

Principles of Tyranny

by Jon Roland

Definition of *tyranny*

Tyranny is usually thought of as cruel and oppressive, and it often is, but the original definition of the term was rule by persons who lack *legitimacy*, whether they be malign or benevolent. Historically, benign tyrannies have tended to be insecure, and to try to maintain their power by becoming increasingly oppressive. Therefore, rule that initially seems benign is inherently dangerous, and the only security is to maintain legitimacy — an unbroken accountability to the people through the framework of a written constitution that provides for election of key officials and the division of powers among branches and officials in a way that avoids concentration of powers in the hands of a few persons who might then abuse those powers.

Tyranny is an important phenomenon that operates by principles by which it can be recognized in its early emerging stages, and, if the people are vigilant, prepared, and committed to liberty, countered before it becomes entrenched.

The psychology of tyranny

Perhaps one of the things that most distinguishes those with a fascist mentality from most other persons is how they react in situations that engender feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. Both kinds of people will tend to seek to increase their power, that is, their control over the outcome of events, but those with a fascist mindset tend to overestimate the amount of influence over outcomes that it is possible to attain. This leads to behavior that often brings them to positions of leadership or authority, especially if most other persons in their society tend to underestimate the influence over outcomes they can attain, and are inclined to yield to those who project confidence in what they can do and promise more than anyone can deliver.

This process is aided by a common susceptibility which might be called the *rooster syndrome*, from the old saying, "They give credit to the rooster crowing for the rising of the sun." It arises from the tendency of people guided more by hope or fear than intelligence to overestimate the power of their leaders and attribute to them outcomes, either good or bad, to which the leaders contributed little if anything, and perhaps even acted to prevent or reduce. This comes from the inability of most persons to understand complex dynamic systems and their long-term behavior, which leads people to attribute effects to proximate preceding events instead of actual long-term causes.

The emergence of tyranny therefore begins with challenges to a group, develops into general feelings of insecurity and inadequacy, and falls into a pattern in which some individuals assume the role of "father" to the others, who willingly submit to becoming dependent "children" of

such persons if only they are reassured that a more favorable outcome will be realized. This pattern of co-dependency is pathological, and generally results in decisionmaking of poor quality that makes the situation even worse, but, because the pattern is pathological, instead of abandoning it, the co-dependents repeat their inappropriate behavior to produce a vicious spiral that, if not interrupted, can lead to total breakdown of the group and the worst of the available outcomes.

In psychiatry, this syndrome is often discussed as an "authoritarian personality disorder". In common parlance, as being a "control freak".

The logic of tyranny

In Orwell's classic fable, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the protagonist Winston Smith makes a key statement:

Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows.

Following the trial of the surviving Branch Davidians in San Antonio, Texas, in March, 1994, in which a misinstructed jury acquitted all the defendants of the main crimes with which they were charged, but convicted them of the enhancements of using firearms in the commission of a crime, the federal judge, Walter F. Smith, first dismissed the charges, correctly, on the grounds that it is logically impossible to be guilty of an enhancement if one is innocent of the crime. However, under apparent political pressure, he subsequently reversed his own ruling and sentenced the defendants to maximum terms as though they had been convicted of the main crimes, offering the comment, "The law doesn't have to be logical."

No. The law does have to be logical. Otherwise it is not law. It is arbitrary rule by force.

Now by "logical" what is meant is *two-valued* logic, which is sometimes also called *Boolean*, *Aristotelian* or *Euclidean* logic. In other words, a system of propositions within which a statement and its negation cannot both be *true* or *valid*. One of the two must be *false* or *invalid*. The two possible values are *true* and *false*, and every meaningful proposition can be assigned one or the other value.

A system of *law* is a body of *prescriptive*, as opposed to *descriptive*, propositions, that support the making of *decisions*, and therefore its logic must be two-valued. It is a fundamental principle of law that *like cases must be decided alike*, and this means according to propositions that exclude their contradictions.

It is also a fundamental principle of logic that any system of propositions that accepts both a statement and its negation as valid, that is, which accepts a *contradiction*, accepts *all* contradictions, and provides no basis for deciding among them. If decisions are made, they are not made on the basis of the propositions, but are *arbitrary*, and that is the definition of the *rule of men*, as opposed to the *rule of law*.

So what Winston Smith is saying is that freedom means being able to distinguish between a true proposition and a false one, and what his nemesis O'Brien therefore does to crush him is make him accept that " $2 + 2 = 5$ ", which cannot be true if the logic is Aristotelian. O'Brien represents the logic of arbitrary power, a "logic" we might call *Orwellian*, although Orwell, whose real name was Eric Blair, was strongly opposed to it.

The methodology of tyranny

The methods used to overthrow a constitutional order and establish a tyranny are well-known. However, despite this awareness, it is surprising how those who have no intention of perpetrating a tyranny can slip into these methods and bring about a tyranny despite their best intentions. Tyranny does not have to be deliberate. Tyrants can fool themselves as thoroughly as they fool everyone else.

Control of public information and opinion

It begins with withholding information, and leads to putting out false or misleading information. A government can develop ministries of propaganda under many guises. They typically call it "public information" or "marketing".

Vote fraud used to prevent the election of reformers

It doesn't matter which of the two major party candidates are elected if no real reformer can get nominated, and when news services start knowing the outcomes of elections before it is possible for them to know, then the votes are not being honestly counted.

Undue official influence on trials and juries

Nonrandom selection of jury panels, exclusion of those opposed to the law, exclusion of the jury from hearing argument on the law, exclusion of private prosecutors from access to the grand jury, and prevention of parties and their counsels from making effective arguments or challenging the government.

Usurpation of undelegated powers

This is usually done with popular support for solving some problem, or to redistribute wealth to the advantage of the supporters of the dominant faction, but it soon leads to the deprivation of rights of minorities and individuals.

Seeking a government monopoly on the capability and use of armed force

The first signs are efforts to register or restrict the possession and use of firearms, initially under the guise of "protecting" the public, which, when it actually results in increased crime, provides a basis for further disarmament efforts affecting more people and more weapons.

Militarization of law enforcement

Declaring a "war on crime" that becomes a war on civil liberties. Preparation of military forces for internal policing duties.

Infiltration and subversion of citizen groups that could be forces for reform

Internal spying and surveillance is the beginning. A sign is false prosecutions of their leaders.

Suppression of investigators and whistleblowers

When people who try to uncover high level wrongdoing are threatened, that is a sign the system is not only riddled with corruption, but that the corruption has passed the threshold into active tyranny.

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Use of the law for competition suppression

It begins with the dominant faction winning support by paying off their supporters and suppressing their supporters' competitors, but leads to public officials themselves engaging in illegal activities and using the law to suppress independent competitors. A good example of this is narcotics trafficking.

Subversion of internal checks and balances

This involves the appointment to key positions of persons who can be controlled by their sponsors, and who are then induced to do illegal things. The worst way in which this occurs is in the appointment of judges that will go along with unconstitutional acts by the other branches.

Creation of a class of officials who are above the law

This is indicated by dismissal of charges for wrongdoing against persons who are "following orders".

Increasing dependency of the people on government

The classic approach to domination of the people is to first take everything they have away from them, then make them compliant with the demands of the rulers to get anything back again.

Increasing public ignorance of their civic duties and reluctance to perform them

When the people avoid doing things like voting and serving in militias and juries, tyranny is not far behind.

Use of staged events to produce popular support

Acts of terrorism, blamed on political opponents, followed immediately with well-prepared proposals for increased powers and budgets for suppressive agencies. Sometimes called a *Reichstag plot*.

Conversion of rights into privileges

Requiring licenses and permits for doing things that the government does not have the delegated power to restrict, except by due process in which the burden of proof is on the petitioner.

Political correctness

Many if not most people are susceptible to being recruited to engage in repressive actions against disfavored views or behaviors, and led to pave the way for the dominance of tyrannical government.

Avoiding tyranny

The key is always to detect tendencies toward tyranny and suppress them before they go too far or become too firmly established. The people must never acquiesce in any violation of the Constitution. Failure to take corrective action early will only mean that more severe measures will have to be taken later, perhaps with the loss of life and the disruption of the society in ways from which recovery may take centuries.



16 Signs That You Live In Tyranny

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Tyranny is an important phenomenon that operates by principles by which it can be recognized in its early emerging stages, and, if the people are vigilant, prepared, and committed to liberty, countered before it becomes entrenched. The methods used to overthrow a constitutional order and establish a tyranny are well-known. However, despite this awareness, it is surprising how those who have no intention of perpetrating a tyranny can [slip](#) into these methods and bring about a tyranny despite their best intentions. Tyranny does not have to be deliberate. Tyrants can fool themselves as thoroughly as they fool everyone else. Here are the top 16 signs that you are living in a tyranny or heading that way. Many thanks to Jon Roland for submitting this list (the original of which is [here](#)).



1. Control of public information and opinion: It begins with withholding information, and leads to putting out false or misleading information. A government can develop ministries of propaganda under many guises. They typically call it “public information” or “marketing”.
2. Vote fraud used to prevent the election of reformers: It doesn’t matter which of the two major party candidates are elected if no real reformer can get nominated, and when [news](#) services start knowing the outcomes of elections before it is possible for them to know, then the votes are not being honestly counted.
3. Undue official influence on trials and juries: Nonrandom selection of jury panels, exclusion of those opposed to the law, exclusion of the jury from [hearing](#) argument on the law, exclusion of private prosecutors from access to the grand jury, and prevention of parties and their counsels from making effective arguments or challenging the government.
4. Usurpation of undelegated powers: This is usually done with popular support for solving some problem, or to redistribute wealth to the advantage of the supporters of the dominant faction, but it soon leads to the deprivation of rights of minorities and individuals.
5. Seeking a government monopoly on the capability and use of armed force: The first signs are efforts to register or restrict the possession and use of firearms, initially under the guise of “protecting” the public, which, when it actually results in increased crime, provides a basis for further disarmament efforts affecting more people and more weapons.



6. Militarization of law enforcement: Declaring a “war on crime” that becomes a war on civil liberties. Preparation of military forces for internal policing duties.

7. Infiltration and subversion of citizen groups that could be forces for reform: Internal spying and [surveillance](#) is the beginning. A sign is false prosecutions of their leaders.

8. Suppression of investigators and whistleblowers: When people who try to uncover high level wrongdoing are threatened, that is a sign the [system](#) is not only riddled with corruption, but that the corruption has passed the threshold into active tyranny.

9. Use of the law for competition suppression: It begins with the dominant faction winning support by paying off their supporters and suppressing their supporters’ competitors, but leads to public officials themselves engaging in illegal activities and using the law to suppress independent competitors. A good example of this is narcotics trafficking.

10. Subversion of internal checks and balances: This involves the appointment to key positions of persons who can be controlled by their sponsors, and who are then induced to do illegal things. The worst way in which this occurs is in the appointment of judges that will go along with unconstitutional acts by the other branches.



11. Creation of a class of officials who are above the law: This is indicated by dismissal of charges for wrongdoing against persons who are “following orders”.
12. Increasing dependency of the people on government: The classic approach to domination of the people is to first take everything they have away from them, then make them compliant with the demands of the rulers to get anything back again.
13. Increasing public ignorance of their [civic](#) duties and reluctance to perform them: When the people avoid doing things like voting and serving in militias and juries, tyranny is not far behind.
14. Use of staged events to produce popular support: Acts of terrorism, blamed on political opponents, followed immediately with well-prepared proposals for increased powers and [budgets](#) for suppressive agencies. Sometimes called a Reichstag plot.
15. Conversion of rights into privileges: Requiring licenses and permits for doing things that the government does not have the delegated power to restrict, except by due process in which the burden of proof is on the petitioner.
16. Political correctness: Many if not most people are susceptible to being recruited to engage in repressive actions against disfavored views or behaviors, and led to pave the way for the dominance of tyrannical government.

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