

Now That America Elected a Dictator: What Can We Expect?

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Olga Lautman

America has entered uncharted waters. With Trump's victory, a leader who openly disregards democratic norms and embraces authoritarian tactics will soon hold power. This forces us to confront a sobering question: what happens next? Drawing from Russia's repression under Vladimir Putin, we can anticipate a chilling blueprint for America's future. If history is any guide, a Russian-style system could quickly take hold, reshaping the nation in ways few could have imagined. I never imagined having to write this about America but here we are.

1. The Erosion of Democratic Institutions

Although Russia, for centuries has been plagued by corruption and repression, Putin's rise to power marked a decisive shift toward consolidating authority and dismantling even the minimal democratic structures that existed. He systematically undermined the judiciary, legislature, and media to entrench his rule, while filling key positions with loyalists—many of whom lacked experience and carried criminal backgrounds. This ensured that every lever of power served his interests rather than the public. A similar playbook will be employed in the U.S., targeting key institutions to erode checks and balances and concentrate power in the hands of a select few.

- **Judiciary:** Judges who stand against the regime will face political attacks, threats, or attempts for outright removal. Loyalists—regardless of qualifications—will be installed to ensure the legal system becomes a tool of the regime, rubber-stamping its priorities and suppressing dissent.
- **Congress:** Opposition voices in the legislature may be neutralized through disinformation campaigns, weaponized investigations, or targeted harassment, creating an institution that offers little resistance to executive overreach.
- **State Governments:** Federal overreach will likely target states that resist centralized authority. This could include withholding funds, filing legal challenges, or deploying federal agencies to strong-arm compliance, undermining state autonomy.

- **Department of Justice (DOJ):** Expect the DOJ to be weaponized to serve regime interests, targeting political opponents with investigations and prosecutions while shielding loyalists from accountability. This shift will transform the DOJ from a guardian of the rule of law into an enforcer of authoritarian priorities and a silencer of dissent.
- **Military:** The armed forces will see an infiltration of loyalists in key leadership positions, prioritizing loyalty over expertise. The regime will co-opt the military for domestic purposes, deploying troops to intimidate or suppress opposition under the guise of maintaining order.
- **Law Enforcement and Intelligence Agencies:** Federal agencies like the FBI and CIA may be purged of independent leadership and repurposed to surveil, intimidate, and target political adversaries, activists, and journalists while overlooking crimes committed by allies of the regime.
- **Election Commissions:** Agencies responsible for overseeing elections will further be restructured or staffed with loyalists to undermine free and fair elections, introducing more barriers to voting, and attempting to manipulate electoral outcomes.

Through these methods, authoritarian regimes systematically seize control of institutions vital to democracy and try to quell all avenues for effective resistance.

2. Media Suppression and Propaganda

In a Russian-style system, independent media becomes an endangered species. Expect a multifaceted approach to suppressing dissent and controlling the narrative:

- **Hostile Takeovers:** Major media outlets critical of the regime may face buyouts by regime-friendly oligarchs, hostile regulatory scrutiny, or outright closures. These takeovers allow the regime to repurpose once-trusted news sources into tools of propaganda.
- **Censorship:** The flow of information will be tightly controlled. Social media platforms will be pressured to suppress dissenting voices through legislation targeting “disinformation,” often a thinly veiled pretext for stifling criticism. Algorithms will be manipulated to deprioritize independent reporting and amplify regime-friendly content.

- **State Media Expansion:** Regime-funded outlets will flood the airwaves and online spaces with propaganda, often disguised as legitimate news. This will foster a cult of personality around the leader and rewrite inconvenient truths, framing opposition voices as enemies of the people.
- **Media Self-Censorship:** A climate of fear can be just as effective as direct government intervention. Expect the regime to create an environment where media outlets self-censor to avoid legal repercussions or physical harm. Journalists may shy away from covering controversial topics or investigations to protect their staff and avoid punitive measures like fines or asset freezes.
- **Intimidation of Journalists:** Journalists who persist in reporting the truth will face significant personal and professional risks, including:
 - **Harassment and Threats:** Online trolling, smear campaigns, and physical intimidation will be carried out to silence reporters.
 - **Surveillance:** Journalists will become targets of state surveillance, with private communications intercepted and leaked to discredit or endanger them.
 - **Arrests and Detention:** Those who cross the regime's red lines may face arbitrary detention or charges like espionage or sedition, echoing Russia's imprisonment of investigative journalists.
- **License Bans and Revocations:** The regime may also weaponize licensing and accreditation requirements, threatening or revoking the credentials of outlets that refuse to conform. In Russia, this tactic has driven many independent voices underground or into exile. In the U.S., similar actions could manifest as government agencies tightening broadcast or publishing regulations to target dissenters, while regime-friendly outlets flourish under lenient oversight.

The result is a chilling effect: a public increasingly deprived of accurate, independent information and a society incapable of holding power to account.

3. Flooding the Zone with Chaos

Dictators often thrive on chaos, using it as a tool to disorient the public, desensitize citizens to egregious behavior, and distract from their systematic consolidation of power. Vladimir Putin has perfected this tactic, and we can expect a similar approach in a U.S. authoritarian

regime. The strategy works because when scandals, crises, and shocking acts come in rapid succession, the public becomes overwhelmed, disoriented, and increasingly numb to each new outrage. The goal of this tactic is to disengage the public.

- **Devising a State of Perpetual Crisis:** Authoritarians flood the zone with chaos through a relentless barrage of scandals, policy shifts, and inflammatory rhetoric designed to dominate headlines and monopolize public attention:
 - **Shock and Awe Tactics:** Sudden and dramatic moves—such as mass firings of government officials, withdrawal from international agreements, or draconian executive orders—shock the public into paralysis.
 - **Crisis Exploitation:** Real or manufactured crises are exaggerated to justify extreme actions. For example, a border “emergency” could be used to expand surveillance powers or deploy federal forces domestically.
 - **Contradictory Messaging:** Confusing and contradictory statements by the regime destabilize public discourse, making it harder for opposition groups to respond effectively.
- **Egregious Acts as a Tool for Desensitization:** Authoritarian leaders often commit acts so outrageous that they initially provoke widespread outrage—but over time, the public becomes desensitized:
 - **Normalization of Corruption:** When blatant conflicts of interest and abuses of power become routine, the public grows weary of outrage and less likely to protest.
 - **Violations of Norms and Laws:** A steady erosion of long-standing democratic norms, such as attacking political opponents with state resources or ignoring court rulings, gradually conditions the public to accept autocratic behavior as the new normal.
 - **Inhumane Policies:** Policies like mass deportations, harsh crackdowns on protesters, or the targeting of marginalized groups sow fear while forcing the public to accept increasingly brutal actions as part of everyday life.

Using Chaos to Distract from Consolidation

While the public focuses on the latest scandal or crisis, the regime works quietly to tighten its grip on power:

- **Behind-the-Scenes Legislation:** Sweeping legal changes may be enacted with little notice, restricting voting rights, expanding executive authority, or limiting judicial independence.
- **Restructuring Institutions:** Key agencies, like law enforcement or election commissions, are quietly staffed with loyalists while attention is diverted elsewhere.
- **Dealing Blow After Blow:** The sheer volume of outrageous acts overwhelms the capacity of watchdogs, journalists, and activists to respond effectively to every new assault.

Chaos as a Shield Against Accountability

In an environment of relentless upheaval, holding the regime accountable becomes nearly impossible:

- **Shortened News Cycles:** Scandals that would dominate headlines for weeks in a normal political environment are quickly forgotten in hours as new crises emerge.
 - **Erosion of Trust:** The public, bombarded with conflicting narratives, loses faith in the media and other traditional sources of truth. This erosion plays directly into the regime's hands, allowing it to define reality on its terms.
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Flooding the zone with chaos is a deliberate strategy designed to wear down resistance and make authoritarian rule seem inevitable. **Recognizing this tactic is the first step toward combating it.** The challenge lies in maintaining focus, organizing effectively, and refusing to accept the unacceptable as normal.

4. Weaponizing Law Enforcement

Russia has long used its law enforcement and security agencies as tools of repression, targeting anyone who dares to challenge the regime. A similar trend in America could see law enforcement weaponized to suppress dissent, instill fear, and maintain control. Here's what to expect:

- **Politicized Arrests:** Opposition leaders, journalists, activists, and even ordinary citizens could face trumped-up charges or politically motivated investigations designed to sideline or intimidate them. High-profile arrests serve as warnings to others, reinforcing the idea that dissent comes at a steep personal cost.

- **Selective Enforcement of Laws:** Laws will be applied unevenly to protect loyalists while punishing opponents. Political allies will enjoy immunity from prosecution, even for blatant corruption or illegal activities, while the slightest infractions by opponents will be prosecuted harshly.
- **Surveillance State Expansion:** Expect the expansion of domestic surveillance under the guise of “national security” or “countering threats.” Activists, political adversaries, and even private citizens critical of the regime may find themselves under constant monitoring, with their communications intercepted, social media scrutinized, and movements tracked.
- **Militarized Police:** Law enforcement agencies could become heavily militarized, equipped with advanced weaponry and surveillance tools. Protests and demonstrations will be met with overwhelming force. Protesters may face designation as “domestic terrorists,” justifying extreme measures to quash dissent.
- **Fabricating Threats:** The regime may fabricate or exaggerate security threats to justify crackdowns. This could include false-flag operations, staged incidents, or hyped rhetoric about “antifa,” immigrant groups, or other supposed dangers to national security.
- **Harassment and Intimidation:** Individuals critical of the regime may face harassment, including frequent traffic stops, IRS audits, or targeted investigations into their personal or professional lives. This low-level but relentless pressure discourages dissent and disrupts the lives of opponents.
- **Specialized Task Forces:** The creation of new task forces or agencies ostensibly aimed at combating threats like “domestic extremism” could provide cover for targeting specific political groups, journalists, or activists. These units may operate with little transparency, enabling abuse of power.
- **Use of Private Security and Mercenaries:** The regime may outsource certain enforcement tasks to private security contractors or militias, blurring the lines between state authority and extrajudicial force. These groups often operate with fewer legal constraints, allowing for unchecked intimidation and violence.
- **Legal Justifications for Repression:** New laws or executive orders may expand the definition of “criminal behavior” to encompass broad categories of dissent, from participating in protests to sharing critical posts online. These measures normalize repression under the guise of legality.

- **Control Over Local Law Enforcement:** Federal authorities may co-opt or pressure local police departments, ensuring a unified response to protests and opposition activities. This could include federal funding tied to compliance with authoritarian directives or embedding federal agents within local departments.
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Weaponizing law enforcement is a cornerstone of authoritarian regimes, turning institutions meant to protect citizens into instruments of fear and control. Recognizing and resisting this transformation is critical to defending democracy.

5. Manipulating the Constitution

Authoritarian regimes often seek to rewrite or reinterpret their nation's constitution to consolidate power and legitimize their actions. By altering the foundational legal framework, they ensure their control is both entrenched and difficult to challenge. Putin's approach in Russia provides a clear example of how this can be done—and offers a warning for what could happen in the U.S.

Putin's Playbook: Extending Presidential Rule

When Vladimir Putin faced term limits in 2008, he orchestrated a temporary switch to the prime minister's office while installing a loyalist, Dmitry Medvedev, as president. Once he returned to the presidency, Putin oversaw sweeping constitutional changes in 2020. These amendments:

- **Reset Presidential Term Limits:** Allowed him to serve two additional six-year terms, effectively keeping him in power until 2036.
- **Centralized Power:** Strengthened the presidency while weakening checks and balances, ensuring other branches of government were subordinate.
- **Cemented Ideology:** Codified conservative values, such as a ban on same-sex marriage and LGBTQ issues to appeal to traditionalist supporters and distract from his power grab.

How This Could Happen in the U.S.

While amending the U.S. Constitution is a more complex process, an authoritarian leader could still manipulate it through a combination of legal, political, and populist tactics:

- **Packing the Courts:** Installing loyal judges who interpret constitutional provisions in ways that favor the regime, paving the way for more sweeping changes.
- **Exploiting a Supermajority:** With enough loyalists in Congress and state legislatures, a regime could push through constitutional amendments to expand executive power, weaken term limits, or suppress dissent.
- **National Emergencies:** Declaring a state of emergency or invoking national security threats to bypass traditional checks and implement changes through executive orders or fast-tracked amendments.
- **Appealing to Populism:** Framing constitutional changes as reforms that restore “law and order” or “protect freedoms,” while actually stripping away protections against authoritarianism.

Potential Changes to Watch For

- **Eliminating Term Limits:** The 22nd Amendment could be repealed or altered to allow indefinite re-election, similar to Putin’s term reset.
 - **Weakening States’ Rights:** Changes could limit state autonomy, concentrating power at the federal level and making it harder for states to resist authoritarian policies.
 - **Restricting Free Speech:** Amendments redefining the First Amendment under the guise of combating “disinformation” or “extremism” could curtail press freedom and public dissent.
 - **Expanding Executive Powers:** Enshrining broad emergency powers in the Constitution, allowing the president to bypass Congress and the courts.
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Manipulating the Constitution allows authoritarian leaders to reshape a country’s legal framework to suit their agenda while maintaining a facade of legitimacy. Vigilance against such moves is critical to preserving democratic norms and freedoms.

6. A Cult of Personality

A hallmark of authoritarian regimes is the creation of a powerful, almost god-like figurehead who embodies the nation’s ideals, virtues, and strength. Putin has mastered the art of the cult of personality, portraying himself as Russia’s savior and the ultimate symbol of its

greatness. Trump has followed suit, using similar strategies to build an unassailable image of himself as the country's indispensable leader.

- **Nationalist Rhetoric:** The appeal to "Make America Great Again" will continue to be magnified, presenting Trump as the only person capable of restoring the country to its former glory. Dissent will be equated with unpatriotic behavior, and opposition figures will be painted as traitors or enemies of the people. This rhetoric seeks to consolidate support by framing the leader as a defender of American values while demonizing those who challenge the regime as threats to national security and identity.
- **Religious Exploitation:** Religious groups will continue to be co-opted to enhance Trump's legitimacy, portraying him as divinely ordained to lead the nation. This relationship helps maintain a loyal base among religious conservatives, further consolidating power while undermining opposition from secular groups.

Historical Revisionism: Trump's regime will continue to engage in rewriting history to promote its own mythology and erase inconvenient truths. Figures and movements that represent democratic ideals or dissent will be discredited or erased from public memory, while the regime will elevate its narrative of nationalism, strength, and unity. Educational curricula will be reshaped to focus on Trump and GOP achievements, framing their rule as a continuation of America's founding principles, and any counter-narrative will be silenced or suppressed.

7. Corruption and Cronyism

One of the defining features of Putin's Russia is the deep intertwining of political power and personal enrichment. Under his regime, political elites have used their positions to amass immense wealth, creating a class of oligarchs who owe their power to loyalty rather than merit. Expect a similar dynamic in America, where personal enrichment becomes a central aspect of governance.

- **Oligarchs:** A small group of business elites and political loyalists will be enriched through lucrative government contracts, preferential treatment, and monopolistic practices. These oligarchs will become essential players in maintaining the regime's power, and their wealth will depend on continued allegiance to the leader. By controlling critical industries or sectors, these individuals would not only benefit financially but also reinforce the regime's dominance by stifling competition and dissent. We are already seeing this in Elon Musk!

- **Kleptocracy:** Public funds will be siphoned into private accounts, and state resources will be redirected to enrich the ruling elite. This could manifest through inflated government contracts, sweetheart deals, or funneling public money into private enterprises controlled by loyalists. Transparency will disappear, and corruption will become institutionalized. The wealth gap would grow, with ordinary citizens seeing little benefit from the nation's resources while the elites thrive.
 - **Political Favoritism:** Regime loyalists and supporters will thrive, receiving government handouts, bailouts, and favorable treatment in every sector of society. Conversely, those who oppose or criticize the regime will be punished through regulatory harassment, legal challenges, or financial ruin. Political rivals may face audits, asset freezes, or other financial sanctions that will attempt to destroy their ability to function, while regime allies enjoy impunity.
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8. Foreign Policy Aggression

Russia's authoritarian system is often accompanied by a foreign policy designed to distract from domestic failures and consolidate power. By adopting an aggressive and unpredictable foreign policy, the regime can rally the population around the leader, framing external threats as justification for internal control. Under Trump, we could see similar tactics.

- **Withdrawal from Alliances:** Expect the erosion of alliances with democratic nations, particularly those like NATO, in favor of closer ties with autocratic regimes such as Russia and China. International norms will be disregarded, as Trump seeks to align with nations that share a disdain for democracy and human rights. This could lead to the weakening of traditional alliances and a shift toward a more isolationist, confrontational stance in international relations.
- **Military Adventurism:** Trump's regime may provoke or escalate military conflicts abroad to stoke nationalist fervor, distract from domestic problems, and consolidate power at home. Military adventures, even if unjustified, can serve as a tool to rally the public around the leader, framing them as a protector of national interests. This could involve intervention in foreign conflicts, saber-rattling with adversaries, or even provoking international crises to bolster Trump's image as a strong, decisive figure.

- **Election Meddling:** Similar to Putin's interference in foreign elections, Trump may seek to destabilize democratic processes in other nations. Using disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, and covert operations, the regime could support like-minded autocrats abroad, undermining the legitimacy of democratically elected governments and promoting political instability. The regime may also encourage far-right or extremist groups in foreign countries, deepening international divisions and advancing its own interests.
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9. Suppression of Civil Society

Civil society is the bedrock of democratic engagement and social change. However, under an authoritarian regime, NGOs, activists, and grassroots movements face systematic suppression. The state seeks to control or eliminate any form of dissent that might challenge its narrative or authority. This will make it increasingly difficult for Americans to organize, protest, or voice opposition to the regime.

- **Regulatory Crackdowns:** Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) critical of the regime will be labeled as “foreign agents,” “terrorist sympathizers,” or “subversive groups,” and face severe restrictions on their ability to operate. This could include heavy fines, legal challenges, and bureaucratic obstacles designed to shut down any organization or movement that poses a threat to the regime. Nonprofits could be forced to register with the government, disclose all foreign funding, and face constant surveillance.
 - **Attacks on Activists:** High-profile activists or dissidents will be targeted through harassment, imprisonment, or worse. Regime critics will be subject to smear campaigns, legal persecution, and physical intimidation. Activists who mobilize against the regime may face coordinated attacks from both the state and violent right-wing groups. Some may be forced into exile or silenced through brutal measures, while others could be “disappeared” entirely.
 - **Fear and Self-Censorship:** As an atmosphere of intimidation spreads, many ordinary citizens will choose to self-censor, fearing for their livelihoods and safety. Speaking out against the regime, even in private, could lead to retaliation, surveillance, or worse. Social media and other communication platforms may become tools for the state to monitor and control public discourse, leading many to avoid expressing dissenting views, even in their personal lives.
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The gradual but relentless suppression of civil society is a defining characteristic of authoritarianism. As institutions of democracy are dismantled, the state consolidates more control over the lives of its citizens, making organized resistance harder to achieve and even harder to sustain.

10. False Flag Attacks to Justify Repression

Dictators often resort to false flag operations to create a pretext for further consolidating power and cracking down on dissent. A false flag attack involves orchestrating or manipulating an attack or crisis and blaming it on political opponents, foreign adversaries, or marginalized groups. This tactic serves several purposes:

- **Manufacturing External Threats:** A regime may stage or exaggerate external threats, framing them as acts of aggression from foreign adversaries or insurgents within the country. By doing so, the dictator can rally the population around the leader, uniting the people against a common enemy. The state uses the manufactured crisis to justify martial law, increased surveillance, and military mobilization.
 - **Repressing Internal Opposition:** False flag attacks can also be used to create internal scapegoats, especially political rivals or dissenting groups. By blaming these groups for acts of violence or terrorism, the regime can demonize and eliminate them as threats, justifying harsh measures such as mass arrests, crackdowns on protests, or even executions. This not only silences political opposition but also helps to establish the regime's narrative of security and control.
 - **Stoking Fear to Quash Dissent:** By creating an atmosphere of fear through orchestrated violence or manufactured threats, the dictator can justify extreme repression under the guise of protecting the nation. This fear can stifle public protests, dissuade activism, and lead to self-censorship among citizens who fear being labeled as "enemies of the state." In this way, false flag operations help to erode democratic freedoms and further entrench the authoritarian system.
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Ways to push back

While the outlook is bleak, resistance is not futile. America's deep democratic traditions and resilient civil society offer hope, but pushing back will require collective effort and strategic action. Support independent media by subscribing to and amplifying credible outlets that challenge the regime's narrative. Organize locally to strengthen grassroots networks that resist authoritarian policies and foster community resilience. Strengthen ties with global

democratic movements to share strategies and resources. Stay informed, as understanding authoritarian tactics is key to countering them. I'll be putting out a comprehensive resistance guide very shortly to help navigate this critical fight. Stay tuned.
