# Of Arms, Freedom, and Capitalism
## What Piers Morgan Does Not Know


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*"Producers who delegate security to others, to specialists of government and war, become politically and militarily emasculated."*

*—Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406)*

## Introduction

Among the causal factors that have been recognized in the emergence of representative government and capitalism in England are: (1) the nobility successfully limited the power of the monarchy beginning with the Magna Carta in 1215, clause 14 of which required the monarch to call the "common counsel of the kingdom" before assessing certain taxes; (2) the rise of the bourgeoisie;[1] (3) the rediscovery during the Renaissance of ancient Greek direct democracy and the Roman republic; (4) the development of the English common law, which protected private property and enforced contracts; (5) the Protestant ethic of accumulation; and (6) the enclosure movement,[2] which forced peasants off the land so that there was a source of unemployed labor willing to work for wages, and allowed landowners to put the land to more lucrative uses.

To these factors should be added: A well-armed population of commoners.

Nearly all commoners in historical England were armed. A significant fraction of them possessed the longbow, that era's equivalent of a heavy automatic rifle. A trained archer with a longbow could loose 12 arrows a minute with a lethal range of more than 200 yards.

Over the centuries, England's well-armed commoners mounted several insurrections against the monarchy and aristocracy. The existence of an armed, determined general population acted as a check on the rapacity of governing elites and led directly to the actualization of ideas such as "consent of the governed," government for the common good, and equality of opportunity. The widespread bearing of arms even facilitated the development of capitalism because the government had to be cautious not to seize too much of peoples' wealth for fear of inciting a rebellion. The wealth that the people were allowed to keep was *capital* that people could use to form their own economic ventures, which led to a strong private sector. English settlers transmitted these ideas and institutions to the American colonies, where they further flourished amidst an armed and trained general population. Prohibiting the people or certain groups from being armed has always been used to keep them down. During slavery and the era of Jim Crow, blacks were not allowed to possess guns or weapons of any kind. A smart plantation owner would even keep farm tools locked up at night.

The culmination of the power of the armed English commoner was in the late 1640s. Thousands of wealthy commoners armed and outfitted themselves as heavy cavalry, and fought on the side of Parliament against the king in the English Civil War. Known as the "Ironsides," they defeated the Royalist heavy cavalry, and so destroyed the notion that the aristocracy was superior to the common person. The victory of Parliament established the supremacy of representative government. The Ironsides were crucial in the making of the world we know—a world where a railsplitter could rise to be President of the United States.

This article began as a response to the debate on gun ownership between Piers Morgan and Alex Jones, which aired on January 7, 2013. This author was surprised to realize that Morgan, who is the product of the reputedly outstanding British educational system, and supposedly earns $2 million per year, is ignorant of the history of his own nation. Widespread arms ownership is part of what made England the birthplace of modern representative government and capitalism. For England to have all-but-banned firearms own-

ership, and for Piers Morgan to advocate that policy for the United States, is to embark on a dangerous social experiment.

The history of England stands for the proposition that firearms laws should be *the most permissive reasonably possible*: Civilians should be allowed to own guns, and gun ownership should be widespread.[3] This history is still highly relevant today.

## Medieval England: Everybody Was Required to Bear Arms

It was mandatory for every (male) person to bear arms according to their financial means. By the Assizes of Arms of 1181 and 1252, knights and sheriffs of every county, were to tour the countryside and convene "burghers, free tenants, villagers, and others of fifteen years of age to sixty years of age, and they should have them all swear to bear arms according to the amount of their lands and cattle. Also all those who are able to have bows and arrows outside the forest should have them." By a statute of 1285, the above laws were affirmed and provision was made for constables to determine whether people were following the law, to prosecute them if they were not, and present a list of those in default to parliament and the king each year.[4] The Archery Law of 1363 "forbade, on pain of death, all sport that took up time better spent on war training especially archery practice."

By these statutes, every male in England between the ages of 15 and 60 was supposed to bear arms and train in their use. That alone would still leave the knights and aristocrats with the power and ability to dominate society because they could afford the heaviest armor and weapons.

However, crucially, nearly every commoner in England was supposed to have "bows and arrows," and that meant the longbow. The longbow, which the English almost certainly acquired from the Welsh, and may have improved, was a crucial English military asset from around 1150 A.D. to 1550 A.D.

Nearly every able-bodied male commoner was training regularly in the longbow. In contrast, the knights and nobility were training with the heaviest armor, horses, and swords they could get. The English elites did so according to custom and in competition with their counterparts in continental Europe.

A longbow arrow fired from 150 feet away could deliver 66 pounds of force concentrated in the tip of the arrowhead. For comparison, a heavy axe or sword can deliver about 95 pounds of force, but across the entire axe head or sword blade that connects with the target. With all the force in that small tip of the arrow head, the arrow could pierce through chain mail and even through plate armor 1 millimeter or more thick.[5] Any knight in the 1100s, in the 1200s, and into the 1300s until thick plate armor was developed, could be killed by a single longbow shot unless the knight could block it with a thick shield.

The longbow was devastating at the Battles of Crecy (1346), Poitiers (1356), and Agincourt (1415). At Crecy, the French lost 11 lords, and thousands of knights to the longbow. At Poitiers, the French had some 6,000 killed, with their king, two of his sons, and 33 nobles captured.[6] English casualties in each engagement were about 300.

By the time of Agincourt, armor had advanced to the point that the French knights were impervious to the longbow's arrows. However, their horses were not so heavily armored and the charging, mounted knights had their horses cut out from under them, and fell onto a muddy battlefield with 70 lbs. of armor.[7] If they were not injured in the fall, they were unwieldy and disoriented and were hacked to pieces by English soldiers not so encumbered. French casualties were as many as 6,000. English casualties were in the hundreds.

English armies generally relied on many thousands of archers. At Agincourt for example, the English army consisted of 5,000 commoner archers, and 2,000 knights and men-at-arms. Estimates for the size of the French armies range from 30,000 to 60,000; such numbers approaching over open fields provided abundant targets for the longbow.

The French casualties were detailed so that the reader can grasp the caution, if not fear, with which English elites must have viewed the English commoners, who were so frequently armed and trained in the use of the longbow.

Why did the English system rely on armed commoners rather than a standing, professional army, as did ancient Rome? On balance, it benefitted the governing elites. There were not enough nobles and knights to supply sufficient numbers of archers. Armed commoners could repel an invasion or be used for offensive purposes such as in France. Commoners called at need were less expensive than maintaining a standing army. But it was "a dual-headed arrow," because the crown had to contend with another armed power base in society, one that could be very difficult to control.

Ultimately, the English system may have its origin in the Anglo-Saxon general *fyrd*, or general levy. The general fyrd appears in the *Laws of King Ine of Wessex* (circa 694 A.D.). All *ceorls* (free commoners) between the ages of 15 and 60 were required to take part in military service when summoned. The Anglo-Saxon system evolved over time and was retained by the Normans, at least to some extent. The Domesday Book (1089) entry for the County of Berkshire reveals the existence of the 'select' fyrd. Under the select fyrd, every fifth household had to supply a soldier to the king, and the other four households had to contribute wages and supplies to that solider.[8] Once the English realized the potential of the longbow, the monarchy may have realized that in order to get the thousands of archers it needed, it would need to return to a general fyrd system.

## Armed Insurrections

Three hundred years of armed insurrections by commoners were crucial to the development of "consent of the governed," government for the common good, equality of opportunity. It also facilitated the development of capitalism. The widespread possession of and training in the longbow by the commoners of England posed an ever-present check on the elites of England, who overwhelmingly were mounted knights. The English monarchy and nobility had to know that if they pushed the commoners too far, they could be faced with a rebellion that they simply could not handle. This is a major reason why the concept of "the consent of the governed" took solid hold in England. If you were an English commoner who could bring down the highest noble with one longbow shot, would you really believe that such people were 'superior' to you? The ground was fertile for notions of equality to sink deep roots.

In 1381 there was the Peasants' Revolt, also known as Wat Tyler's Rebellion. This was a tax revolt, just like the American Revolution. The rebels destroyed the palace of the king's uncle, John of Gaunt, and seized the Tower of London. The Lord Chancellor, the Lord Treasurer, and the Grand Prior of the Knights Hospitallers were captured and executed by the rebels.

The Peasant's Revolt made the following two demands, among others: "That there should be equality among all people save only the King," and that there should be "no serfdom or villeinage, but that all men should be free and of one condition." [9]

It was during this revolt that a sympathetic priest asked in a sermon, "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?"

Dr. Andrew Wood of the University of East Anglia writes that a number of revolts after 1381 sought to remind rulers of their duties or espoused alternative visions of the distribution of

power in society.[10] In 1400, the citizens of Cirencester attacked two Earls and 40 retainers.

> A chronicler wrote that . . . Seeing 'that every way out was blocked with beams and other great pieces of wood', the earls and their retainers attempted to break out, attacking the townspeople 'with lances and arrows'. The locals forced them back and 'began to shoot arrows at the lodging—some through the windows, some at the doors and gates—with the result that no place was safe for them, and not only were they unable to get out, they were not even able to look out'. This fight lasted from the middle of the night until three o'clock the next day, when the earls eventually gave up, handed themselves over to the townspeople, begging not to be put to death before they had had an opportunity to speak to the king.[11]

But an attempted escape resulted in the earls being executed under the leadership of prominent locals. [12]

Contrast this situation of feudal England to that in feudal Japan. If two samurai lords marched with 40 retainers into a town, the commoners would likely have prostrated themselves in submission. That was because under the Japanese feudal system, only the samurai class could carry swords and be trained in their use. The Japanese sword—arguably the best sword in the world—was the most effective weapon the country had. This monopoly on force by the samurai class was designed to keep the elites in power, and it resulted in the subjugation of the rest of society. It was a dictatorship of the aristocracy and, not surprisingly, it led to dictatorial forms of government in the twentieth century. Could it be that Japanese elites functioned best in the politics of force, and that is the way they dealt with the rest of world? By contrast, in England, a balance of forces existed between the classes. Elites had to use persuasion, employ soft power, and make accommodations to the other strata of society.

Again in England, Jack Cade's rebellion occurred in the year 1450. It originated in Kent. It seems to have started with a rumor that the king intended to punish Kent for the death of the Duke of Suffolk, for which the Kentish insisted they were blameless. The local gentry led an army of commoners. "All were as high as pig's feat," reads the *Chronicle of Gregory,* a diary of current events written by a fifteenth-century citizen of London.[13]

Jack Cade apparently was in command; it is unclear exactly who he was. The rebels killed the High Sheriff of Kent (like killing a police commissioner today). At the Battle of Sevenoaks, the advance force of the royal army was destroyed by the rearguard of the Kentish army. The King then retreated with the remainder of the royal army, leaving the road to London open. The army of commoners then marched on London and held sway there for six days. During that time they killed the Lord Chancellor (who was also the Archbishop of Canterbury) and the Lord High Treasurer (who was also a Baron). These two were the second and third highest advisors to the king (like killing the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury). They were beheaded, and their heads placed upon London Bridge.[14]

### *For the Comyn Wele of England*

The *Chronicle of Gregory* remarked of Jack Cade's rebellion that "in that furiousness they went, as they said, for the comyn wele of the realm of England."

That the rebellion claimed to act for the "comyn wele" of England is important. Scholar David Rollison writes of the struggle of an ideology of government by and for elites against an ideology of "commonweal," which after 1520

became "commonwealth," meaning a culture and government that "connected and encompassed all the communities and inhabitants of England." In other words, government for all persons.[15] This is something remarkable in history. Ancient Athens had a democracy, but the "citizens" there actually comprised some 30,000 adult males out of a population of 250,000. Decisions were made in the interests of a relatively narrow band.

### *Any Longbow Massacres of Civilians?*

The longbow was an automatic weapon in its day. A trained, competent archer could loose up to 12 shots a minute, and the bow had an effective range against unprotected flesh of over 200 yards. A crazed archer who climbed a tower near the local market on a Sunday could have unleashed arrows at the crowd, killing a number of people. The bow would have been almost silent in the noise of a crowded market: a few victims would have gone down before anybody sounded the alarm.

But is there any record of a longbow massacre? Could it be that anyone who considered doing this knew that there would certainly be a significant number of archers who would quickly begin firing arrows right back at him? Or is the real difference that Medieval England handled mental illness better than we in the United States do today? A Ph.D. anthropologist at the American Museum of Natural History in New York informed me that in his extensive travels among primitive tribes, one of which is the Huaorani in Ecuador, he has never encountered a case of mental illness. We should look at the causes of mental illness in this society, and how we handle mental illness, before we forbid reasonable, temperate, law-abiding people from possessing weapons.

### *Consent of the Governed and the Rise of Capitalism*

Around 1471, Sir John Fortescue (1394–1476) wrote that England was the supreme example of a limited monarchy, while France had the supreme example of an absolute monarchy.[16] The key difference lay in the way taxes were levied. In France, the king could tax the people at will. In England, the king could tax only with the agreement of Parliament. Parliament first met in 1236 and the House of Commons first deliberated separately from the King and Nobles in 1341. The King could not just impose taxes unilaterally—he had to request that Parliament agree to levy them.

If the people you are taxing are well armed, many with longbows, you better secure their consent before taxing them. When there are real consequences for tyranny, the concept of "consent of the governed" germinates in fertile soil and can develop into an institution with deep roots.

Fortescue strongly disapproved of the French system in which the king could tax the people at will: it made the king rich, but kept the people poor. The common people retaining their money was essential to the emergence of capitalism—which happened in Great Britain (England, Wales, and Scotland) first—because people need to accumulate capital in order to invest it. You can't do that if the king is taxing away all your money to fund wars and extravagances.

Rollison writes in *A Commonwealth of the People* that a centuries long social revolution in England began with the Peasant's Rebellion of 1381 in which the concepts of equality, freedom, and government by consent were proclaimed, sustained, and finally triumphed.

> In a succession of crises from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, commonwealth ideology formed in opposition to existing government. At such times, the state and senior ruling classes were forced,

> if only momentarily, not only to acknowledge but negotiate and even bow to a higher authority: commonweal. . . . At its most dramatic, in a series of large-scale regional rebellions from 1381–1649, commonweal's army rose in the form of a popular army with the capacity, momentarily, to defeat any band of knights the state could put into the field against it.[17]

The year 1649 brings us to the English Civil War and Oliver Cromwell.

## Oliver Cromwell—A Man Who Made the Modern World

In 2008, an article in *Bloomberg/BusinessWeek* characterized Oliver Cromwell as being "in the dust of English history." I wrote in to the editor that this simply is not so.

We have seen that in English history, the existence of trained and armed commoners, especially those wielding the longbow, meant that insurrections could pose a serious, albeit temporary threat to the English government. But these rebellions did not coalesce into broad, nationwide movements. As a result, the monarch and nobles could gather their knights and enough loyal commoners with longbows to suppress an insurrection.

The armorer eventually won the battle with the longbow: by the 1400s quality armor had advanced to the point where no arrow could penetrate it. Commoners continued to use the longbow, and they could force knights to dismount from their horses and could slow and bruise them with arrows delivering 66 pounds of force knocking on the armor, but the knight was the tank of the battlefield.

Firearms were the innovation that allowed a projectile to pierce armor and kill a knight. And so the armored knight became obsolete. Musketeers were much easier to train, while the longbow required constant practice from childhood. Muskets did not fire nearly as many rounds per minute as the longbow could loose, but huge numbers of musketeers were relatively easy to obtain so the slower rate of fire of huge numbers matched the rapid fire of fewer longbowmen. So musketeers supplanted the longbowmen. Musketeers almost always were commoners.

Replacing the armored knight was heavy cavalry. Full body armor that could stop a bullet was beyond the technology of the time. But heavy cavalry did wear a thick breastplate that could sometimes stop a bullet. In the early 1600s, heavy cavalry was still the domain of knights and nobles, just as the mounted, armored knight had been previously. It was very expensive to get the equipment and training needed to field heavy cavalry. You were best off with a 1500-pound horse, and it had to be fast. The horse had to be fed, housed and trained. You needed years of practice to control the horse. You needed several pistols (that gave you one shot each), a sword, a helmet, light armor on less vulnerable areas of the body such as the shins, and finally the heavy, armored breastplate.

Heavy cavalry was useful for raids that could seize an objective before the opposing side reached it by foot. It was also useful for riding quickly around to the side of an opposing army (known as outflanking it), and charging into that unprotected side, which could result in the army being rolled up from that flank and routed.

Oliver Cromwell was a commoner born into the gentry, yet who as an adult at one time owned no land and was leasing a farm. During that period, his status may simply been "freeman." But he came from a prominent gentry family boasting several knighthoods, members of Parliament, and a Lord Mayor of London within two generations. Oliver Cromwell was, however, beset by monetary difficulties until an inheritance in 1636 returned him firmly to the gentry class. He then had enough money to buy his own heavy horse and

weapons. As a member of the gentry in his youth, he must have already been trained in their use.

The English Civil War started in 1642. Parliament was fighting against the monarchy of Charles II, who asserted absolute powers. Cromwell raised a troop of 60 cavalry riders at his own expense.[18] In the early battles, the Royalist cavalry bested the Parliamentary cavalry. Cromwell wrote to his cousin, John Hampden, a wealthy commoner and MP, describing the cavalry troopers of each side frankly:

> Your troopers are most of them old decayed servingmen and tapsters; and their [the Royalist] troopers are gentlemens' sons, younger sons and persons of quality; do you think that the spirits of such base and mean fellows [the Parliamentary troopers] will ever be able to encounter gentlemen that have honour and courage and resolution in them?[19]

In other words, the Royalist cavalry was composed of: (1) knights, (2) nobility, (3) the younger sons of nobility who would not inherit titles owing to the institution of primogeniture, and so were looking to distinguish themselves in battle and thereby earn their own titles, and (4) wealthy commoners who sought to distinguish themselves in service of the king and thereby earn a knighthood or noble title.

To meet this challenge, Cromwell recruited, trained, and led a cavalry force known as the Ironsides. This was a double regiment consisting of 14 troops of approximately 60-horse to each troop (about 840 total). The Ironsides almost exclusively were commoners, mainly recruited from the gentry, and many were Puritans. Aside from Cromwell's original troop, the rest of the Ironsides supplied their own arms and warhorses. "This regiment was universally regarded as the best regiment, man for man, in either the Royalist or Parliamentarian Army."[20]

The Ironsides consistently bested the Royalist cavalry. They were decisive in battle after battle—first driving off the Royalist cavalry, and then charging and routing the Royalist foot soldiers. The nickname "Ironsides" was bestowed upon them by Prince Rupert.

A man of comparatively low station, leading a cavalry force of similar men, proved to have the "honour and courage and resolution in them" to exceed the ruling class in martial affairs.

But for the widespread bearing of and training with arms by the commoners, none of the accomplishments of Cromwell and the Ironsides would have been possible. These were considered heavy weapons—heavy cavalry was the tank of its time.

The Ironsides became the model for the entire Parliamentary army. Cromwell became a Lieutenant General and second-in-command of the army by 1647. He eventually became commander-in-chief of the army, and then competently led England for five years (1653–1658) as Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

Cromwell's military victories and ability to govern the country showed that the aristocracy was no better than the commoners.[21] Oliver Cromwell and the Ironsides therefore were pivotal in making our modern world characterized by equality of opportunity and respect for all persons regardless of their social origin. This laid the groundwork for a nation in which a railsplitter could become president.

As David Rollison explains it, in the 1640s ideas similar to those seen in the Peasant's Revolt of 1381 were asserted,

> But the rebels did not melt away. They defeated and executed Charles I in terms which rebels against unjust kings and lords had been using since Magna Carta (1215): in the name of commonweal or (a common usage after 1540) commonwealth. In

> 1649, commonwealth replaced kingdom, and became what it had been fighting for centuries, the state.

After the execution of Charles I by Parliament, England was declared to be a commonwealth. As Rollison has explained, the meaning of "commonwealth" was a realm which connected and encompassed all the communities and inhabitants of England.

The establishment of Parliamentary government was not complete until 1689. The knowledgeable reader will recognize that this brief summary has left out much about the English Civil Wars of 1642–1649 and subsequent history. The intent was to hit the relevant high points while not committing falsehoods by omission.[22]

One thing I have omitted is the Levellers. The Levellers were a faction of the New Model Army and the citizenry of southern England. Leveller colonels and soldiers asked for universal male suffrage at the Putney Debates in the year 1647. Elements of the New Model Army nearly mutinied on the basis of Leveller ideology several times in 1647–1649. This was not properly part of the story of commoners bearing arms resulting in politico-economic change. It was an army becoming radicalized by citizen agitators because they had not been paid for a year. Unpaid armies get radicalized and even stage coups, but it is not properly part of the story of freedom owing to the right of the citizens to bear arms.

## Core Conclusion

The widespread bearing of arms was essential to the emergence and institutionalization of "consent of the governed," government for the common good, and equality of opportunity in England. It facilitated the development of capitalism. These concepts and institutions were transported to the American colonies by English settlers. They took firm root and further developed in an American society where the general population was well-armed. It is beyond the current scope of this Working Paper to continue the story in the American colonies.

## Relevance to the Present Day and the United States

The stock counterargument to this article is:

> That was England 400 years ago. The notion of well-armed commoners, which translates to widespread gun ownership in the current day, is irrelevant to combat government tyranny in the face of Predator drones, M-1 battle tanks, and F-35 stealth fighters.

I answer that gun ownership is still relevant for combating dictatorship. In Syria, a revolt of people that would have been called "commoners" in medieval England has proven to have staying power against a brutal, well-equipped national government. The rebels were armed at first only with pistols and automatic weapons before they were able to secure outside aid. It does appear to be true that Islamic fundamentalists play a significant role in the Syrian rebellion. What do you expect? These people have had to face Mi-24 helicopter gunships with AK-47s. You almost have to be insane to do that. However, the rebellion started with peaceful marches and calls for political reform. The government of Bashar Assad had in 2000–2002 indicated that it might be open to such reform. It was the murderous response of the Syrian regime that led to the armed rebellion. For example, a singer/songwriter named Ibrahim Qashoush had written several songs that were performed at anti-Assad rallies. In July of 2011, his body was found in a river with its throat cut out and vocal chords removed. Everybody knew it was done by the regime or its paramilitaries. That was one of many such incidents.

In Libya, the population had access to small arms. In Benghazi in particular, the population was so strongly against the Gaddafi regime that they were able to seize the main government bastions. It is true that the Gaddafi regime had dispatched an armored column to crush this revolt, and it was only the intervention of Western airpower that saved the rebels in Benghazi, but not later the lives of the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans.

The point is that small arms can be enough to get an armed struggle started in today's world, although outside assistance is soon needed to maintain it. The American colonials would have been unable to win the Revolutionary War without significant assistance from France.[23]

Another argument against widespread gun ownership is, "We live in a Republic. It is not necessary for the citizens to own guns in our political system." The response is that we do not know what this country will be like in 50 years. If the reader thinks that a dictatorship cannot happen here, the reader is unwise. Hitler was elected lawfully to the office of Chancellor in a constitutional republic. He then turned the mechanism of government to the creation of the Nazi regime. The same nation that produced Goethe, Kant, Hegel, Beethoven, Heidegger, Max Weber, Hannah Arendt, Max Planck and many other luminaries also became the Third Reich. Widespread gun ownership in the United States would be essential to resisting a future tyranny in the stage before outside help can be secured.

The type of tyranny that might emerge in the United States could be characterized by corporate control of the government and media, a national security state that continuously expands its powers and replaces old enemies with new ones (terrorism replaced communism), all in a polygamous marriage with an executive branch that steadily aggrandizes its powers beyond constitutional limits. The outlines of this potential tyranny are now becoming clear. A separate article could envisage how such a tyranny would function.

## Choose Civil Disobedience

In the United States today, any sort of armed resistance to government brutality is met with overwhelming force by "the authorities." Even with 300 million guns owned by civilians, the most potent weapons at the disposal of the populace are the video camera, the Internet, and public opinion.

Rodney King was beaten in 1993, but there was a video. Mass arrests of protesters were perpetrated during the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York. The police claimed that some of the crowd was resisting arrest. But the defendants had video of the protesters being arrested peacefully. The charges were dropped immediately once the video was shown, and the episode diminished the reputation of the NYPD.

During Occupy Wall Street, the police reacted violently against the participants. Some of the incidents were captured on video. One instance was Deputy Inspector Anthony Bologna of the NYPD maliciously and gratuitously pepper-spraying non-violent female protesters. That incident "helped galvanize worldwide support for the movement, which until then had attracted minimal media attention."[24]

Video and its dissemination over the web have the effect of turning government violence into some of the best publicity dissidents can get, resulting in the broadcast to the world of the ideas the dissenters are trying to communicate. Additionally, civil lawsuits against the perpetrators can compensate the victims of violence. In the current situation, the wiser choice is not to respond with force if the U.S. government employs force against you.

Civil disobedience works against governments claiming to be civilized and subject to the rule of law. Gandhi employed civil disobedience against the British. Britain claimed to be the leading civilized nation in the world. Gandhi forced them to live up to it. Martin Luther King employed civil disobedience in the United States.

In other scenarios, guns are essential. Brutal regimes such as Gadaffi's Libya, Assad's Syria or Hitler's Germany simply will kill those who resist. Meeting a gun-toting madman with non-violence is not going to work.

Having said all of the above, I am pessimistic about the prospects for effecting change in the United States. Occupy Wall Street appears to have achieved nothing. Journalist Chris Hedges recently told a forum at MIT, "We have political paralysis in this country. We have a system that is incapable of responding to the legitimate grievances and injustices that are being visited upon tens of millions of Americans."[25]

Effecting change may require extensive, long-term civil disobedience. Very few people have the time or reserves of money necessary. But it is essential to use non-violent means as early as possible. Once a tyrannical system becomes entrenched, it becomes all the more difficult to dislodge. It is easier to stop a stream than a river.

The rebellions in Libya and Syria demonstrate that widespread gun ownership continues to be essential to resisting tyranny. As the United States debates gun control, whatever solutions we adopt should be as protective as possible of the right to bear arms. None of this rules out enacting reasonable measures to prevent mass shootings by underage and/or insane persons, such as occurred at Columbine, Aurora, Virginia Tech, and Newtown. But if we go too far in restricting gun ownership, we could strip our descendants of the ability to resist tyranny in a future in which it would be unwise to predict, "it can't happen here."

## Notes

1. Feudalism was not as rigid in England as on the continent so that a wealthy stratum of commoners could develop. For example, Ann Boleyn was descended from wealthy linen merchants who, as commoners, had purchased Hever Castle by 1462, presumably from the aristocracy.

2. The Statute of Merton of 1235 indicates that landowners already were converting arable land over to sheep grazing, dispersing the peasantry in the process. See Simon-Fairlie, "A Short History of Enclosure in Britain," *The Land,* Summer 2009.

3. After completing this article, the author discovered a peer-reviewed journal article that has a different emphasis but is highly accurate: David E. Vandercoy *The History of the Second Amendment,* 28 VAL. U.L.R. 1007 (1994).

4. Hans Delbruck, *Medieval Warfare* (Bison Books, 1990), 174, 177.

5. Paul Bourke and David Whettham, "A Report on the Findings of the Defence Academy Warbow Trials Part 1 Summer 2005," *Arms & Armour,* Vol. 4, No. 1, 2007. The Kinetic Energy the longbow arrow delivered to the target is a product of the small mass and high velocity of the arrow (1/2 mv2). It is measured in joules and can be converted to foot pounds.

6. Figures for the numbers of the French armies in these battles are as high as 60,000, but 30,000 seems more reasonable given the size of the population at the time, and the size of the English armies opposing them. So for Poitiers, where the estimates are that 20% of the French army was killed, that would mean 6,000 deaths.

7. "Battlefield Detectives: Agincourt's Dark Secrets," Channel 5 (Great Britain), a Granada Production in association with The Discovery Channel, (2003).

8. Mark Harrison, The Anglo-Saxon Thegn A.D. 449–1066, (Oxford, Osprey Publishing, 1993), 6–10.

9. http://historical-academy.co.uk/blog/2011/10/14/"how-far-was-the-rising-of-1381-revolutionary-in-character-how-far-reactionary"/

10. Andrew Wood, Palgrave, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England*, (Macmillan, 2001).

11. David Rollison, *A Commonwealth of the People: Popular Politics and England's Long Social Revolution: 1066–1649,* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 254–255.

12. If the situation of the nobles and retainers trapped at Circencester unable even to look out of the windows sounds like a scene out of a Western movie set in the late 1800s USA, the similarity between the longbow and the six-shooter should not be overlooked. If anything, the long bow was a

more powerful and versatile weapon in its time.

13. The text of the Chronicle is available at: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=326

14. Due to time and space constraints, I am omitting a discussion of Kett's Rebellion, which took place in 1549 and involved 14,000 rebels seizing the city of Norwich and destroying a 1,500-man royal force, but then being defeated by a large royal army.

15. Rollison, *A Commonwealth of the People*, 275–278; www.britainexpress.com/History/medieval/cade.htm

16. Sir John Fortescue, The Governance of England, also known as The difference between an Absolute and a Limited Monarchy. Written circa 1471, after the Battle of Tewkesbury.

17. Rollison, *A Commonwealth of the People*.

18. William Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth of England*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 22, 109–110.

19. Roger Raymond Sellman, *Civil War and Commonwealth*, (Methuen & Co. 1973), 29.

20. Stephen C. Manganiello, *The Concise Encyclopedia of the Revolutions and Wars of England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1639–1660*, (Scarecrow Press, 2004), 81.

21. The side of Parliament in the English Civil War was not taken only by the gentry and commoners. Many nobles sided with Parliament, including the Earl of Essex, the Earl of Manchester, Lord Fairfax of Scotland, the Earl of Warwick, and the Earl of Denbigh. Indeed it was the participation of nobles on the side of Parliament that probably explains why the House of Lords retained its power, and the nobility continued to enjoy most of their privileges after Parliament was victorious in the Civil War. Many lords probably believed that King Charles I's assertions of absolute monarchy were in violation of an understanding of the powers of the King that dated back to the Magna Carta of 1215. However, none of the nobles proved as able a military commander as Cromwell. All land commanders eventually were sidelined in favor of Cromwell. Nor was Cromwell an exception, as there were many highly able commoner generals and politicians, such as Hampden.

22. Professor Mark Kishlansky of Harvard University has posted on the web a "Harvard@home" series of video lectures from his Harvard course about Cromwell.

23. However, France would not have intervened in the war unless at Saratoga 12,000 militia had come out to help the 5,000 Continental army regulars who would otherwise have been outmatched by the 7,000 British troops under Bourgoyne. See Hoffman Nickerson, *The Turning Point of the Revolution*. Port Washington, (NY: Kennikat Press, 1967), 437. The victory at Saratoga convinced France to enter the war. The Battle of Bennington set the stage strategically for Saratoga. Bennington was fought entirely by militia on the American side.

24. Christina Boyle, "Deputy Inspector Anthony Bologna's Decision to Pepper Spray Occupy Wall Street Protesters," *NY Daily News*, September 9, 2012.

25. MIT Forum, *The Occupy Movement and Economic Inequality*, December 6, 2012. Available on C-Span 3 (www.c-span.org).


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