



The Oppressor's Toolkit: How Propaganda, Patronage and Fear Help Charismatic Leaders Retain Power (or Overthrow It)

Karim M Lalani

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How do unpopular regimes stay in power, even in the face of widespread opposition? And what allows an individual or a group to take control of a society and institute the worst kinds of tyrannies, seemingly with the consent of the governed?

In this far-ranging and lively study, Karim Lalani explores the diverse and insidiously effective "tools" that governments and individual rulers have used throughout history to maintain their power base and keep the mass of people under control. From ancient Rome and China, to the Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella, to sixteenth-century England and imperial Russia, Lalani shows the ways in which patronage, propaganda and state-sponsored violence have been employed by tyrannical regimes, and demonstrates that extraordinary phenomena such as the Spanish Inquisition are but extreme examples of oppression as usual. While Lalani mostly confines his exploration to earlier historical periods in order to maintain a critical distance from events, the relevance of his analysis to contemporary society is obvious and the issues he raises speak directly to more recent examples of governmental abuses.

In its clear-sighted, colorful -- and occasionally humorous -- treatment of a very serious subject, The Oppressor's Toolkit offers an eye-opening and incisive look at a little-explored area of political history. More importantly, it provides a crucial perspective, giving us a lens through which to analyze and understand modern political systems and movements.

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