

Totalitarianism in the Modern Day

There is a mistake in thinking that totalitarianism simply means brutal dictatorships such as the old Stalinist Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, or present day North Korea.

Totalitarianism is any political regime where thought is restricted to acceptable forms of discourse and action. Acceptable, that is, to the regime in power at the time. This does not need to be done by propaganda and secret police brutality. One needs no gulags or mass shootings. Such processes are, essentially, primitive, since they are so observably present. They rely on mass hysteria and fear, which is difficult to maintain long-term.

Totalitarianism's key feature, however, is to introduce ways of thinking that disallow contradictory argument without needing an obvious state presence or any clear coercion. It operates by subtle media manipulation, using the old Goebbels-style concepts of sloganeering, repetition, ridiculing opposition, 'big' lies, and creating political Utopian fantasies. Thus, those subject to totalitarian systems believe themselves to be free, even when they are not. They will also defend the regime in order to sustain their supposed freedom (i.e. freedom to think as the government thinks).

It is very difficult to combat a social order where thinking differently (and I mean THINKING, not emoting or fantasising) is seen as insane, antisocial, or subversive.

Governments that want to control thinking do so by establishing a discourse throughout the media that seems 'common sense', even though the rationale for such 'sense' very often lacks any evidence.

Similarly, unwelcome words are driven out of use, and others substituted to promote the 'obviousness' of a sociopolitical position. Practical democracy is managed so as to create narrow limits to voting styles that discount varied action.

By these criteria then, the UK currently has a totalitarian government. Not in origins perhaps, but certainly in its style and intents. You can make your own list of other regimes.

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