



Does Jeff Bezos Want To Take Over The State Next?

A consummate Technocrat, Bezos is 'providing the vital infrastructure of state' and quietly subsuming its power. The Atlantic outlandishly suggests that Bezos' private government is 'preferable to a public government run by Trump'.

Such are the calls for Technocracy in America, and they fit perfectly with the original 1930s mandate to replace all elected government representatives with top-to-bottom control by unelected and unaccountable Technocrats. Already Bezos has more monopolistic power than any other American oligarch before him and he is the richest man on the planet.

The Atlantic should just call it what it is: Technocracy. □ TN Editor

On Monday, Jeff Bezos announced the creation of the Bezos Earth Fund, which will disperse \$10 billion in the name of combatting climate change. The fund is a triumph of philanthropy—and a perfect emblem of a national failing.

Or rather, a series of national failings. In a healthy democracy, the

world's richest man wouldn't be able to painlessly make a \$10 billion donation. His fortune would be mitigated by the tax collector; antitrust laws would constrain the growth of his business. Instead of relying on a tycoon to bankroll the national response to an existential crisis, there would be a national response.

But in an age of political dysfunction, Bezos has begun to subsume the powers of the state. Where the government once funded the ambitious exploration of space, Bezos is leading that project, spending a billion dollars each year to build rockets and rovers. His company, Amazon, is spearheading an experimental effort to fix American health care; it will also spend \$700 million to retrain workers in the shadow of automation and displacement. Meanwhile, swaths of the federal government have contracted with Amazon to keep data on the company's servers. Bezos is providing the vital infrastructure of state. When Amazon locates its second headquarters on the Potomac, staring across the river at the capital, it will provide a perfect geographic encapsulation of the new balance of power.

It is possible to watch Jeff Bezos's public spirited commitments and respond: Well, at least someone is doing something. And isn't a private government run by Bezos preferable to a public government run by Trump?

Trumpism may indeed pose the most immediate danger; the growing concentration of power in one man, however, is hardly a democratic path. And whereas Trump is curbed by Congress, courts, and elections, there is no meaningful public oversight of Bezos's power. His investments and donations—not to mention the dominance of his sprawling firm and his ownership of one of the nation's most important newspapers—give him an outsize role in shaping the human future.

Thus far, the extent of the public's knowledge about the new foundation largely derives from an Instagram post by its namesake. There's no clear sense of the projects it will bankroll, even though a contribution of that scale will inevitably set the agenda of academics and nongovernmental organizations. Bezos's personal biases—his penchant for technological solutions, his skepticism of government regulation—will likely shape how

the Bezos Earth Fund disperses cash. And that will, in turn, shape how activists and researchers craft their grant proposals, how they attempt to please a funder who can float their operations.

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