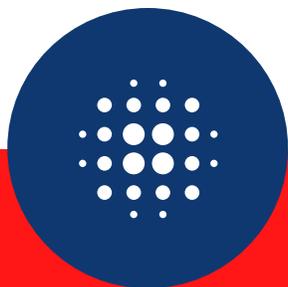
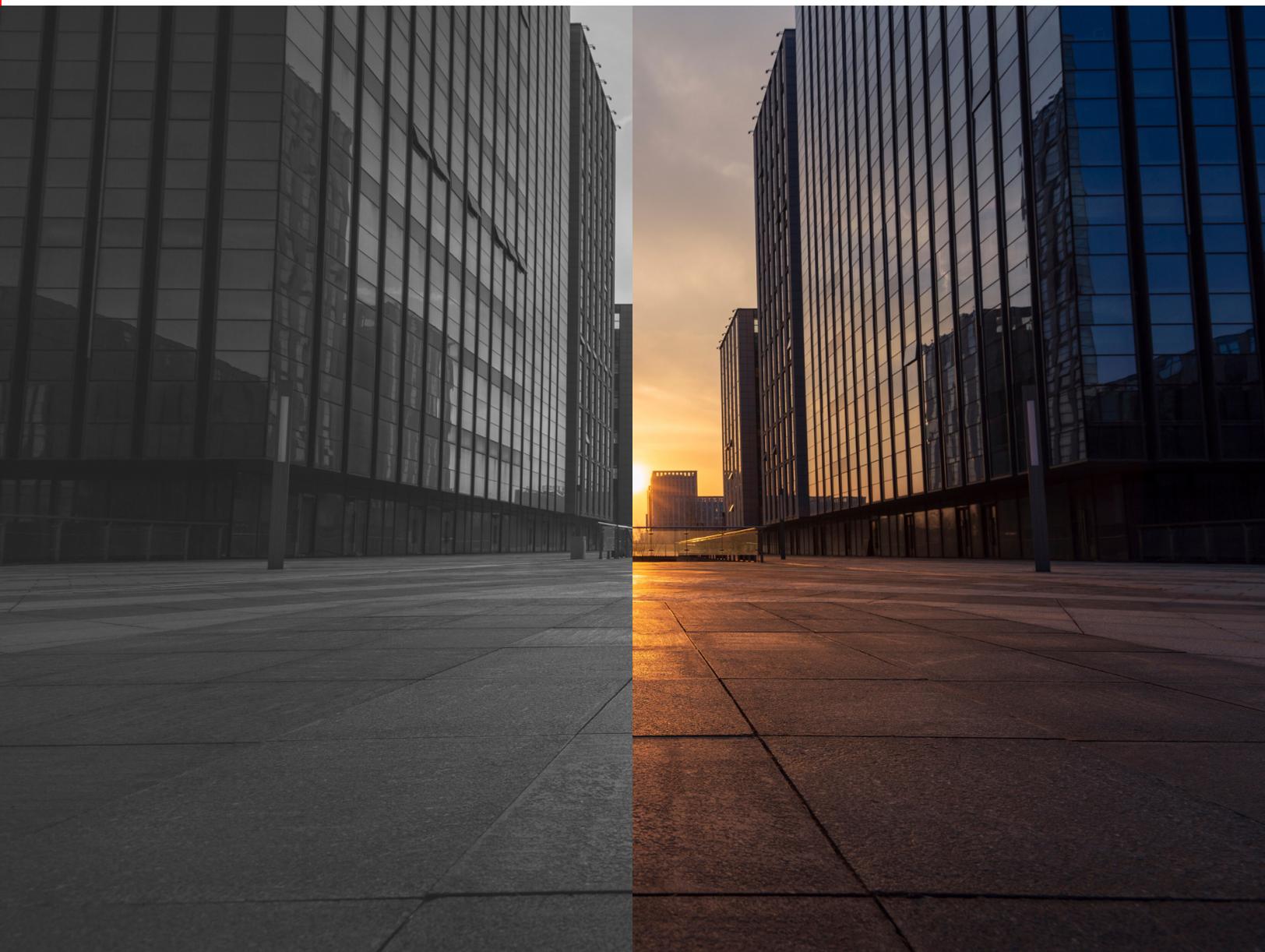




SOCIALISM OR FREEDOM

IS OUR REPUBLIC WORTH SAVING?



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MAY 2021

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Socialism is the siren call for many of our anxious young people.

This paper reviews how well contemporary collectivist governments, including socialism, deliver for their citizens and compares them to how the democratic republic of the United States performs, so we can decide if our republic is worth saving.

Introduction

The political campaigns leading to the 2020 presidential election were informative: they showed us that there is a small but vocal group of the political class (led by Senator Bernie Sanders, a socialist) that is pressing for significant changes in our form of government. Recognizing that our government today is in need of repair, we are led to ask the question “Is our republic worth the effort that is required to save it?” Careful analysis of this question requires three stages of inquiry:

- First, what is our objective for the government? What role should it play in our lives?
- Next, what are the alternative forms of government that are available to us?
- Finally, what empirical evidence is available to enable us to assess the real-world results that the different governmental forms have in fact delivered to their host countries (including our own)?

After completing this review of contemporary history, we will find evidence that the American Experiment has produced the most dramatic and profound improvements in the human condition that mankind has ever witnessed, yet a large swath of America’s young people seem dedicated to its destruction as evidenced by violent street protests and attacks on personal and public property. And further, surveys of young people have indicated that perhaps half of them believe socialism would be a better form of government than our republic.

It has been suggested that our young people’s ignorance of history leads them to question the efficacy of our form of government.

The pages that follow endeavor to provide this history of the principal government structures of the modern era, which should prepare us to determine if the republic is worth saving.

First, the Objective

The human impulse for freedom from oppressive regimes had been very slowly building for two thousand years: early stirrings appeared in ancient Greece and Rome, took root in England with the Magna Carta in 1215, and slowly built on that in England over the next several hundred years. In a stunning demonstration of the freedom impulse in 1620, a small group of Puritans fled from England to the shores of the New World to escape religious persecution. Others followed their example from England and Europe, settling in 13 English colonies. These emigres acknowledged (and chafed under) the sovereignty of the English Crown until 1775 when they declared their independence. The creation of the republic that followed was not an accident of history; it was a conscious choice by the members of the Constitutional Congress of 1787 (let’s call them the “Founders”) that required hard work and difficult compromises by the varied interests within the 13 states that they represented. Their work was subsequently ratified by the states, which created the United States of America. But the states were not completely satisfied with the Constitution, as written, and they demanded that explicit statements of personal rights (freedoms) be added (rights that were implied were not deemed sufficient). So ten amendments to the Constitution,

improved, rational solutions. Conversely, the collectivist form of government gives the promise of quickly responding to developments, but it would of course implement policies that were favored by the rulers while the wishes of the populace might be largely (or completely) ignored.

The advocates for Marxism organized as an international Communist Party, based in Russia but with outreach efforts around the world. Variations on the collectivist theme produced communism, socialism, fascism, and national socialism (Nazism) in other nations.

Democracy is an alternate (we might say competing) form of government to those collectivist forms. A pure type of democracy was tried in ancient Greece but proved impractical. Ancient Rome followed, experimenting with a republic wherein the citizens elected men to represent them in the workings of segments of the government. But it was not until 1787 that a successful full-blown democratic republic was created in the nascent United States, and it has performed admirably, as we will see. Nation-states of the world now have a panoply of government structures from which to choose; some have adopted a hybrid form that allows some limited freedom in their economy but otherwise exerts tight command over their society.

Finally, the Empirical Evidence

The last 200 years have given us a ring-side seat at the workings of a number of different government forms. Following is a review of the more prominent of these, including ones of particular interest to the United States. When we evaluate them, we do not need to rely on theoretical discussions; we can call up the actual results that they have delivered, and are delivering, to their people.

A Collectivist Example: Russia

Russia was ruled by autocratic, hereditary Tsars until a bloody revolution overthrew the government in 1917. The Tsar and royal family were executed, and the ruling cabal endured years of murderous intrigue before Joseph Stalin emerged as the undisputed ruler of Russia and the Communist Party (the Party) after assassinating one of its intellectual leaders, Leon Trotsky, who was hiding in exile in Mexico. This was a case of one autocratic, collectivist government being substituted for another.

*50 million Russians
were killed in a massive
social experiment!*

Under Stalin's leadership, Russia expanded aggressively, pulling its neighboring states into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), under Russian control. He moved quickly to transform the agricultural, feudal Russian society into a model communist nation, with the small farms merged into vast collectives managed by the Party hierarchy. The transformation proved disastrous, however, and an estimated 50 million Russian citizens died of starvation (or political assassination) within two decades. Yes, it is true: 50 million Russians were killed in a massive social experiment!

During the Second World War (1939-1945), Russia joined the Allies (the United States, England, and other democracies) to fight against the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan). The Allies prevailed, and in the settlement of national borders that followed, Russia expanded its hegemony to

which we call our Bill of Rights, were quickly ratified. The Founders were determined to leave no “wobble room” in which future politicians could operate.

The colonists had left behind the legacy governments of England and Europe; they were free! They were determined to create a government that protected their precious freedoms, and would deny any aggressive forces (internal or external) from gaining power over their republic. The Founders were well equipped for this task: they were schooled in the writings of the prominent philosophers of the Enlightenment, had studied carefully the historic records of the countries of the West, and were astute students of the noble (and ignoble) impulses of mankind. From this cauldron of information, insight, and brotherly compromise came the Constitution of the United States. It was an audacious start by this intrepid, insightful and thoughtful group as they worked to carve out and protect a promising future on the shores of the New World.

230 years later, we believe that the goal of the Founders remains the goal of the vast majority of the American people; it is further confirmed by the attempts of millions of others to immigrate to the United States.

The colonists had left behind the legacy governments of England and Europe; they were free!

Next, the Alternatives

There are just two basic forms of government available to a nation-state: democracy or some form of collectivism that is ruled by an autocratic leader or small cabal. Either the people are in power (in a democracy) or they are not. The collectivist model had been the norm throughout history, with a strong man or group taking power by force. However, a theoretical justification for collectivism was provided in the late 1800s in the writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Vladimir Lenin in Russia, which gave more credibility to the collectivist form. The body of their work is known as Marxism.

The industrial revolution had just gotten underway in the West, and Marx called attention to the harsh abuses that workers received from some business owners in this new, industrial environment. They assumed that this behavior would continue indefinitely, keeping the working class permanently under the heavy heel of the capitalist business owners. Based on this assumption, they predicted that the workers could only receive humane treatment by engaging in a pitched battle of class warfare. Events, however, failed to match their expectations, and a largely peaceful evolution ameliorated the plight of the workers, and conditions gradually improved without open warfare. Despite significant social progress, however, the legacy of Marxism has led to a continuing search by some groups for a utopia, a perfect form of government hopefully under a benign and wise ruler (or cabal). The groups promoting the collectivist structure (let’s call them the “Utopians”) are willing to surrender our personal freedoms in exchange for the hoped-for benefits that would flow from the decisions of the benign rulers. The alternative, democracy, has proved to be a messy and at times indecisive governmental form that can be slow to take action to cure the perceived ills of society. But the criticism that democracy is slow to react to problems can also be seen as a strength: delay caused by public debate often works to prevent hasty, emotional mistakes and often also produces

include East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Romania, the Balkans, and other territories. During the war, the United States had emerged as a leader of what became known as the “free world,” but Russia now stood as a military power rivaling the influence of the United States on the world stage. The period from 1945 to 1989 has been referred to as a “cold war” between these two nations; the détente of mutually assured destruction (because we both possessed nuclear weapons) prevented the escalation of conflicts between us. There were many serious areas of disagreement, including the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, but the détente survived intact. It ended with the collapse of the economy of the USSR in 1989. Neighboring countries withdrew from Russian control but continued with authoritarian governance; many of those closer to the West opted for democracy.

Stalin ruled the country with an iron grip and deployed a brutal secret police force (the KGB) to control all aspects of society. After his death in 1953, he was followed in power by a series of men that largely continued his policies until the economic collapse of the USSR. Vladimir Putin, an alumnus of the KGB, is the latest leader of Russia, and he follows the Stalin leadership template. Although the Russian constitution places term limits on the presidency, when Putin faced that barrier he simply arranged for an amendment to the Russian constitution, and he remains in power (perhaps for life?). That act clearly demonstrates that the constitution is just for show; the people of Russia have no power. Putin is in fact a dictator.

Today, the plight of the Russian people may be marginally improved compared to the Stalinist days, but is still far from ideal as the human rights of its people are largely ignored. During this extended period of dictatorships, the grim history of the treatment of the Russian people was largely suppressed by their government. It has slowly trickled out in recent years, disclosing the true nature of the Russian police state. Its source of economic power was based on vast reserves of oil, not from the workings of its autocratic government.

Utopians around the world originally looked to Russia as the model for the spread of communism, but later distanced themselves from the Russian experience, claiming that it was a misguided attempt at real communism. They worked to bury this entire phase of history by ignoring it or claiming that the historical record is in error. Members of the Communist Party in Europe refused to discuss it; when pressed, they simply changed the subject to the evils of Nazi Germany.

In recent years under Putin’s rule, Russia has shown a desire to reclaim territory of the old USSR; it courts neighboring states, annexed the Crimea in 2014 with military force, and encouraged dissidents in Ukraine to start a civil war near the Russian border. Western powers, including the United States, supported the Ukraine government, and as a result that conflict appears to have receded to armed harassment. Other accusations of adventurism by the Russian government have been made in cases of murders of Russian dissidents on foreign soil; the shooting down of a military airplane over Ukraine in 2014 by a Russian missile, killing 25 people; providing military support for President Bashar al Assad of Syria who has used poison gas to suppress his own people; and cyber attacks on government agencies and businesses of the United States.

A Collectivist Example: China

In 1949, Mao Zedong led the Communist Party to victory in a civil war waged for control of China, after which he became known as the founding father of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The vanquished Nationalist army and government fled to the island of Formosa (now Taiwan) where it declared its independence from the PRC of mainland China. Mao ruled the PRC as the chairman of the Communist Party of China (the Party) from 1949 until his death in 1976. Ideologically a Marxist, his theories, military strategies, and political policies are collectively known as Maoism.

Chinese society was transformed under Mao's rule into a communist model similar to Russia's, with the management of the economy and large collectivist farms taken over by the Communist Party. The result was also similar to that of Russia: the agricultural experiment failed and an estimated 40 million people died of starvation (or political assassination) in a few decades. Although it had the world's largest population and enormous natural resources, it had been isolated from Western-style economic development until the collapse of the USSR. Then it became the leading communist power on the world stage, albeit an economically undeveloped one.

After allowing in some free-market ideas from the West, including turning a blind eye on a farmers' revolt that saved its agricultural economy and on working conditions in manufacturing establishments, it started from a very low base of economic output and saw rapid growth with modestly improved social outcomes. In recent years, with Westerners looking to expand global resourcing, China became the low-cost manufacturing hub for Western businesses; their competitive advantage was built on the exploitation of the workers (neo-slavery?) and governmental manipulation of the rules of international trade. This economic boost jump-started its economy, and in 25 years it has grown to rival the United States in many areas of endeavor. With this newfound prestige, the brash, assertive style of China's leaders has intimidated many nations. Since the death of Mao, China has maintained its top-down command and control government to hold and build the Communist Party's power, suppressing all attempts by the people to gain freedom. Examples of this are the military conquest of Tibet in 1951, the military suppression of a student revolt in 1989, the forceful suppression of the Uyghur people of Northwest China, breaching the terms of a treaty with Great Britain by stripping the freedoms of the people of Hong Kong, periodic threats directed to Taiwan, and the antipathy of the government toward religious groups. An expansion of those topics follows:

- In 1951 China's military occupied Tibet, a nation of three million Buddhists; the Chinese government harassed the leader of this nation, the Dalai Lama, until he was forced to flee the country. He set up a government-in-exile in India.
- In 1989, a group of students staged a protest in Tiananmen Square to call for freedom of the people, and they were joined by thousands of the general population. The government responded with a strong military crackdown; troops opened fire on the students, killing dozens (the actual number was never disclosed). This drastic, repressive action drove all calls for freedom underground.

- The Uyghur people, an ethnic Muslim group of 12 million, occupy a large area in northwest China, and it became the target of a Chinese government program to destroy their culture through “re-education” of the people. The PRC has administered forced sterilization and abortions on them, and more than one million of these citizens are detained in camps to convert them into model Chinese citizens.
- As a British colony of six million people, Hong Kong enjoyed the freedoms of Western democracy: it had a powerful economy and was rated as one of the freest countries in the world. Under pressure from China, the British government ceded Hong Kong to China in 1997 in an agreement in which China promised to make no political changes affecting Hong Kong for 50 years. However, China breached that agreement after just 23 years and imposed changes that have curtailed the freedoms of Hong Kong residents. Hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong citizens protested this action over several weeks, but the Chinese police stood up to the protestors and took measures that forcefully quieted them. The Chinese Communist Party apparently felt that the existence of this small enclave of free people on the border might give hope for freedom to the 1.4 billion people under their control in mainland China, so took the action in defiance of international law and world opinion.
- The PRC has never recognized the sovereignty of Taiwan, claiming that it is rightfully part of mainland China. The remnants of the Nationalist government that fled there in 1949 have built a strong democratic ally of the United States with a robust economy and high standard of living. The PRC fears that this example, so close to home, could undermine their control over the mainland population, and so makes periodic threats that it may invade Taiwan and annex it.
- Freedom of religion is provided by the Chinese constitution, but the PRC promotes state atheism and conducts campaigns to this end. It has a government agency monitoring all religious groups and has not hesitated to issue threats to influence their behavior. When the Falon Gong, a spiritual meditation group, began growing rapidly the Party labeled them an “evil cult” and imprisoned their leaders. Historically, there was no indigenous religious activity in China; instead, it had a secular culture based on Confucianism and did not encounter true religious thought until Western missionaries arrived in the 1800s.
- However, there has been a sharp increase in interest in Christianity among the Chinese people in recent years, and membership in Protestant churches is now estimated at 100 million and Catholic churches at 12 million. The leadership of the PRC appears to be alarmed by this and is taking steps to suppress Christianity. Freedom of speech, which churches typically enjoy, is particularly vexing to the leadership.
- In addition, the bellicose behavior noted above can also be seen in China’s claims in the South China Sea that defy international law.

Since the death of Mao, China has maintained its top-down command and control government to hold and build the Communist Party’s power, suppressing all attempts by the people to gain freedom.

There was one notable example of a farmers' revolt in China that was not suppressed; it was tolerated but not acknowledged by the Party:

- In 1979, a small group of farmers staged a quiet revolt in a Xiaogang village in central China that saved the country and perhaps the ruling Communist Party. The PRC had aggregated all farmland into large communes managed by the party leaders, and annual quotas of the farm products were assigned for collection and redistribution across the country. Under this system, local farm families were starving, so in a desperate act of defiance against the government, this small group of farmers pledged to secretly break up their commune land into private plots, work them independently, ship the assigned quota as directed, and retain the excess production for their personal use (including selling it in a gray-market). The Party manager of the commune warned them that there would be harsh penalties assessed for their treasonous actions.
- In the first year of the rebellion, the village produced more corn than the commune had produced in the entire 15 years of its existence without changes in fertilizers or mechanization. When word of this reached higher Party levels, no penalties were invoked but a gag order was issued to prevent the practice from spreading to other communes. But news of this importance could not be contained, and the practice spread across the country. A national crisis was averted and the government survived.
- Understandably, the PRC does not publicize this bit of history, as it provides a graphic comparison of the results of communist dogma and the accomplishments of a free people. The PRC chose practicality over ideology in this instance.

Today, China has nuclear capability and is rapidly expanding its military forces, raising concerns in the democratic West about the global aspirations of the Chinese leaders.

Introduction to Latin America

It has been suggested that Protestantism was a critical element of the freedom movement, but that movement was evident in society long before Martin Luther sparked the Reformation. So we see it as an enabler of freedom but not the author of it.

Spain was a naval power rivaling England in the 16th century and it sponsored the Christopher Columbus expedition that “discovered” the New World in 1492. Finding gold and other valuables among the natives, Spain moved aggressively to settle the land, claim title to it, and extract the wealth from its vast areas: Mexico, Central America, South America (except Brazil which had been ceded by treaty to Portugal), and many islands of the Caribbean. The settlers of these lands were primarily from Spain (a royalty with close ties to the Vatican) and had not been exposed to the stirrings of liberty that roiled England, and later, northern Europe. Consequently, the Spanish colonies did not appear to harbor the zeal for freedom that motivated the English colonies.

A Collectivist Example: Cuba

Cuba was settled by Spain in 1511, 109 years before the Puritans landed at Plymouth. Since it is located just 90 miles south of Key West, Florida, over the years there was interest in the United States in annexing it in some fashion, and several US presidents attempted to negotiate a path to incorporation. Those efforts were not fruitful until the Spanish-American war (1895-1898) placed Cuba in our custody. But then we lost no time in granting it its freedom; there was little interest in maintaining an ongoing responsibility for the island and its people. At the time, it was the largest producer of sugar in the Caribbean and was reliant on black slaves and Chinese indentured laborers to work the sugar cane plantations. Cuba was a mini-cauldron of political unrest and the scene of many slave uprisings in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

In 1959, a communist group led by Fidel Castro overthrew the corrupt Batista regime and took control of the government. As communists, they had a kinship with Mother Russia and were welcomed into the Russian orbit. The United States and Russia were then engaged in our cold war, so Russia saw the value of having an ally (no matter how small) sitting just 90 miles from the US coast. So a warm relationship quickly emerged between Cuba and Russia: Russia began supporting their new friend with financial grants of approximately \$5 billion a year, and Castro was seen as a reliable member of the international communist brotherhood. At the time, Russia no doubt saw this as a small price to pay for this geopolitical asset on our doorstep.

Castro adopted many features of the Russian political system, including a secret intelligence service (the DCI) that the Russian KGB trained. It operates both inside Cuba and abroad. With the collapse of the USSR in 1989, Russia’s financial support ended, but a barter arrangement with Venezuela kept Cuba financially afloat. Venezuela provided bargain-priced oil to Cuba in exchange for the services of medical personnel and the DCI, which was empowered to take over the Venezuela secret police. The brutality of the Cuban DCI was well known and admired by ruthless autocrats, and they have kept a lawless dictator in power in Venezuela.

Fidel Castro was in power from the revolution in 1959 until illness forced his retirement in 2006, when he turned over the reins to his brother Raul Castro. Fidel and Raul were both flagrant abusers of the human rights of the Cuban people and suppressed all attempts by the people to gain freedoms. Many Cubans fled the country, but the remoteness of the island and the police-state control over all of Cuban society made escape difficult and hazardous. The United States has embargoed trade with Cuba in an effort to put financial pressure on the regime to moderate its behavior, but without success.

Fidel and Raul were flagrant abusers of the human rights of the Cuban people

A Collectivist Example: Venezuela

Hugo Chavez was a career military officer that turned to politics in the 1980s, took part in a failed coup attempt, and succeeded in being elected president in 1998 on a centrist platform (“between socialism and capitalism”). At that time, Venezuela had the largest proven oil reserves of any country in the world (300 million barrels) and had the highest standard of living of the countries of South America. Chavez’s first step as president was to rewrite the constitution, then he packed the supreme court with his appointees. When he had control of the legislature and the courts, he began to implement his hidden agenda of socialism: he nationalized the oil industry, banks, and many businesses.

PVDSA, the nationalized oil giant, produced large cash flows that Chavez quickly seized to fund socialist programs for the country. When world oil prices collapsed in 2008, the cash flow was sharply reduced and Venezuela’s growing economic troubles became apparent. Chavez demanded more and more cash from PVDSA, which caused an exodus of professional personnel, lack of equipment maintenance, and even theft of equipment. Oil production dropped precipitously which compounded the problem of lower oil prices. The economy went into free fall, with skyrocketing inflation and scarcity of essential goods, including food. Life for the average citizen became extremely difficult and millions fled the country, flooding neighboring countries with refugees before the Chavez government closed the borders. To control the rising public discontent, Chavez brought in the Cuban DCI to control dissidents and the general public. The DCI was more than an advisor: it was given legal authority to act independently against targeted Venezuelan dissidents. Chavez lost a battle with cancer in 2013, and he was succeeded by his understudy, Nicholas Maduro. Chavez had maintained close ties with the military, which supported his regime, and Maduro has continued to cultivate them. He recently appointed an army general as president of PVDSA, which indicates how desperate their oil company management had become. It also appears that in the government’s search for cash they have turned to relationships with criminal drug lords, and the United States has taken legal action against Maduro’s alleged drug trafficking. Maduro’s position has been tenuous, but he has used the Cuban DCI effectively to hold on to power.

The Venezuelan National Assembly challenged the 2018 election of Maduro, and elected Juan Guaido interim president of the country. His position has been recognized by the United States, the Organization of American States, and others. Maduro is supported by China, Russia, Iran, Bolivia, South Africa, and North Korea. At this writing, there is a political stalemate but the people are continuing to suffer extreme hardship.

Common Characteristics of Collectivist Governments

When we studied these collectivist governments, we observed characteristics that were common among them and other collectivist governments, including:

- Regardless of their origins, they all became autocratic with a single strongman in command. It seems that the opportunity to wield absolute power over a people was irresistible to their leaders.
- They are plagued by rampant corruption with the leader and his cronies stealing millions (or billions) of dollars from the country treasury.
- They often employ secret police/intelligence forces to monitor the people; this force may use harsh control techniques, including torture, on their own citizens; dissidents are routinely imprisoned on questionable charges (e.g., “showing disrespect to the government”) without due process.
- Many of them preempted possible dissident challenges by purging their society of professionals of all stripes: large numbers fled the country, and large numbers were imprisoned or shot. This eliminated potential adversaries but also stripped the country of capable professionals.
- They typically adopt a patina of democratic institutions to give the appearance of granting freedoms to the people while secretly maintaining absolute control; sham elections are an example.
- They do “whatever it takes” to maintain absolute power over their people.
- Many of them use the word “republic” in their country name, implying that they are a form of democracy (which they most certainly are not).

A Democratic Example: United States of America

After winning our independence in the Revolutionary War, our republic was launched with great hope. Sovereignty, for the first time in history on this scale, rested with the people. There were skeptics that predicted it would not succeed, but our Founders believed that the promises of freedom outweighed the risks so proceeded with this bold move. Because it was a new and untried form of government, its outcome was far from certain and it became known as the American Experiment.

It was characterized by freedom for all of its citizens with limitations on the power of government, but among the difficult compromises, the Constitutional Convention delegates made in 1787 was on the issue of slavery. The southern states did not create slavery, which had existed worldwide throughout history (even among the Native Americans of the New World), but they had allowed it to be introduced into the colonies and their plantation economies had become totally dependent on it. In 1787, the states felt it was imperative to come together for mutual protection from foreign powers, but this would not be possible if the free states demanded that slavery be abolished. So the issue was deferred for resolution at a future time and place, and it required a horrendous civil war (1861-1865) to settle the issue. Following the war, political implementation of the abolishment of slavery began in 1865 when the first of three constitutional amendments were ratified by the states, and civil rights legislation to improve the enforcement of the amendments was enacted in 1964-1965.

If we look at the evidence of our first 200 years, our constitutional republic has a stellar track record unmatched by any other form of government in history. Consider these major accomplishments:

- We developed economic power that dramatically improved our standard of living and reduced poverty levels far beyond anything done before, by anyone. Average daily income in the colonies was a subsistence-level \$2 a day (which had been the global norm for all mankind throughout history) which we increased to \$100 a day, inflation-adjusted.
- We played a pivotal role in saving Western civilization and freedom from foreign aggression in two horrendous world wars that killed 100 million people.
- We gave critical support to rebuilding our former adversaries in those wars (Germany, Italy, and Japan); with our help, they became model democracies working for a peaceful world.
- We defended Western nations from the threat of world conquest by communist nations whose leaders killed 90 million of their own people in an attempt to restructure and remold society into their vision of utopia. Our defense of South Korea in the Korean War (1950-1953) preserved a new nation that became a staunch ally and built a prosperous democratic country.
- We abolished slavery, expanded citizenship to include all segments of our society, and established a social safety net for our disadvantaged members.

These five points are so consequential that we suggest you pause, reread them, and take a moment to reflect on their significance.

The freedom of our people led to these impressive results. We demonstrated that sovereign and free people can overcome tremendous obstacles and accomplish great and noble goals when the need is understood. We may rightfully take pride in our national accomplishments which have contributed significantly to improvements in the lives of untold millions of people around the globe. And we can face the future with the confidence that we can overcome whatever lies ahead.

Throughout history, no other form of government has had this impact for good. Our constitutional republic is absolutely worth fighting for.

At the conclusion of the Second World War, the accomplishments of the United States were widely recognized and admired. This led many countries to adopt democratic governments patterned after our republic. However, the record of the last few decades is less inspiring as external threats abated and we turned our attention inward. Special interest groups became aggressive in their efforts to test and breach the limits of our Constitution, lobbying intensified, big money enhanced its grip on election campaigns, and hyper-partisanship has virtually gridlocked our federal government. These developments have left us with a muddle in a Washington that appears incapable of rational governance.

Our Utopians add to our national confusion by using disinformation to promote public acceptance of their goal, which is of course socialism. An example is their claim that Sweden, a country that is admired here, has adopted socialism. This assertion is of course intended to assuage our fears about socialism and look favorably on it. But the facts dispute the claim: a Swedish political leader put the record straight with a published opinion piece that described their free-market economy and fully functional democratic institutions. He took exception to others misrepresenting his country in that fashion.

Our current travails are evident to political leaders around the globe, which has emboldened some of them to initiate aggressive programs to extend control over targeted areas. The allure of democracy faded in other countries around the world, and national conversions to democracy diminished. However, when we look objectively at the evidence, it is clear that democracy has not failed, but that we have allowed our democratic infrastructure to become damaged and ineffective. It is time we acknowledged the true state of our affairs and took action to repair and rebuild the republic, which would encourage restraint from aggressive leaders of other countries.

We should suspend policy debates and focus on structural changes that will restore our democracy to its former glory. If we do this, we can then address policy questions with greater confidence and success.

Business-as-usual half-measures won't do the job; it will take a concerted effort by all Americans, starting with a convention of states to consider constitutional amendments pursuant to Article V of the Constitution.

In this brief review of the history of governmental forms, you may have noticed that democracies do not tend to start armed conflict, but they will respond when necessary to protect their freedoms.

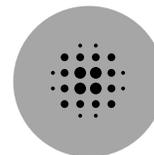
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The Human Freedom Index

The Fraser Institute, a Canadian think tank, has developed a method of measuring the level of freedom in a country, which is then used to compare and rank them globally. The index is based on a combination of measures of personal, civil, and economic freedoms. The study based on 2018 data (which, at this writing, is the latest compiled), ranked the countries discussed in this paper, among a population of 162 nations, as shown in the Appendix.

It is interesting to note that the countries and colonies of the British Empire stand high in the ranking, and neighboring countries of northern Europe also rank high. This shows that the institutions of freedom take many years to evolve and spread to other neighbors, but once established the people are tenacious in defending their freedoms.

Human Freedom Index of Selected Countries in 2018			
By Rank among 162 Nations		Alphabetical, with Rank	
1	New Zealand	4	Australia
3	Hong Kong	5	Canada
4	Australia	135	China
5	Canada	??	Cuba (lacks data)
6	Denmark	6	Denmark
6	Netherlands	10	Finland
8	Ireland	13	Germany
8	United Kingdom	3	Hong Kong
10	Finland	8	Ireland
10	Norway	34	Italy
10	Taiwan	31	Japan
13	Germany	6	Netherlands
17	Sweden	1	New Zealand
17	United States	10	Norway
27	South Korea	119	Russia
31	Japan	27	South Korea
34	Italy	17	Sweden
119	Russia	10	Taiwan
135	China	8	United Kingdom
161	Venezuela	17	United States
??	Cuba (lacks data)	161	Venezuela



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Keeney attended the University of Washington on an NROTC scholarship, earned membership in Phi Beta Kappa and other academic honorary organizations, and graduated with honors. (BA and MBA). Before graduation, he passed all four parts of the state CPA examination in one sitting. His career included three years on active duty with the US Navy Supply Corps during the Korean War (1950-1953) (he was the “Bull Ensign” of the Corps); 22 years working in large companies (IBM, Smith Barney and Deloitte); and 26 years in small business startups and turnaround situations, which included numerous financings, a successful Chapter 11 reorganization, the sale of a turnaround to First Data Resources and sale of a startup to Qualcomm.

In retirement, Keeney developed a keen interest in government and with his wife Carol founded the Act 2 reform movement in 2013. They recently relocated from Colorado to New York state, but continue to pursue the program with a small staff based in Colorado. The Keeneys will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary in May, 2021.