

### **3: AUTHORITARIANISM - DICTATORSHIPS - DEMOCRACY**

For the greater part of my time on this planet, I believed that I lived in a country that exemplified freedom, independence, patriotism, and adherence to our Constitution and the rule of law. Unfortunately, this no longer seems to be the case. What was once thought to be the greatest country in the world is no longer looked up to and revered by a large majority of the people living in other nations.

Our beloved democracy has reached a tipping point. The threat of morphing into a society based on authoritarianism, and even a de facto dictatorship, has become a sad reality over the past decade. In this chapter, I will address what the characteristics and differences between an authoritarianism form of government, a dictatorship, and a democracy are.

## **Authoritarianism**

Political scientists use the term authoritarianism to describe a way of governing that demands total order and unbridled control, as opposed to personal freedom. A government run by authoritarianism can often be led by a dictator. That having been said, an authoritarian is not necessarily a dictator, while a dictator is almost always an authoritarian. Strict authoritarians show a lack of concern for the wishes or opinions of others, over their own.

An authoritarian form of government lacks free and competitive direct elections or interferes with any attempt to provide for them. This is not the type of governing that our forefathers had in mind when they created our Constitution.

Some of the characteristics of authoritarian governments are:

- Highly concentrated and centralized power that is maintained through political repression and the exclusion of potential or supposed challengers ... even by armed force, if necessary.
- Using political parties and mass organizations to mobilize people around the mandated goals of the regime.
- Leadership that is self-appointed and cannot be displaced by citizens' free choice.
- Leadership tenures that are marked by indefinite periods of control by the ruler or ruling party or other authority.
- The arbitrary deprivation of civil liberties with little, if any, tolerance for meaningful opposition.
- A bureaucracy staffed by the regime and creation of allegiance through various means of socialization and indoctrination (cult-like environments).
- Punishment and/or retribution for those who would challenge the ruler of the prevailing party.

Do any of these characteristics sound familiar in some of the power-hungry people in our country today?

It should be noted that the totality of authoritarian governments need not be confused with authoritarian styles of leadership, which are not always marked by complete repression and a demand for total obedience. Some business leaders whose executive leadership styles have been purported to reflect authoritarian characteristics at times, include Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Larry Ellison, Lorne Michaels, Rupert Murdoch, and Elon Musk.

## **Dictators**

Realizing that dictators are, by definition, authoritarians, what additional characteristics do they possess, above and beyond those inherent in most authoritarians who are not dictators? Here are some of the major ones:

- Advocation of the suspension of (or interference with) elections and civil liberties.
- Proclamation of a state of emergency in favor of ruling by decree.
- Repression of, and vicious verbal attacks against, political opponents.
- Not abiding by the rule of law or established procedures.
- Cult-like personality traits.
- Self-centered narcissistic behavior.
- Putting their own needs and well-being above those of the people that they are leading.
- An overwhelming need for admiration, excessive paranoia, and ruthless brutality (a relatively healthy, "normal" individual will have a great deal of difficulty putting themselves in a dictator's shoes).

Do any of these characteristics sound familiar in some people in our country today?

When I was a much younger man (in my early twenties), I was very active in local politics. During a political/philosophical discussion with one of our city councilmen, he told me that the

best form of government was a “benevolent dictatorship.” At first, I blanched at the thought of accepting a dictatorship as a preferred choice of government.

When I thought about it further and pondered over the caveat of “benevolent” in his statement, I realized that what he was saying was probably true as it provided for centralized decision making, efficiency of policy enactment, concern for the will of the people, and a “buck stops here” environment. Unfortunately, time has proven that the terms “benevolent” and “dictatorship” are mutually exclusive. While the concept is an interesting one to think of, the reality of it occurring is virtually nonexistent.

Just to anchor this point, here are some examples of previous, respected (or feared) dictators who never moved the needle to the “benevolent” side of the dictatorship barometer:

- Saddam Hussein – pushed out of office and pulled out of a hole in the ground in December 2003. Subsequently tried, convicted, and hanged by the neck until dead in December of 2006.
- Muammar Al- Gaddafi - captured and killed by his own people in October 2011 ... beaten and sodomized with a bayonet before he was shot several times.
- Benito Mussolini – shot and killed along with his mistress and members of his entourage in April 1945. Their bodies were hung upside down from the roof of an Esso gas station. They were then stoned from below by Italian Citizens.
- Nicolae Ceausescu – executed by firing squad along with his wife Elena in December of 1989. He was accused of genocide, resulting in the deaths of more than 700,000 people, perhaps as many as 1,200,000.
- Adolf Hitler – shot himself in the head after his wife of one-day, Eva Braun, committed suicide by ingesting cyanide in April of 1945. Their corpses were burned in the Reich Chancellery Garden, outside the bunker in which they were hiding at the time. Hitler was the architect of the Holocaust that resulted in the deaths of millions of Jews throughout Eastern Europe.
- Joseph Stalin - On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1953, Stalin's staff found him semi-conscious on the bedroom floor of his home. It was said that he had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage;

however, it is widely conjectured that Stalin was murdered by the administration of the drug Warfarin. He was linked to the death of millions of people throughout his rule of the former Soviet Union.

What all these dictators had in common is that they were anything but benevolent. The other commonality is that they all had, at one time or another in their reign, the unwavering support and loyalty (feigned or not) of the people in their country ... which brings me to another important point.

In today's world, we are quick to point the finger of blame and criticism at ruthless dictators such as Kim Jong Un, Vladimir Putin (largely thought of as a dictator), Omar al-Bashir, Bashar al-Assad, (and many other aspiring candidates for the title of dictator) as the cause of the hardship, strife, chaos, wars, genocide, terrorism, political divisiveness, blatant prejudice, and economic depravity, any or all of, which had been realized under their regimes.

The real cause of all these problems is not the dictators who spawned them, but the people who enabled the dictators' abhorrent behavior in the first place, and allowed it to continue, unchecked and unchallenged. The truth is that dictators are only a vehicle for the terror, misery, poverty, ruthlessness, and unbridled power that they bring to bear. Throughout the course of human history, dictators have used their oratory skills, personal magnetism, fear mongering, and societal acquiescence to remain in power.

It is the people who allow dictators to gain and maintain power that are to blame. It is the people who buy into the anti-government hateful rhetoric and empty promises of prosperity, independence, economic independence, and a bright future, as they mindlessly follow their satanic leaders.

Dictatorships are a real-life example of what happens when we are asked to choose between good and evil in our lives (as I referred to in Chapter 1) that is the root cause of dictators gaining power and leading their people into spiritual and moral decadence. We get what we choose in life and what we deserve in life ... nothing less and nothing more.

Fortunately, up until now, good has always prevailed in the long run. Dictators are eventually driven out from their regimes, one way or the other, while democracies are still immersed in the ongoing struggle to survive ... against all odds.

## DEMOCRACY

The word democracy comes from the Greek words, "demos", meaning people, and "kratos" meaning power; so, democracy can be thought of as "power of the people." In other words, a democratic government is:

A: A government by the people, characterized by the rule of the majority.

B: A government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving, periodically held, free elections.

There are no shortcuts to democracy or the happiness, prosperity, and freedom it offers. Anything worth having requires time, effort, sacrifice, and (usually) money. It is the realization of this truism that has made the United States the greatest democracy in the world. Anyone who tells you differently isn't being honest with you.

Our American Democracy was built on a foundation of unparalleled work ethic, a commitment to excellence and a willingness *to work together* (collaboration and inclusiveness) for the good of our country. That is what has made us who we were in the past. The question now is, who will we become in the future?

In my lifetime I have seen recessions, inflation, soaring interest rates, skyrocketing unemployment, long gas lines, price controls, wage controls, presidential assassinations, a presidential resignation, September 11<sup>th</sup>, January 6<sup>th</sup>, the impeachment of two presidents (one of them twice), pandemics, extreme political/social polarization, blatant corruption, civil unrest, the Cuban crisis, wars, discrimination, a move towards isolationism, rising inflation, anti-

immigration movements, and the breakdown in trust of our government, our law enforcement authorities, and our judicial system.

I have had a ringside seat for several decades and have watched in awe as our country, and its people, navigated their way through all these challenges and crises. We were able to do this by enduring pain, making sacrifices, and paddling together in the same canoe in order to steer our way through troubled waters. We did whatever it took to persevere and find success in the adversities that we were faced with. We used our differences to make ourselves stronger.

Today, in the United States of America, we have morphed into a “we want it all, and we want it now” society. There is no longer a tolerance for pain or a willingness to work through the hard times **together** to achieve our mutual goals and objectives. We have become a nation of whiners instead of a nation of winners. Far too many of us are criticizing, condemning, and complaining instead of cooperating, collaborating, and creating. It is much easier to be a critic than an author.

Consider this:

- Our world, and our choices within it, bring about good or evil.
- Circumstances cause us to react and to make choices.
- ***Pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain impact those choices.***
- ***Tolerance for pain leads us to make good choices. Evil is the path of least resistance ... towards pleasure and self-gratification. It's easier for some to rob a bank than to work to make a deposit.***
- We can choose to be positive or negative in the way we approach situations in life.
- Our choices become habits, our habits form our behavior and our behavior determines our destiny.

Once people begin spiraling down the road of negativity, they become ripe for the influence and intrusion of outside forces who want to see what we have created in the past, destroyed. There is currently an undeniable movement away from our democratic values and towards authoritarianism (and potentially a de facto dictatorship) that is threatening the very existence

of our democracy. The rise in violence, the acceptance of national supremacy, governing with vengeance as a goal, lack of bipartisanship, intentional disinformation, and lack of civility in the way we treat each other is heartbreaking.

The gears of our political system are frozen solid (more on that later in this book). For now, ***we all need*** to make an emotional commitment to break away from arbitrary allegiances to ideologies and political false flag groups.

A longtime ago, a social studies teacher told our class to “never vote for a person” and to “always vote for a party.” It struck me as a very odd thing for him to say. Today, what he said could not be further from the truth. Our widening divide is caused by blind allegiances to parties and ideologies without regard for the character of our leaders (who seem to be more focused on staying in office rather than what the majority of our citizens want).

It’s time to begin taking a closer look at the people who want to represent us before we cast a ballot for them. We need to look at their values, ethics, and personal motives above and beyond the policies and principles that they espouse. There has to be some sort of vetting of individuals seeking to serve in a higher office in our country. Every political party should create a means of qualifying candidates before they arbitrarily allow them to throw their hat in the ring based on imaginary backgrounds, false resumes and lack of experience or integrity. Isn’t this what we do when we hire people in the private sector?

Having the freedom to make the right choices of who will represent us is the real backbone of democracy ... the free will to choose what is best for our country and ourselves. Those we elect need to respect that premise. Do they have the courage to stand up for what is right instead of what is Left or Right? Do they have the courage to make decisions based on what’s in the best interests of our country instead of their own self-interests and thirst for greed and power?

“The mind is like a parachute. It works best when it’s open!” When all else fails, we need to keep our eyes wide open and **THINK!** We need to have the will and the intestinal fortitude to “tell the king that he has no clothes” when the situation warrants it.



Yes, we are undoubtedly at a tipping point, a crossroads. Are we willing to begin working together in a spirit of compromise and bipartisanship to keep our democracy alive and well for many years to come, or will we acquiesce and allow authoritarians and dictators to subvert what we have fought so valiantly to have? As has often been said, “the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result!” It’s time to change our course, to alter the current trend line in our beloved democracy. We can do that by demanding more from our elected officials and by taking personal responsibility for putting “the best of the best” in office based on their personal values and ethics, not their political rhetoric and empty promises.