now. How does this end? I don't know. Unfortunately, in my worst moments, I'm thinking that we're reverting to the 1930s, when a large part of the Western world was in a struggle between fascism and socialism. You know, is that where we're headed? Sometimes it seems like it.

When I look at what's happening in Brazil, you've got, like, totalitarian communists battling against, you know, corporatist fascists, right? I mean, this seems to be a model that's unfolding in a lot of parts of the world. I don't want that to be true. But, you know, what is the next stage? It's really hard to say. Whatever that next stage is, there is going to be a next stage. And I think a lot of that is up to us. We have to reconstruct the world because whatever has happened over the last 100 years, certainly over the last six years, strikes me as completely unsustainable. Very, very alarming. And it calls for a rethinking of the paradigm that we've assumed to be true for a long time.

#Pascal

I absolutely agree with that. I think a lot of us are trying to do that right now, kind of scratching our heads and thinking, A, it cannot continue like this, but B, we don't know what else there could be. What do you make of the way that the Trump administration is unfolding? Because when I remember the speeches Donald Trump gave when he was campaigning, and even his inaugural address that he gave in January, one and a half, almost two years ago, the one thing I will not forget is that he said, when he stood there, that this administration will not only be remembered for the wars we ended, it will also be remembered for the wars that never started. And I could not help but applaud the man, because that's exactly the thing that I would have loved to see. But then, of course, it goes exactly the other way. And his social policies also follow exactly the same old pattern of enriching a very small oligarchic class and not the general population. How do you view the progress of this administration?

#Jeffrey Tucker

Well, you know, there has been some progress on some fronts, I will say, just enough to satisfy, you know, people like me, so that we have to be fans because the alternative is so scary, right? That's the way it works. But in general, sometimes I wonder if the Trump administration was a kind of limited hangout. It was like the elites, whoever they are, appointed him to pretend to be the great populist leader because he had the appeal, he had the rhetoric, he had everything going for him. But if you actually look at what he's done, he's done about 1% of what we hoped he would do on health, reversing COVID policies, and war and peace. I mean, the Iran war is the great catastrophe of the second term.

I mean, that's his COVID—his second term's COVID. The first term was ruined, of course, by the last year with the COVID lockdowns, right? That was a disaster that befell the Trump administration. That's arguably why they lost the election in 2020. He came back as this great resistance guy, and it seemed to be going well for about 50 to 100 days, maybe, with DOGE sweeping through the agencies, certain cuts, and promises to abolish USAID. We got some good appointments in this agency or that. But since that time, it's really been throttled and hamstrung. And nothing's happening really right now except bad things. But I don't want to say there aren't sometimes good things. I feel like rescuing Flavio Bolsonaro out of Brazil was probably a good decision that happened today.

#Pascal

I didn't even catch that yet. What happened?

#Jeffrey Tucker

Well, you know, Flavio Bolsonaro was standing up to this guy Lula. Arguably, he won the election, but of course, it was stolen from him at the last minute. And we could argue about that, but it seems obvious that it was stolen in the same way that 2020 unfolded for us in the U.S. Okay, so the new regime, not even a day into the victory, was going after Flavio's passport. Lula's personal lawyer demanded his passport, and they were really attacking him. And Marco Rubio made it possible for the U.S. to protect Flavio Bolsonaro and flew him to the U.S. to save him from what was going to be jail or whatever was going to happen.

So I'm sort of for this. It's not to say that I agree with everything associated with the Bolsonaro regime. I mean, it's probably as cruel as the people they oppose. But nonetheless, I don't like the idea of one regime taking over from another and punishing all their political enemies, which is definitely going on in Brazil right now. So, you know, if you want to talk about flavors of politics, I actually approve in some sense. Even though I don't like American intervention abroad, I approve of the Trump administration using whatever peaceful mechanisms they have to give sanctuary to a guy like Flavio Bolsonaro.

#Pascal

Right. I wonder if this is also one of the possible futures of the United States, where these different administrations, or the different people inside the administrations, will then persecute each other. We've seen how this happened to Donald Trump. Whatever you think about him—and I'm no fan of Donald Trump at all—the entire Russiagate affair, trying to discredit him with very, very bogus accusations about being close to Russia, which we now know were fabricated, is absolutely ridiculous. And the way that they tried to go after him when he was out of office was, once again, quite a scam.

I mean, the level of detail in the accusations about accounting errors related to paying somebody not to speak—which is not illegal—but the accounting fraud that was ultimately found in order to indict him and call him a criminal. This type of lawfare just smells very much like authoritarian or sectarian lawfare against the other side. And this is the kind of thing that, I believe, we thought the United States, at least, was not about. You fight each other very hard when it comes to all the political arguments, but then, once the fight is over, you go back home and the winner takes it all. But not really, and not really anymore.

#Jeffrey Tucker

Well, so this is a major historical problem we face right now. The U.S. is the paradigmatic case of what's called democracy. So the U.S. was founded not at the tail end, but very close to the tail end of the monarchical age—the age of despots, of kings, of long systems of familial inheritance in which the people did not have a voice. And the U.S. was founded to celebrate democracy. The people would be the government, and the government would be responsive to the people. Well, it looks

very good on paper. And if you read someone like Thomas Jefferson, my hero, who's the guy right here, right? Or Thomas Paine—they all believed in bringing standards of individual rights and market forces to government itself, right? That was the theory. And the U.S. adopted a kind of Roman republican system.

It wasn't pure democracy. It wasn't pure majority rule. But we had checks and balances, right? And we had a bicameral system of Congress. We had senators, and we had a House of Commons, essentially, which is the House of Representatives. So we borrowed from many systems throughout history to try to create the perfect system of government. And for, let's say, 125 years, the U.S. was celebrated as having the right model. We figured it out. We figured out the right balance between limited government and democracy and devolved power to the states or to individuals or families or communities. The Civil War was a great exception, but we put that on the shelf because, of course, we had this original sin of slavery, you know, which we had to get rid of, right?

So that was the model we faced at the end of the 19th century. So everybody loved America. But then the Great War happened, right? And so suddenly we have totalitarian systems descending upon the world. That was not supposed to happen, but it did happen. Now, we're more than a century past the Great War, and I feel like the mood of the world has shifted away from democracy. Like, "Your system sucks. You know, all you do is struggle for control of government power, and you're wasting massive social and economic resources struggling for this control. And that does not work. A system like China, with a one-party state and wise rulers at the top, is clearly outcompeting you, outperforming you." And so this worries me a lot because I think the message we're getting from the tenor of our times is that democracy has failed.

"Constitutional government has failed. We need wise rulers at the top who are autocrats, who can't be overthrown. They should have the right—and the duty, really—to crush opposition, because opposition to the state is opposition to society. It's wasteful. Democracy is wasteful. It's inefficient." And this, I think, is where we're headed. I think we may have seen a prequel to this in the 1930s, right? But 100 years later now, I think it's getting really intense. And I'm worried about this because I'm very nostalgic for the great American experiment, right? See my Jefferson statue, right? Like, I love these guys. I love the Enlightenment. I can't say I'm entirely persuaded by their argument for democracy as such. But, hey, democracy is better than most other systems. Except...

#Pascal

I'm a great fan of it, too. And the counterargument to what you just presented is, of course, to say that, no, it's not democracy that failed. It's just the oligarchic class that managed to take over the system, right? So it's not very democratic if, at the end of the day, the choice you have is between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump, but you don't have a Jill Stein or Bernie Sanders or all the others that you could think of on the ballot, right? Like the choice between, "Do you want to be hanged or

do you want to be electrocuted? Which one is it? Tell me." And yeah, I made my choice, but I still don't like the outcome because it's the same, right? That's the argument about the uniparty. And we know that if you have a lot of money, you can buy a lot of political influence, right?

So then there's this kind of argument: "Oh, well, it's not really democratic at its core, so what's needed is a restoration of the actual principles: one man, one vote. And then we actually battle it out." And there would be other forms, right? We could think about the United States under a parliamentary democracy, with a prime minister instead of a president. We could think about it as a direct democracy where, you know, two or three times a year, you're asked about two or three bills: "Do you want them, yes or no?" I mean, that would be on the cards, right, in theory. But the system is as it is. What would be the optimal version of democracy for the modern United States?

#Jeffrey Tucker

So if you look back at the founding model of the U.S., I think it was glorious. I mean, first of all, we had a gold standard. We had no central bank. Okay, so the financial powers were already mostly kept at bay, right? And it took 140 years before that was overthrown. They tried to get a national bank here, and it was mostly rejected in the 19th century. So there was no central bank. There was no income tax. So whatever money people made, they could keep. The powers were mostly devolved to the states.

We didn't really have much of a central government in 1776. I mean, the Articles of Confederation were like no government at all. In 1789, we got the Constitution. Okay, so now we have a government. But still, even then, most of the powers of government belonged to the states and to the people. That just began to gradually change. And I'll tell you what, a major change in the U.S. that hardly anybody talks about is—I'm trying to think which amendment that was. I think it was the 13th Amendment, something like that. You could look it up. But we used to have a bicameral Congress. So we had a House of Lords and a House of Commons.

In 1913, there was a new amendment put into the Constitution that abolished the idea that we would have a House of Lords. So no longer were states as such represented in the Senate. The Senate was suddenly subject to popular vote, which meant that only big cities really picked the Senate. And only big cities picked the House, right? So now you had two branches of Congress that represented the same people. The thing about having the state legislature pick the Senate representatives is that state legislatures represented the whole population of the entire state. You see that? It was a big change, right?

So suddenly the Senate, as the founders imagined it, was abolished and replaced by something else through a constitutional amendment. Maybe it was the 17th Amendment. I can't quite remember. Yeah, I think it's the 17th Amendment. They changed one word, and it abolished the bicameral Congress. So now the Senate represents only the big cities in the U.S. instead of the entire state. So these kinds of structural changes were catastrophic. So you could make the argument that the U.S.

is not under the same constitution as it was in the 19th century. It's under a different structural constitution. And you add a central bank to that, you've got a prescription for a leviathan. So, you know, where do we go from here?

I think recapturing the original vision of the Founding Fathers would be a brilliant thing, but that's going to require more than just imagining things, giving speeches, making AI videos, or voting for the next guy. It's going to require dramatic structural change, and that has to happen soon enough. Let me just back up slightly and say something about Trump and what Trump represents. I always thought, when Trump was elected, that the establishment that was terrified of him should have been very grateful for Trump, because I always knew that he was the guy who was, in a sense, going to keep the system functioning. And the mood in the public, even when he was first elected, was practically revolutionary.

I mean, there was such anger in the populace. It doesn't compare to now, but it was, even then, very, very high. Now it's like ten times as intense. Trump, I think, has always been the guy to channel revolutionary populist anger into a reformist agenda that wasn't really serious, and in that way, just kind of block and throttle the populist movement. I think that was his role here. I'm not saying that he himself is not a revolutionary. I think he may be. Or maybe not. I mean, who knows what he is? But that was his kind of historical role: to contain, restrain, and rechannel the populist movement into something that would ultimately support the ruling-class establishment.

#Pascal

It's quite fascinating, actually, to watch that happening. Regularly, we see, on several sides of the political system, what we could call the great pacifiers suddenly arrive, right? They channel the anger, win on it, and then make it ebb away. And I would argue that Obama served a very similar purpose at the time on the left, right? He managed to push it down but keep the system going as it is, and actually move it more toward, well, what I would call the great oligarchy that has taken over much of Western democracy. It's no coincidence to me that Germany now is ruled by a former chief executive of BlackRock. It's just part and parcel of how the system works. So, in a sense, I would actually argue that democracy has been hollowed out from within and is not under attack from without.

#Jeffrey Tucker

Yeah, no, I think that's probably right. I mean, it's funny because when I think back on my own temperament toward this whole thing, back in 2016, I guess it was, I wrote a book called Right-Wing Collectivism. All right? So this is a book that was translated into Portuguese, Spanish, and other languages around the world. And I was warning about Donald Trump, saying that he represents a genuine danger to human liberty. And I had an elaborate argument that goes back to

Hegel in 1820, right? And really, it's a wonderful book in some ways. I mean, not entirely correct, but it had a good intuition behind it, let me say. And I was raging against this guy, right? And then I gradually warmed up to him. I came to terms with the 2016 election.

I thought, well, you know, in many ways, he represented a kind of overthrow of the establishment. The establishment was against him. So, to my mind, maybe there was some redeeming value. And from 2017 to 2020, I was okay with what was unfolding. I thought, well, maybe he's not as bad as I thought. And then COVID hit, right? And even though he initially resisted lockdowns, when he got enough pressure from what you call the oligarchs—in this case, the pharmaceutical companies and the deep state—he caved. And suddenly, most of the world's population was locked down, partly because Trump, who everybody thought would resist it, went along. So that was a catastrophe.

And then he brought us the great pharmaceutical product that I think has injured a vast swath of the world population, the mRNA shots and so on. So I thought, well, maybe my initial instincts were right. So then Biden took over in the U.S. and became actually far worse, like vastly worse than Trump. So then Trump arrives and says, "Look, Biden sucks. You should vote for me." So I thought, well, maybe he is my guy after all. I wouldn't say I became a fan, but I thought, well, Trump in 2024 was better than the alternative. I never would have imagined I would have said anything like that in 2020, because I was raging against Trump after lockdown. Like, raging. I said, "See, I was right in 2016. He was always a bad guy."

And then suddenly, four years later, I'm telling everybody, "Well, he's better than the alternative. So maybe he's going to liberate us." And then, sure enough, a year in, he starts his war with Iran, right? Which is an unbelievable catastrophe. And so now I don't know. Now I think, like you said, we're given these two choices, and they're two flavors of poison, right? That sounds a little bit despairing, in a way, and I don't like to think of it that way. I really do think that there's going to be a paradigm change, and it's going to happen soon. I don't think that the masses of the world's population are going to live under this kind of oligarchic tyranny—two flavors of tyranny—forever. I think at some point something's going to give. I just don't know entirely what that looks like.

#Pascal

Yeah, I think that's on the minds of a lot of us. In a sense, what would be nice would be if we had a way of forcing these people to give us the full sentence. Neither of them ever gives the full sentence. For Barack Obama, it was, "Yes, we can, but we won't." Period, right? And that, of course, comes later. For Donald Trump, it's, "Make America great again, maybe later." So they don't give the full sentence. And for some reason, the system then always reasserts itself. And this is why a lot of people on my channel, General McGregor, and others all predict that, you know, it's pointing towards some form of revolution, of violence, of mass political violence. I don't see that happening.

#Jeffrey Tucker

Well, I don't know. I don't entirely know. And nobody knows, right? I mean, there's nobody who understands entirely what's about to happen because we've never been in this situation before in all of human history. What does it look like when advanced societies have highly industrialized, digitized, and corporatized systems of government that ostensibly are democratic, but the entire population has lost trust in all the commanding heights? No trust in media, academia, the expert class, the agencies, or anybody associated with them. Nobody believes anything. Okay, so, you know, what is the result of that? And where does that lead?

I think all of us, as intellectuals, ultimately absorb a little bit of a Hegelian sort of dialectic in our minds. We think in terms of stages of history, and we're all asking ourselves, "What's the next stage?" And Orwell would say, "The boot on the neck forever," right? But as hopeful human beings, we don't want to believe that, and I don't want to believe that. So I don't entirely know what it looks like. I wish I did. If I were a prophet, I would predict this. I just don't know. But all I can say is that, for sure, the existing system is completely unsustainable, particularly in the U.S. People have no idea how absurdly oppressive, from a financial and economic point of view, life in the U.S. has become.

It's not possible to afford basic medical care in the U.S. anymore. I'm not sure if people understand this or not, but it's just not possible. If you're a family of four, for example, you're going to be paying $3,000 to $4,000 a month for medical care. And so what does that buy you? It doesn't buy you any medical care. It buys you access, after which you're going to spend as much as $10,000, $20,000, even $50,000 before the insurance kicks in. Even if it kicks in, the insurance company can dispute your claim and throw it back to you. And your only choice is to litigate, and that's kind of hopeless.

So, in effect, medical care in this country is bankrupting the American family. Okay, this is a catastrophe. Our currency is losing about 4% per year. Over the last six years, we've lost as much as 30 cents on the dollar of purchasing power. It's not possible for a household to exist without two income streams. I mean, it has gotten so bad, and this is not well reported at all. But we are losing our standard of living dramatically. And then, you know, when I point this out to people, they say, "Hey, what are you complaining about? You've got streaming movies. You've got fancy toys."

"You can watch TikTok videos all day. You know, your life's good." I'm sorry, this is not even real. I mean, we are losing anything we used to call civilization at a very dramatic pace. There's no sustainability for the family, for the household, no capacity to support families—basically, to further the reproduction of the human family in any kind of viable way. This is what's going on in the Western world today. And it shocks me that nobody is talking about it, particularly not economists, you know, who are forever arguing about real median income. I'm sorry, this is not a thing. It's just not a thing. Everybody's lying to you.

#Pascal

Yeah, but I mean, that's the thing to tell them, right? Go and eat your real median income, and go and eat your Netflix subscription, and then see how tasty they are. Tell me. This is what's going to bite them in the behind at some point, you know? Suddenly, people will say, "No, I would rather have some food than this thing that you're offering here. That is the last thing that I can actually afford. But my Netflix subscription is now cheaper than my hamburger," right? Which sucks. I mean, that just obviously sucks, but okay.

#Jeffrey Tucker

It drives me absolutely crazy. The more I look at it, the more furious I get, because the data mongers, the Federal Reserve, and almost every economist are lying about all these things. And once you, you know, peer behind the curtain, you can't go back.

#Pascal

It's almost like, you know, it's made for jokes, right? It's like the people on the Titanic: everybody's panicking, and the data people tell you, "Look, the median floating rate is totally fine. We're okay."

#Jeffrey Tucker

Yeah, and then you have another problem in the West, anyway, which is a kind of biological attack on civilization, which is indescribable: the power of the pharmaceutical industry and shots that were ineffective, not safe, and ultimately devastating. We just published a book that's 1,048 pages of people's actual reports of injury from the COVID shots. I've read it over the course of like 15 hours, and I'm only on page like 275. I've done this live on X. It's like the most heartbreaking thing I've ever read. But it's only the beginning.

You know, like a third of adults are addicted to psych meds, right? So let me just frame this up really quickly. We've got a serious problem with American capitalism right now. The number one employer in the U.S. is the medical industry. Number one employer by far, right? Right. So does that mean we're healthy? No. It's exactly the opposite. We're extremely unhealthy. So where are these profits coming from? They're coming from ill health. So we've got an entire industry—pharmaceutical companies and medical companies—whose profitability plan…

#Jeffrey Tucker

is to maximize harm from their previous drugs and treatments. So it's like an iatrogenic-driven economy. I don't know how we get out of this. I had a call a few months ago from a very high official in the U.S. government who was looking at the data, and he was genuinely troubled when he looked at this. He realized some of America's biggest corporations were getting rich by making people sick. And he asked me, "What is your solution for how we switch the incentives? How do we

make people make money by getting people well instead of making them sick?" And I sat there on the phone, and I'm sorry, I just fell silent. I don't have the answer. I don't know what the answer to that is. It's a grim and gruesome and terrible problem. But it gets to the heart of this: the health of the population is the strength of the society itself. And we're getting ever less healthy.

#Pascal

Yeah, but I think you put your finger right on the spot where it hurts. If something is an industry, then the interest of those profiting from the industry is to sell more of the same thing, not to actually be effective at what it does. And we see this across the board. Japan has a huge English-language industry, and Japan is one of the least English-speaking countries on Earth. But it's a multibillion-dollar industry. On every train, you see advertisements for English-language courses. But again, the whole point is to sell the courses, not for the students to learn English. Hence, the education that you then get is abysmal. But people wouldn't know it because they think the experts know what they're doing. But that's the thing. It's not that these people are intrinsically bad. It's the system that perpetuates itself in this way if it is structured as a for-profit industry.

#Jeffrey Tucker

I know. I know exactly what you mean. I think about this all the time. We all imagine ourselves to be future historians sometimes, right? We think, as historians 300 years from now, how are we going to describe our period? And I think the description is the wealthiest, most profitable, most resource-rich civilization ever in the history of the world, which squandered 99% of it on stupidity and oligarchs and fripperies and nonsense. That's what it strikes me as. Scams, rackets. Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's what it seems like to me. We had the opportunity over the last, let's just say, 30 years to build the greatest civilization in the history of the planet Earth. You know, with beauty and peace, contentment, solidarity, and joy all around. Good lives. And instead, we squandered it all on junk and silliness and entertainment and scams and rackets and pillaging and political struggles. And it's just, I mean, one of the great tragedies in the history of the world, as far as I'm concerned.

#Pascal

It is. My hope is that unless we actually end the experiment ourselves with the nuclear weapons we have, we will have a chance to try to improve things because, at the end of the day, we're 8 billion people on this planet. We are condemned to self-organization. We're just not very good at organizing yet. Yet. So I hope we'll get there.

#Jeffrey Tucker

We'll see. We'll see.

#Pascal

Jeff, this was fascinating. Thank you very much for the insights into your thinking. People who want to follow you, where should they go?

#Jeffrey Tucker

Brownstone Institute is at brownstone.org. Sign up for our emails. We send out one email a week, just a kind of list of articles. I think we're doing some of the best work on planet Earth because we're not partisan. We try to look objectively at the truth about our world situation. At least, as the editor and president of Brownstone Institute, I try to be objective. Yeah, in my heart, I'm a revolutionary, but I also try to stick to the facts.

#Pascal

And thank you very much for sharing your insights with us. Everybody, if you want to follow Jeffrey Tucker, go to the Brownstone Institute. I will put a link to it in the description box below. Jeffrey Tucker, thank you so much for your time today.

#Jeffrey Tucker

My pleasure. Thank you.