

The Tempting Road to Totalitarianism

version 0.8.0

The human Teenage Parent instinct, aka "Puritanism", believes that survival depends on control of others, and thrashing punishment for all those who step out of line. For their own good. But the real world is a messy place. So those who bring too much Order, as the Nazis did, actually turn into Agents of Chaos.

But each step makes so much sense.

Without Adult high-level gestalt thinking, to push back, the tempting road to a totalitarian Hell is paved with good intentions, and each small step becomes a ratchet that's never removed.

Here is a first pass at a subjective grading of the various *degrees* of totalitarianism. These things are always easier to see from the outside.

You can use these steps to calibrate the level of totalitarian control in your *own* country, and predict what happens next.

Once the Killbot, Robot, and A.I. Godling revolutions happen, add at least two or three steps, based on computer efficiency.

Level 0: Adults Take Responsibility

- There are so many different cultures that no one bothers to even think about them. You can go to 14 different kinds of restaurants in one week.
- Mixed racial couples, and mixed kids, are so common that no one even thinks about them or notices them in the supermarket. It's simply not a thing. See: Hawaii.
- People are taught to think for themselves, and how to do it. There is enough information freely available online for anyone to research any topic.
- Many people, and many countries, have different opinions about things. People think this is normal. People respect other people's opinions, and have the freedom to hold their own opinions.
- People hail and recognize each other on the street. Everyone knows who their neighbors are. A neighborhood community means something.
- The press is motivated, fair, and independent, and is able to report on things various factions in the government do wrong without any repercussions.
- The press has integrity, and reports on wrongdoings.
- Laws are in place that the government is not allowed to propagandize its citizens. These laws are respected.
- Government corruption is punished. Publicly.
- People are given speedy and public trials, with a jury of their peers.
- Policy is decided by a contest of ideas, rather than a contest of deception, money, or fighting. The best ideas win.

- Government is run as a meritocracy. The best people win, no matter what color they are.

Level 1: Some Order Feels Needed

- People are taught that their culture is better than any other culture, instead of simply just being different, and part of God's fantastic mosaic of creation.
- Children are taught from a young age that their leaders are wise and generally always right, and that they need to be patriotic and follow their country. People who get killed doing something their leaders ordered them to do, are worshipped as "brave heroes".
- People from different cultures are "exotic" and "interesting".
- Laws are passed to "protect whistleblowers", because there's growing backlash against people who point out wrong. These laws eventually prove ineffective.
- The press looks the other way on wrongdoings, until they become obvious.
- Law enforcement agencies keep files on people.

Level 2: More Rules Pile Up

- Limited NewSpeak. Other hated governments are "regimes". Criminals are "terrorists".
- Limited precautionary surveillance of key foreign leaders.
- The government creates government-sponsored news channels, "to present our side of the story".
- The secret police plan to subvert media.
- Private, competing agencies keep credit files on people. These files are used to determine what kind of house they can buy.

Level 3: It's Not Enough

- Limited precautionary surveillance of key citizens.
- Laws against propagandizing your own citizens are repealed.
- Manichean thinking starts. Our side is always Good. The other side is always Bad. Events are presented in terms of cardboard Bond villains. The effort to dumb down the population starts.
- Government is run by what color and what faction the people are. Quotas are put into place. People of questionable merit, but loyal to the Party, are promoted over talent, because "they'll be popular with the people".
- The government implements No-Fly lists of obvious terrorists.

Level 4: We're Starting to Lose Control

- The State becomes paranoid. Ubiquitous surveillance programs are quietly started, violating previous norms on privacy.
- Entrapment. Citizens get imprisoned for conspiring to plot actions against the state, but it's revealed that the leaders and half of the conspirators were hired by the government.

- Hiring murderous mercenaries on the quiet, to do your dirty work for you.
- Demonization of outside political leaders. [Fill in blank] is the "next Hitler".
- Arbitrary confiscation of assets and cash, called "civil forfeiture". Police use this excuse to steal from citizens.

Level 5: It's All THEIR Fault

- Dehumanization of the Other. The opposing population is "Colorado Beetles", "Gooks", "Japs", "Chinks", "Krauts", "Norks", "towel-heads", etc. They are named as insects and monkeys.
- The Great Leader announces: "You're either *with* us, or *against* us."
- Antibodies form in society. Foreign ideas are violently rejected.
- Anyone who attempts to apply common sense, or think about issues from different sides, gets violently shouted down.
- Foreign and dissident news sources are passive-aggressively targeted, e.g. as "foreign agents" that need to register and pay licenses. Except for the foreign sources that are Party line.
- Top whistleblowers are put into solitary, or maximum-security dungeons.
- Jury trials are denigrated as "quaint". Trials are performed by a single judge.
- Efforts to track all money. "Large" transactions over \$10,000 must be quietly reported to the secret police.

Level 6: HATE. HATE. HATE.

- Medium level of hatred promulgated constantly. Bogeyman nation blamed for any disturbances, without evidence.
- Blatant NewSpeak. Murderous mercenaries are "moderate jihadis" and "aid workers". Torture is "enhanced interrogation".
- The government creates secret government-sponsored troll farms, to spam the Party line.
- Corrupt leaders blatantly lie in full view of the public. This is considered normal. No one even thinks about doing anything about it. Government is simply more-organized crime.
- Foreign and dissident news sources are actively targeted, blocked, and de-platformed. Other nations start blocking *your* Party news, as being secret-police efforts to overthrow their government.
- Allies of the Party get away with literal torture, dismemberment, massacres of hundreds of civilians. The Party shrugs.
- "Terrorists" are given military trials, with a military judge, without juries.
- Press and public are actively discouraged from attending trials, due to various excuses (covid, electronic feed is down, crowded rooms only allow 6 people, passports get lost, privacy concerns, special viewing lists, etc.)
- Efforts to control and de-legitimize alternative money. Gold, bit-coin are made illegal to own.
- Arbitrary confiscation, seizing, freezing of money and assets of countries, leaders, NGOs, and political parties the government doesn't like.

Level 7: You'd Better Come With Us

- Bolshevik/Jacobite/Puritans/Right Wing/NeoCons/NeoLibs take control, for its own sake. Get drunk on power.
- Speech Crime. Citizens get imprisoned because of what they say.
- Weaponized NewSpeak. Journalists are "non-state hostile actors", and so may be kidnapped and imprisoned in maximum-security dungeons. Entire populations are "terrorists"--terrorist men, terrorist women, terrorist children, and little terrorist babies.
- Political opponent civilians are named "domestic terrorists". The State starts considering use of force against large population segments to ensure dominance of the ruling Party.
- Roving gangs spontaneously stomp outsiders, especially mixed couples who are dating "our women" or tempting "our men".
- The secret police create secret government-sponsored troll farms, to astro-turf artificial support for revolutions overthrowing other governments.
- New leaders are chosen by oligarchs in smoke-filled back rooms. Voting by the plebes is subverted, so that elections look contested, but they're not. The second-tier Party candidate resigns at the last minute, leaving only one choice on the ballot.
- States use secret police to hack into private corporations, and expose the assets of leaders they don't like. These are augmented with false data and computer-generated "artists' conceptions", reported as truth.
- Accused, and their lawyers if any, are not informed of the charges until at the trial.
- Important trials are held in secret. With no press allowed.
- Efforts to control and de-legitimatize some cash. Large bills made illegal to own.
- Banning citizens the government doesn't like from using Paypal, credit cards.

Level 8: Kill The Impure

- High level of hatred promulgated constantly. Bogeyman nation blamed for economy, illnesses, .
- Paranoid Indoctrination. All children and teenagers taught the rest of the world is out to get you.
- Beatings and starvings in jail.
- State-sponsored lynching parties by militias are encouraged.
- Krystallnachts. Gangs break store windows and loot in "protest", while police and authorities look on. Grocery stores destroyed, leading to further starvation of the poorest people.
- Efforts to control and de-legitimatize all cash. ALL transactions must be done electronically, and must be approved by the government.
- Banning citizens the government doesn't like from using money.
- Arbitrary jailing of leaders the government doesn't like, using thin excuses.

Level 9: Big Brother Owns Your Life

- Kidnap Squads. Routine 5am government goon-squad raids on the cockroaches, to imprison them for crimes against the state.
- Torture taught as an art form.
- Government sends goon squads to trash the offices of non-Party press.
- Arbitrary killing of other-country leaders the government doesn't like, using thin excuses.

Level 10: Totalitarian Control Achieved

- Pre-Crime. Citizens get imprisoned because of "things they'll do in the future".
- Thought Crime. Citizens get imprisoned because of what they think.
- The secret police spy on their own government leaders. When this is revealed, nothing is done about it.
- Arbitrary killing of own-country leaders the government doesn't like, using thin excuses.

Level 11: Chaos Reigns Supreme

- Concentration camps. Ethnic cleansing of neighborhoods. *It is important to remember that America had concentration camps. George Takei, Star Trek's Sulu, was imprisoned in one of these, simply because he was a Japanese-American. Here is a [song](#) to remind you.*
- Death Squads. 5am goon assassination raids on the cockroaches.
- Government literally bombs press buildings of the opposition.
- The secret police create secret government-sponsored troll farms, to astro-turf artificial support for revolutions overthrowing **their own** government.

Level 12: Exterminate Your Own

- Death Camps. Active government extermination of inconvenient populations.
- Government gains total control of its people, but is still not satisfied.
- Any change or dissent is viewed as an existential threat, and mercilessly stamped out.
- Innovation collapses. Technology is frozen at the year State gained absolute power. No one is allowed to do anything that might change this.

Level 13: Conquer, Enslave, Exterminate Others

- Dropping atomic/nuclear bombs on rival civilian cities
- Attempts to slaughter other countries
- Active invasions
- Super-secret police formed to spy on the secret police. Cabals in the government spying on each other. Government turns into gang warfare between factions.