



The Color of Tyranny

February 5, 2025

“The Trump administration on Friday fired a group of prosecutors involved in the Jan. 6 criminal cases and demanded the names of FBI agents involved in those same probes so they can possibly be ousted,” [reports](#) an AP story from last weekend, “moves that reflect a White House determination to exert control over federal law enforcement and purge agencies of career employees seen as insufficiently loyal.”

That’s just for starters. Trump & Company is taking all the discretion it can to fire government agents who persecuted the once and current president in what was, certainly, a concerted campaign to scuttle his first presidency ... and any chance at a second.

There are several contexts to all this. One: we are witnessing a

purge of those who worked against him. The other is a more general context: Trump has promised to cut down the size of government, and that can only be done by firing people—as Elon Musk is developing with his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

This has a lot of people worried. “If the Chinese hacked the U.S. government the way private citizen Elon has, it would be a major act of cyber warfare,” [frets](#) *The Bulwark*. Robert Kuttner [states](#) that most of what is being done through executive order is illegal—only Congress can dismantle what Congress authorized. NPR [notes](#) that DOGE leader Musk is not even legally hireable by the federal government.

Illegal government is, *ipso facto*, tyrannical.

But there exists a relevant bottom line: is the Trump color revolution being “tyrannical” against the American people, or “merely” against federal employees?

The federal government itself has been rogue for decades. Much of what it does is unconstitutional as well as abusive.

The Constitution is a vast system of checks upon politicians, functionaries, and rapacious private interests on the make. To those who itch to practice real tyranny, its chains themselves appear tyrannical. If the net effect of Trump’s barrage of executive orders and DOGE edicts is to reduce government burdens, is it really the kind of tyranny we must freak out about?

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.