

It is one thing to be nostalgic about the "good old days," but another to actually be hostile to modernization. Two current institutions are promoting the anti-modernization movement: the dictatorships around the world and the Republican Authoritarian party in our own country. Both are part of the pushback against all the things that have made America a modern country over the past several centuries.

The earliest anti-modernization movement in America was the southern pushback against the emancipation of slaves. The south campaigned about the glory of the "traditional" southern culture, its refinement, the willingness of Blacks to be slaves, and the need to prevent Blacks from voting.

Hidden from their propaganda was the brutality of policing Black communities, the KKK terrorizing citizens, and lynching any people who threatened their control. Black citizens lived with this until the voting rights movement and President Lyndon Johnson's campaign to desegregate the South. Southern Democrats punished Johnson by becoming Republican, which they still are.

Global dictatorships and American far-right Republicans share the same values: reject the programs that comprise modernism. Modern states believe in expanding human rights: permitting more people to vote, equalizing the law for all, protecting victims of hate (women, non-White races, and non-traditional genders), and encouraging the now diverse population to college education and all professional opportunities. These are the very things that the anti-modernizers fight. They call them "Woke."

Russia, after its Communist empire collapsed, had a brief run with a Western-style democracy, but this quickly collapsed under the burden of Russia's long-time corruption and alcoholism. A former KGB officer, Vladimir Putin, saw his opportunity to reverse democracy. He promised the first (and last) elected president, Boris Yeltsin, who had fallen into alcoholism and corruption, from prosecution if he would name Putin as President when he stepped down. Putin then corrupted elections and eliminated possible opponents by murder or prison, giving him his two and a half decades of increasingly total dictatorship.

Russians, who have suffered for centuries, crave stability over democracy, and gave their votes to Putin. They gave up a legitimate parliament (Duma) to a rubber-stamp one; an independent judiciary, an independent press (all have left the country), and now, freedom of speech. Two genuine patriots who attempted to run for office (supported by the most educated sector of the population), after two attempts by Putin to poison them, now serve long prison terms.

The consequences of Putin's success and obscene self-enrichment are evident in today's Russia. They have only an extraction economy (natural resources like petrochemicals, nothing produced that the world wants to buy). The population is in crash mode, educated and accomplished citizens fleeing the country, more people dying than are being born, and a horrible mortality rate due to bad medical care and drug and alcohol addiction.

Russia is a modern country with an excellent educational system, at least for the sciences. The humanities, which they once dominated, are not supported, resulting in a thin culture. Why become a doctor or lawyer when your country doesn't support either group? A 15-year-old Russian boy has the life expectancy of a Haitian teen, at least two decades less than the same age boy in the rest of Europe.

Putin has given his country a stupid war against a neighbor state, Ukraine, killing thousands of his ill-trained soldiers, and facing a possible mutiny among his cowed military. He has murdered, one by one, members of his inner circle, leaving him with no competition except the two in prison. Russia faces chaos.

Our own country verged on chaos after an unqualified bully, Trump, managed to get elected, not by a popular majority vote, but with the help and propaganda of Putin and a gerrymandered Republican party. Fortunately, our democracy elected a decent president, which Trump conspired to overturn. An independent Justice Department and State Prosecutors are now bringing Trump and his circle to account.

We can still save ourselves by using our most powerful tool: voting in the next election by the majority of American citizens.

A stacked Supreme Court is facing condemnation as it pursues an anti-modern agenda.
We can fix this. Elections matter.

686 words

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