

On being an autocrat

(November 2024)

- A. Politicians of Western Democracies refer habitually to the systems of government of Russia¹ and China² as to "**autocracies**", while the leader³ of each is called an "**autocrat**", in a sense that seems to have firm derogatory connotations.

The word "**autocrat**" derives from French "**autocrate**", which finds its roots in Greek "αὐτός" (self) and "κράτος" (power, might).

The definition of an "**autocrat**" since the 18th century has been:

"A sovereign whose power is not subjected to any legal control. For example, the emperor of Russia is defined as an autocrat." (in Littré, citing Voltaire).

In such Western polities that boast their absolute subjection to the "**Rule of Law**", it is hereby suggested that the antonym of "**autocrat**" be henceforth "**nomocrat**", from Greek "νόμος" (law) and "κράτος" (power, might). A "**nomocrat**" would be defined as:

"A head of state whose power is subjected to strict legal control. For example, the president of the United States of America is defined as a nomocrat."

To wit, neither civil nor criminal immunity is explicitly granted in the U.S. Constitution or any federal statute.

- B. However, it so happens that the Supreme Court has ruled on several occasions that a sitting president of the United States enjoys both **civil and criminal immunity** for his or her official acts, and, on July 1st, 2024, the Supreme Court confirmed in *Trump v. United States* that **presidents have absolute immunity from criminal prosecution** for those official acts which fall within their "*exclusive sphere of constitutional authority*".
- C. It is therefore suggested to philological and political doctoral candidates to submit a dissertation on the relative attributes of an "**autocrat**" and of a "**nomocrat**", and, in view of the above, to formulate in less than 12,000 words a crafty oratory that would reconcile elegantly and convincingly the semantic incongruities depicted in **A** and **B**.

¹ In the vernacular of some U.S. politicians, always ex-"Soviet Russia"

² In the vernacular of most U.S. politicians, always "Communist China"

³ In German: "*Führer*", verbatim