

Brent E. Hamachek
Jan 2, 2021
24 min read
Updated: Mar 5, 2021

Understanding and Embracing the Role of the 21st-Century American Dissident

Recently a couple of stories have surfaced that most people are not associating with one another. In Russia, opposition leader [Alexei Navalny](#) returned to Moscow after having spent several months in Germany recovering from an attempt on his life by means of the old Soviet method of poisoning. In what was almost certainly at the direction of Vladimir Putin, Navalny was arrested as he stepped off the plane.

Meanwhile, here in the United States, Russia's opponent during the Cold War, the City of Philadelphia took the gun away from 51-year-old Police Detective [Jennifer Gugger](#). Her "crime"? She attended the rally in Washington on January 6th. There was no indication that she was inside the Capitol, simply at the rally. She had some strong posts on social media, especially about Vice President Mike Pence, but not anything that would constitute a direct threat.

What do these two seemingly quite different people have in common? They are both dissidents. They both acted as though they had the right to say and do what they said and did. They were both mistaken. In Russia, given its history of totalitarianism, Navalny likely knew what he was getting himself into. In our country, however, where totalitarianism is in its infant stages, it is quite likely that Gugger was caught unawares.

This is going to be commonplace for many of us over the next several years as we are forced to come to grips with the fact that this is no longer the "home of the free and the land of the brave." We can stomp our feet and deny it, we can try to act as though we don't accept it, but it is not going to change the reality that the great American experiment that was launched just over 230 years ago is finally producing empirical results. The conclusion: People are capable of sustaining individual liberty only for as long as they can be constrained by a system of law that suppresses and contains their true nature.

Hobbes was right.

For those of us who still believe in and embrace the ideas of our founding, for those who believe that the individual and their liberty are of paramount importance and prime value, for those of us who believe that free market capitalism is the most moral and just system for organizing economic activity, we need to have an epiphany. We need to awaken to the reality that we are not a majority. We are not a vocal minority with the same rights as the majority. We are now dissidents. We do not have the same voice as our ever-strengthening oppressors, and we do not have the same rights that they enjoy.

For those who might argue that there more of us, or at least as many of us, who believe in individual liberty and free market capitalism than there are opponents to same, I would suggest that you should not confuse a simple head count with total political atomic mass. The positions within society that our opponents hold and the institutions and machinery they control gives them leverage beyond simple membership numbers.

As to our being cast in the role of dissidents, we have no choice. How we conduct ourselves in that role will be the difference between having a chance over the long term to ultimately prevail or having to spend

a century or more under the totalitarian's thumb. We need to understand the role we are in, the most effective course of action we can take, and above all, we must understand and accept our limitations. A failure to understand and accept the latter will only deepen and prolong our subjugation.

This is NOT about an election

Understandably, there has been a great deal of focus on the events that have happened since this past November 3. [Probably half](#) the country feels as though the reelection of President Trump was stolen through some combination of China, Dominion, corrupt state and local election officials, and overzealous volunteers. I have addressed that issue in a separate piece entitled "[Why They Cheat](#)." This treatise is not about that. In fact, there is a way in which the election of November 2020 was completely irrelevant in terms of what has happened to transform the United States.

There is a myth that political events happen in cycles or that there is some sort of swinging political pendulum that goes too far one way and then overcorrects to the other. People make this mistake because they confuse election results and prevailing political parties with directional changes for the nation. While it is true that election results can swing from cycle to cycle, and while there has been a historical back-and-forth regarding the occupant of the White House, the actual direction of the country in terms of diminishing individual liberty has been consistent over the past one hundred years.

Said mathematically, if the X axis is time and the Y axis represents level of liberty, we have been steadily descending toward the X axis for a very long time. We are now about to test the limit function.

In less than twelve months, we have hit three inflection points along that downward-sloping line that have led to its descent at an ever-increasing rate. The first was the advent of the Chinese coronavirus that made people susceptible to government control and allowed governments to gain control. It also instilled in us the willingness to, leading to reveling in, the turning in of our neighbor.

The second was the incident involving George Floyd, which tapped into an individual's notion of shame and triggered a societally conditioned need for self-sacrifice ([altruism](#)). Millions of people came to feel they somehow had to surrender something, anything, to right a social wrong that was identified with catchphrases such as social justice, police brutality, and black lives matter.

The third was the rally in Washington D.C. on January 6th, which provided a visual image that could justify having to silence our speech, remove us from our positions, and generally limit our freedom in order to "protect us from unruly and dangerous elements."

Over a period of less than twelve months, the American "body politik" was given a mainline injection of an emotional cocktail that included fear, guilt, dependency, revenge, anger, class struggle, oppression, and even empowerment (for those joining the "cause"). We created what [Charlie Kirk](#) calls "micro tyrants", people of normally limited status who by virtue of their position were able to exercise authority over others (wear your mask, keep your distance, and so on). These were people used to feeling of limited significance who were suddenly given the ability to be part of something bigger. Something that was moving. Something that had force.

Of all the factors, fear has probably been the primary driver. Politicians and the media have stoked the public's fear masterfully. Fear of the Chinese coronavirus, fear of riots, fear of insurrection, fear of their neighbor, fear of just about everything. Fear is what triggers the basic fight-or-flight response in humans. In a crisis of an instant, that instinct can save our lives. Living in fear for a protracted period of time,

however, can destroy our psyche and take away nearly everything that makes us a rational, skeptical being.

We made victim status—a sought-for attribute often contrived, which has been gaining membership and momentum for over thirty years—something that brought with it not only an entitlement to get from others, but now an entitlement to outright take from them. At the heart of this is, as it has been for millennia, the attack on private property. You have too much. You acquired it unjustly. You exploited others in the process of acquiring it. These arguments are as old as man himself, but they have taken on a new sort of tone in 21st-century America.

We also created a new way for humans to group together and exploit other humans through what Victor Davis Hanson has termed the [Zoom/Skype class](#) and the muscular class. This conflict is between the people who get to sit at home in comfort during the Chinese coronavirus and the real men and women out there doing the work that needs to be done to keep the country fed, warmed, cooled, etc. This has led to a feeling of empowerment on the part of the Zoom/Skype class over those in the muscular class and feeds the inclination to control and subject.

All of these seemingly disparate elements have one unifying theme. They are all hostile to individual liberty and free market capitalism. The hostility to these twin towers of American exceptionalism was present and steadily increasing over the course of several generations. All the events of the past year did was to hasten their receding into the shadows and being replaced by groups of people wanting to make collective decisions for all, and with a group of citizens receptive to having them make those decisions.

That leaves those of us who still believe in both the ideas of individual liberty that are codified in our Constitution and in the virtue of free market capitalism as threats to the new order that has been forming.

That makes us dissidents.

For anyone who holds to the notion that if only Donald Trump had won the election, none of this would be happening, check your premises. Look what has happened in this country over the past four years while Donald Trump was president! This is much bigger than one man or any one party. This is historical in nature and involves over 200 years of continuous cause and effect.

People who are learned in history like to point out that our Founding Fathers were inspired by the likes of [Aristotle](#), [John Locke](#), [Montesquieu](#), and [Adam Smith](#). These were all great thinkers whose ideas, when joined together, led our Founders to design a country that would enable the freedom of man, freedom they felt was man's natural state, to take hold in virtually every aspect of their daily lives. It is fair to say that without these philosophers, America might have existed, but it would not have existed as designed to promote so much individual freedom. To promote the best hopes for man.

Regarding that design, there was another element. It is true that our Founders took their inspiration from the great natural law thinkers of the Enlightenment. It is just as true that they had read that most foreboding of pre-Enlightenment thinkers, the Englishman [Thomas Hobbes](#). Hobbes, who wrote his seminal piece, *Leviathan*, in the early 17th century, warned of man's true nature, that of a fearful moral relativist, who was incapable of living civilly without the oversight of a strong monarch.

Our Founders wanted nothing to do with a strong monarch, but they took Hobbes seriously. They built such a complex system of government with so many fail-safes to protect us from ourselves that they hoped it would be able to contain our nature.

However, give a madman locked in a stone-walled room a heavy-duty spoon and enough time and he will find a way to dig through the walls. After 200-plus years, human nature in America has escaped its Constitutional walls. There are many of us who want to put the beast back inside.

We are now called dissidents.

What is the societal structure facing a dissident?

Not every society that has experienced the various forms of despotism has faced the same internal structure. America’s movement toward a totalitarian state is unique (some Western European countries have similarities but not enough to be considered parallels) because of its having so recently occupied the position of being the world’s leading country both in terms of individual rights and free market capitalism. The structure we find ourselves in now is a function of the structure that we built and are now leaving.

Consider a series of concentric circles. Here is a quick list of our current American model. The placement of these circles is not going to change for quite some time. The only alteration will be seen in their relative size and in their increasing “rigidness.”



- Innermost circle (core): Government (all levels, all sectors)
- Circle around government: Large institutional partners
- Circle around institutions: Citizens in “support” of suppression
- Circle around citizens supporting: Citizens against suppression

Those who are opposed to the tyranny are in the outermost circle and the farthest removed from the power structure.

At the core, we have government. It is the government, and only the government, that has the power both to set actual law and to enforce the law through criminal penalty. That places them at the power center.

However, in today's America, it is only their enforcement capability that earns them that spot. In today's America, the second circle, that of institutions, is the one truly steering government and setting its goals and objectives for managing the lives of others.

The circle of large institutional partners are those players who are both large enough and wealthy enough to guarantee their influence. They are also players where their leaders (board members, C-suite members, public faces, etc.) are united in the desire to suppress both individual liberty and free market capitalism (more on that seeming contradiction later).

Members of this institutional circle, which if drawn to scale would be quite large, include:

- Big tech companies
- Other large publicly traded companies, especially commercial banks
- Primary and secondary education units
- Colleges and universities
- Large media organizations
- Entertainment industry

These institutional groups are playing a significant role in reducing freedom. There is nothing about this that is new, just accelerated. For example, the attack on individuals versus the collective and the assault on capitalism on college campuses has been under way since the 1960s. The media's hostility to the same ideas lagged behind universities as the educational system that produced them needed them to enter the workforce and take control of the various corporate and institutional cultures. This is true of other large companies and institutions, as well.

In the next circle are citizens, acting in their capacity as individuals outside of whatever occupation they might have, who generally support the oppression of individual liberty and free markets. This group can be broken down into two subgroups:

- Those who actively and knowingly support
- Those who passively, perhaps unwittingly, support

The distinction matters with regard to the activities of dissidents. While it is not possible to know the exact percentage breakdown of the two subgroups, it is important to realize that the dissident focus needs to be on members who are passively, even unwittingly, supporting the oppression.

Finally, in the outer circle, we have those who stand squarely in support of individual liberty and free markets. Like the circle inside it, the members of this group can be broken down into two subgroups:

- Those who are passive in their support (inner ring of last circle)
- Those who are active in their support (furthest away from core)

It is vital for these two outermost groups that they do not further fracture. Given its status as outsiders, membership is critical. This means that those who are "active" in their dissent cannot become critical of those who are passive. To do so risks their alienation and could push them into the circle below. We need to understand that not everyone has the same tolerance for risk. Nor everyone has a set of life circumstances that enables them to actively join a dissident movement. For those of us who can join, we must join on behalf of the others. We are already so far removed from the powerful core that we cannot risk alienating anyone who stands behind us, even if circumstances prevent them from standing alongside us.

Two points of clarification are needed about this model. The first is with regard to the inner circles that include governments and institutions. It must be noted that we exist under a bell curve. It is not the case that all governmental units will participate in all forms of suppression at equal levels, or even at all. For example, the citizen living in Florida will experience a much higher level of individual liberty and ability to engage in local commerce than will the resident of Illinois.

What I contend is that at the mean and out toward two or three standard deviations, governmental units of all types will become increasingly assertive in limiting individual liberty and free market capitalism. Enjoy the havens that are ten standard deviations away from the mean and consider outliers to be the equivalent of winning the freedom mega-lottery.

The other point in need of addressing is that the individuals in the third and fourth circles are also often members of the inner two circles when it comes to employment. This is not an inconsistency, but rather points to a structural design flaw in the inner two circles and creates one of the opportunities for the ultimate victory of dissidents. There is no actual living organism that is named government, nor are there any that can be called institutions. Both are nothing more than compositions of individuals; individuals who live in those two circles furthest from the power structure, but who are involved, in fact running, those power structures as part of their normal lives.

In their day jobs, people of both the outermost circles come together in the workplace to interact. Those who are supportive will be more likely to embrace the suppressive activities of their employers. Those in the outer circle will be less so. The daily interaction in the workplace (classroom, congregation, coffee shop, etc.) will provide an opportunity for the properly acting dissident, over time, to cause their oppression-supporting coworker to start to question themselves. It will lead them to check their own premises. Having the supporter of suppression, especially the ones who are passively or unwittingly supporting, see the targeting of dissidents for punishment can ultimately lead to their making the most powerful statement that any citizen can possibly make on behalf of another:

Hey, that doesn't seem right.

This is the new social stratification in America, and the dissident lies at the outermost ring, removed almost completely from the center of power. It is critical for the dissident to understand their position vis-à-vis others in order to understand how to penetrate and dismantle their opposition. Failure to do so will lead to self-destructive behavior. Mistakes will be made in assuming they have more power than is actually possessed.

One of the biggest mistakes that is going to be made by dissident Americans relates to their assumption about "rights."

By what right...

Americans are big on individual rights. Our [Declaration of Independence](#) starts out with referencing our "inalienable rights." The first ten amendments to the [Constitution](#) are called the "Bill of Rights." It is these rights that those in support of individual liberty and free market capitalism seek to defend and preserve. These are the rights that virtually all Americans believe they possess. They must possess them. The Constitution says so.

This is where the dissident needs to discern the difference between the "is" and the "ought." It is black-letter clear that each and every American ought to have the same rights as every other American.

Unfortunately, that is not the case. When those in control of government decide that they will not apply the laws in the same manner to all people, then some people effectively no longer have the same rights. They may retain them theoretically, but functionally those rights are gone.

We all know that at a crosswalk, cars are required to stop for pedestrians. We also know that if we begin to step into a crosswalk in front of a car approaching at what seems to be about three times the permitted rate of speed, we will be killed for exercising our “right” to cross the street at that place and at that moment. This is the example that the effective dissident needs to bear in mind.

Americans often speak of “natural rights” or “rights given to us by God.” These ideas seem consistent with the “inalienable rights” mentioned in the Declaration and seem to be codified in the Bill of Rights. While most people make mention of them, few understand their actual derivations.

Natural rights are derived from what we call “natural law.” There are really two categories of natural law theory, neither truly conflicting with the other, but also not identical. One could be the more [religion-centered](#) version held by [Thomas Aquinas](#) or [William Blackstone](#), that there is a natural law set forth by God and that all people are capable of understanding it through their own reason and God’s grace and revelation.

The other concept is more secular in its formation and is the sort held to by John Locke or Montesquieu, that natural law is in accordance with the laws of nature and that man’s [right to be “free”](#) is as fundamental as is any other rule of order found in nature. Most American don’t know that “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” are an intellectual direct lift from Locke’s “life, liberty, and property.” You don’t have to believe in an unmoved mover to believe in natural law (but it probably helps).

Either way, Americans have come to believe, rightly so, that their absolute rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” are not to be afforded to them by the government. Government’s role is to protect those rights, not to grant them.

While that argument may be theoretically sound and morally right, it is not a reflection of reality. While we may all possess those rights innately, we do not possess them functionally if the government decides to take them away. Did the citizens of Eastern Europe under the Soviets not have natural rights? Do the people of Cuba not have natural rights? Do the people of China not have natural rights? Regarding the possession of natural rights, *if one does, all must*. Yet we see the people of those times and places denied access to their natural rights. Rights are only as real as the power structure that enforces them recognizing their existence.

The new American dissident needs to understand that they will also be denied access to them, as well. Failure to acknowledge this reality will cause them to be needlessly struck down, either literally or figuratively, and removed from the dissident movement. We will have martyrs, but we do not need an assembly-line-style production of them. We need to learn to say, “I used to have the same rights as you,” not “I have the same rights as you.”

Already we are seeing the beginnings of this with incidents like the detective mentioned at the beginning of this piece having her service pistol confiscated while her political activities are being reviewed. We have people who are losing their jobs, effectively facing discriminatory practices in the workplace, for their political views. We have students losing scholarships. This list is long and it is growing. For anyone to deny the reality is to place themselves, and those around them, at risk.

This is not a call to pacifism. On the contrary. It is a call to reality. To be a dissident means to do the work that you can do, at risk, but working around the easy ways to snuff out your efforts. Posting a dissident

piece of content on Facebook will simply have you removed from Facebook and without redress. We need to find paths of least resistance in which to undertake our activities.

One of the key things to keep in mind is that those who occupy the circle just underneath ours, the people who are supportive of the oppression, will have more rights than we have, but only so long as they remain supportive. They are only a single statement, action, or “post” away from joining us in the outer circle. Some are aware of this so they will be hesitant to express their support. Some are not aware and will be shocked and frightened when their rights are suddenly curtailed, causing them to want to move back to their prior circle. As dissidents, we need to be aware of these problems facing those who decide to join us. We need them prepared for what they will face. We need to try to instill courage in others while mitigating shock. This will help us not only to convert new members to our side, but to make those conversions take hold.

Above all, we have to accept that we no longer have access to those rights given to us by God or by nature. Our fight is to recapture them, not to throw a petulant fit and insist we still have them.

An effective dissident knows this.

What exactly should we do in our role as dissidents?

Let’s break Western Civilization into two segments, secular and religious, and ask this question: *Who was the most important dissident in history?* In each segment, I believe we can come up with a clear winner: [Socrates](#) and [Jesus Christ](#), respectively.

Socrates planted a flag in the ground for reason and rational thought. He built his intellectual “church” upon the rock of [Plato](#), the philosopher to whom other philosophers say all must answer. Every advancement in Western Civilization, whether in agreement or not with the Ancient Greeks, is somehow derivative of what Socrates started.

As for Jesus Christ, there is hardly a need to defend this choice. To the extent that Judaism preceded Him and launched Him, He transcended it. As for other religions of the world that already existed, He surpassed them. As for religions that came after, they were in answer to Him. He built His church upon the rock that was [Peter](#), and the world has never been the same.

These two great dissidents had two things in common. First, they were both killed, dramatically and tragically, as thanks for their efforts. Second, and more lastingly, they both embraced a method of teaching that caused them to last eternally and grow in influence:

They asked questions.

It is important to remember that while the two innermost sections of the new social structure are government and large institutions, neither of these are thinking things. They are merely vessels that are controlled and occupied by thinking things, also known as humans. We cannot reach “government” and we cannot reach “Facebook,” but we can reach the humans who are in control of the machinery. We cannot lose track of this. The moment we make the enemy nameless and faceless and nothing more than an abstract representation, then we can no longer reach it in any way, and it cannot be defeated.

The role of a dissident is not to convert those who are already on their side. The role of a dissident is to convert those who are opposed but who eventually come to realize and accept the teachings of the

dissident. This comes through self-revelation. Self-revelation is created through awareness. Self-awareness is best created by posing a question to the listener that causes them to tip their head, scratch their chin, and say to themselves, “I never thought of it that way.”

It is likely that you have friends who use their social media or who engage in coffee shop conversations (back when it was possible to meet in a coffee shop for conversations), who talk about people who believe in the individual liberty and free market capitalism as the proverbial “they”, “them”, and “those” people. Those same friends might look at you and say that, of course, they do not mean you personally. They reassure you that you are not like “those” other people whom they insult.

One of the main objectives of being a successful dissident is to make the impersonal generic condemnation of others into a personal condemnation of you. Those who support the suppression of individual liberty and free market capitalism must understand that they are not allowed to criticize everything you believe in, and those who believe in it along with you, without simultaneously criticizing you. The supporters of suppression need to know that “others” and “you” are indivisible. This is a critical element of success.

We will not be able to win this war in which we now find ourselves by fighting. We can win it only through persuading. We need to teach. We need to lead by example. We need to be asking questions, especially to the power structure and in front of the circle beneath us. These questions will come in two very fundamental forms: *Why*, and *why not?*

When we ask those questions of the government, of academia, of industry, of the news media, we already know the answers they will give. For your safety. For the greater good. To protect others. And so on. We don’t need to hear the answers and the explanations; others do. Over time, the sheer weight of those answers will start to ring hollow to the supporters of oppression.

We also need to share stories. We need to share the nature of our own persecution so that the stories are not just read or heard in the moment, but so that they accumulate. It will be the collective weight of those kinds of stories that can eventually help to break the back of a totalitarian state.

We cannot assume that we alone can cause the system to collapse or accommodate. We are the outer ring. We need help. We need to be able to get at the system and eat at it from the inside out. That means turning our cherished notions of individual liberty and free market capitalism into a sort of American virus that can lodge within the totalitarian framework, multiply, break it down, weaken it, and kill it. We must work within the system to break the system. That is what dissidents do.

Here are a few tips to follow on the path to becoming an effective dissident:

- *Question everything (and do it in front of others).* We all know how silly someone looks when they are asked a simple, direct question and seem to be unable or unwilling to answer it. When we make them do so in front of others, those who are listening start to take notice.
- *Make predictions and let them be heard.* We who believe in individual liberty and free market capitalism know what happens when both are strangled at the hands of the oppressive. We know what happens, but the average citizen does not. This means we can predict things that will happen and share those predictions with others. If generations of people can come to believe in horoscopes because of vague similarities between predictions and actual events, then they can certainly be made to believe in something when the predictions are specific, and the events clearly take place.
- *Ask questions of those who are closest to you—don’t argue with them!* When you are with friends, family, classmates, coworkers, parish members, anyone who you find is in favor of suppression, ask them

questions. Ask what they support, ask why they support it, ask them if they have considered X, Y, or Z. Force them to choose words to defend their beliefs. Don't try to force words upon them.

- *Know that there will be martyrs as we move forward; call them such and keep track of them.* Martyrs are those who fall to the abusive powers of the system. We are going to have the lives and careers of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people destroyed over the upcoming years. Let us make it a point not to lose track of them. We need to create lists, memorial “walls,” if you will, that keep track of those who lose jobs, who lose scholarships, who lose their freedom, who might lose their lives. Eventually the lists of names will have weight. Weight is a destructive force, especially when being carried by a bloated and oppressive state.

- *Work within the limits of the system.* It is more important to get something done than to have everything destroyed. Don't waste your time trying to be heard where you will be immediately silenced. Don't take on hopeless causes. Act as water would and follow paths of least resistance. We all know the destructive nature of a single dripping pipe in our home. Let the messages and actions flow where they can without containment.

- *Understand that your focus must be forward. Look where you are going, not where you have been.* This is a warning directed to those who are obsessed with what was the clearly disturbing election process in November of 2020. It is also directed toward those who have become obsessed with various conspiracy theories over the past several years.

Without passing judgment on any of those claims or beliefs, I would suggest that if you want to prevail, your dwelling on those things will not help the cause. You are not going to convince those in the circle below us to join us based on claims about that which might have happened. You will only convince them by having them understand what is happening now and what is likely to happen next. Leave the past and join the present. You are needed.

- *Do not expect instant gratification—steel yourselves for a long process.* We got here over a century of decline. We will not reverse this in a couple of years. Pace yourself. Find ways to enjoy this gift that is life while still acting in your role as dissident. It does no good to abandon the joy of life while trying to improve life.

- *Call yourself a dissident and wear the label with honor.* The other side, the oppressors, has long been winning the battle of language. It is time for us to take some control. Let us take the word “dissident” and ignore however and whoever else might have it in use and claim it for our own. We are the people who are dissenting from the prevailing direction of the country. We are the ones who are dissenting from limiting individual liberty and free market capitalism. Let us be united, clear, and unapologetic. Let us come under one term so we can speak with one voice and create a unified front for all other Americans to see.

- *Recruit members from our passive side into our active side.* There are millions of people who will agree with us but who lack the willingness to join a dissident movement. As previously stated, we cannot force them, and we cannot reject them. We can, however, attempt to recruit them. Individually, in small groups, through our postings, we can try to get people to find the will inside themselves to join. This is our version of the “Great Commission.” We need to go forth and bring others in. Having their support is helpful; having their active assistance can be the winning edge over time.

- *Remember that you are trying to fight for the restoration of the United States of America, not a restoration of the Trump presidency.* While this might seem obvious, I don't believe that it will be to all

people. It is easy to lose track. Many people in America have had a political awakening because of the pro-America candidacy and presidency of Donald Trump. For that, we should be grateful.

However, as we move forward, we must keep in mind that what we are trying to restore is something that is 230 years old, not something from 2015 to 2020. Place his picture on your wall if you'd like, but you will not be able to have people in the ring below us come to support us if they believe your ideas and your loyalties are attached to a man and not to a set of principles and values.

• *Learn to dine with new “friends”—remember they do not eat red meat.* We are in the habit of mostly communicating about politics within the safety of our own ideological and philosophical circles. This is comfortable for us. We are going to need to get uncomfortable and start to engage people in the circle below ours who do not generally agree with us. That means that the kind of content we typically share, and the tone that we choose (especially on social media), not only will not work but will be counterproductive. “Red meat” can be served only to those who have a taste for it. Content that is both “leaner” and “sweeter” will be more appealing to the people we need to engage and persuade.

This has been done before.

We are not in uncharted territory. People have had their freedom taken and have been persecuted before. We are not used to seeing it happen in 4K resolution and in real-time using street-scene videos, but the general mechanics are all the same.

One thing that is quite different is that this totalitarian takeover is seemingly being led not by those in government, but by those in private industry, especially the media and big tech. It is not something that has ever really been anticipated by academics (only peripherally), and it seems counterintuitive that those who have profited from capitalism and liberty would want to attack both of those principles.

The Austrian School of economic theory has long held that the behavior of people in a free market is not explained by greed, as is often suggested, but by purposefulness. Even if your purpose is altruism, an Austrian would argue, you still must be able to produce something of value and sell it at a profit in order to give your profit away. What nobody has ever seriously contemplated is that the individual’s “purpose” of participating in a free market system might be to accumulate enough power to destroy the system.

Whatever are the ontological explanations for this behavior, it might simply be reduced to their having a lust for power—a need to control. It seems that all roads ultimately lead back to Hobbes.

What we need to understand as Americans who value individual liberty and free market capitalism is that our role models are not [George Washington](#), [John Adams](#), and [Thomas Paine](#). They can still be heroes, but for the situation in which we find ourselves, they cannot be role models. Their situation in 1776 does not truly resemble ours today. Their time is not our time.

Our role models need to be people like [Lech Walesa](#), [Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn](#), [Natan Sharansky](#), and [Andrei Sakharov](#). These were courageous men, true dissidents, who stood up to totalitarianism during the period of Soviet domination. Their unyielding yet steady courage and resolve helped to make the world understand what true oppression felt like. People forget that in the early days of Soviet Russia, the country was considered to be a utopian model for many in the West. The efforts of dissidents like these taught the world a different story. More importantly, over time it taught their countrymen.

It was their efforts, their sacrifice, and the sacrifices of others like them that eventually led to a bit of an incident in a shipyard in [Gdansk](#).

We have an advantage over those in the past in counteracting this because we have more tools available to us in the early stages to start the dissident process. The bad news is that the oppressors also have more tools at their disposal. The conclusion is that the process will be long and trying.

Said in terms for fellow *Game of Thrones* followers: Winter is coming. Don a warm jacket, pick up a megaphone or a keyboard, start thinking up questions, and be prepared for a good deal of darkness to precede the light.