

Tyranny

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Principles of Tyranny

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Definition of *tyranny*

Tyranny is usually thought of as cruel and oppressive, and it often is, but the original definition of the term was rule by persons who lack *legitimacy*, whether they be malign or benevolent. Historically, benign tyrannies have tended to be insecure, and to try to maintain their power by becoming increasingly oppressive. Therefore, rule that initially seems benign is inherently dangerous, and the only security is to maintain legitimacy — an unbroken accountability to the people through the framework of a written constitution that provides for election of key officials and the division of powers among branches and officials in a way that avoids concentration of powers in the hands of a few persons who might then abuse those powers.

http://www.constitution.org/tyr/prin_tyr.htm

This shows how power is passed from one hand to another in the best of the circumstances that Civilization has come up with. But it still won't stop the next Hitler. By this definition Hitler was OK, because he had *Legitimacy*.

Throughout history the common man has been beset by those folks who just can't seem to have a good day if they are not pushing someone else around. Mancur Olson had a wonderful thesis to describe Kings, Queens and their ilk. Basically he called them Stationary Bandits. They were reformed Roaming Bandits – they had decided to settle down and steal from the same group of folks over the long haul. These Stationary Bandits found that they acquired a symbiotic relation to their hosts. Like all parasites, they succeed as long as their host is relatively healthy (but not so healthy that they can throw off their parasites).

Left to their own devices, most native peoples developed governing structures that were the outgrowths of extended families. If their Rulers were organically generated, there was no upheaval upon the death of one and the ascendancy of the next. A continual struggle for power within a society is very disruptive to the daily grind of the Common Man.

The Stationary Bandits developed strict rules about who gets to next rob the People upon the current King's death. Nations congratulated themselves if their societies didn't devolve to Civil War every time one of their Head Bandits assumed room temperature.

In Republics and Democracies there is the periodic election of Representatives to act as the People's Rulers. Generally speaking the transition of Power is smooth in Democracies and Republics.

(For Tocqueville on Tyranny see:

http://books.google.com/books?id=615mfngHdgC&pg=PA234&lpg=PA234&dq=Rousseau+government+leads+to+tyranny&source=web&ots=ZhcQzPPlqy&sig=zTB4z3vUcRCKNnkswrHNxIF1uSw&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=7&ct=result#PPA4_M1 . He introduces the concept of a stultifying Tyranny of Bureaucracy.)