

Fascism, Trump, Reform, and the silencing of dissent

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Chris Hedges, the noted anti-fascist campaigner in the USA, [has recently pointed out](#) that fascists are unusually candid. They tell you what they are going to do. The problem is not that they hide their intentions, but that too many people refuse to believe them.

Hedges is right: we are seeing this played out in real time at present, and the march of fascism in the USA and UK is so fast that most people are not noticing it.

Donald Trump's latest presidential order – [National Security Presidential Memorandum 7 \(NSPM-7\), issued on 25 September](#) – is a case in point. Entitled “*Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence*”, this should be seen as the direct equivalent of Stalin's Article 58 of the USSR's Penal Code of his era, and the Nazis' [Malicious Practices Act](#), because, like them, this gives the US authorities sweeping powers to target anyone indiscriminately.

What this memorandum does is codify into official policy the idea that dissent itself can be redefined as terrorism. It says that critics of capitalism, of the Christian right, of US power, or of immigration enforcement can now, in Trump's world, be treated as potential domestic terrorists. What is most important to note is that this is not rhetoric. This is a legal instruction to the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, the Treasury and even the IRS (the US equivalent of HM Revenue & Customs) to tackle those deemed as a result to be terrorists, even though they are nothing of the sort.

In plain English, what NSPM-7 requires is draconian:

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It directs terrorism task forces to investigate not just violent acts, but also the networks, funders, and organisers whose words and ideas might be deemed to encourage what is deemed to be political violence, although it is nothing of the sort.

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It gives the Attorney General the power to label such groups as “domestic terrorists” if

any of their members are implicated in such acts.

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It tells the Treasury and IRS to hunt down donors, charities, and NGOs whose funds or activities might indirectly support those labelled violent.

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And it elevates all this to be a national security “priority,” ensuring resources and political will are thrown at the task.

The risks are obvious. Political speech and association are blurred into radicalisation. Civic groups and charities will face suspicion and false accusations when all they are doing is exercising their right to free speech. At the same time, deep-seated financial surveillance will be extended far into civil society, and beyond immediate actors to those who might lend support to them in any way, including by making donations. In effect, all forms of ordinary political opposition are redefined as a security threat in the USA as a result.

This is the [DARVO](#) playbook in action. The acronym describes the process of 'Deny, Attack, and Reverse the Victim and Offender'. Trump is denying the legitimacy of his critics. He is attacking them as dangerous. And then he reverses the ordering of the victim and offender by claiming the state itself is under siege from so-called terrorists who are, in reality, his political opponents who, in US law, have a completely legal right to make clear their opposition to what he is doing.

The result is a situation akin to that created in Germany in 1933. The internments in the first concentration camps, in places like Dachau in suburban Munich, started in March 1933, a month after the Reichstag fire. It is no coincidence that this new Presidential order comes less than a month after the murder of Charlie Kirk, which it explicitly uses as an example for action.

Dachau was created to imprison political opponents of the Nazi regime, not Jews, at least in the first instance. The first prisoners were communists and social democrats. Troublesome priests and intellectuals, as well as members of other persecuted groups, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, and those labelled antisocial, then followed. Expect this to start to happen in the USA very soon. As Chris Hedges says, fascists say what they will do, in plain sight, and then do it.

And do not think that this will not happen in the UK. Just look at what is happening now in this country. Reform has already, this week, [accused Labour of “inciting violence” against Nigel Farage](#) simply for calling his policies racist, which they are. Again, DARVO is the method being used. Reform is denying the legitimacy of the critique and is attacking it as dangerous, even though it is obviously true. They have then reversed the

roles of the victim and the offender, suggesting that Farage is the one under mortal threat, while his opponents are to blame.

The consequence of this narrative is easy to predict. If criticism is treated as violence, as Reform - like Trump - clearly want to do, then silencing critics can be justified as self-defence. What Trump has already written into law, Reform is rehearsing in opposition.

The trajectory is chillingly consistent. First, opponents are stigmatised as dangerous. Then, the state apparatus is mobilised against them. After that, censorship, repression, and criminalisation of dissent are presented as security necessities.

Fascism tells us what it intends to do. NSPM-7 is Trump's warning. Reform's claims about Farage show the same script being tested here. The question is whether we are willing to hear what is being said – and to resist before the logic of authoritarianism becomes the new common sense.

What to do next

We are not powerless in the face of this. But it requires action. We must:

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Name what is happening. DARVO cannot be allowed to work. When critics are accused of being the aggressors, we must call out the reversal for what it is.

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Defend dissent. Free speech and the right to criticise those in power are the foundations of democracy. If Reform or any other party tries to shut that down, we must resist it publicly and vocally.

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Hold MPs to account. That means writing to your MP to demand that they oppose any attempt to redefine dissent as violence, and that they defend civil liberties in the UK.

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Build awareness. We need to share information about NSPM-7 and Reform's rhetoric. The more people understand the playbook, the less effective it becomes.

Authoritarianism thrives on silence and confusion. The best defence is clarity, solidarity, and the refusal to accept that criticism is violence.

Writing to your MP

If you want to act, here is a suggested text you can copy, paste, and adapt to send to your MP.

Subject: Defending free speech and opposing the criminalisation of dissent

Dear [MP's Name],

I am writing to express my deep concern about the way dissent is being redefined as a threat both in the United States and here in the UK.

Donald Trump's recent National Security Presidential Memorandum 7 has authorised US agencies to treat critics of government policy as potential "domestic terrorists." At the same time, Reform UK has accused Labour of "inciting violence" against Nigel Farage simply for criticising his policies.

This is a dangerous trend. It follows a familiar pattern: deny the legitimacy of criticism, attack the critic, and reverse the roles of the victim and offender so that those with power are portrayed as the persecuted. If this logic takes hold, democratic opposition itself is turned into a security risk, and silencing critics becomes an act of "defence."

In that case, might I urge you to:

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Publicly affirm that criticism and dissent are fundamental democratic rights, not threats to security.

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Oppose any attempt by political parties to equate critique with incitement to violence.

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Demand clarity and transparency about how UK security and policing bodies assess political risk, to ensure they are not used to stifle lawful opposition.

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Support civil society, free speech, and the right to protest as essential checks on authoritarianism.

This matters because once the frame shifts, repression becomes normalised. That is why I am asking for your support in defending the principles of open debate, even when you may disagree with the substance of what is said.

I look forward to hearing from you about what you might plan to do in response to this threat to our democracy in the UK, as well as your thoughts on how we should react to the developments in the USA.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Address & Postcode]

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