

The Authoritarian Playbook

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Livermore Indivisible
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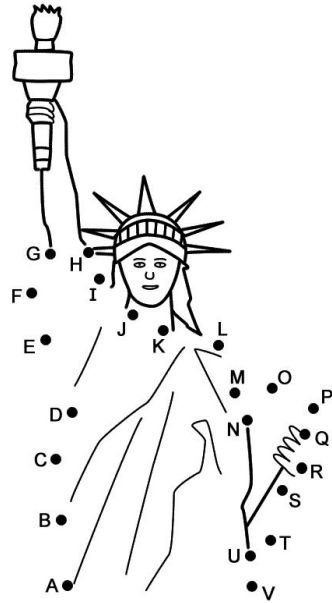




Caveats

- I am not a authoritarian expert.
- I am not a legal scholar.
- ✓ *But I am a political scientist and I teach Latin American politics.*
- What's true one minute (about the US government), might not be the next.
- ✓ *I've been burned before.*
- ✓ *A lot US policy is built on norms.*

You can Make the Connections



It's a Global Trend

Just a taste...



Victor Orbán (Hungary)



Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Turkey)



Nicolás Maduro (Venezuela)



Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua)



Nayib Bukele (El Salvador)



Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil)*
*not currently president

More Democratic

1
**What's
the
Truth?**

2
**Lots of
Corruption**

3
**Create an
Enemy**

4
**Eliminate
Checks &
Balances**

5
**Violence as
a Political
Tool**

6
**Rely on Our
Complicity**

7
**Don't Give
Up Power**

1

What's the Truth?



Make people question reality.

Discredit journalists, the media, and experts.

Impose direct/force self-censorship.

Use/promote others' use of propaganda.

Reduce/eliminate gov't transparency
(records, data, intelligence).

2

Lots of Corruption

Self-enrichment.

Redistribution of public funds.

Government contracts to supporters and family.

Pay to Play politics.

Oligarchy (small group of people having control, often the wealthy)



3

Create an Enemy

Create a common enemy (or “other”) to build unity.
Nationalism

The government/leader, and only them, can protect you.

Will create new enemies over time.



3 Create an Enemy

Manipulate peoples' feelings.

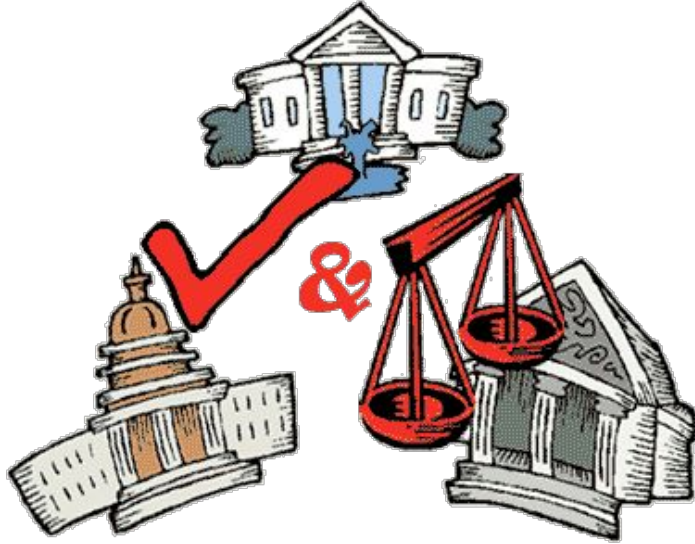
To instill fear, display power, and as a distraction.

The “weaker” the enemy the better.

Common Exs: media, elites (EU), universities (Orbán), “deep state” political opposition (communists/imperialists/liberals/conservatives), immigrants (Orbán), different religious groups, drug cartels/gangs (Bukele),



4 Eliminate Checks & Balances



Many governments set up with 3 (or 4) branches.

Legislative & Judicial “rubberstamps.”

Due to weakness, intimidation, complicity
(hyper)presidentialism

Don’t consult or just ignore rulings/policy.

Ex: US Courts (don’t rule on morality, just interpret constitution/laws)

Rule by Decree (executive orders)

4 Eliminate Checks & Balances

State of siege, suspends protections/rights

Ex: Bukele's "state of exception" (with legislature), multiple times

Ex: Hungary's ruling party pushed through a new constit amendment to allow "state of danger," would need no leg or jud (Covid, Ukraine)

US has a "national emergency" (then could use Insurrection Act)*
no congressional approval necessary

Can't meet/shut down branches.

Ex: Chavez/Maduro shut down and created new legislative body



5

Violence as a Political Tool

Valorize strength (in the face of our enemies)

Normalize (political) violence.

Violence is “okay” on dehumanized “others.”

Live in a constant state of fear.

Use of the military/paramilitary/police

US: long history of no domestic military

Ex: “Mano Dura”/iron fist, Bukele’s popularity



6

Rely on Our Complicity

Loyalty (a one way street)

clientelism, nepotism, lack of qualifications

Instill fear of violence, slander, retribution.

The art of distraction.

Naivete:

“It won’t happen to me.”

“It’s not that bad.”

“He won’t go THAT far.”

Leaders don’t even have to do everything they threaten.



7

Don't Give Up Power (Consolidate it)



Change the constitution (term limits, successive terms)

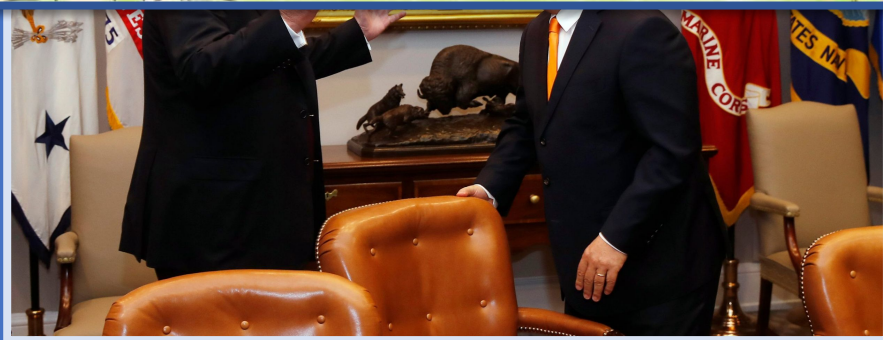
*Harder to do in the US

Postpone elections (state of emergency/siege)

Control elections (candidates, parties, registration, access, etc.)

Pass power to family.

EX: Ortega (Nicaragua) made his wife VP and then co-president



We The People

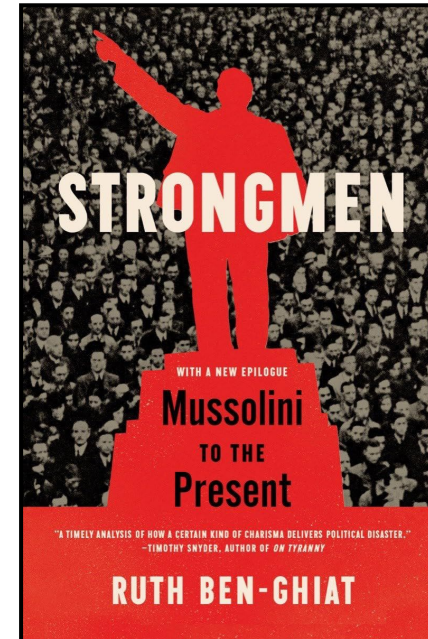
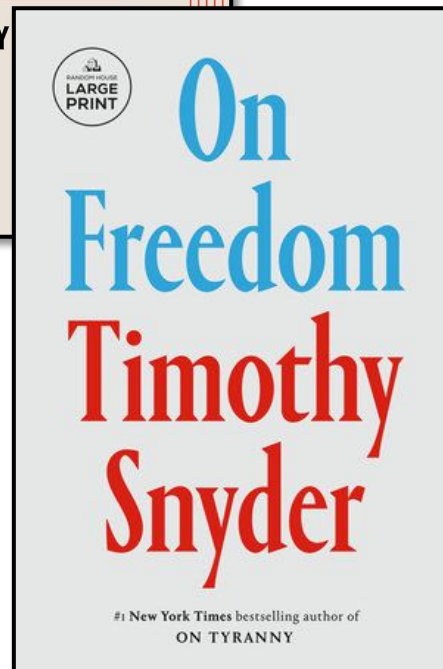
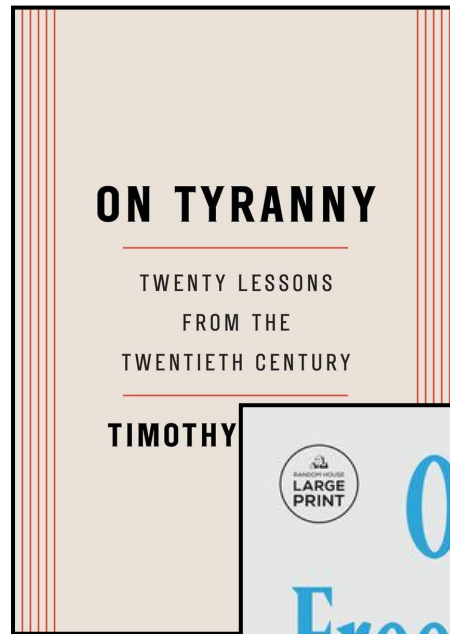
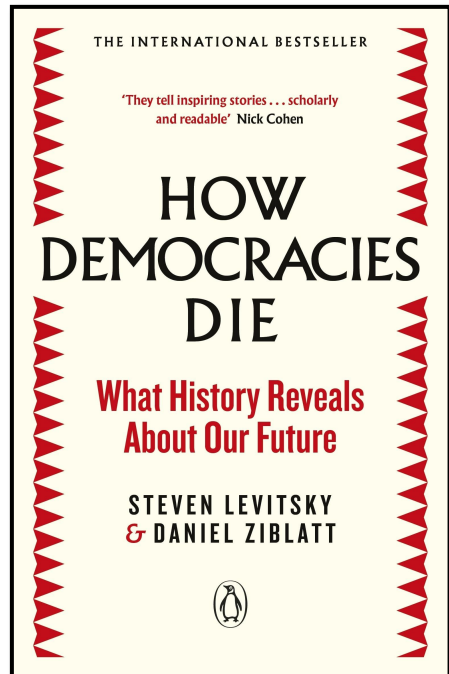


Democracies must be deemed by the people as legitimate.

When we stop believing in democracy, it dies.



Resources



Also Happy to Discuss:



**War on Universities/
Education**



US Global Standing



Climate Change

Thank you!