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Trump's 7 techniques to control the media

Robert Reich

Democracy depends on a free and independent press, which is why all tyrants try to squelch it. They use seven techniques that, worryingly, President-elect Donald Trump already employs.

1. Berate the media. Last week, Trump summoned more than two dozen TV news anchors and executives to the 25th floor of Trump Tower to berate them for their reporting about him during the election.

For 20 minutes he reportedly railed at what he called their "outrageous" and "dishonest" coverage. According to an attendee, "Trump kept saying, 'We're in a room of liars, the deceitful dishonest media who got it all wrong,' " and he called CNN a "network of liars." Another person who attended the meeting said Trump "truly doesn't seem to understand the First Amendment. He thinks we are supposed to say what he says and that's it."

2. Blacklist critical media. During the campaign, Trump blacklisted news outlets whose coverage he didn't approve of. In June, he pulled The Washington Post's credentials. "Based on the incredibly inaccurate coverage and reporting of the record setting Trump campaign, we are hereby revoking the press credentials of the phony and dishonest Washington Post," read a post on Trump's Facebook page.

After the election, Trump agreed to meet with The New York Times and then suddenly canceled the meeting when he didn't like the terms. He then reversed himself again and met with the Times.

3. Turn the public against the media. Trump refers to journalists as "lying," "dishonest," "disgusting" and "scum." Referring to the journalists at his rallies, Trump said, "I hate some of these people," adding (presumably in response to allegations of Vladimir Putin's treatment of journalists) "but I'd never kill 'em."

4. Condemn satirical or critical comments. Trump continues to condemn how he's depicted on "Saturday Night Live." In response to Alec Baldwin's recent portrayal of him as overwhelmed by the prospect of being president, Trump tweeted that it was a "totally one-sided, biased show - nothing funny at all. Equal time for us?"

When Brandon Victor Dixon, the actor who plays Aaron Burr in the Broadway musical "Hamilton," read a message from the stage to Vice President-elect Mike Pence, who was in the audience, Trump responded angrily. He tweeted that Pence had been "harassed," and insisted that the cast and producers of the show, "which I hear is highly overrated," apologize.

5. Threaten the media directly. Trump said he plans to change libel laws in the United States so that he can have an easier time suing news organizations. "One of the things I'm going to do if I win ... I'm going to open up our libel laws so when they write purposely negative and horrible and false articles, we can sue them and win lots of money."

6. Limit media access. Trump hasn't had a news conference since July. He has blocked the media from traveling with him, and even from knowing with whom he's meeting. His phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, which occurred shortly after the election, was first reported by the Kremlin.

This is highly unusual. In 2000, President-elect George W. Bush called a press conference three days after the Supreme Court determined

the outcome of the election. In 2008, President-elect Barack Obama met with the press three days after being elected.

7. Bypass the media and communicate with the public directly. The American public learns what Trump thinks through his tweets. Shortly after the election, Trump also released a video message outlining some of the executive actions he plans to take on his first day in office.

Aides say Trump has expressed interest in continuing to hold large rallies.

Historically, these seven techniques have been used by demagogues to erode the freedom and independence of the press. Even before he's sworn in, Trump seems intent on doing exactly this.