

## **The Primary Dynamics Governing the Rise and Maintenance of Authoritarian Regimes**

Michael A. Podgorski – Political Science

*“Every day, every hour, offered the opportunity to make a decision, a decision which determined whether you would or would not submit to those powers which threatened to rob you of your very self, your inner freedom; which determined whether or not you would become the plaything of circumstance, renouncing freedom and dignity...” – Victor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning**

*“...the effectiveness of a doctrine should not be judged by its profundity, sublimity, or the validity of the truth it embodies, but by how thoroughly it insulates the individual from his self and the world as it is.” – Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer**

The purpose of this paper is to outline and explore the primary dynamics, which have allowed for and still do allow for the rise of authoritarian regimes. These primary dynamics are not necessarily deterministic in nature. Despite the temptation to present and determine ironclad interlinkages of causal factors which would require a more advanced statistical analysis, this paper will focus on a general outline of prescient theories and reasoned descriptions, with an eye toward how these dynamics provide fertile ground for the rise of authoritarian regimes based on an amalgam of historical and recent literature, which in their entirety provide a more robust explanation for the existence of authoritarian regimes. There is no simple explanation which can account for the rise of authoritarian regimes; and so, this paper will attempt to speak to its likelihood and is not intended to contradict any of the existing analysis, but rather to augment it. This paper is not meant to be exhaustive; and undoubtedly, there will be some dynamics, which may have been worthy of covering, but will have been overlooked.

The dynamics to be discussed are observable and ascertainable via their repetition through modern history, up to and including the present time, and will be shown to have contributed to one of the most well-known authoritarian regimes in modern day Russia. This paper will avoid

becoming bogged down in contentious discussions of the distinctions between totalitarianism and authoritarianism, such as those drawn by Juan Linz in *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*; and Hannah Arendt certainly would argue that totalitarian regimes are not simply more drastic in nature than authoritarian regimes, but rather fundamentally different (460). In *The Future is History*, Masha Gessen presents compelling evidence that present day Russia is not ruled by simply an authoritarian regime; but rather, she argues that it meets the different set of standards for being considered a totalitarian regime. Despite these distinctions, many of the very same explanatory dynamics are applicable to *both* types of regimes, but it is not the purpose of this paper to explore this in any detail.

First, a discussion of concepts to be employed here is warranted, one of which is the idea of **Existential Security**, an idea borrowed from *Sacred and the Secular* by Norris and Inglehart. They present this idea as an axiom to their main proposition, the **Religious Values Hypothesis**. Existential Security is defined as “the feeling that survival is secure enough that it can be taken for granted” (Norris & Inglehart 4). In contrast, this paper will also employ the converse concept, **Existential Insecurity**, which is best defined as “the human psychological sense of pervasive danger, a deep and fundamental threatening anxiety, without a sharp focus on a specific danger” (Marcuse 924). Although he did not cite this term directly, I believe that the psychological state of mind of modern man, which Erich Fromm describes in *Escape from Freedom*, is most aptly characterized as Existential Insecurity.

According to Fromm, the **Authoritarian Personality** is a psychological response to this condition of Existential Insecurity, which has its roots in the paradox of new found freedom, born from the rise of market economies, i.e., capitalism. Writing in 1941, Fromm states that, “What characterizes medieval in contrast to modern society is its lack of individual freedom.

Everybody in the earlier period was chained to his role in the social order” (40). However, “although a person was not free in the modern sense, neither was he alone and isolated. In having a distinct, unchangeable, and unquestionable place in the social world from the moment of birth, man was rooted in a structuralized whole and thus life had a meaning which left no place and no need for doubt” (Fromm 41). The consequence of the rise of the market economies leaves, “The medieval social system destroyed and with it the stability and relative security it had offered the individual,” with the result that, “The individual was left alone; everything depended on his own effort, not on the security of his traditional status” (Fromm 59). To summarize, “freedom from the traditional bonds of medieval society, though giving the individual a new feeling of independence, at the same time made him feel alone and isolated, filled with doubt and anxiety, and drove him into new submission” and hence, to seek an escape from freedom (Fromm 103).

Arendt wrote of a related and similar psychological process, in which she believed that:

...the masses are obsessed by a desire to escape from reality because in their essential homelessness they can no longer bear its accidental, incomprehensible aspects ... The masses' escape from reality is a verdict against the world in which they are forced to live and in which they cannot exist, since coincidence has become its supreme master and human beings need the constant transformation of chaotic and accidental conditions into a man-made pattern of relative consistency. (352)

Taken in historical perspective, *Escape from Freedom*, written in 1941 and *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, written in 1951, both arrived right on the heels of the chaos of two world wars, the Russian Revolution, Nazi Germany, Stalinism and the resulting, multiple periods of severe economic depression and societal breakdown. The books' authors were certainly witness to some of the most catastrophic events of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, which certainly produced some of the most extraordinary threats to almost any person's sense of Existential Security. Exacerbated by such existential threats, the masses were primed for a particular psychological response, the

Authoritarian Personality, which is characterized by the masses' ready submission to an authoritarian regime. As described by Fromm:

The annihilation of the individual self and the attempt to overcome thereby the unbearable feeling of powerlessness are only one side of the masochistic strivings. The other side is the attempt to become a part of a bigger and more powerful whole outside of oneself, to submerge and participate in it. This power can be a person, an institution, God, the nation, conscience, or a psychic compulsion. By becoming part of a power which is felt as unshakably strong, eternal, and glamorous, one participates in its strength and glory. One surrenders one's own self and renounces all strength and pride connected with it, one loses one's integrity as an individual and surrenders freedom; but one gains a new security and a new pride in the participation in the power in which one submerges. One gains also security against the torture of doubt. The masochistic person, whether his master is an authority outside of himself or whether he has internalized the master as conscience or a psychic compulsion, is saved from making decisions, saved from the final responsibility for the fate of his self, and thereby saved from the doubt of what decision to make. He is also saved from the doubt of what the meaning of his life is or who "he" is. These questions are answered by the relationship to the power to which he has attached himself. The meaning of his life and the identity of his self are determined by the greater whole into which the self has submerged. (154-155)

The fundamental process outlined functions as such: the individual makes an exchange with the state, his freedom for existential security, and paradoxically using his free will to choose a new condition in which he has forsaken his free will to choose. This is the basic psychological mechanism by which authoritarian regimes gain and maintain their power. Authoritarian regimes exploit this psychological predilection of modern man by providing a narrative which manifests a sharp focus on an object of fear, be it through nationalism, racism, antisemitism, homophobia, or the existential threat posed by a determined enemy, despite that these threats may be real or imagined. The regime goes on to solve or promise to solve these existential phobias, which it often originates, thus providing existential relief for the individuals affected and through repetition, which in turn creates a self-reinforcing loop. Just as Hannah Arendt had noted in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, this process must be repeated for the sake of maintaining power. Either an authoritarian regime must exploit the existential threat posed, for example, by a

terrorist attack, or it must exploit modern man's fears of foreigners, intrusions upon sovereign jurisdictions, and those who represent the *other* in contrast to what is considered traditional, and so forth. By reminding modern man of his precarious state, and providing paths to secure it, authoritarian regimes gain and maintain their power. With this basic premise in mind, let us turn now to some of the other dynamics which give rise to and allow for the maintenance of authoritarian regimes, using Russia as an exemplar. Some of the dynamics and factors discussed here may fall into two broad categories: those which allow authoritarian regimes to manifest and those which allow these regimes to persist, and in some cases, both categories.

As James C. Scott remarked in *Seeing like a State*, one of the primary elements contributing to the likelihood of the establishment of an authoritarian regime is large scale, human catastrophe. "The most fertile soil ... has typically been times of war, revolution, depression, and struggle for national liberation. In such situations, emergency conditions foster the seizure of emergency powers and frequently delegitimize the previous regime." (5) These periods are often marked by a lack of democracy or only fragile/nominal democracy. Some of the most obvious examples include the Russian Revolution of October and February of 1917, itself partially brought about because of severe economic conditions, and the failure of democracy and the severe economic depression in the Weimar Republic following WWI. Although the failed coup by soviet leaders in 1991 may not seem relevant or as prominent, it was just as important, because it led to the eventual constitutional crisis of Russia in 1993. Although Yeltsin is thought of as a reformer in some regards, he certainly laid the groundwork for a state that was conducive to authoritarian rule via the establishment of a new constitution which created an unrestrainable executive and a weak representative branch. Further, his economic policy manifested extreme income inequality, vastly increasing poverty for the general populace while concentrating much of the nation's

wealth in the hands of a few oligarchs. As we will see, this economic policy was an incredibly important element to the rise of an authoritarian regime in post-communist Russia.

As Scott mentioned, depression can play a major role in the establishment of authoritarian regimes and one need only think of the hyperinflation and depression that resulted from the victors' imposition of war debts during the years of the Weimar Republic to immediately grasp its importance as an element paving the way for an authoritarian regime. Although the Weimar Republic's situation appears to be the result of its indentured servitude to the victors of the Great War, there is a deeper story to this. It should be readily apparent to the reader why war and revolution, especially one as violent as the Russian Revolutions of 1917, contribute to an individual's sense of Existential Insecurity, just as it might be obvious why an economic depression falls into that group of events; however, in *Can Democracy Survive Global Capitalism?*, Robert Kuttner proposes that depressions are a symptom of a larger set of issues, including an ever-encroaching global capitalism and a failed set of fiscal and economic policies, and he contends that representative democracy plays a pivotal role in the prevention of authoritarian regimes coming to power in the first place via their particular implementation of economic policy.

As he sees it, representative democracy is supposed to reign in unfettered capitalism through a series Keynesian economic policies designed to provide the most social good for the largest number of people. When governments fail to do so, when they in fact promote classic laissez-faire capitalism characterized by deregulation, fiscal austerity measures, and stripping unions of their power, the result is that economic downturns are more frequent, more severe and tend to last longer. Additionally, in poorly regulated market economies, wealth tends to become concentrated in the hands of the few, known as elites, rather than the many, and as a result of

these processes, the masses suffer the brunt of the economic hardship, and these periods are characterized by huge disparities in economic equality. Since wealth tends to buy more political access and influence, and since political leaders appear more concerned with the needs of the elite, the masses become disenfranchised with democracy and are left with a sense that government does not serve them, but rather only serves those with money. Kuttner sees the relationship between democracy's legitimacy and its ability to mitigate market forces inextricably tied together in mutual beneficial symbiosis. "When the system is in balance, strong democracy tempers market forces for the general good, in turn reinforcing democratic legitimacy" (xvi). When democracy is reigning in capitalism it can perform its role as, "both a bulwark against totalitarianism and a shield against economic concentration" (14).

From a historical perspective, Kuttner argues that, "Fascism thrived on the failure of parliamentary democracy to solve urgent problems. In the aftermath of World War I, these included national humiliation and economic catastrophe, never a good combination. The failures, in turn, discredited democracy itself, to the point where people were willing to turn to dictators." (263) In addition, the Weimar Republic employed extreme fiscal austerity policies, which only deepened its depression. Post-communist Russians certainly suffered some national humiliation, witnessing the loss of a great empire to be followed by a President who was supremely embarrassing because of his buffoonery and drunkenness seen across the globe. And Yeltsin's economic policies, including a fire sale of government assets, led to extreme economic inequality, which was not only a problem that the nascent democracy had caused, but could not solve.

Whereas war reparations on the Weimar Republic were imposed from external sources, Russia's economic hardship was imposed from internal forces, essentially self-imposed. The

effect is the same, but the distinction is important. It is far too easy to attribute the rise of Hitler to the imposition of unbearable war debt, without grasping how economic policy, even that employed by present day governments, could push a population towards authoritarianism, if that government's economic policy was similar to that of the Weimar Republic. And it might be just as tempting to blame Russia's economic circumstances on its leaders' lack of experience creating and managing a market economy, satisfied that such a situation could not arise in the West because of its deep experience with managing market economies, but this overlooks the more important consequence of how Russia's situation in the late 1990's contributed to the rise of an authoritarian regime.

Although Russia's transition to a market economy would have been vastly difficult under any circumstances, the result of extreme economic inequality is still similar to the current situation Kuttner finds in many present day western societies. Again, Russia appears to be an exception, because of its abortive attempts to implement democracy, as evidenced by the constitutional crisis of 1993 when the representative branch of Russia's government would not yield to its executive, and subsequently Yeltsin shelled the building housing the representative branch, effectively shelling Russia's nascent representation of democracy. To be sure, a nominal democracy existed after new elections, but was quite fragile, and was (and still is) subject to an executive branch with broad ranging powers and the ability to easily encroach upon the representative branch. The point is that it is quite easy to overlook the exception and fail to realize its applicability to present day democracies, which is a sentiment best captured by Pomerantsev, quoting an associate:

'We used to have this self-centered idea that Western democracies were the end point of evolution, and we're dealing from a position of strength, and people are becoming like us. It's not that way. Because if you think this thing we have here isn't fragile you are



kidding yourself. This, 'and here Jamison takes a breath and waves his hand around to denote Maida Vale, London, the whole of Western civilization, 'this is just fragile.' (227)

In the wake of the fall of the USSR, the notion was floated that Capitalism had defeated Communism, and many had made the assumption that a market economy in Russia would go hand in hand with the burgeoning democratization of the country, yet as Tony Judt points out in *Ill Fairs the Land*:

... if we give the matter a moment's thought, we can see that the 20th century morality tale of 'socialism vs. freedom' or 'communism vs. capitalism' is misleading. Capitalism is not a political system; it is a form of economic life, compatible in practice with right-wing dictatorships (Chile under Pinochet), left-wing dictatorships (contemporary China), social-democratic monarchies (Sweden) and plutocratic republics (the United States). Whether capitalist economies thrive best under conditions of freedom is perhaps more of an open question than we like to think. (145)

But rather than assisting in the democratization of Russia, the introduction of a free-wheeling market economy likely hastened the country's trajectory towards authoritarian rule, as old forms of stability were cast aside in favor of a system which created extreme economic inequality.

Although obviously imperfect, the Communist party had provided much of the connective tissue within Russian society with its multifaceted roles organizing civic society, providing ladders for individual economic advancement, operating government, providing communication channels for people to voice a limited scope of opinions and desires, and guaranteeing a certain minimum living standard, including a job and a pension. But with the collapse of the party and its system of rule, there was the sudden liberation from the relative security and stability which it had provided, and its citizens were faced with a period of Existential Insecurity due to conditions quite similar to those described by Fromm. Without recourse to remedy their situations through a truly democratic institution and without the stability of the old regime, people were ready to seek out a higher power in which to immerse themselves in order to regain their sense of Existential Security.

With the introduction of income inequality, Existential Security is degraded yet further. Wilkinson and Pickett, in *The Spirit Level*, present convincing data-driven, empirical evidence which supports the case that income inequality is the single most explanatory variable for measurable levels of social trust, mental health, drug use, physical health, life expectancy, obesity, educational performance, teenage birth, social mobility, violence and imprisonment. And the greater the income inequality within a society, the more adversely affected these areas are. Although the US was the focus of the authors' book, the Gini coefficients for both the US and Russia are historically comparable over the last 25 years. The authors also note that in the 1990's, Russia's transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy was "accompanied by a rapid rise in income inequality" (87). However, the authors are careful to limit the scope of their conclusions and without a specific study related to Existential Insecurity, what can be safely stated here is that income inequality does adversely affect many areas which, at least superficially, would seem to exacerbate Existential Insecurity. It may be worth reviewing the original definition of this idea with emphasis italicized, which states that it is, "the human psychological sense of pervasive danger, a deep and fundamental threatening anxiety, *without a sharp focus on a specific danger*" (Marcuse 924). It is tempting to draw more conclusive causal links, but this must suffice as another theorized piece of evidence that helps affirm the idea that income inequality may heighten Existential Insecurity and in turn this dynamic increased the possibility that Russians would respond to these stimuli with an Authoritarian Personality.

By the time that Vladimir Putin rose to power, Russia's populace was primed for an autocratic leader, and for a time Putin was able to provide a measure of Existential Security in the form of being credited with Russia's economic boom of the 2000's and rescuing some of the population from extreme poverty and economic deprivation and taking the first step towards reinforcing his

role as chief rescuer. And yet at the same time, he has continued to undermine representative democracy with various changes to the election or appointment of members of the upper and lower house. Some authors have contended that the Duma is a place where opposition opinions can be voiced, but it has also become an echo chamber for Putin's populist hard right messages, and therefore, as a framing device for positioning his political points of view as centrist. This frame allows him to be seen as a moderate. Since the economic downturn in Russia after 2008, Putin has been able to use the resulting circumstances to his advantage, sharply focusing the population's fears by providing narratives on foreign interference, foreign economic sanctions, terrorism, and ostensibly subversive elements within society to explain what ails Russians, rather than addressing one of the country's largest issues, the looting of Russia's resources by an elite class of oligarchs and a lack of real representative democracy. Compounding these issues, Russia has no inherited, collective memory of what a traditional, functioning democracy actually looks like due to the transition from Communism. In such an environment, how is democracy to take root? Is the rise of an authoritarian Russian state nearly inevitable at this point?

Kuttner believes that his proposed causal link between democracy's inability to regulate capitalism and the rise of authoritarian states finds its roots in the hard right politics of the masses and warns against the possibility of people turning to autocratic-styled leaders who are able to focus the anger and fear of the societies and in particular, the West, but this does not exempt the study of Russia's political state of affairs or the lessons which could be drawn from it as inapplicable to western societies. "Today, large numbers of citizens throughout the West are angry that the good life is being stolen from them. They are not quite sure whom to be angry at – immigrants, corporations, the government, politically correct liberals, the rich, the poor? The anger is both unfocused and inchoate, but increasingly articulated by a neofascist right" (Kuttner

xv). Faced with the erosion of confidence in the institutional efficacy of modern western governments and their seeming inability to provide the economic security they once did, people are turning in greater numbers toward right-wing populism:

Today's right-wing populism is a repudiation of liberalism in its multiple forms. Ultrationalist leaders are contemptuous of the norms of parliamentary democracy. Radically nationalist masses reject such liberal values as tolerance, compromise, universal rights, and informed deliberation. There are national variations, but the common elements include a feeling that the system has failed the citizenry; that the Nation must be taken back from the cosmopolitans; and a belief that a strong Leader who embodies the true popular will is preferable to squabbling and corrupt parliamentarians. (Kuttner 260)

Putin is the embodiment of a strong authoritarian leader that Kuttner is warning against, one who provides convincing popular narratives, which help Russians make sense of an insensible world, by making claims that the world does not give Russia the respect it deserves, or that the West is hypocritical by breaking international laws it attempts to enforce on Russia, etc. And Putin is also the leader that Russians have turned to after their relative security was swept away after the fall of the USSR.

The next dynamic to be examined is the loop of Putin's reinforcement of power. Critics will rightly point out that Putin has not consistently eliminated his political opposition, as thoroughly as one might expect an authoritarian leader necessarily to do, but that opposition is at times necessary to the maintenance of the regime's power. Certainly, there are natural ebbs and flows in the stability of any state, each new instance of instability offering a strong authoritarian leader an opportunity to coopt it for the purposes of the regime. According to Walzer, within totalitarian states, "Social control ... is dependent upon continuous upheaval, crisis, struggle, and instability. All those together breed uncertainty and distrust among the people ... and mutual distrust (as Aristotle said) is the key to all tyrannical rule" (Walzer 111-112). While this may seem self-evident, it should also be just as self-evident that only a near permanent sense of Existential

Insecurity is essential to the survival of the regime. Coopting an organically grown opposition movement by creating an alternative narrative for its existence in order to heighten a feeling of Existential Insecurity among the masses is perhaps preferable to manufacturing a threat like Stalin's Doctors' Plot, and is at least more convincing when protestors fill the streets. Arguably, even if Putin does not dispatch with most of his political opposition through assassination, he heavily handicaps them by forcing them from prominence by jailing them, stripping them of resources, position and credibility, or forcing them into permanent exile.

There are certainly arguments in favor of the masses' ability to organize their opposition using social media platforms. To be sure, advances in technology have facilitated better organizational capability and greater access to readily available information. That is not in question, but the quality of that information is. As I cited in a previous paper, Jared Diamond wrote, "The kings and priests of ancient Sumer wanted writing to be used by professional scribes to record numbers of sheep owed in taxes, not by the masses to write poetry and hatch plots" (235). Further, citing the renowned anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss, he wrote that, "ancient writing's main function was 'to facilitate the enslavement of other human beings'" (235). Thus there is a long standing historical tradition of centrally commanded state authorities attempting to exercise control over the masses by employing technology against them and preventing that technology from reaching the masses with the understanding that it could be used to spread information to subvert its power.

In *The Red Web*, Soldatov and Borogan document the creation and nearly immediate, subsequent destruction of the first Xerox machine in late Soviet Russia, thus establishing its place in the same historical vein. Soviet Russia had a well-documented and long standing tradition of attempting to eradicate certain parts of its official history, including obviously the

technology which could have spread it as well, hence the masses' solution of samizdat. But in modern day Russia, the total destruction of information and the technology used to spread it, is not an option for Putin's regime. Essentially, computers are extremely efficient copying machines and the internet is the supreme copying machine, spreading information far and wide, unrestricted, and fully open to anyone willing to pay a nominal monthly fee. And despite the vast repository of factual information to be found on the internet, it is completely packed with disinformation, distortions of objective facts, "alternative" histories, and falsified results of "scientific" studies, faked firsthand accounts, and of course, endless personal opinions, punctuated by the ability of just about anyone to anonymously harass anyone who attempts to interact with others in this realm. In large part, the creation of this misleading information is backed by the resources of the regime and spread by state controlled entities; and subsequently, much more is organically spread yet further by loyalists to the regime. Putin's regime adapted the most open platform ever for the sharing of information in the most effective way possible, by coopting the very mechanism that allows the opposition to organize itself; and therefore increasing the regime's organizational capacity in parallel. In combination with a predominantly state controlled mass media, the echo chamber that is the representative branch of government, and the cooption of technology based organizational platforms, Putin (and his supporters) are able to shape, manipulate and disseminate Putin's narrative of events with unprecedented efficiency and ease.

Beyond this, for all the ostensible openness of the internet, Soldatov and Borogan document a country wide system of internet surveillance, initially installed and forced upon internet providers without legal precedent, but gradually, under the auspices of security implementations to inhibit potential terrorist attacks, this system is now partially legalized. The authors also

document ideas by the state to create the ability to “turn off” the internet from outside of Russia, also for security purposes. Finally, according to various websites, Russia has forced Instagram to remove the online videos of opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, and YouTube has at times temporarily removed Navalny’s videos at the Russian Federation’s request (Coldewey). So while the regime cannot completely eradicate information, it still does exercise great power in forcing the hands of technology companies to its own will.

Masha Gessen’s *The Future is History* documents the lives of several people who grow up in post-soviet Russia, including the story of young gay man who eventually teaches courses in gender studies at Perm University, but is subsequently forced from his position and seeks asylum in America because the threat to his life, due to his sexual orientation, becomes increasingly tangible and entirely possible, as Gessen documents deadly attacks on young gay men which go unprosecuted (411-418). Gessen also documents attempts by legislators to pass laws which essentially conflate homosexuality with the sexual molestation of children and to punish gay people accordingly. One legislator lamented that if only such laws were in place, citizens would not have to take justice into their own hands. By omission of action, the state no longer needs to terrorize its people; rather instead, it lets factions of its people lash out violently and with impunity against other members of society. The law discussed here, more widely known in the West as “the Gay Propaganda Law,” did pass to become official state law. Surely it only emboldened the extreme elements of Russian society. With this conflation, an open dialog surrounding sexual orientation cannot even take place because supposed deviants have been legally villainized and sanctioned. And in this way, the regime has once again hijacked open discourse with its own narrative, locating the ills of society with a particular group, and giving

focus to peoples' fears and then "remedying" the situation, thus reinforcing the loop of the Authoritarian Personality response.

Rather than attempting to absolutely control information and abolish the spread of undesirable information, the regime has adopted multiple approaches to the spread and quality of information available. And with so many echo chambers, the regime can avoid the appearance of being the entity originating its own narratives or acting in a way which places the official responsibility for terrorizing the population with the regime. By far, this is one of Putin's most effective strategies, that is to refer to the law incessantly and emphasize its importance; and yet, distancing the regime from anything outside of its official, lawful capacity, while at the same time, allowing "organic" movements to act as unofficial surrogates serving the state's purposes, whether it be online trolls, anti-opposition groups, or troops engaging in the Ukrainian civil war. In this way, the classic roles of both technology and law are subverted to the regime's needs.

And when Putin answers a question by prefacing his statements with a reference to the law, he seemingly makes himself appear subservient to the law, almost self-effacing and modest; and yet actually, this is a very self-reflexive action because it reinforces his own authority since he possesses the constitutional ability to issue wide ranging decrees, which may encroach upon or restrict the representative branch and the constitutional rights of Russian citizens. But more importantly, according to Lilia Shevtsova, "the Russian president's status makes it possible for him to constantly expand his powers" and thus, "The Constitution is thus both the main guarantor and main instrument for keeping Russia's authoritarian system in place" (22). What then is the exact horizon of Putin's *lawful* powers?

As Fromm suggested earlier, God or an institution may serve as the power with which man may exchange his freedom for security, which when combined is likely an organized religion.



Norris and Inglehart have already proposed that religion may play a role in mitigating Existential Insecurity. But here again, Putin's Russia of 2018 has embraced the church, and endorsed the church's less tolerant views on social issues such as sexual orientation (The Economist). Thus, the regime has not only coopted religion's potential role mitigating Existential Insecurity created by the regime, it has in turn eliminated a competing, alternative source of existential security, and it has also located yet another surrogate that can act on the regime's behalf by energizing adherents of both the church/state to mobilize against their fellow citizens who adhere to less accepted traditions.

To conclude, the rise of authoritarian regimes has some of its primary roots in human psychological reactions to modern economic conditions, including the rise of market economies and laissez-faire capitalism, and conditions which can be further exacerbated by man-made catastrophes. Although Kuttner warns that only Democracy can serve as a bulwark against the rise of authoritarian regimes, in several cases it has failed to do so, but the deeper nature of these cases, like that of the Weimar Republic are generally overlooked as relates to the rise of authoritarian states. Potential lessons from Russia's political development over the past 30 years may also fail to be realized due to the West's notion of its supremacy of political and economic systems, while treating Russia as an exception.

Although not inevitable, many of the circumstances, which provided an opportunity for an authoritarian leader to come to power, were present in Russia before Putin took office. The collapse of the USSR ushered in a market economy, which dislodged its populace from an established sense of societal order and security that had been kept in place by the Communist system of government. In this system, each person could count upon certain minimum standards, but the rise of the market economy swept them away and also brought about extreme income

inequality, which was additionally exacerbated by Yeltsin's "loan for shares" scheme. The Russian populace was ready to respond to its state of Existential Insecurity with Fromm's psychological response, the Authoritarian Personality.

Since he has been in power, Putin has been able to maintain his power through repurposing the classic roles of law, technology, the representative branch and the church, allowing him to use them as surrogates in order to hijack open discourses to spread his narrative of events, act with force where he cannot with plausible deniability, and raise the specter of constant threat against Russia's populace. All of this gives sharp focus to the sense of Existential Insecurity experienced by a great deal of Russia's population, who in their search for a sense of Existential Security turn to Putin time and again, and have given their allegiance to him, but more essentially traded their freedom, for a sense of security. Given that there is some truth to this idea, it must be remembered that nothing about authoritarian regimes is deterministic. Hannah Arendt, Erich Fromm and Viktor Frankl have all remarked upon man's incredible gift of freedom, and the ways in which it can be used to empower the self through conscious, deliberate choice, which one might describe as Democracy on the scale of the individual self.

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