

Exploring the Influence of Mental Illness on the Rule of Law in Authoritarian and Emerging Democracies: A Psychoanalytic Perspective

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Political Science in The Graduate School of Duke University
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

While psychoanalysis seeks to understand the internal workings of the mind, law regulates external behavior, yet both disciplines shape and reflect human experience. This paper examines the transition from The Rule of Man to The Rule of Law from a psychoanalytic perspective, exploring how both traditional democracies and authoritarian states can achieve this transformation, while others remain trapped in cycles of failed democratization. This study argues that in stalled transitions, authoritarian leaders with narcissistic personality traits align with the fundamental characteristics of The Rule of Man, using large-scale political campaigns to inflict collective trauma. This trauma erodes the societal foundation necessary for legal and institutional transformation, preventing the establishment of The Rule of Law and leaving societies in a persistent liminal state. Through an analysis of Stalin's totalitarian rule and Pinochet's dictatorship, this paper examines the psychological mechanisms that reinforce authoritarian rule and hinder legal transitions. By integrating psychoanalytic theory with legal analysis, this research demonstrates how authoritarianism perpetuates itself through psychological manipulation, shaping governance and societal compliance, ultimately obstructing democratization efforts.

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1. Introduction

In modern society, when we intuitively compare democratic and authoritarian states from the perspective of an individual subject, what comes to mind is the relationship between citizens and the state in each system. Citizens in democratic countries enjoy rights such as voting and criticizing the government, while those in authoritarian states are forced to accept an inherent power imbalance in their relationship with the state. This contrast reflects two fundamentally different social relationships: contract and status (Szasz, 1968, pp. 248). In democratic states, the relationship between citizens and the state resembles a contractual one, meaning the two parties are relatively equal, just as two merchants must adhere to agreed-upon rules in a transaction and possess the means to hold each other accountable. In contrast, the relationship between citizens and rulers in an authoritarian state is akin to that of a father and son within a family, where the subordinate (the citizen) has little to no legal or physical power to restrain the superior (the ruler or government).

Extending this distinction to the legal and political realms, relationships based on contract form the foundation of what is known as The Rule of Law, whereas those based on status underpin The Rule of Man. In the former, abstract legal principles are applied universally to regulate individual behavior, whereas in the latter, an individual's actions are entirely subject to the will of another. As the foundational pillar of democratic governance, The Rule of Law is often regarded as the ultimate goal for political transitions away from authoritarianism. It is commonly believed that a well-crafted constitution and a sophisticated legal framework are essential to ensuring the long-term and effective functioning of The Rule of Law in any society. However, in political reality, successful transitions from The Rule of Man to The Rule of Law are exceedingly rare. More frequently, authoritarian states undergoing transitions become so-called "failed states," ultimately reverting to authoritarian rule, as seen in Afghanistan. Worse still, some classical dictatorships, after repeated failed attempts at democratization, lose faith in legal institutions

altogether and come to believe that The Rule of Man is more suitable for their nation and culture, thereby abandoning their motivation for reform over the long term (e.g., China and Russia). From this perspective, The Rule of Law does not appear to be universally applicable; rather, its long-term viability cannot be assumed in any given cultural or political context. Even for mature democratic states, The Rule of Law is not an innate phenomenon that can be indiscriminately applied to all individuals. Instead, it emerges from an ongoing interaction between a society and its people, with its adaptation and transformation occurring primarily at the psychological level of the citizens.

This paper argues that, in authoritarian states that have failed to transition, the ruling elite's violent political campaigns inflict collective psychological trauma on the population, erasing the psychological foundation necessary for The Rule of Law to take root. This trauma fuels a pathological desire for strongman rule, rendering the populace unable to accept the inherent predictability and rule-based nature of The Rule of Law. This study employs Freudian psychoanalysis to explain this collective trauma phenomenon. The first section explores the general relationship between law and psychoanalysis. The second section applies psychoanalytic theory to examine how states transition from The Rule of Man to The Rule of Law. This paper posits that modern authoritarian states that have undergone violent political upheavals exist in an intermediate stage between The Rule of Man and The Rule of Law. While they exhibit certain legal and institutional characteristics of democratic states, their collective psychological trauma prevents them from completing the transition, leaving them trapped in a liminal state and ultimately reverting to The Rule of Man.

This paper categorizes such stalled states into two types for case study analysis. The first type consists of long-standing authoritarian regimes, which lack both internal and external incentives for transformation. In these cases, legal reforms primarily serve to reinforce The Rule of Man. The second type comprises former colonies that were subjected to prolonged

authoritarian rule. Unlike traditional authoritarian states, these nations were governed by foreign colonial rulers, yet the trauma they experienced bears striking similarities. After the colonial powers withdrew, the collective trauma inflicted by paternalistic rule created a psychological need to seek out new authoritarian leaders. Through these case studies, this paper aims to integrate historical instances of collective trauma, such as Stalin's Great Purge in the Soviet Union and Pinochet's Rule in Chile, and employ psychoanalysis to explain why The Rule of Law has struggled to take root in authoritarian states.

2. Psychoanalysis and the Rule of Law

Joseph Goldstein argues that psychoanalysis aims to provide a systematic theoretical explanation for human behavior. Law, as a collection of enacted decisions and processes, is a human creation designed to regulate human actions. Psychoanalysis seeks to understand the workings of the human mind, while law is something that humans create for themselves. On the surface, this may suggest that law typically focuses on an individual's external image, while psychoanalysis is more concerned with the internal image (Goldstein, 1968, pp. 1053). However, the essence and implementation of law heavily depend on assumptions about the inner world of individuals. Although psychoanalysis is primarily trained, practiced, and studied from an internal perspective, its theory and therapeutic practices are always directed toward external reality.

When analyzing the essence of the Rule of Law from a psychological perspective, Friedrich Hayek emphasizes that its most crucial attribute is its ability to allow individuals to predict how authority will act. In this sense, the textual content of the law itself becomes less significant because, as Hayek argues, "for the Rule of Law to be effective, it is more important that there should be a rule applied always without exception than what this rule is." The opposite of this arrangement is a system in which every conflict of interest is decided on its own merits, with authority always acting in the best interests of its subjects (Hayek, 1957, pp. 72-73).

From this perspective, we can see that the core concept of predictability in the Rule of Law is largely defined in opposition to the unpredictability of the Rule of Man, where rulers act entirely in their own interests. In other words, the very foundation of the Rule of Law has evolved from the uncertainties of the Rule of Man. Therefore, to better understand the relationship between the Rule of Law and psychoanalysis, it is essential to apply a psychoanalytic perspective to examine the broader transition from the Rule of Man to the Rule of Law. The universality of this framework allows us to analyze the positions of both democratic and authoritarian states

within this transformation process, shedding light on where they stand in the continuum of legal and political evolution.

Jeanne L. Schroeder, in her article "*Totem, Taboo, and the Concept of Law: Myth in Hart and Freud*," compares how H.L.A. Hart and Sigmund Freud use myth to explain the origins of law. Hart constructs a fictional scenario centered on a king named Rex I, who governs his people through direct violence and threats. His subjects obey his rule based on a widespread habitual practice, without any intermediary rules or structured legal framework guiding their relationship. In this sense, Rex's subjects lack the intersubjectivity constitutive of a developed legal system. Their obedience to Rex is unreflective, they do not question why they follow his rule but simply accept his authority as an unquestioned reality. At this stage, Rex I's rule symbolizes an early society in which only customary practices exist, rather than a fully developed legal system. However, the establishment of a legal system requires an intermediary relationship between the individual and society, the individual's sense of being part of or internal to a group or society, that is, of having mediated, intersubjective relations (Schroeder, 2009, pp. 144).

This transformation occurs only after the death of Rex I. His successor, Rex II, cannot rely solely on personal authority to command obedience from his subjects in the same way his predecessor did. The death of Rex I disrupts the direct, personal dynamic of rule; even the legitimacy of his heir is not based on personal authority alone but instead depends on a socially recognized principle of inheritance. More precisely, no successor can establish legitimacy purely through personal relationships, the very act of establishing a rightful heir necessitates a mediating legal structure. At this point, the subjects no longer obey an individual ruler; instead, they follow established rules. This marks the transition from the Rule of Man to the Rule of Law, as we commonly understand it in modern legal systems. This shift signifies that law has transcended the personal will of the ruler and has become an independent symbolic order. The legal system, no longer bound by individual authority, begins to take shape through a structure composed of

primary rules (norms that regulate behavior) and secondary rules (rules that determine how laws are created, adjudicated, and recognized).

Unlike Hart, who believes that law originates from a rational evolution from primary rules to secondary rules, in Freud's theory, the origin of law is rooted in a story filled with violence and psychological conflict. He assumes that in the early stages of human society, there existed a primitive tribe ruled by a powerful father figure. This father monopolized all resources through absolute violence, particularly exercising exclusive control over the tribe's women, thereby forcing his sons to live in a constant state of repression and fear. The sons' emotions toward their father were deeply conflicted, on the one hand, they had immense hatred for his tyranny and longed to overthrow him; on the other hand, they revered his strength and authority, viewing him as an unchallengeable figure. Freud calls this psychological state as a manifestation of the Oedipus complex, eventually reaching a breaking point under extreme repression. One day, the sons banded together and murdered the father, consuming his flesh as a symbolic act of inheriting his power and seizing control over the tribe's women. However, this violent rebellion did not bring the expected freedom. Instead, it triggered an overwhelming sense of guilt. They soon realized that their patricidal act had destroyed the foundation of the tribe's social order, and if the cycle of violence continued, they themselves could become the next victims of a similar rebellion. This guilt and fear became the psychological basis for the birth of law and morality.

To resolve their internal conflict and prevent the tribe from descending into chaos, the sons established two fundamental taboos to reconstruct order. The first was the deification of the father as a totem, accompanied by a prohibition against harming or consuming the totemic animal that symbolizes him, an implicit prohibition against repeating the act of patricide. The second was the incest taboo, which forbade relationships with the women of the tribe to prevent renewed violent competition. These two taboos formed the earliest legal structures, with their primary function being to repress instinctual impulses through prohibitive rules and thus maintain group

stability. As societies evolved, these primitive taboos gradually developed into complex legal systems. Hart establishes the concept of the rule of recognition as the foundation of modern legal systems, while Freud interprets the origins of law in primitive societies through the framework of totem and taboo. Although Hart and Freud approach the transformation toward the Rule of Law from entirely different perspectives, we can identify striking similarities in their narratives. In both accounts, legal order ultimately emerges through the rule of the father. Initially, paternal authority, embodied by the king, serves as the ultimate source and symbol of power. Whether through natural death or violent overthrow, the father's absence creates a power vacuum, pushing society toward a state of disorder and unpredictability. At this critical juncture, the Rule of Law emerges as a symbolic order, reestablishing norms and restoring a sense of predictability to human behavior.

Law accomplishes this by delineating the boundaries between legal and illegal, ensuring that individuals operate within clearly defined limits. At its core, law is the legal codification of paternal authority, a means of maintaining order in the wake of the father's disappearance. As a derivative structure born from the collapse of paternal rule, the Rule of Law represents a depersonalized symbolic order, one that removes legitimacy from the personal will of the ruler and relocates it into an abstract system of legal norms. However, dictators seek to maintain their personalized rule by preserving an incomplete symbolic order, one where legal structures exist but remain subordinate to the ruler's authority. Their refusal to establish a genuine Rule of Law stems from the need to sustain a pre-symbolic order or a state of incomplete legal institutionalization, in which their power remains unchecked by legal constraints. From this perspective, the Rule of Man and the Rule of Law are inherently incompatible. Dictators do not rule through law and reason but through fear and authoritarian control. By cultivating fear, dictators push society back toward a primitive "state of nature", in which individuals, seeking security, must submit entirely to the ruler's authority.

However, when applying Hart's and Freud's theories of legal and societal transformation to real-world political developments, we find that the evolution of authoritarian regimes is far more complex than theory alone suggests. Traditionally, we might assume that dictators either maintain power through fear and repression or are overthrown by forces of societal change. Yet historical experience demonstrates that the behavior of dictators and the trajectory of political development do not always follow a single linear path. At certain critical historical junctures, some authoritarian rulers have chosen to initiate legal and democratic transitions, laying the groundwork for more stable and institutionalized political systems.

For instance, in the final years of his rule, Spain's Francisco Franco arranged for Juan Carlos I to take the throne, ensuring a smooth transition to constitutional monarchy and ultimately paving the way for democratization. Similarly, F.W. de Klerk in South Africa, under both domestic and international pressure, dismantled the apartheid system and worked with Nelson Mandela to successfully transition the country toward democracy. These cases illustrate that not all dictators seek to maintain authoritarian rule indefinitely. In some instances, they may engage in rational calculations and choose to relinquish power within a legal framework, facilitating a more structured and orderly transition.

This pattern aligns with Hart's theory of legal evolution, by reforming constitutions, adjusting electoral systems, and strengthening judicial independence, these nations gradually moved toward the rule of law. However, in other cases, legal and political transitions did not occur through gradual institutional reform but rather through violent revolution or mass social movements that forcibly overthrew the old regime to establish a new democratic system. The French Revolution serves as a classic example. Revolutionaries violently dismantled the monarchy and sought to construct a republican legal order. Yet, the Jacobin Reign of Terror during the revolution demonstrated that societies undergoing radical transformation do not necessarily establish stable legal systems overnight.

A more contemporary example can be found in the Arab Spring. Following the overthrow of Ben Ali in Tunisia, the country successfully established a democratic system. By contrast, Egypt's democratic experiment quickly collapsed as the military intervened, leading the nation back to strongman rule. These cases align more closely with Freud's theory of patricide, in which the collapse of the old order is often accompanied by extreme social upheaval. The legitimacy of the new political system must undergo a process of psychological reconstruction, as Freud suggests. While revolutions may succeed in toppling the old authority, the long-term stability of the new order depends on collective trauma healing and the reestablishment of the superego, a process necessary for ensuring the legitimacy and endurance of the rule of law.

However, what warrants the most attention are those states that have neither undergone democratic transitions nor experienced full-scale revolutions, but instead remain trapped under long-term authoritarian rule. These countries have neither established Hart's secondary rules nor undergone Freudian psychological transformation, leaving them locked in a vicious cycle of pre-rule-of-law society. The defining characteristic of such regimes is a dual pathology that afflicts both the rulers and the ruled. In these states, authoritarian leaders not only refuse to initiate institutional reforms but also continuously manufacture political movements and collective trauma to reinforce society's dependence on the authoritarian system. Within such a society, the function of law becomes distorted, it no longer serves as a framework for maintaining social order but is instead weaponized as a tool to sustain personal rule.

Understanding this mechanism helps explain why some countries remain trapped in autocracy, even when faced with external pressure or internal protests. Despite moments of apparent upheaval, these states struggle to transition toward a genuine rule-of-law society. My argument, based on modern psychological perspectives, is that this phenomenon is often linked to the extreme pathological nature of dictatorship itself, particularly its alignment with narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). In the following chapters, I will explore this condition through

concrete case studies, demonstrating how the narcissistic pathology of authoritarian rulers perpetuates systemic stagnation and obstructs meaningful political transformation.

3. Narcissistic Personality and Totalitarian Rule

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) plays a central role in shaping the logic of authoritarian rule. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, individuals with NPD exhibit key traits such as grandiosity, a sense of entitlement, exploitative behavior, lack of empathy, and pathological envy (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, pp. 671). These characteristics not only influence individual behavior but also profoundly shape how dictators wield power and perceive the rule of law. When the psychological mechanisms of NPD are projected onto the political realm, they drive authoritarian rulers to establish governance models centered on personality cults, extreme control, and systemic repression. Under such a system, law ceases to function as a tool of social contract and instead becomes a mere extension of the ruler's personal will, obstructing the transition toward a genuine rule-of-law society.

When considering the origins of narcissistic personality, we can trace it back to Freud's Oedipus complex, as discussed earlier. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud proposed that law originates from the establishment of paternal authority, which itself was the result of an act of patricide. The emergence of law can be understood as a response to the repression of desire, particularly the desire for maternal recognition, which had previously been obstructed by paternal authority. Similarly, the formation of narcissistic personality is deeply linked to the pursuit of parental validation, especially in cases where parental figures engage in either excessive rejection or excessive indulgence (Kohut, 1972, pp. 14). In early childhood development, individuals typically undergo an initial phase of omnipotence, during which they perceive themselves as the center of the world, capable of controlling everything around them. However, healthy psychological development requires external reality to provide appropriate feedback, helping the child gradually adjust their self-perception. If parents provide consistent emotional support while maintaining a balance between criticism and recognition, the child's narcissistic tendencies

gradually transform into a mature sense of self, allowing them to regulate their self-esteem in real-world interactions.

However, when a child's emotional needs are severely neglected or overly criticized, they may develop pathological narcissistic defense mechanisms as a way to cope with deep-seated insecurity. Freud discusses a historical case that exemplifies this phenomenon in *New Introductory Lectures* (Freud, 1933, p. 66), where he critiques Emil Ludwig's explanation of Kaiser Wilhelm II's personality. Ludwig attributes Wilhelm II's aggressive diplomatic policies to a congenital deformity, his withered arm, which supposedly led to organ inferiority. According to Ludwig, this physical deficiency drove Wilhelm to compensate through militaristic aggression, ultimately contributing to the outbreak of World War I. However, Freud rejected this explanation, arguing that Wilhelm's pathological personality was not the result of his physical defect itself, but rather the emotional rejection he suffered from his mother. As the daughter of Queen Victoria of England, Wilhelm's mother was disgusted by his deformity and maintained a cold and distant relationship with him. She refused to offer him the emotional validation he desperately craved, treating him as an embarrassment rather than as a son in need of care (Kohut, 1972, pp. 17). Her inability to accept an imperfect child and her use of emotional neglect as punishment meant that Wilhelm never received the "mirroring recognition" necessary for healthy psychological development.

Within Freud's psychoanalytic framework, the formation of narcissistic personality is closely linked to the Oedipus complex. Specifically, when a mother, due to her own psychological deficiencies or cultural conditioning, refuses to provide emotional feedback, this becomes the core trigger for narcissistic integration failure. The development of primitive narcissism is originally meant to be gradually integrated with the real self through the mother's mirroring, but the deprivation of this mirroring forces an abrupt disruption of the process. This leads the individual into an unresolved Oedipal dilemma, they are neither able to achieve psychological

independence through symbolic “patricide” nor capable of identifying with the father to establish a healthy superego.

This incompleteness gives rise to two primary psychological defense mechanisms: horizontal splitting and vertical splitting (Kohut, 1972, pp. 17). Horizontal splitting represses dangerous emotions into the unconscious, but when this repression fails, it results in the loss of emotional control, where suppressed emotions erupt in outbursts of rage. Vertical splitting results in the division and coexistence of two selves, one grandiose and inflated, the other rooted in reality. In vertical splitting, the grandiose self and the reality-based self exist in parallel within distinct psychological domains, creating a dual logic of rational rules and irrational impulses.

Once this individual psychological mechanism is projected onto the political sphere, it transforms into the pathological core of totalitarian rule. The rule of man system, in essence, is a personalized governance model, and when a narcissistic ruler ascends to power, they push the personalization of the state to the extreme. Corresponding to the two psychological characteristics of narcissistic personality disorder, I argue that totalitarian societies under the rule of a narcissistic dictator also exhibit two distinct models. The dictator, through institutionalized mirroring deprivation, reconstructs society as a substitute for the “mother”, demanding unconditional worship from the people to compensate for their childhood deprivation of emotional recognition.

In this process, the legal system undergoes a dual distortion. First, it becomes an outlet for rage in horizontal splitting, where arbitrarily expanded criminal definitions and systematic purges are used to eliminate perceived threats. Second, within the safe zone of vertical splitting, the legal system maintains a façade of rationality, creating the illusion of legitimacy for the rule of law. As a result, society itself falls into a state of collective psychological vertical splitting, citizens are forced to adopt a grandiose self in public life by participating in the deification of the leader, while in private, they experience a reality-bound self, overwhelmed by the fear of survival. This self-division creates a fragmented perception of reality among the population. When

narcissistic splitting becomes institutionalized, it drives society into a nearly inescapable transitional deadlock. In a society dominated by horizontal splitting, the accumulated collective trauma often erupts into chaotic violence during democratic transitions. This, in turn, reinforces the public's fear of losing control, ultimately facilitating authoritarian restoration. In vertically split societies, the conflict between nationalist myths and economic decline produces an irreconcilable cognitive dissonance, stripping the populace of the ability to pursue genuine integration. On the one hand, they develop material grievances, while on the other, they yearn for a strong national identity, often resulting in the return of totalitarian rule.

4. Horizontal Splitting: The Soviet Union Under Stalin

Stalin's rule in the Soviet Union is a perfect example of a horizontally split narcissistic dictator projecting his personality onto an authoritarian regime. According to my previous classification, Russia falls into the first category of traditional autocratic states, and the formation of Stalin's pathological personality was shaped by the dual influence of Russia's autocratic traditions and his personal traumatic experiences. From a psychological perspective, Stalin's personality was formed through the accumulation of three layers of trauma. First, the cycle of violence in his childhood home laid the original foundation for his pathological personality. His father, a shoemaker with a drinking problem, subjected young Stalin to continuous violence. This violence not only caused Stalin persistent physical injuries but also continuously destroyed his dignity, leading to deep identity anxiety (Junkermeier, 2011, pp. 3). Stalin's relationship with his father cannot be explained through Freud's Oedipal complex. Instead, his father's prolonged violence forced young Stalin into a sadistic-masochistic dynamic. This pattern of abuse was later reversed when Stalin came to power, he became the perpetrator, subjecting the population to institutionalized violence during the Great Purge. Secondly, Stalin's mother, Keke, although not an abuser, developed a paradoxical combination of indulgence and expectation toward Stalin. She hoped that Stalin could escape the poverty of their household by entering religious education and becoming a priest (Junkermeier, 2011, pp. 5). However, this religious aspiration conflicted with the material deprivation of Stalin's actual family environment, forming a contradiction between "sacredness" and "secularity" in Stalin's early cognition. This upbringing, shaped by violence and psychological contradictions, ultimately materialized in Stalin's governance strategy as a distinctive fusion of ideological sanctification and extreme political pragmatism.

Thirdly, Stalin contracted smallpox in childhood, leaving visible scars on his face, which intensified his sense of inferiority and made him extremely sensitive to his self-image and social status. The interaction between Stalin's physical defect and social exclusion catalyzed the

formation of a pathological compensatory mechanism. This sense of bodily shame, within the violent and militaristic culture of Georgia, was transformed by Stalin into an obsessive pursuit of power. At the same time, Stalin's hometown, Gori, was shaped by a tradition of street fighting as a survival rule, while the strict hierarchical order of the Eastern Orthodox seminary he attended reinforced a rigid sense of authority. These extreme social norms together constructed Stalin's perception of violence, for him, violence was not only a tool of power but a proof of existence. This cognitive model of violence was continuously reinforced through Stalin's revolutionary practices. He maintained his internal psychological balance by constantly creating external threats, using institutionalized violence to dissolve his identity anxieties. From the perspective of narcissistic personality theory, Stalin exhibited the typical characteristics of horizontal split narcissism. The conflict between the omnipotent narcissism in his surface structure (his personality cult and historical determinism) and the existential void in his deeper structure (the secret police system) defined his rule.

During his youth time in seminary, Stalin was deeply influenced by Marxist communism. There is a high degree of compatibility between Stalin's narcissistic personality and totalitarian ideology. Hannah Arendt identifies the defining characteristics of certain ideologies that contribute to their totalitarian potential. Ideologies claim to offer a comprehensive explanation for all human and worldly affairs. As Arendt states, "The claim to total explanation promises to explain all historical happenings, the total explanation of the past, the total knowledge of the present, and the reliable prediction of the future" (Arendt, 2018, pp. 470). Communist theory provided a highly explanatory worldview, allowing Stalin to find within it a logical framework that aligned with his narcissistic needs. For Stalin, Marxism was not just a political theory but also a psychological refuge, it offered an alternative projection of the "grandiose self," enabling him to establish his own value and meaning through revolutionary struggle.

In the early 1900s, Stalin actively participated in revolutionary movements and quickly rose to prominence through underground activities, gradually becoming an important figure within the Bolshevik Party. After Lenin's death in 1924, he swiftly secured his leadership position through political struggles. The 1936 Constitution of the Soviet Union marked a turning point in the complete transformation of law into a tool of Stalin's power. On the surface, this constitution constructed the image of a modern rule-of-law state, enumerating civil rights such as freedom of speech and voting rights, creating the illusion that Soviet society was protected by law. However, the true foundation of Stalin's governing logic lay in Article 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code: "*Art. 16. If a socially dangerous act has not been expressly dealt with in this code, the basis and limits of liability in respect thereof shall be determined in conformity with those articles of the Code that deal with the crimes more closely associated with it.*" This law provided a broad and vague definition of "counter-revolutionary crimes," making thoughts, private speech, and even silence itself potential offenses, thereby granting legal justification for mass political repression (Maruca, 2002, pp. 36). To implement this legal system, Stalin established a judicial system composed of multiple administrative institutions, including the Ministry of Justice, the Procuracy, and the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union. Among them, the Procuracy played a crucial role in adjudicating various legal proceedings. Under Stalin's rule, the Ministry of Justice and the Procuracy were granted different administrative and supervisory powers, yet this cannot simply be attributed to the idea that "the precedence of law reflects the regime's confidence in its own power." On the contrary, the coercive function of law was largely dependent on the stability of the regime. When protests or uprisings threatened the regime's viability and legitimacy, Stalin would turn to legal measures to sustain his rule (Maruca, 2002, pp. 37).

This distortion of law reached its extreme during the Great Purge (1936–1938). Stalin turned judicial proceedings into a political spectacle, with the Moscow Trials serving as the most emblematic rituals of confession. Defendants, under coercion, publicly denounced themselves,

branding themselves as enemies of the people in a forced act of self-debasement, an ultimate submission to Stalin's absolute authority (Tucker, 1992, pp. 306). This was not merely an instrument of political repression but a narcissistic tyranny in ritual form, in which Stalin reinforced his image as the supreme leader by compelling his political enemies and dissenters to break down in public. However, the true function of these institutionalized purges was not simply to eliminate potential rivals. Instead, they served as a scapegoating mechanism, in which new enemies were periodically fabricated to absorb societal tensions, redirecting public grievances toward targeted groups. This system created an atmosphere of omnipresent fear, ensuring that no one dared to challenge power. Ultimately, under Stalin's regime, law completely lost its independence, ceasing to be a universal set of societal rules and instead becoming a projection of the leader's personal will.

Stalin maintained this illusion of stability by manufacturing chaos and terror. Decades of political purges, the weaponization of law, and the systematic use of fear fundamentally altered the psychological structure of Soviet society. The mechanism of interpersonal trust was completely destroyed. The culture of denunciation became a survival strategy, where relationships were no longer built on trust but on fear. Everyone lived in constant anxiety that their words or actions could be reported, leaving absolute obedience to power as the only safe choice, even to the point of voluntarily participating in the repression system. This pervasive climate pushed Soviet society into a sadomasochistic mode of survival, where power continually generated terror, and the people, trapped in fear, were forced to accept and even take part in the cycle of oppression. Stalin's rule not only dismantled the legal system of the Soviet Union but also embedded long-lasting trauma within the psychological structure of society. His impact extended far beyond his own lifetime, leaving behind a historical legacy of fear and repression that persisted through the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, shaping a system that struggled to free itself from its authoritarian past.

Terrifyingly, Stalin's model of terror-based rule proved to be highly contagious. As communism expanded throughout the 20th century, narcissistic rulers across the world regarded Stalin as the ultimate example of political terror and strongman rule, psychologically perceiving him as another "political father" and attempting to replicate similar totalitarian models in their own countries. This horizontally structured narcissistic rule, characterized by extreme violence and total control, became a standardized template for totalitarian politics, with dictators in different historical contexts constructing their own systems of terror in similar ways. The spread of Stalin's model was not limited to the socialist bloc. Many non-communist regimes also borrowed Stalinist terror strategies to safeguard their dictators' power. A prime example is Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Saddam combined Stalinist purges with tribal politics in the Middle East, carrying out ruthless counterrevolutionary campaigns within his party and military while using secret police to instill omnipresent fear. Saddam openly expressed admiration for Stalin's purges and directly emulated Soviet trial tactics. During the 1979 Ba'ath Party purge, he staged public trials and on-the-spot executions to eliminate a large number of political enemies, further consolidating his absolute control over the state. These examples demonstrate that Stalin's model of governance extended far beyond the Soviet Union, giving rise to a highly structured form of totalitarian politics on a global scale. Horizontally structured narcissistic rule, with its reliance on extreme violence and absolute power, is easily replicated by other rulers in specific historical contexts. Its core mechanisms include the complete instrumentalization of law, transforming legal systems into weapons of persecution rather than safeguards for citizens; extreme mass mobilization, in which continuous creation of political enemies sustains loyalty to the leader; and the social institutionalization of fear, embedding surveillance, denunciation, and punitive mechanisms into daily life, making fear itself the foundation of political stability. Stalin's model not only permeated communist regimes but also influenced authoritarian rulers across the world,

turning revolution into an endless cycle of patricide, perpetually repeating the Stalinist cycle of totalitarian rule.

5. Vertical Splitting: The Dual Regime of Pinochet

Compared to the Stalinist horizontally structured narcissistic dictatorship, which relies on direct violent rule, vertically structured narcissistic dictators govern in a more concealed and complex manner, heavily influenced by the country's historical background and political culture. In many emerging democracies with a colonial past, Stalinist-style tyrants cannot easily seize power, as these nations, after gaining independence, possess both a degree of legal consciousness and democratic aspirations while simultaneously remaining entangled in the authoritarian governance patterns inherited from their colonial past. This psychological contradiction shapes a distinct national personality structure, allowing vertically structured narcissistic rulers to construct a sophisticated system that oscillates between the rule of law and dictatorship, keeping the nation in a perpetual pre-rule-of-law state, where true political transformation never fully materializes.

First, colonial history has profoundly shaped the psychological structure of these nations. Under prolonged foreign colonial rule, the colonizers played the role of an external father figure, creating a post-independence identity split. On the one hand, these nations sought to break free from colonial rule and establish independent modern democracies, inheriting the legal and democratic traditions of their former colonial powers. On the other hand, they had already developed a deep reliance on authoritarianism and violent control during the colonial era, making them inclined to depend on strongmen and elite governance rather than genuine rule of law. This collective personality split mirrors the psychological structure of vertically structured narcissism, an external "civilized self" that conforms to modern political norms coexists with an internal "hidden self" that fundamentally relies on authoritarianism. These two conflicting identities exist simultaneously in political practice, forming a theoretically contradictory yet functionally coherent governance model.

A typical case of this governance model is Pinochet's dictatorship, which was closely linked to Chile's colonial history. Chile's colonial past created a highly stratified society, where

during Spanish rule, the hacienda system established a rigid class hierarchy, concentrating economic and political power in the hands of a small elite. Additionally, the authoritarian influence of the Catholic Church during the colonial period reinforced a culture of submission and a dependence on strong authority figures. After gaining independence, Chile adopted a constitutional system modeled after Western democracies, but the colonial legacy continuously hindered true democratic reform, causing the nation to oscillate between democratic governance and authoritarian rule. This colonial history led to a simultaneous resentment of external paternal authority and a profound reliance on strong leadership, leading to vertically structured narcissistic dictators like Pinochet to emerge.

Pinochet's personal experiences were also highly aligned with this social psychological structure. His father was a customs officer, and his mother was a devout Catholic, raising him in an environment that emphasized order and authority. However, despite growing up in a system that valued hierarchy and discipline, he remained on the margins of Chile's military elite. His education at the military academy instilled in him absolute obedience to discipline, but at the same time, his middle-class background meant that he was never fully integrated into Chile's traditional military aristocracy (Muñoz, 2008, pp. 25). This sense of identity anxiety led him to develop an extreme desire for power and a suspicion of potential challengers. When he launched the 1973 military coup to overthrow Allende's government, he simultaneously assumed a moral sense of superiority as the savior of the nation and constructed a covert system of political terror through the use of secret police, torture, and assassinations. This inherent contradiction is precisely the defining feature of vertically structured narcissism, outwardly maintaining an image of the rule of law, while fundamentally relying on violence and fear to sustain power.

The most defining governance techniques of Pinochet's regime was using legal mechanisms to obscure the essence of dictatorship, making violent rule more concealed and institutionalized. First, he utilized the constitution to legitimize his rule. The 1980 Constitution

was central to this strategy. On the surface, the Constitution established democratic elections and judicial independence, presenting a framework for a modern rule-of-law state. However, the 1980 Constitution contained two distinct parts: the permanent articles and the transitory provisions. The permanent body of the Constitution, consisting of fourteen chapters and 120 articles, structured a “self-protected democracy” by creating Republican institutions, such as an elected bicameral legislature and president. These institutions were reinforced by mechanisms designed to protect the regime from internal subversion (Barros, 2002, pp. 169). The second part, the transitory provisions, took precedence during the first presidential term starting on March 11, 1981, six months after the Constitution’s ratification by plebiscite. These provisions were key to legitimizing Pinochet’s authoritarian rule. For example, Article 24 of the transitory provisions established a period of eight years during which the military junta continued to hold executive, legislative, and constitutional powers. The President was to be appointed directly by the junta, effectively securing Pinochet’s lifelong position (Barros, 2002, pp. 169). Moreover, the military government had the power to suspend constitutional rights under the guise of national security, and such actions were exempt from judicial review. Additionally, the Constitution laid out a power succession trap, if the military government won the 1988 referendum, Pinochet would remain in power for another eight years; if the vote failed, the junta still retained the right to nominate presidential candidates and control key government sectors. This design blurred the lines between dictatorship and constitutionalism by presenting authoritarian rule as a series of temporary measures under the guise of a transitional period. The 1980 Constitution was also an example of an internally imposed constitution. It was drafted in secret and enacted by the sovereign lawmaker, the military junta, without any popular participation or input from an elected constituent assembly (Barros, 2002, pp. 172).

Second, Pinochet used economic reforms as a cover for political repression. He implemented neoliberal policies advocated by the Chicago School, introducing privatization,

market liberalization, and reductions in social welfare, which created a short economic boom in Chile (Valdés, 1995, pp. 1-3). The authoritarian context itself made economic transformations possible, which allowed the Chicago Boys to implement their program with technocratic coherence and determination, free from democratic opposition, no interference from labor unions, parliamentary debate, or critical media. The economic strategy not only won the support of Western nations but also immersed the middle class in the illusion of prosperity, allowing them to ignore the ongoing political repression faced by the lower classes. Meanwhile, Pinochet's methods of violence became more concealed and efficient. Unlike Stalin, who openly displayed violence, Pinochet sedated political prisoners before throwing them into the Pacific Ocean, making their bodies impossible to recover, thus creating the illusion that the crimes never existed. He also manipulated state-controlled television to produce false news reports, repackaging government crackdowns as national security operations, minimizing the visibility of state violence.

After Pinochet stepped down, Chile entered a democratization process, but the legal framework and psychological trauma left by the military government made the transition exceptionally difficult. While neoliberal economic policies brought prosperity, they also exacerbated social inequality, leaving the voices of the poor suppressed. Pinochet's dictatorship did not end in a clear rupture but instead quietly retreated through a democratic transition, allowing his political legacy to persist in the legal system, military structures, and public consciousness. This is the most profound impact of vertically structured narcissistic dictatorship, unlike Stalinism, which collapses directly, it disguises itself within institutional structures, allowing the dictatorship to remain latent within democratic institutions for the long term, obstructing true legal reform. Vertically structured narcissistic dictators are not merely individual figures but the product of historical, institutional, and social psychological forces. Their legacy is often more resilient and covert than the dictators themselves.

6. Conclusion

The comparison between the Pinochet regime and the Stalinist model reveals the complex relationship between dictatorship and the rule of law. The Stalinist mode of horizontal splitting dictatorship manifests itself as the most extreme form of violence, where rulers arbitrarily trample rules based solely on personal will and unconstrained brutality. The legitimacy of such regimes depends entirely upon the ruler's own authority, ultimately collapsing due to their inherent destructiveness. However, the vertically splitting dictatorship, represented by Pinochet, demonstrates another possibility, by institutionalizing violence through legal procedures and disguising autocratic rule as constitutional transition, authoritarian regimes can create an illusion of legitimacy, even prolonging their longevity.

This phenomenon challenges the traditional assumption that "rule of man" and "rule of law" are inherently opposed. Hart's theory of legal evolution envisioned an idealized path from traditional authority (such as Rex I) to rational-legal authority (such as Rex II's legal system). However, Freud's concept of the irrational turn is more reflective of political reality, humanity's desire for order and its fear of disorder causes politics to oscillate continuously between rational rules and impulsive power. The Stalinist model reenacts this Freudian dilemma, whereby the ruler's unchecked pursuit of power ultimately destroys the institutional order itself. Pinochet's regime, conversely, invented a strategy of "simulated rule of law," employing the appearance of constitutionalism to mask the essentially authoritarian core. The modern implication of this logic is that the divergence between the formalistic rule by law and substantive rule of law may become a new source of resilience for contemporary authoritarian regimes. When authoritarian leaders master the technique of cloaking violence in legal language and numbing society with economic prosperity, their regimes gain legitimacy in the international community, while institutional stability simultaneously suppresses internal opposition. This explains the two potential fates of contemporary authoritarian regimes: either collapsing due to extreme destructiveness, as seen in

Stalin's Soviet Union, or gradually transitioning into more stable forms via performance legitimacy, as observed in Singapore or modern China.

Even more alarming, however, is the tendency toward authoritarianism within democratic states themselves. When populist leaders attack judicial independence and media freedom in the name of anti-establishment politics, they effectively transplant the logic of vertical fracture into democratic frameworks. By manipulating legal procedures (such as abusing executive orders) to enforce personal will while preserving the formalities of electoral democracy, such regimes exhibit a disturbing similarity to Pinochet's governance strategy. Both aim at creating hybrid regimes by infusing rational-legal frameworks with arbitrary rule, thereby perpetuating authority through a dual-track legitimacy. This trend reflects a profound psychological contradiction in contemporary society's relationship with freedom. While people desire the rights and security guaranteed by rule of law, they simultaneously fear the responsibilities and risks associated with free choice. During social crises, people may even voluntarily embrace strong leaders, acquiescing in the reduction of law to a mere political tool. This was clearly demonstrated when Chile's middle class tacitly accepted Pinochet's repression in exchange for economic prosperity. Consequently, the survival of the rule of law depends not only on institutional design but more fundamentally upon society's capacity to resist the psychological temptation of "escaping from freedom." The specter of Pinochet continues to haunt contemporary politics; in authoritarian states, it manifests as institutionalized violence; in democratic societies, it appears as populist leaders' manipulation of law. Both situations share a commonality: when irrational impulses inherent in human nature intersect with modern political technologies, the ideal of rule of law risks becoming little more than an intricately staged political illusion.

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