

A REPORT FROM SOVEREIGNMAN.COM



THE SIX PILLARS OF SELF-RELIANCE

A
BLACK
PAPER



PREFACE

WELCOME; I'M SIMON BLACK.

For more than two years now, I've been writing a daily newsletter, *Notes from the Field*, over at SovereignMan.com. That letter, which goes out to tens of thousands of people looking to better their lives and protect their families and livelihoods, details strategies for creating true resilience. These include protection and growth for your freedoms, opportunities and assets.

I'm an entrepreneur and a permanent traveler, one who is constantly on the go. I'm always looking for the trends, threats and opportunities that will affect all of us as the Age of Turmoil continues to unfold.

No matter what your current circumstances, I implore you to realize that the world is changing in dramatic ways: if you want to ensure that you and your loved ones will be safe, protected and even in a position to see their lives and livelihoods flourish, you need to take self-reliance to heart.

I'm also going to ask you to be open-minded to what I mean by self-reliance. As you'll see in this report and in my daily newsletter written from all over the world, I've developed six unique pillars to self-reliance. I firmly believe adopting these pillars in your life will enable you to both survive and thrive all that's coming to down the pipe.

As you read more, you'll notice I put a big emphasis on internationalizing yourself. This isn't because I hate America. Quite the contrary. It's simply because America faces a unique set of challenges, and internationalizing key aspects of your life could put you in a far better position.

Put another way, when it comes to surviving catastrophic systems failures, a key element will always be redundancy. That's why you need a backup water supply, a backup food supply, and, if possible, a backup place of shelter...and it's also why you might want to have a backup bank account (preferably abroad, in another currency), a backup landing pad, a backup country of residency and other international elements.

Internationalization isn't the only strategy I'll talk about in this report, but it is something I want you to think about going in. It doesn't mean you have to move; it just means that it's prudent to think globally as well as locally.

Surviving and thriving in the Age of Turmoil will take preparation, guts and ingenuity. It's my goal to help provide you with the tools to make that happen. At the risk of sounding immodest, this paper is probably some of the most important work we've put together. The ideas here will help you expand your preparations, and, I fervently hope, protect yourself, your loved ones and your assets.

To your resilience and self-reliance,



Simon Black,
Editor, SovereignMan.com
The Six Pillars of Self-Reliance

THE FIRST PILLAR – Define Your Reality

We have entered what I call the Age of Turmoil, a time that is marked by rapid change and fluctuating crises. The old system of debt and consumption that gave us great salaries, generous benefits, stock market and housing appreciation, and a high standard of living...is gone. Forever.

That doesn't mean everyone is going broke, or that the future is bleak. It means that the traditional ways of doing everything from educating ourselves to protecting and growing our money are shifting, and that there are growing pains.

What's happening right now is a major sea change: the game is being reset, and the rules are being rewritten.

I'm not being pessimistic, and this is not a cause for fear. We shouldn't be afraid of the Age of Turmoil, but rather prepare for it by becoming more self-reliant. Those who are prepared will survive, thrive, and be well positioned for the enormous opportunities that await.

Conversely, those who faithfully cling to the old system, desperately hoping for a return to the autopilot days of the past, will see their lives turned upside down.

This is because all the major elements of the old system-- our political process, our money and financial institutions, the job market, police forces, etc.-- can function only if the system is operating normally.

THE OLD, ANTIQUATED SYSTEM – LIMITING CHOICES

Think about how things work under the old system-- people are effectively given pre-packaged options for the major decisions in their lives. Do you want to be a doctor? Follow this career template. A pilot? Follow that one. Investing your money? Select from these mutual funds.

I call these 'limiting choices,' and they are a staple tradition in our modern society. Our realities are defined by people and regulations which govern our thinking, restrict our options, and constrain our creativity.

When you walk into a bank, for example, no one is going to sit down with you and say, "Hey I think you should protect yourself from a depreciating currency; let's talk about gold allocation and, since China is doing so well, taking some options in the renminbi."

No, instead you get the same two limiting choices that are jammed down the throats of all their other millions of customers: the generic savings account, or the generic checking account.

Even the political process is full of limiting choices. How many times have you gone to the polls and been forced to decide between two equally vapid, insipid candidates? In the end, you vote for the limiting choice of who is "least awful," the lesser of two evils.

These limiting choices work just fine as long as the system is functioning properly... they're efficient and help maintain order. Human nature is such that most people abdicate the power of choice in their lives, and limiting choices provide basic direction, making it easy to follow the herd.

The trouble is, such limiting choices are **not designed to help you survive when the system collapses**.

Limiting choices, such as the standard career template of racking up huge university debt, or investing in index funds, or holding cash in a savings account, or relying on social security, all were successful tactics over the past 20 years.

But in the Age of Turmoil, they've become destructive.

THE NEW, EFFECTIVE SYSTEM – UNIVERSAL CHOICE

The way out, the way to survive and thrive in this turmoil, is to reject limiting choices and define your own reality through what I call universal choice. In fact, I consider “defining your reality” to be the first pillar in achieving self-reliance in the Age of Turmoil.

This entails being actively engaged in the major problems and decisions we face in life, and developing the *independent mindset to design our own paths* from an entire universe of possibilities, not just limiting choices.

One way of doing that is something we frequently talk about over at SovereignMan.com, something we call “planting flags.”

Think of a flag as a section of your life or your assets: you've got a banking flag. You've got a residency flag. You've got a business flag (regardless of whether you have your own entity.) You've likely got investment flags and real estate flags. Such flags determine how robust and redundant your financial life is...and how free your freedoms are.

If you have “planted,” so to speak, all your banking flags in one country, and in one currency, you do not have diversification. If that currency collapses – as we saw in Argentina in the 1990s, and as we could see with the dollar – you are not protected. So when we talk about planting flags, we're talking about creating redundancy with your money and lifestyle.

Planting multiple flags is a great example of **cultivating the first pillar of independence and defining your own reality**. Instead of the limiting banking choices provided by your hometown bank, you can open a foreign bank account in alternative currencies, or store gold in a private vault overseas. This diversifies and protects your assets, taking your nest eggs out of that one solitary basket.

Instead of the limiting investment choices provided by your broker for standard blue chip stocks and index funds that have yielded negative returns for a decade, you can take control of your money. You can invest in alternative assets, such as foreign companies or international real estate, based on out-of-the-box trends that you identify. This requires more effort on your part, and more homework, but, as you've seen with other areas of your life in which you've become more independent, the rewards are hugely satisfying.

Instead of limiting career choices provided by the guidance counselor that will result in massive student loan debt and little else, you can learn valuable skills that solve people's problems, or you can head to thriving economies overseas looking for more interesting opportunities and adventures. You don't have to move overseas, of course, although I've met countless people who have moved abroad to inexpensive jurisdictions, started businesses, and who now live like kings. You can do all of these things while remaining in your home country. The key is to think outside the traditional career track. Look for niches and needs in your geographic area...or in your field...or in the lives of your kids and their peers.

The key theme in defining your reality is to think creatively beyond the limiting choices that the old establishment puts in front of you. In fact, when you consider many of the world's greatest historical figures, the main factor they all shared was a common rejection of limiting choices.

People such as the Wright brothers, Gandhi, Bill Gates, and Ayn Rand all dismissed convention and defined their realities based on possibilities that they conceived. I'm absolutely convinced that the greatest outcomes await those who are willing to take this step. It requires self-reflection. It requires time. It requires much thought and, often, effort.

And it will change your life.

THE SECOND PILLAR – Preserve and Grow Your Capital

How would you feel if a gang of criminals broke into your home, stole your most valuable possessions, and then went on national TV to claim it was for your own good?

My guess is that you would be pretty angry. Yet this is essentially what our central bankers and political leadership are doing right now.

Not long ago, at a picturesque resort in beautiful Wyoming, the Federal Reserve Chairman, Ben Bernanke, met with his global counterparts, including Bank of England's Mervyn King, the ECB's Jean-Claude Trichet, and Masaaki Shirakawa of the Bank of Japan.

The financial world was attentively looking for indications of what these men were planning to do after having exhausted every monetary policy tool at their disposal.

These bankers have collectively printed trillions of currency units, purchased unprecedented amounts of government debt, given handouts to commercial banks, slashed interest rates to record lows, and taken risky assets onto their ever-expanding balance sheets.

And how have these historic efforts fared? Poorly. Aside from a few outliers, economic data in the developed world are anemic at best. There has been little recovery in the jobs and housing markets, and the debt crises have grown worse.

Even Standard & Poors is threatening to downgrade the United States. China – America’s biggest creditor – is shying away from mopping up all of our T-bills and giving us more money. Investors are losing confidence in the major former powerhouses and looking more and more to emerging nations.

Look, I’ll be the first to tell you that there are great opportunities and good news stories around the world; unfortunately, millions of people were watching their lives and livelihoods turned upside down while Bernanke and his friends toasted themselves with expensive champagne at that luxury resort.

Politicians aren’t much better: they are flying around the world on their government jets, praising themselves in front of voters and trying to convince taxpayers that stimulus programs are working. Obama has “a plan” to shrink the debt. It includes waging two wars, jump-starting Obamacare and making sure entitlement programs stay firmly imprinted into the budget.

These politicians have spent trillions of dollars over the past few years, with little benefit. The ultimate consequence is more, staggering and crippling debt.

Despite the printing and spending of trillions of dollars, the world is still faced with the same financial conditions as when this crisis started: **huge government debt, and lack of credit availability in the private sector.**

And so... what is the solution now? According to the likes of Bernanke and company, there are three choices: continue cutting interest rates, spend trillions of dollars, and print trillions more pieces of paper.

Something is very, very wrong with this picture.

EVEN THE INSANE HAVE TO QUESTION THIS LOGIC

The first thing that comes to mind is the definition of insanity: “doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting a different result.” This is exactly what’s happening now.

Then again, how do you cut interest rates that are already at zero? How much more money do you print when you have already printed trillions of it? How much more do you spend when the deficit is already beyond \$2 trillion?

The crazed decisions of our financial and political leadership have a significant impact on our hard-earned savings... and **entrusting our capital to a corrupt system of incompetent bureaucrats is a sure-fire way to lose our money.**

As we enter the Age of Turmoil, the risks to our capital are only going to increase. The way out, the way to survive and thrive, is to become self-reliant and reject the limiting options that have been force-fed by the old system.

We’ve talked about *defining your reality* as the first pillar of self-reliance. I believe that the second pillar

of self-reliance is *capital preservation*: maintaining the value and purchasing power of the savings that we depend on to feed our families.

That means moving beyond checking and savings accounts, and beyond traditional investing options (limiting choices).

Most importantly, it means moving beyond mere cash. Let's explore this:

In the past, loose central banking and generous government entitlement programs were part of the old system that made a lot of people very rich. That system generated huge returns in the market, easy credit for businesses and investors, and a giant safety net (courtesy of the taxpayers).

That system has collapsed. There are a lot of people who still cling to it, who put their trust in their governments and central bankers: they'll keep buying bonds, CDs, and the like, and they're going to see their lives turned upside down.

Those traditional mechanisms are less and less reliable, and less and less secure. And at the same time, governments are becoming more and more determined to grab what you have...this goes way, way beyond taxes.

For example, over the next ten years or so, as the Age of Turmoil rages on, **you can absolutely bet on things such as rising taxes, capital controls, further erosion of financial privacy, increased regulation, and negative real returns.**

Perhaps most importantly, there's a major debate in finance right now among various camps over whether we will see significant inflation, deflation, both, or neither.

THE FOLLY OF FIAT CURRENCIES

Wherever you stand on the issue, I would suggest asking yourself one simple question: Will the paper currencies of the largest debtor nations in history continue to be reasonable stores of value in the long-term?

Absolutely not. A complete loss of confidence is coming – again, look at the recent downgrading of the US by S&P. **Such a loss in confidence will have catastrophic effects on your savings if your money is trapped in a debtor nation's fiat currency...a.k.a. cash.**

Let's look at what we can do. First of all, as we've said, it's ill advised to depend traditional capital preservation -- T-Bills, CDs, savings accounts, etc. Not only because they're less reliable than ever, but also because governments are squeezing citizens for everything they've got.

Fundamentally, finding suitable alternative methods of preserving capital is one of the ways that the self-reliant individual can survive and thrive in the Age of Turmoil. Those methods need to be diverse, legal and effective.

They include the following:

- opening foreign bank accounts,
- creating alternative and productive assets,
- pursuing offshore gold storage,
- considering high yield financial assets,
- buying and investing in foreign currencies, and the like.

In our free daily e-letter over at SovereignMan.com, and in our premium service, [*SovereignMan: Confidential*](#), I provide a lot of specific, actionable information about these sorts of ideas. I hope you consider joining the conversation.

THE THIRD PILLAR - Hedge the System

Think about all the various things most people depend on as they go about their days... they get up in the morning, flip the switch, and the lights come on. One turn of the faucet and the water starts running. They open the refrigerator to a cornucopia of food and beverages.

They get in their cars and make an uneventful drive to work down the highway, perhaps making a stop at the local store, whose shelves are filled to capacity. At the cash register, the money changes hands without thought of its value, and everyone goes on about his/her day without considering the complex systems that make it all possible.

Just in the normal, mundane course of life, we all depend on these systems-- the money system that is run by central bankers, the highway system that is run by bureaucrats, the day-to-day system of jobs and commercial activity that is so heavily influenced by politicians.

Even more, consider the electrical grid, or the logistical network that transports our food and fuel, or the water treatment facilities, or the availability of maintenance support to fix homes and vehicles...

Are any of these systems truly fail-safe? Can we guarantee, without doubt, that the next time we flip the light switch in the morning darkness that we'll suddenly be able to see? Japan recently learned the answer to both of those questions the brutal way.

It's not something to obsess over, but one should definitely consider the possibility that these existing systems in place-- banks, governments, utilities, etc. -- are prone to failure, some more so than others.

I have argued repeatedly that our governments, politicians, and central bankers have already failed. They are desperately hoping the same old tactics will prop up a system that is now defunct, when all the while they're

lying to their constituents, claiming that everything is just fine, and that, in the words of the Treasury Department just recently, government officials know what's best for us and how to make the best choices.

ARGENTINA – AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT CAN HAPPEN WHERE YOU LIVE

Unfortunately, even our private utility infrastructure is prone to failure. Quite often, the likelihood of failure is tied to economic conditions, and I'd like to highlight Argentina as an example.

Once the shining beacon of prosperity in Latin America, Argentina's years of unsustainable fiscal irresponsibility took a massive toll on the economy. Ten years ago, the government finally capitulated by defaulting on its debt, and the subsequent fallout has been a rough ride for the locals.

The Argentine government's response might well have been ripped from the pages of *Atlas Shrugged*: in one instance, they fixed the price of electricity across the country to a level that was attractive to voters, but ultimately unprofitable for the utility companies.

After a few years, two things happened:

- 1) The electrical infrastructure in Argentina fell into a state of disrepair, as the companies had no profits to reinvest; and,
- 2) Due to artificially low prices, the system was being overused by residents who gave little thought to conserving electricity as a means to save money.

Naturally, the combination of these two factors led to blackouts and brownouts being a part of normal life in Argentina. Even today, years later, you cannot always assume that the light will come on when you flip the switch.

Argentina is also the sort of place where you cannot simply assume that the gas stations will have fuel that day, or that the grocery stores will have fully stocked shelves. Again, reactionary government policies have reduced the free trade of goods and services, resulting in frequent shortages.

Perhaps most pointedly, though, crime has risen rapidly in Argentina. Brazen armed robbery is unfortunately commonplace in the country, even during broad daylight in the best neighborhoods of Buenos Aires.

Given their poor salaries and the greater economic opportunity that exists in extortion and bribery, the police have become an absolute joke. They routinely fail to serve and protect citizens.

If you think it can't happen in your home country, think again. Economic decline leads to strain in essential services and systems. People who place their trust in the old systems (systems that used to, but no longer, work) will absolutely see their lives turned upside down.

The third pillar of self-reliance is **hedging the system-- planning for system failure and mitigating the consequences.**

I'm an unabashed optimist; I'm not predicting some sort of epic meltdown here. I do, however, think it's a reasonable assumption that as economic conditions deteriorate in certain countries, the basic systems we take for granted will suffer.

Overall, we shouldn't dwell on the negative; it stifles our motivation and keeps us from enjoying and making the most out of our lives. But, we should take precautions and hedge our bets.

Here are a few powerful steps you can take to get started:

THE FOOD SYSTEM

- Learn to plant and grow your own.
- Rip up your chemically treated lawn and turn it into a vegetable garden.
- Plant fruit trees.
- Look into hydroponics and even aquaponics.
- Consider, if you have a yard and live in a location that doesn't zone you to death, acquiring a small goat for milk and cheese. Or chickens.
- Learn permaculture.
- If you live somewhere urban, *make friends* with the farmers from your farmers' markets. Make friends. Don't just buy their items. Give them a service in return.
- Buy or grow in bulk and learn to preserve: traditional forms of food preservation include drying, canning (which you can also do with meats or fish, if you use a pressure canner correctly; Eugenia Bone writes a good book on that), preserving, fermenting (as in yogurt, sauerkraut and pickles), and salting. Look at what people have done for centuries, then do that.
- If you eat meat, find someone who will sell you the whole animal, or half of it. Learn to cook parts other than just the muscle meat and other popular cuts. Get a chest freezer and store the meat there. (Or salt it.)
- Learn to hunt and fish.

THE WATER SYSTEM

- Start capturing rainwater in a cistern.
- Invest in low-flow toilets.
- Do what it takes to gain access to a well.
- If necessary, purchase land somewhere where you have water rights and can dig your own well.

THE ENERGY SYSTEM

- Research what is most effective in your area: wind, solar and geothermal are the most promising alternative energy sources.
- Then invest in it; make it happen. Now.
- Do what you can to reduce your own energy consumption; once you're off the grid, you can sell what you don't use and invest it back into your own system.

THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM

- We talk about this all the time on our sites, but start by opening a foreign bank account.
- Invest cash into real estate abroad; it's an asset your home government can't take from you.
- Consider gaining a second passport; it's the biggest insurance you can give yourself. When things hit the fan, a second passport will give you an escape hatch.
- If you're an entrepreneur, consider setting up an entity abroad.
- Think about establishing a trust; it makes it much harder for someone to seize your assets, whether because of capital controls or because your neighbor decides to sue you when their dog drowns in your swimming pool.
- Invest in precious metals and store them overseas, far from your home government. Note that you're not hiding anything: you **MUST** report this and all other assets. You're just using a legal method of making it harder for bureaucrats to take from you what's rightfully yours.

There are other types of systems that can collapse, and other skills and assets you'll need, but these are a good start. Again, we discuss many of these in our free daily e-letter and in great detail over at our premium service, [*SovereignMan: Confidential*](#). Visit SovereignMan.com for more information.

THE FOURTH PILLAR

- Declare Your Economic Independence

It's critical – critical – to declare economic independence. That means diversifying your income sources. No matter how self-sufficient you are, money is still a driver of societal engines, and you must protect what you have.

The game is changing. Success or failure in the future will no longer depend on accidents of birth, but

by people's hard work, ingenuity, and self-reliance. This is good news for us, as far as I'm concerned... something to be excited about, not shy away from.

I know that each of us is powerful and capable, and that we can succeed in this new environment if we're simply willing to accept personal responsibility and take action to become more self-reliant.

Let's review what we've covered so far in our core principles of self-reliance:

The first pillar is defining your reality-- rejecting the limiting choices imposed by the old system while having the independence of mind to determine your own outcome.

The second is preserving your capital-- recognizing that the standard options for safeguarding and growing your wealth are tied to a corrupt money system.

The third is hedging the systems – realizing that food, water, economic and other systems could and will likely falter, and taking steps to become more self-reliant.

The fourth is declaring your economic independence -- **eliminating your reliance on a single source of income**, and finding more reliable ways to put food on the table for you and your family.

What would you do if your sole source of income dried up tomorrow?

Would you be prepared? Do you have a plan?

In the Age of Turmoil, many income sources that were considered 'stable' in the old system will be at risk; these include **retirement pensions, investment income, salaries and wages, and small business profits**.

For example, retirees living on company pensions could easily see their monthly stipends fall, due to corporate bankruptcies. And while public pensions such as Social Security are unlikely to change in the short-term, this broken system will undoubtedly see massive restructuring in the next decade.

Meanwhile, many small business owners and self-employed professionals may suffer reduced revenue as market conditions and consumer priorities shift; this has already happened to many businesses in the retail and real estate sectors.

For salaried workers, we live in a rather bizarre time when corporate profits are surging, yet revenue growth is lackluster. Companies are cutting back on expenses by reducing their headcounts and squeezing every ounce of productivity out of a smaller workforce.

Millions of people are now unemployed, without a backup plan. Politicians make empty speeches about hope and better times ahead, but they offer little more than hot air and higher deficits.

THE SOLUTION

The thing is, there is a way out...self-reliance is the way to survive and thrive in this Age of Turmoil that we have entered.

When you think about it, this isn't the only tough time in history where such a thing has happened.

Just a few hundred years ago, new settlers in the United States, Canada, and a remote penal colony down under had to brave harsh terrain, hostile natives, war, disease, etc., all without the convenience of modern technology.

Their only assets were their labor, ingenuity, and whatever they could carry on their backs. Despite difficult conditions, though, these pioneers carved out a new life with their bare hands, and they didn't rely on government handouts or incompetent central bankers to do it.

Back then, settlers were economically independent: they built their own homes, fetched their own water, and put their own food on the table. (And before them, the Native peoples had done the same thing.)

Now, I'm not saying we should all go out and wear buckskin and live solely off the land, but I think the same lessons of economic independence apply today.

Our livelihood and that of our families hinges on our ability to be economically independent. As such, it's critical to seek alternate sources of income.

ALTERNATE SOURCES OF INCOME

These can take a variety of forms.

For those with a secure job and a fair amount of investment capital tucked away, income can be derived from any number of passive assets: examples could include high yielding securities, productive land, and other income-producing real estate.

For people who are short on capital, the development and licensing of intellectual property is a great way to generate an additional source of income. If you have a creative idea that solves a problem, there are likely several potential suitors who would license the rights to your idea.

For those who would like to share their skills and expertise online, and who are willing to put in the considerable time and effort a blog requires, my friend Craig Ballantyne (an Internet millionaire) has created a dynamic program to help you earn \$100,000 in one year. You can sign up for his program at <http://InternetIndependence.com>.

For others who enjoy the stability of a steady paycheck, it's a smart idea to develop new skills and seek secure employment in some of the fastest growing industries in developing economies.

This option is only suitable for those who either want an adventure or desire a change of scenery; it's difficult to leave one's home country, and it is certainly not a requirement for self-reliance, but for those with the desire to experiment, there are tremendous opportunities abroad.

In China, for example, there is a hiring bonanza in retail banking. Citigroup alone is hiring 12,000 people there. Same deal with investment banking and fund management.

There are dozens of other places in the world with similar conditions, including in your home country. Sure, the housing market may have slowed down, but alternative energy is a thriving industry just about anywhere. (We cover these sorts of opportunities at SovereignMan.com, in our free daily letter.)

Here's the bottom line: even in the worst economic conditions that we have ever known, there is **substantial opportunity everywhere around us**. Just like in the stock market, where you can make money by shorting when the market is headed south, you can make money in a down economy.

In a down economy, it's not like all economic activity stops; unemployment might be 10%+, underemployment might be 20%+, but there is still 80% of the workforce that is getting paid and allocating their income towards purchases each and every month.

The critical difference is that their priorities have shifted. In general, people are no longer looking to spend their money on useless trinkets or expensive consumables. But they will gladly spend on the things that they actually need.

I think this is where the greatest opportunity lies for entrepreneurs and professionals-- *tapping in to the shift in consumer demand*.

A good entrepreneur will identify an unfilled need in the marketplace-- identify a problem that needs to be solved-- and create value by providing a solution. Any business that can consistently provide value for its customers will prosper in any economy, good or bad.

You can do this in your home country, but as I am a permanent traveler and international businessman, my own advice is for adventurous entrepreneurs to **consider moving to a foreign country** that either has solid economic fundamentals, vast resource wealth, or will likely become a preferred destination for the coming wave of expatriation.

Such a location will provide the most substantial business opportunities, both for self-employed professionals as well as for entrepreneurs.

Having created some initial wealth for myself in this way several years ago, I believe wholeheartedly in this idea...and I'm putting my money where my mouth is. In fact, I'm actually having some discussions right now to fund some young people in setting up small businesses in central Asia next year.

For more information, check out the success stories over at SovereignMan.com and on our premium service, [*SovereignMan: Confidential*](#).

THE FIFTH PILLAR – Create a Robust Network

It's true that no one is an island. The concept of a community is one of the basic building blocks of the human experience, and we have been building communities since we first walked the earth.

Traditionally, human beings formed families, and families became tribes. These were large collectives based on common factors such as geography, DNA, and eventually languages and core values.

Over time, tribes grew into kingdoms and empires, and the common factors that tied people together became increasingly blurred. Today, kingdoms and empires have become nation-states... and the common factors that bind us together are rather limited.

Sure, we might look alike, talk alike, dress alike, and hail from the same postal code or some other invisible line on a map, but shared core values are a thing of the past.

In my own experience, I've found that I have very little in common with the people who share the color of my passport or driver's license, and that I have much more in common with those I've met around the world who share my outlook and philosophy.

Moreover, this trusted network of individuals around the world, wherever they happen to be based, often has made the difference between success and failure in my life...and my businesses.

As we go through the Age of Turmoil and experiences rapid change and fluctuating crises, I think that having a trusted network will become even more important. The cliché, **“It's not what you know, it's who you know,”** is absolutely true...perhaps more so in difficult times.

Lately, I've written extensively about why becoming self-reliant is ultimately the way to survive and thrive in the Age of Turmoil...and this is absolutely true. But as ironic as it may sound, **I think that building a trusted network is one of the key pillars to achieving self-reliance.** The Amish, for example, are very self-sufficient individuals...but they'd never attempt a barn raising alone.

Let me begin by saying that there is a critical difference between building a trusted network and expecting others to take care of you. The former is a position of strength, the latter a position of weakness. If you build a network where you are a valued member of the team, you are an asset, not a liability.

Developing valuable relationships with like-minded people is immensely rewarding, both personally and professionally. Human beings are naturally social creatures, and, like it or not, we are all going to need help someday. Likewise, other people are going to need ours.

It's much easier to face the world, particularly in the Age of Turmoil, knowing that the people on your team are a carefully selected group of dependable men and women who share your core values and have important skills.

Technology has made it possible for us to reject the old system of identifying our tribe through DNA and geography; we can now congregate digitally in online communities, or in person at various expat havens or resilient communities, based on complementary skills, philosophy, and core values.

One of my primary goals is to facilitate people making connections based on shared values; it's a fundamental core of our premium service, called [SovereignMan: Confidential](#). It's essential that you find a group you can rely upon and bring value to. My advice: do everything you can to find those people. Now.

THE SIXTH PILLAR - Pick Your Battles

I was reading an article online recently that one of our [SovereignMan: Confidential](#) members was kind enough to send along. The article described how public transit commuters in Philadelphia are now being randomly subjected to forced pat downs and baggage searches with explosives-sniffing dogs. Even more recently, a story came out about a six-year-old child being patted down by the TSA.

Another subscriber followed that up with an article about the US Department of Homeland Security implementing a new technology that can scan irises at a distance of six feet, then store the information in a government database.

According to one of the department's program managers, Homeland Security is testing the technology to take iris scans of people who are walking by a specially outfitted camera.

I'm willing to make a huge bet that these sorts of things make your skin crawl. Mine too. Unfortunately, reading the comments under these articles on Reuters and USA Today, it's clear too many people are in total support of these outrageous acts...

"I don't think there is anything wrong with it at all!!!! Wouldn't rather be safe than sorry? I think it's a great idea and I appreciate it! [sic]"

And:

"I have no problem with submitting to any kind of scan... The government's first job is security."

This real life illustration of the mental state of our fellow human beings is indicative of a very clear, powerful point: **some people just don't get it.**

In this report, and on our site, we have been engaging in probably our most significant conversations to date about what I call the Age of Turmoil-- a time marked by rapid change and fluctuating crises.

Undoubtedly, as conditions deteriorate in certain parts of the world, you can count on governments delivering the solutions that people will demand... and like it or not, **voters will demand more intervention, more security, greater erosion of their liberties, and more Draconian economic measures.**

Now, there are significant steps that we can take to protect ourselves in order to survive and thrive in the Age of Turmoil: planting multiple flags to preserve our capital, hedging our risks, acquiring valuable skills, and achieving economic independence, among others.

But these steps take time. They take energy. They take focus, and sometimes money. Unfortunately, we are all constrained by finite amounts of those resources.

CHOOSING WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL:

As such, we must wisely allocate these resources and choose to affect the things that we can control. It's nice to hope for change, but in the greater system that is collapsing all around us, there are simply too many things that we cannot control.

One thing we certainly cannot control--or even predict--is what our governments will do. Rising taxes, faltering currencies, bailouts, stimulus spending and the like: these sorts of things will either happen, or they won't. **And no policymaker is going to ask our permission first.**

We have no control whether or not our central bankers will continue inflating the currency, whether or not our politicians will engage in further fiscal or military folly, whether or not bureaucrats will implement iris scanning technology or random pat downs.

And, it's seems quite clear that too many citizens are quite happy with these new "security" measures.

You and I have no say in the matter, and it would be a waste of our precious resources and precious life energy to get caught up in the fight. These decisions are all being made by a small, small-minded group of men and women, not by us.

We have been talking throughout this report about the pillars of self-reliance, ways to become independent and succeed in the Age of Turmoil. **I believe that the final pillar is being able to pick your battles-- wisely allocating finite resources to affect that which we can change, and that which is most important.**

Grassroots campaigns to affect political change (some of which we've seen in the Middle East recently) are wonderful ideas, and they have admirable goals. There's clearly right and wrong in the world, and it feels good to be on the side of the morally right. But given our limited resources, realism must prevail.

Sure, you could spend your life working for these goals and trying to change the perspectives of people who don't want their perspectives changed. Or, you could use that time **getting prepared** to ensure that you and your family survive and thrive in the Age of Turmoil.

When you look at how much the world has changed over the last several years, and you consider how quickly things are changing now, I think we only have a few years remaining before much of what we know today changes dramatically.

How do you want to spend that time?

I want to spend it valuing and enjoying the people in my life; working to protect, enhance and grow what my family and I already have; gaining new, valuable skills; and connecting with people of nimble minds, sound philosophies and admirable character. This is why I do what I do at SovereignMan.com. This is why I travel, seeking out opportunities and real freedom.

And this is why I'm proud to have created our premium service, [*SovereignMan: Confidential*](#). In time, you might decide that SMC, as we call it, is a critical platform for you to enhance your own network, but even if you don't, I hope you read and comment often on our daily emails at SovereignMan.com

I look forward to continuing the conversation, and to hearing your success stories in implementing your own Six Pillars of Self-Reliance. May you begin taking action today.