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# FUTURE OF FREEDOM

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*An empire founded by war has to maintain itself  
by war.*

— *Montesquieu*

# FUTURE OF FREEDOM

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The Future of Freedom Foundation is a nonprofit educational foundation whose mission is to advance liberty and the libertarian philosophy by providing an uncompromising moral, philosophical, and economic case for individual liberty, free markets, private property, and limited government.

*Future of Freedom* is FFF's monthly journal of uncompromising essays on liberty. The price is \$25 for a one-year print subscription, \$15 for the email version. Past issues of *Future of Freedom* and *Freedom Daily* can be accessed on our website: [www.fff.org](http://www.fff.org).

Our (free) FFF Daily email provides hard-hitting commentary on current events and describes the most recent additions to our website. Our op-eds are published in newspapers all over the nation as well as in Latin America. We also give speeches on liberty and libertarianism throughout the United States. The Foundation's other activities are described on our website.

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## Why We Don't Compromise, Part 6

by *Jacob G. Hornberger*



A few days after the 9/11 attacks, I was attending a big libertarian dinner at an area hotel. As I was walking out at the conclusion of the dinner, a longtime libertarian friend approached me and said in an approving voice, “The American people are now going to see what Latin Americans had to do to deal with terrorism.”

For me, that comment didn't bode well. I was familiar with the U.S.-supported military dictatorship of Chilean strongman Augusto Pinochet, whose national-security state forces, with the full support of the U.S. government, had rounded up tens of thousands of innocent people, incarcerated them without trial, tortured or raped them, and disappeared or executed thousands

of them, all in the name of the wars on communism and terrorism. I was also familiar with the history of U.S.-supported right-wing regimes in Latin America that were notorious for their secret death squads that engaged in kidnapping, torture, rape, disappearances, and assassination.

Then, as I was waiting for my car, I asked another libertarian friend who was working at a conservative educational foundation, “So, what do you think about all this ‘war on terrorism’ rhetoric?” Not hesitating a bit, he responded, “We have immediately jumped all over this. We have all sorts of position papers coming out in favor of the war on terrorism and the measures that U.S. officials need to take to win it.”

As I was driving home, it was becoming increasingly clear to me that 9/11 would be a real dividing line for the libertarian movement. Some people in the movement, especially those who had come into it from the conservative movement, would become ardent supporters of the war on terrorism, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, foreign interventionism, and an ever-expanding national-security establishment.

Others, including FFF, remained steadfast in their opposi-

tion to such things. Soon after the attacks, we were emphasizing what we had been saying before them: that they were a direct consequence of the interventionist foreign policy that the U.S. government had initiated in the Middle East, especially after the national-security establishment had lost its longtime Cold War enemies, the Soviet Union and communism, in 1989. We also emphasized that the war on terrorism would bring grave infringements on the freedoms of the American people as well as damage to our economic well-being through out-of-control federal spending and debt. None of this, we kept saying, was consistent with the principles of a free society.

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**People didn't want to  
hear about blowback from U.S.  
foreign policy.**

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But we were facing a tsunami of public opinion against us, including from many of our supporters. People were viewing the 9/11 attacks like some sort of Pearl Harbor attack on the United States, one that, in their opinion, required the entire nation to band together to fight those who had attacked us out of hatred for our “freedom and values.” They didn’t want to hear about

blowback from U.S. foreign policy or about how crises inevitably lead to a loss of liberty and economic well-being.

### The split

Those were difficult times for FFF. I have never seen more hate mail in all my life. We were accused of being unpatriotic, even traitors, haters of America, cowards, lovers of terrorism, and terrorist sympathizers. We lost much financial support, with many donors abandoning us, unable to comprehend our position or simply disagreeing with it.

Over time, many of our donors returned to us, especially as the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq turned into deadly and destructive fiascoes and as our supporters saw the “war on terrorism” vesting U.S. officials, especially those in the national-security branch of the government, with extraordinary and permanent emergency powers that were characteristic of totalitarian regimes, not governments in free societies.

Nonetheless, there is still a major split in the libertarian movement, with many libertarians reluctant to call for an end to the “war on terrorism” and, even more important, the dismantling of the entire

national-security state apparatus that was grafted onto our federal governmental system at the end of World War II.

How did this split come about? In the past several years, especially as a result of Ron Paul's two campaigns for the Republican presidential nomination, the libertarian movement has been flooded by conservatives of all ages and from all walks of life. Disillusioned by the passion for socialist and fascist programs demonstrated by the conservatives, as manifested by their devotion to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, public (i.e., government) schooling, medical IRAs, farm subsidies, education grants, the Federal Reserve, and countless other statist programs, many conservatives have become attracted to libertarianism primarily because of libertarian economic principles, especially those of the Austrian school, as reflected in the works of Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek.

That migration into the libertarian movement has been, of course, a good thing. What is not good is that all too many of the new libertarians have been unable to let go of their conservatism in specific areas, such as immigration, where they continue to embrace the socialism of immigration central planning

that comes with immigration controls, or in foreign policy, where they continue to support the enormous permanent standing army, the CIA, and the NSA, along with the war on terrorism, foreign interventionism, militarism, foreign wars, secret surveillance, and undeclared wars of aggression.

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**The continued existence of the national-security establishment means the continued loss of freedom for the American people.**

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Libertarians who favor a large military establishment, the CIA, the NSA, and foreign interventionism have come to be known within the libertarian movement as "liberventionists." They support the continued existence of the national-security state as part of the federal governmental system but want to reform it by making it more efficient as well as by intervening overseas only when it is "in our interests," ignoring the fact that U.S. officials, who make the decisions on whether to intervene in a foreign country, always believe that their interventions are "in our interests."

What the interventionists fail to realize is that the continued existence of the national-security establishment means the continued loss

of freedom for the American people. That's because the Pentagon and the CIA will do whatever is necessary to maintain a continued climate of crisis and war in order to justify their existence and the ever-increasing flow of taxpayer money to "defense" contractors. Those perpetual crises and wars, of course, are then used as the excuse for infringing on fundamental rights and liberties. In other words, freedom — genuine freedom — turns on dismantling, not reforming, the national-security apparatus that was grafted onto our original constitutional system at the end of World War II.

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### The Founding Fathers had a deep antipathy toward standing armies.

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Knowing that some of their views are still conservative and not libertarian, many liberventionists remain silent and stay below the radar screen. Others, on the other hand, are constantly trying to subvert young libertarians into accepting their view favoring militarism, empire, and foreign interventionism. That's in fact one of the reasons that FFF focuses much of its attention on college libertarians — to counteract what they are being quietly but persistently told by liber-

ventionists about militarism, empire, and foreign intervention.

### The greatest threat

As we study the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, as well as the events surrounding those three documents, one thing stands out above all else: Our American ancestors were firmly convinced that the greatest threat to the freedom and well-being of the American people would be the federal government. That's why they took such care to strictly limit the federal government's powers to the few enumerated powers within the Constitution. It's also why they demanded the enumeration of the express restrictions on federal power in the Bill of Rights.

It's also why the Founding Fathers had such a deep antipathy toward standing armies. They knew that when governments do bad things to people, they use their troops to carry out those bad things. They also knew that when rulers have large military establishments at their disposal, they inevitably get the nation embroiled in expensive foreign wars and adventures that ultimately bankrupt a nation.

Prior to World War II, the enormous wartime military establish-

ment was always demobilized at the end of a war, leaving a very small military force during peacetime. That changed after World War II, when America's federal governmental system was fundamentally altered by making an enormous military establishment, the CIA, and later the NSA a permanent part of the federal government. Given the enormous power of this national-security establishment, both in terms of military might and information gathering, it effectively became a fourth branch of the federal government, one to which the other three branches increasingly deferred during succeeding decades.

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**Former president Truman stated that the CIA had become a sinister force in American life.**

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In 1961, in what is the most remarkable Farewell Address in U.S. history, Dwight Eisenhower observed that this national-security state apparatus — or what he called the “military-industrial complex” — constituted a fundamental altering of America's governmental structure as well as a grave threat to the freedom and well-being of the American people. Thirty days after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, former president Harry Truman

wrote an op-ed in the *Washington Post* in which he stated that the CIA had become a sinister force in American life.

Some years ago, I was attending a libertarian function when someone approached me and asked, “What do you consider to be the biggest threat to our freedom today?” I didn't hesitate. I answered, “The U.S. national-security state.”

That is what the libertarians, unfortunately, do not understand. Having come into the movement owing primarily to an attraction to free-market, Austrian economics, they look on the military, the CIA, and the NSA as conservatives do — as a friend and protector of our rights and freedoms, when in fact they are, as our American ancestors understood so well, the gravest threat to our rights and freedoms as well as to our economic well-being.

Consider the fact that the president, the military, and the CIA now wield the omnipotent power to take any American into custody, incarcerate him indefinitely, torture him, execute him, or assassinate him, as a suspected terrorist. Deferring to the national-security establishment, the federal courts have upheld the power to do those things both to Americans and to others.



Consider also the massive secret surveillance schemes, upheld by the secretive judicial court that deals with such things, by which the federal government monitors the most private aspects of people's lives.

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**A free society necessarily depends on dismantling both the welfare state and the warfare state.**

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There is no way to reconcile those things with a free society. They are antithetical to the principles of a free society. They violate the most fundamental of libertarian principles. It's not a coincidence that totalitarian regimes have national-security establishments as part of their governmental structure. It's the way they enforce their tyranny. Look at China. Look at Egypt. Look at Chile under Pinochet. Look at the Soviet Union. Look at Nazi Germany.

If libertarians want a free society, then it's not sufficient to simply dismantle the welfare state and adopt an economic system based on Austrian economics — not when government officials wield the totalitarian powers to detain, incarcerate, torture, execute, and assassinate anyone they want. A free society necessarily depends on

dismantling both the welfare state and the warfare state.

The stakes are obviously extraordinarily high. The libertarian movement is the only hope that America has for achieving a free and prosperous society. The welfare-warfare state way of life that both conservatives and liberals have foisted on our nation has brought nothing but chaos, strife, conflict, crisis, misery, suffering, and impoverishment. It is only libertarianism that offers the way out of all this. Thus the fight is not only a fight for the heart and soul of the libertarian movement. It's a fight for the future of freedom for America and, indirectly, for the rest of the world.

## Conclusion

In the wake of the ongoing crises, fiascoes, and disasters in Social Security; health care; the drug war; immigration; federal spending; the national debt; fiat (i.e., paper) money; mortgage loans; public schooling; the drug war; and Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, every American should be asking himself the following important questions: What is the role of government in a free society? Should it be taking money from people to whom it belongs and giving it to others? Should

it be punishing people for engaging in purely peaceful activity? Should it be owning and operating economic enterprises? Should it be engaged in invasions, occupations, wars of aggression, torture, rendition, and assassination; foreign aid; regime-change operations, coups, and partnerships with dictatorial regimes; empire; and foreign interventionism?

Additionally, every libertarian should be asking himself the following important questions: How much do you want to be free? Do you want freedom now or 40 years from now? What is the best way to achieve freedom — by leading people to question the moral and economic legitimacy of the welfare-warfare state way of life or simply by encouraging people to reform it?

Today, many older libertarians favor funding young libertarians because they're "the hope for the future." There is just one big problem with that concept: that's what older people said to me when I discovered libertarianism 40 years ago, when I was in my late 20s. "We have to invest in you young people," they said to us, "because you're the hope for the future." Well, we're the older people today and yet many of us are saying the same thing that the older

people said to us when we were young: "We need to invest in young people because they're the hope for the future." Who's to say that today's young people, 40 years from now, won't say the same thing to the young people of their time, thereby making the achievement of freedom a never-never proposition?

I say: let's not wait for another 40 years to bring a free society to America. I say: Let's not be reformers of the status quo. Let's instead be dismantlers of the welfare-warfare state. Let's lead the world now to the freest, most prosperous, most peaceful, and most secure society in history.

Why don't we compromise here at FFF? Because we want to be free, because freedom is possible, and because achieving freedom depends on adhering to principle.

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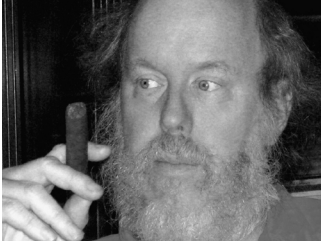
*Jacob Hornberger is founder and president of The Future of Freedom Foundation.*

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**NEXT MONTH:**  
"Opposing America's Entry  
into World War II"  
by Jacob G. Hornberger

# The Failure of the Americans with Disabilities Act

by James Bovard



The Americans with Disabilities Act was enacted 25 years ago. It promised a brave new era of equality and freedom. Instead, it has spawned endless lawsuits and absurd federal decrees while harming some of the people it sought to relieve.

The original law was badly drafted and subsequent amendments and administrative decrees have made it far worse. The 1990 ADA defined disability as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities” — a far broader definition than what previously prevailed in the statute book. In 2008, Congress vastly expanded that definition to include people with diabe-

tes, depression, heart disease, or cancer, as well as people who have significant troubles “standing, sitting, reaching, lifting, bending, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating and interacting with others.” The EEOC decreed last year that even pregnancy can often qualify as a disability that entitles a person to special treatment.

The ADA is known as “Attorney’s Dreams Answered” because it has spurred hundreds of thousands of lawsuits, often for violations of arcane architectural standards. As early as 1995, one federal judge denounced an ADA lawsuit as “a blatant attempt to extort money” — something for which the law is now notorious. A California P.F. Chang restaurant was sued because the coat hook on the inside door of an accessible toilet stall was at an improper height. The *New York Times* reported in 2012 that the ADA had unleashed a “flood of lawsuits” against New York City delis, bagel shops, flower shops, and other businesses that many people considered nothing more than “ambulance chasing.” Miami lawyer Michael Casey observed that many ADA claims are “a legal form of extortion, and the ADA is all-purpose extortion.”

Barack Obama declared in July that “thanks to the ADA, the places

that comprise our shared American life — schools, workplaces, movie theaters, courthouses, buses, baseball stadiums, national parks — they truly belong to everyone.” But workplaces do not “belong to everyone” — they are mostly privately owned, but the feds have often used the ADA to commandeer them. For instance, the Justice Department dictated exactly how miniature golf courses must be configured and slanted for the ease of wheelchair users.

### Officially wacky

Many ADA decrees defy common sense. The Los Angeles Disabled Access Appeals Commission invoked the ADA to force the Odd Ball Cabaret, a strip joint, to close a shower stall on its stage. The commission ruled that since the stall would not be accessible to a stripper in a wheelchair, the business discriminated against disabled women. It didn't matter that there were no wheelchair-bound strippers.

The ADA also provides “freedom” to the handicapped by sacrificing other people's safety. The EEOC sued United Parcel Service in 1997 for refusing to hire one-eyed drivers for its big trucks. EEOC lawyer Bill Tamayo told *Traffic World*, “If they [UPS] feel that these people

cannot do the job, then let them prove it. Don't assume that people with one eye cannot drive.” Yet, the National Transportation Safety Board prohibits one-eyed drivers from driving any truck above 10,000 pounds. “Fairness” apparently obliges people to let themselves get killed by truck drivers with little or no depth perception.

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**Workplaces do not “belong to everyone” — they are mostly privately owned.**

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The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was sued for \$20 million by David Schultz, a deaf lifeguard, who was dismissed after the YMCA, seeking to comply with the ADA, established stricter guidelines on who could be a lifeguard. The YMCA ruled that lifeguards must be able to “hear noises and distress signals”; Mr. Schultz is “profoundly deaf” but claims to have “enhanced visual alertness.” Perhaps a “reasonable accommodation” would be to require everyone who goes swimming at the YMCA to learn sign language and promise not to go under for the third time until they have caught the lifeguard's eye.

While many Americans initially supported the ADA to help people

with severe physical handicaps, claims of mental, emotional, and psychological handicaps have exploded, thanks to the law. A 1999 Surgeon General's report declared that "22 percent of the population has a diagnosable mental disorder." People claiming to suffer from depression account for the most common "mental disability" complaint. The Census Bureau reported that 7 million adults claim "being frequently depressed or anxious such that it interfered with ordinary activities."

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### The ADA's vagueness spurs many wacky claims.

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The EEOC issued rules in 1997 that may compel employers to accommodate workers taking antidepressants by letting them arrive later in the morning or provide time off for workers who announce they are "depressed and stressed." The ADA is degenerating into a federal entitlement program for people who claim to be unhappy — with the bill sent to whoever happens to be paying their salary at the time.

A federal court ruled in 2013 that anxiety over potentially getting fired qualifies as a sufficient disability — thus making terminating an underperforming teacher a viola-

tion of the ADA. An Ohio high-school teacher claimed she was disabled by "pedophobia" (fear of children) and unable to accept reassignment to a middle school (a federal appeals court disagreed).

Many colleges have been roiled by masses of students claiming to be disabled by little more than fear of hard work or bad grades. According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities, "15-20 percent of the U.S. population has some sort of learning disability." In the first five years after the ADA was enacted, the number of Boston University students requesting disabilities accommodations rose tenfold.

The EEOC announced in 1999 that companies must allow disabled employees "to work at home as a reasonable accommodation." As *Human Resources* magazine noted, "EEOC guidelines and recent court decisions will force employers to justify their attendance requirements in ADA cases and reconsider attendance rules."

The ADA's vagueness spurs many wacky claims that employers must spend tens of thousands of dollars to rebuff. A school custodian claimed that he had been fired because of a hearing problem; a court rejected his claim because the same guy had terrorized other em-

ployees, in some cases making death threats. (He was also fired in part because he was running an ADA consulting business on the side during his school job.)

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**The ADA has made it far more difficult for employers to deal with alcohol-abusing employees.**

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The ADA has made it far more difficult for employers to deal with alcohol-abusing employees who could pose a threat to themselves, co-workers, or customers. An Oregon police officer who was fired after he crashed his undercover car while intoxicated sued for \$6 million in damages, claiming the ADA protected him because of his alcoholism. The ADA also spurred Northwest Airlines to rehire an airplane pilot who had been fired after being caught flying a passenger jet while legally drunk. Roger Clegg of the Center for Equal Opportunity observed after the Justice Department intervened, “A bar in Illinois agreed to modify its policy of refusing to serve alcohol to customers who appear to be drunk based on the way they walk because a customer with Parkinson’s disease had been refused service.”

When Congress enacted the ADA in 1990, probably no one was

expecting that the law would compel schools to prohibit kids from bringing peanut butter sandwiches for their lunch. But after food allergies were recognized as a bona fide disability, some schools have done exactly that.

### Creating unemployment

President Obama declared, “The ADA offered millions of people the opportunity to earn a living and help support their families.” But the ADA has actually been a disaster at helping the disabled find work and become financially self-reliant. The percentage of disabled who are employed has fallen sharply since the ADA was enacted. A Massachusetts Institute of Technology study concluded that the ADA reduced employment “of disabled men of all working ages and all disabled women under age 40.” Russell Redenbaugh, a blind businessman who was a member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, warned in the late 1990s, “My own fear is that the ADA implementing regulations can have a chilling effect on the hiring of the disabled.”

While the feds are twisting arms to try to boost disabled employment, federal disability payments subvert that goal by rewarding people with borderline conditions to

stay out of the work force and enjoy tax-free income. Obama's Social Security Administration is even giving disability payments to Puerto Ricans whose only handicap is lack of English fluency — even though most of the work on that island is conducted in Spanish. That is typical of the schizophrenia that has long plagued federal disability policy. Office of Personnel Management chief Don Devine told me in 1985, “We allow some employees to retire on disability who have much less severe handicaps than many of those we encourage the agencies to hire.”

The ADA is essentially a federal command for people to treat certain other people “nice” — with harsh penalties for any behavior considered not nice — and with niceness defined on a case-by-case basis through endless court cases and complaint settlements.

The ADA illustrates how the moral ideals and goodwill of the American people toward a group that most people want to help are exploited by politicians and government bureaucrats. Once that goodwill supposedly gets canonized in the law, the sky is the limit to how much power government can extort. The more benefits the government mandates, the more incentive people have to declare themselves disabled.

A policy designed to help the disabled instead mushrooms the number of people claiming to need help. University of Rochester professor of economics Walter Y. Oi (who himself is blind) observed, “The ADA will result in an inflated population of disabled persons whose welfare will become increasingly dependent upon an ever-growing federal bureaucracy.”

American attitudes toward the disabled have become far more compassionate, humane, and rational in the last half-century. The ADA, by sowing so much unnecessary conflict, threatens this progress. It is time to admit that relying on a federal iron fist has subverted freedom and badly served America's disabled. Good intentions are no excuse for perpetual legal chaos.

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*James Bovard serves as policy advisor to The Future of Freedom Foundation and is the author of a new ebook memoir, Public Policy Hooligan, as well as Attention Deficit Democracy and eight other books.*

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**NEXT MONTH:**  
“The Great Sugar Robbery  
Continues”  
by James Bovard

# The Morality of Libertarianism

by *Laurence M. Vance*



**L**ibertarianism is a political philosophy that says that people should be free from government interference to live their life any way they desire and engage in any economic activity they choose as long as their actions are peaceful and consensual and they don't violate the personal or property rights of others. It is that simple. Violence is justified only in defense of person or property against violence. Nonaggression — that is the libertarian creed. And that is the essence of libertarianism. One's lifestyle has nothing to do with it.

Liberal and conservative smears of libertarianism are legion. Libertarians are said to be naive, utopian, idealistic, materialistic, and nihilistic. They disdain religion and reject tradition. They are disciples of

Rousseau. They are too individualistic. They have nostalgia for a fictional past. They have no compassion for the poor. They don't believe in social justice. They are weak on national security. They are pacifists and isolationists. Libertarianism aspires, like Marxism, to reduce social life to economics. It treats children like adults. It believes that man is inherently good. "Libertarianism," according to conservative Jonah Goldberg, "is an ideology best suited for young folks. It compellingly tells kids everything they want to be told." Libertarians "fetishize change, assuming it to be always and everywhere good."

But above all, liberals and conservatives like to characterize libertarians as libertines and hedonists who celebrate alternative life-styles and don't believe in moral principles or absolutes. The trump card they play has two sides: libertarians are all moral relativists and libertarianism is immoral.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Libertarianism celebrates things such as individual liberty, private property, peaceful activity, voluntary interaction, laissez faire, personal freedom, financial privacy, individual responsibility, free enterprise, free markets, free speech, free



thought, and a free society. There is nothing inherently immoral about any of those things.

There are two things generally cited by opponents of libertarianism to “prove” that libertarianism is immoral: the attitude of libertarians toward prostitution and their stand on drug use. Those are always the two sticking points, not because libertarians promote, endorse, defend, or practice them, but because they don’t believe the government should interfere with the voluntary, private, peaceful activity of consenting adults.

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**Vices are not crimes and every crime needs to have a victim.**

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Regarding prostitution, libertarians reason that if it is legal for a woman to provide free sexual services as often as she wants and to as many people as she wants, then it shouldn’t be illegal for her to charge for performing the same services. Especially since someone’s indirectly paying for sex by paying for dinner and a movie is not a crime.

Regarding drug use, libertarians reason that it makes no sense for the government to wage war on illegal drugs, when tobacco, alcohol, and prescription drugs kill far more people every year. Tobacco use

costs the U.S. economy billions of dollars every year in medical costs and lost productivity and causes hundreds of thousands of premature deaths every year from heart disease, stroke, cancer, and smoking-related diseases. Alcohol is also one of the leading causes of premature deaths in the United States. Alcohol abuse is a factor in many drownings; suicides; fires; violent crimes; child-abuse cases; sex crimes; and home, pedestrian, car, and boating accidents. More than 100,000 people die every year from drugs prescribed and administered by physicians. More than two million Americans a year have in-hospital adverse drug reactions. And thousands of people die every year from reactions to aspirin.

But the main reasons libertarians have their attitude toward prostitution and drug use are simply that vices are not crimes and that every crime needs to have a victim. That doesn’t mean that libertarians don’t think the practices are immoral. It just means that they believe that it is not the proper function of government to arrest people for them or seek to limit them.

The vice list used against libertarians used to also regularly include gambling and pornography, but since now almost every state

has a lottery, there are casinos scattered all across the country, pornography is available for sale on newsstands, and porn is freely available on the Internet, libertarianism's detractors don't much mention those two vices anymore. And how can they? All the gambling and pornography viewing that takes place cannot be laid solely at the feet of libertarians any more than soliciting prostitutes and taking illegal drugs can. No political ideology has a monopoly on vice and bad habits.

### Lifestyle libertarians

Some of the criticism of libertarianism is deserved: a small, but vocal, minority of libertarians have unfortunately given liberals and conservatives the impression that libertarianism is a social attitude or lifestyle.

Those libertarians say or imply that libertarians should celebrate change for change's sake; live an alternative lifestyle; partake of illegal drugs; embrace the feminist movement; support abortion on demand; defend same-sex marriage; celebrate hedonism, licentiousness, and libertinism even if they don't live that way; do something illegal; view pornography; own a gun; enjoy a particular kind of art; have a par-

ticular musical taste; and celebrate diversity for diversity's sake.

And, at the same time, they also say or imply that libertarians should reject organized religion, not work for a large corporation, not be socially conservative, disdain tradition, and never discriminate.

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**Libertarianism as a political philosophy cannot be said to be immoral.**

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Whether any of those things is right, wrong, moral, immoral, good, or bad is irrelevant. Libertarians who say or imply them are improperly expanding libertarianism beyond its core nonaggression principle. Libertarianism has nothing to do with anyone's lifestyle, tastes, vices, sex life, traditions, religion, aesthetics, sensibilities, outlook, or cultural norms. An individual libertarian might be a moral relativist — as might an individual liberal or conservative — but libertarianism as a political philosophy cannot be said to be immoral.

That being said, libertarianism, even narrowly defined, does not oppose the educational efforts, debate, argumentation, media campaigns, organized boycotts, social ostracism, or other nonviolent, noncoercive methods of persuasion

of others — libertarians or otherwise — to effect changes in their public and private behavior. It is liberals and conservatives who advocate government aggression and violence against peaceful people's person or property to achieve some desired end.

### Is it moral?

Although they accuse libertarians of being moral relativists, it is liberals and conservatives alike who support the immoral actions of government.

- Is it moral to charge someone with the commission of a crime when there is no victim?
- Is it moral to force some Americans to pay for the health care of other Americans?
- Is it moral to make someone get a license or permission from the government before he can open a business?
- Is it moral to treat vices as crimes?
- Is it moral to incarcerate anyone but violent criminals?
- Is it moral to commit someone to an institution against his will?
- Is it moral to send a soldier

to fight an unnecessary and unjust war?

- Is it moral to force people to pay for the education of other people's children?
- Is it moral to arrest, fine, or imprison someone for using drugs, when alcohol is readily available?
- Is it moral to take money from people without their consent and give it away to foreign governments?
- Is it moral to charge someone with the commission of a crime when no one's personal or property rights are violated?
- Is it moral for one person to live at the expense of another?
- Is it moral to criminalize marijuana, when tobacco kills tens of thousands every year?
- Is it moral for an immoral government to legislate morality?
- Is it moral to take money from some people and redistribute it to others?
- Is it moral to initiate force against someone who hasn't himself initiated force against another?
- Is it moral to demand that "the poor" have a right to the earnings of "the rich"?

- Is it moral to lock someone in a cage for years for possessing a plant the government doesn't approve of?
- Is it moral to sentence someone to life in prison for a drug "crime," when rapists don't serve that long?
- Is it moral to force people to contribute to a retirement program?
- Is it moral to force people to be charitable?

I think the answers are obvious.

### Is it immoral?

Conservatives and liberals have it backwards; it is violating the tenets of libertarianism that is immoral.

- Is it immoral to let someone keep the fruits of his labor?
- Is it immoral to let someone live and let live?
- Is it immoral for charity, relief, and philanthropy to be voluntary activities?
- Is it immoral to let Americans spend their money however they choose?
- Is it immoral to permit buyers and sellers to freely exchange with each other for mutual gain?
- Is it immoral to allow people to engage in commerce with whomever they choose?
- Is it immoral to let every individual be free to pursue happiness in his own way?
- Is it immoral to believe that the initiation of force to achieve a political, or other goal, is wrong?
- Is it immoral to believe that acts of theft and violence are still wrong when committed by government?
- Is it immoral to allow people to live their lives any way they choose as long as their conduct is peaceful?
- Is it immoral for the government to just leave people alone who are not threatening or aggressing against the person or property of others?
- Is it immoral to allow people to participate in any activity with anyone else as long as their behavior is consensual?
- Is it immoral to want everyone — including government — to live by the nonaggression principle?
- Is it immoral to allow people to engage in any economic enterprise or activity of their choosing without getting permission from the government?

- Is it immoral for people to just mind their own business?
- Is it immoral to allow people to associate or not associate with whomever they choose as long as their associations are mutually voluntary?
- Is it immoral to want the government to stay out of people's bedrooms?
- Is it immoral to allow people to accumulate wealth as long as they don't defraud anyone?
- Is it immoral to allow people to do business or not do business with whomever they choose?
- Is it immoral to let someone do what he wants with his own property?
- Is it immoral to want to live in a free society?

Again, I think the answers are obvious.

It is liberalism and conservatism that have a morality problem, not libertarianism. It is liberals and conservatives who support the immoral actions of government and demonize genuinely moral impulses. "Libertarians," as economist Robert Higgs has said, "should never concede the moral high ground to those who insist on coercively interfering with freedom."

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*It is the responsibility of the patriot to protect his country from its government.*

— Thomas Paine

# Free Markets and Human Freedom

*by Dean Russell*

Where the market is freest, human liberty is highest. If labor is controlled (e.g., slavery), there is neither a free market nor freedom. If capital is controlled (e.g., government ownership), you can't produce without permission; that's not freedom. The free-market economy and human freedom are mutually dependent; destroy one, and the other automatically falls....

Governments control people (you and me) and nothing else. Governments tell the seller of a loaf of bread (or the owner of a rental apartment) what price to charge. Thus, it's obviously the owner who's controlled; the price itself couldn't care less.

Sometimes the specific price the owner must charge is the minimum. Sometimes it's the maximum. Sometimes the same price is both minimum and maximum. Whichever, it's never the price that would be determined by peaceful people freely exchanging their goods and services in the market place. And always the control is on

the person who owns the product or service. The process is one of "people control," and (as Bastiat said) the inevitable result is loss of freedom, independence, and personal dignity — as well as the production of fewer goods and services....

My thesis is that the free market economy is the key to all freedoms. In fact, the market and freedom are really synonymous terms....

Just as the government can't control prices (but only people), just so is it absurd to imagine that the government can support prices. Without exception, the only thing that any government can ever do is (in one way or another) control people, i.e., to prevent us from doing what we want to do, or to compel us to do what we don't want to do. Thus, it follows that the government's price-support program for agriculture necessarily deprives farmers of their freedom. And it most surely does just that....

[The] only thing any government can ever do, even in its proper function of preserving the peace, is to control people — to compel us to do what we don't want to do, or to prevent us from doing what we want to do. That procedure is, of course, the proper way to stop murderers and thieves and rapists; for

clearly, the police powers of government should be used to prevent those anti-social people from imposing their desires upon others by violence. But when the same powers are used against peaceful persons in their peaceful activities, freedom is always and undeniably infringed.

For example, every American has lost his freedom to save or to spend his earnings as he pleases. Our government compels all of us to “save” (actually, it’s a tax) a portion of our wages and salaries — that is, the government taxes away a portion and promises to give it back (sometimes more, sometimes less) at some later date. This compulsory scheme is called Social Security, and it is generally cited as the essence of true freedom for the people. Perhaps as many as 75 per cent of the American people are now in favor of this loss of personal choice (freedom) and would categorically oppose any suggestion to return to a situation in which each person is responsible for his own welfare in a market economy.

And so it goes — through hundreds and thousands of government prohibitions and compulsions

in the peaceful economic affairs of men and women. Without exception, every one of them is a direct loss of freedom of choice and responsibility.

Again ... the only control that any government can exercise is people control. Any attempt to control things must necessarily involve the control of people, and that is undeniably a loss of freedom....

[Our] essentially free economy must drift into an essentially controlled economy, if the present trend continues. That will be the end of human freedom in the United States, and probably in the world. All other freedoms — press, speech, franchise, religion — must necessarily disappear with the loss of the free economy. For the fact remains: In a totally controlled economy, it is not the economy but the people who are totally controlled.

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*Dean Russell served on the staff of The Foundation for Economic Education. This essay was published in the March 1985 issue of FEE’s journal, The Freeman. Reprinted with permission.*

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# The Political Economy of “Exporting” Democracy

by Christopher J. Coyne



In 1917, President Woodrow Wilson justified the American entry into World War I on the ground that it was necessary to make the world “safe for democracy.” Since that time, U.S. presidents have used this same line of reasoning to justify military interventions around the world. More than eight decades after Wilson’s decree, George W. Bush stated that “it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.” And a 2011 White House press release noted the Obama administration’s commitment to the “goal of helping provide the Libyan people an opportunity

to transform their country, by installing a democratic system that respects the people’s will.”

Promoting regime change in the name of democracy and freedom sounds noble and heroic to many. But rarely, if ever, do politicians, citizens, and pundits consider whether the U.S. government can actually achieve its stated goals. More common is an unconstrained view that assumes that the U.S. government can do whatever its members put their minds to. The unconstrained view was captured nicely in comments by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in a 2010 talk to the Council on Foreign Relations, when she noted that “Americans have always risen to the challenges we have faced. That is who we are. It is in our DNA. We do believe there are no limits on what is possible or what can be achieved.”

There are strong moral arguments against the use of military intervention, and those arguments are very important. However, it is of crucial importance to engage in the positive analysis of military intervention. A positive analysis involves taking the ends stated by policymakers as given (e.g., exporting democracy) and focusing on the means invoked to achieve those ends to determine whether they are



feasible in practice. Focusing on the actual ability of policymakers to achieve their desired ends is important because discussions of foreign intervention often devolve into ideological debates with no clear resolution.

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**Economists emphasize that people face constraints and respond to incentives.**

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For instance, Republicans contend that the Democrats are “soft” on the war on terror and can’t stomach the sacrifices that are required to spread democracy and freedom around the world. Democrats often respond that the Republicans botched the current efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan with poor planning and a general lack of “effort.” If only better planning had taken place prior to occupations, the argument goes, the United States would not be mired in these situations.

Employing the tools of economics affords the opportunity to put aside ideological issues. Economists emphasize that people face constraints (e.g., knowledge, information, and income) and respond to incentives. Incentives refer to factors influencing human behavior by changing the relative costs and benefits. When the benefits associated

with a certain behavior increase, people engage in more of it. Likewise, when the costs associated with a certain behavior increase, people engage in less of it. From an economic standpoint, military occupation is all about constraints and incentives. All of the various individuals (i.e., members of the military, bureaucrats, policymakers, politicians, citizens and policymakers in the occupied country, and politicians in neighboring countries) involved in foreign interventions face certain constraints and incentives that contribute to ultimate success or failure. The application of the economic way of thinking to foreign intervention goes a long way in explaining why a large majority of U.S. efforts to export democracy abroad through military occupation have failed dismally.

### **The knowledge problem**

The most significant constraint facing policymakers and occupiers is the fundamental knowledge problem of establishing the foundations of a free society where they do not already exist. Many agree on the general characteristics of a free society — protection of individual and property rights, freedom of speech, rule of law — but the knowledge of how to effectively de-

sign and impose those characteristics is lacking.

The lack of knowledge regarding the factors leading to liberal democracy is captured in the following list of propositions put forth by political scientist Doh C. Shin:

- (1) There are few preconditions for the emergence of democracy;
- (2) No single factor is sufficient or necessary to the emergence of democracy;
- (3) The emergence of democracy in a country is the result of a combination of causes;
- (4) The causes responsible for the emergence of democracy are not the same as those promoting its consolidation;
- (5) The combination of causes promoting democratic transition and consolidation varies from country to country; and,
- (6) The combination of causes generally responsible for one wave of democratization differs from those responsible for other waves.

Success in military occupation is not simply a matter of taking the rules that work in one society and imposing them on another society. This point is illustrated not only by

the many failed U.S. foreign interventions but also by the failure of several Latin American countries to effectively mimic the U.S. Constitution.

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**The ability to transport rules between societies is constrained by the fact that underlying belief systems differ across societies.**

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The ability to transport rules between societies is constrained by the fact that underlying belief systems, values, and ideals often differ across societies. What works in the United States will not work in the Middle East, just as what worked in Japan and West Germany following World War II is a very poor guide for current and future foreign interventions.

The knowledge problem is almost always ignored by policymakers and supposed foreign-policy “experts.” As Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the former commander of the U.S. forces in Afghanistan, noted, “We didn’t know enough and we still don’t know enough.... Most of us — me included — had a very superficial understanding of the situation and history [of Afghanistan], and we had a frighteningly simplistic view of recent history, the last 50 years.” Given the lack of knowledge

regarding the foundations of liberal democracy, why should we expect foreign occupiers to be successful in attempts to establish those institutions at gunpoint? The knowledge problem facing policymakers and occupiers prevents them from creating the incentives necessary for a free society. That realization alone should lead us to be extremely skeptical of the ability of the U.S. government to “export” liberal democratic institutions abroad through military intervention.

Unfortunately, the knowledge problem has not stopped U.S. policymakers from using foreign military interventions to foster political, social, and economic change. Instead of recognizing the fundamental limitations of their efforts, they typically focused on the amount of “effort” in the form of time spent planning, monetary and humanitarian aid, troop levels, the timing of elections, and exit strategy. Unfortunately, that overlooks the deeper issue — policymakers do not have the relevant knowledge to achieve their desired ends.

### The economics of politics

Politics is central to any foreign occupation. Therefore, it is important to consider the incentives facing those involved in the political

system and the subsequent impact on military interventions and occupations. To illustrate that, consider three of the key categories of actors in military occupations:

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**Policymakers do not have the relevant knowledge to achieve their desired ends.**

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**Elected officials.** Elected officials in the United States make decisions regarding where and when to deploy military forces abroad. Economics suggests that the decisions of elected politicians are often shortsighted in nature. For elected officials who are constrained by a term limit, the main focus is on obtaining benefits during their time in office, even if the shorter-term benefits entail great costs that will be incurred in future periods. That is because current politicians will not incur “bills” that come due in the future, since they will be out of office. That logic applies to military intervention just as to any other policy.

For example, in 2002 Larry Lindsey, an economic advisor in George W. Bush’s administration, announced that the Iraq War could cost in the range of \$100–\$200 billion. In order to maintain public support for the war efforts, the Bush administration rejected those num-

bers as a significant overestimate. According to the Cost of War project at Brown University, direct outlays for the Iraq War were more than \$800 billion through 2014. Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes have estimated that the war and reconstruction in Iraq could cost closer to \$3 trillion when all is said and done and all direct and indirect costs are taken into account.

**Bureaucrats.** The occupation and reconstruction of Afghanistan and Iraq have been characterized by infighting among various agencies and bureaus within the U.S. government. Many blame that on poor planning and management on the part of the Bush administration. However, the economics of bureaucracy predicts that this is the outcome we should expect no matter which political party is in power. Consider the incentives that bureaucrats face. Absent profit and loss to judge their effectiveness, the success of a bureau is judged by the size of its budget and the number of bureaucrats employed. Foreign occupations provide an excellent opportunity to increase both. While bureaus are supposed to be working together toward some common goal, the result is that they end up fighting with each other in the hopes of establishing a dominant

position and securing a bigger share of the resources associated with the intervention.

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### Private firms also seek to influence foreign interventions.

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**Special-interest groups.** In addition to bureaucrats, private firms also seek to influence foreign interventions and secure a share of the associated monetary budget. Central to the process of securing contracts and significant roles in the intervention are the relationships between those firms and elected officials and bureaucrats. A recent example from Afghanistan nicely illustrates this logic.

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Agriculture partnered with the American Soybean Association to launch the Agricultural Renewal of Afghanistan Initiative at a cost of \$34 million. The stated goal of the initiative was to create a thriving soybean industry in Afghanistan. Four years later, an audit of the initiative concluded that it was a complete waste. There was little to no demand for soybeans in Afghanistan, and the environmental conditions were not conducive to growing the crop. Members of the American Soybean Association were enriched at the expense of

American taxpayers who ended up footing the bill for the sham project. This example of pure waste may be considered minor, given that it is estimated that at least \$7 billion has been wasted in Afghanistan in total. However, it is an important example precisely because it is so minor. If something like a small agricultural initiative is doomed by rampant cronyism, why should we expect more-grandiose projects to be any different? We should not, as foreign military interventions encourage widespread fraud and corruption.

A massive military-industrial-aid complex emerged in the post-World War II period, consisting of a dynamic set of political, bureaucratic, and economic interests seeking to influence foreign policy regardless of the need or viability of a particular policy. Those bureaucracies and special-interest groups view foreign interventions as a lucrative profit opportunity. Politicians from both of the main political parties rely on the fear of foreign threats to maximize their votes. The perverse incentives created by political institutions affect foreign interventions by influencing policies and outcomes in a manner conducive to dysfunction and failure.

### The failure of central planning (again)

The main insights from the economic way of thinking regarding foreign intervention and military occupation can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Policymakers and occupiers face an array of constraints, both internal and external to the country being occupied, which make reconstruction efforts more likely to fail than to succeed.
- (2) The failure of foreign interventions and reconstruction efforts is not a matter of political ideology or the political party in charge, nor is it an issue of “trying harder” with more troops, money, the timing of elections, or better planning.
- (3) The failure of foreign intervention and reconstruction efforts is due to: the fundamental inability of government to centrally plan the complex array of formal and informal institutions of a free and prosperous society, and political incentives that lead to waste, cronyism, and dysfunction.

Together, those implications make me extremely skeptical of the

ability of the U.S. government to produce liberal institutional change in foreign societies. The sheer complexity of the situation, combined with the perverse political incentives, is good reason to be predisposed against foreign military interventions. Just as the work of Ludwig von Mises, F.A. Hayek, James Buchanan, Gordon Tullock, and others leads us to be skeptical about the ability of government to achieve grandiose initiatives domestically, so too should we be skeptical that government can do so internationally, where the complexities are often far greater.

With the collapse of socialism, there is widespread consensus regarding the futility of economic central planning. Unfortunately, the same logic has not been extended to foreign interventions that attempt to centrally plan economic, legal, social, and political institutions. Like socialism, more-recent efforts at central planning are likely to fail to achieve the desired end.

If U.S. policymakers and citizens are serious about improving the well-being of those in other societies, there are ways to do so that do not involve military intervention. For example, allowing for the free movement of people, goods, and services would improve the well-being of the poorest in the world. Such policies do not require central planning but, rather, the removal of barriers to individual freedom and discovery. At the same time, that approach will minimize the significant costs of foreign intervention, which include not just monetary costs but also the loss of domestic freedoms and liberties associated with an activist and meddling foreign policy.

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*Christopher J. Coyne is the F.A. Harper Professor of Economics at George Mason University. His most recent book is Doing Bad by Doing Good: Why Humanitarian Action Fails.*

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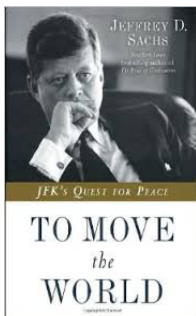
## Two Days in the Life of President John F. Kennedy

by Michael Swanson

*Two Days in June: John F. Kennedy and the 48 Hours That Made History* by Andrew Cohen (McClelland & Stewart, 2014), 404 pages.



*To Move the World: JFK's Quest for Peace* by Jeffrey Sachs (Random House, 2013), 249 pages.



November 22, 2013, marked the passage of fifty years since John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. The milestone garnered a lot of media attention and also sparked something of a boom in books about Kennedy. Almost all of them were celebratory of his life and his presidency, but some of them also attempted to draw lessons from his leadership and time in office that could be applied to today.

Historians now know more about the Kennedy years than they have ever before, thanks to the declassification of records following the Oliver Stone movie *JFK*, which sparked a public campaign to release records pertaining to and surrounding Kennedy's assassination. Congress formed the Assassination Records Review Board as a result. Although some records examined by the board are still due to be released in 2017, the board declassified more than four million pages of records. Many of them had to do with Kennedy's foreign policies.

In July 1962, Kennedy set up a secret tape-recording system and began to record 260 hours of meetings and phone calls. The Kennedy library released those tapes, and the Miller Center at the University of Virginia has transcribed them up to

the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis in October of that year and published them.

These fly-on-the-wall recordings are a great source that helps us better understand those particular months and the decision-making process of Kennedy and his advisors during the missile crisis. However, the following months have yet to be transcribed for the public, so there will be more material for people to learn from in the future.

All of this new information and the passage of time itself have enriched the historian's understanding of Kennedy. Interpretations of those years have changed as a result. In the past, some have portrayed Kennedy as a reckless Cold Warrior. The disaster of the Bay of Pigs invasion, in which 1,500 CIA-backed Cuban exiles invaded the island of Cuba, only to find themselves so helplessly outnumbered that they surrendered in two days, seems to back up that impression. And so does the dangerous nuclear brinksmanship of the Cuban Missile Crisis. And there has been an endless debate on what Kennedy would have done in Vietnam if he had lived. But the new materials of recent years have generated works that give a more nuanced look at what was really going on. Kennedy

can now be seen as more restrained than reckless, because we now know that he turned down calls for armed intervention in Laos, Vietnam, and Cuba over and over again throughout his presidency.

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**The Cuban Missile Crisis marked a turning point in his administration that led to a thaw in the Cold War.**

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One common thread in writings about the Kennedy administration is that the president made a mistake in approving the failed invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs and afterwards never again would he blindly listen to his foreign-policy advisors. Another theme is that the Cuban Missile Crisis marked a turning point in his administration that led to a thaw in the Cold War and a move towards peace on the part of the president of the United States and the Soviet premier, Nikita Khrushchev.

### Two speeches

Two recent books, *Two Days in June*, by journalist Andrew Cohen, and *To Move the World*, by economist Jeffrey Sachs, take up this theme of peace. Cohen's book focuses on two speeches that Kennedy gave on consecutive days, which



Cohen sees as turning points in American history. He sees them as “tipping points” in which the president made a “pivot” and became a true leader.

The first speech is a famous commencement address that Kennedy delivered at American University on June 10, 1961. In that address, which came almost eight months after the Cuban Missile Crisis, Kennedy broke from the harsh rhetoric used by leaders of both the Soviet Union and the United States at various times during the Cold War.

This speech has taken the name “the peace speech,” but Kennedy titled it “A Strategy of Peace.” A desire for a thaw in the Cold War was not new. Dwight Eisenhower had hoped for one towards the end of his presidency and had high hopes that he might be able to make some deal to limit the nuclear arms race with Khrushchev, only to see his hopes dashed by the downing of an American U-2 spy plane over the Soviet Union. John Kennedy also spoke of a willingness to negotiate with the Soviets in his inaugural address.

“But he also knew,” writes Cohen, “in the shadow of the Cuban Missile Crisis, that it was now time to try a new approach to peace. The way to do that was not to demonize

the Russians — the code of the Cold War — but to humanize them.”

Instead of speaking of the Soviet Union as an evil enemy that should never even be talked with, Kennedy said that it could be possible to make agreements with it if such deals were in the best interests of both parties. But to do so would mean that Americans would have to revisit their own attitudes towards the Soviets and be willing to “live together in mutual tolerance.”

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**“Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace.”**

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He also asked, “What kind of a peace do we seek? Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children....”

Such words seem out of place today, when the American military talks of maintaining “full spectrum dominance” and some political leaders of recent years in both parties have spoken of the virtues of

empire. Kennedy used this address to work towards a treaty that banned the further testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere and declared that the United States would no longer engage in any more airborne atomic tests as long as the Soviets did not. And the move worked. Within a few months the two sides signed an agreement and the Senate ratified it.

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**The president did something no president had done up to that time: denounce racial segregation as a moral wrong.**

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Kennedy saw that as just one step towards peace in the Cold War. He gave an address at the United Nations offering to explore a joint space program with the Soviet Union to the moon. But the moves towards peace on both sides came to an end with his assassination and the removal of Khrushchev from power almost one year later.

Cohen also focuses on a televised address to the nation that Kennedy gave the very next day concerning civil rights and racial segregation. With the bulk of Democrats in the Senate and Congress coming from the South, the Kennedy administration tried to avoid the issue of civil rights. But events

forced it to take a stand and the president did so with this address that did something no president had done up to that time: denounce racial segregation as a moral wrong.

“It was the moment that a president pivoted. Kennedy was moving from a detachment to engagement, from being a transaction president — as political scientists would classify leadership of a certain type a half-century later — to a transformative one,” writes Cohen. Kennedy’s address would lead to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Andrew Cohen’s book works as a micro study of those two very important days in the history of the Kennedy administration. It documents to the best that it can all of his movements during those 48 hours. As you read the book you see whom he met with and whom he talked with, and even see him escape from the White House for a quick dinner party with some friends. It makes for an entertaining read that makes history come alive.

However, there is always a danger in any work of history that focuses on one event to magnify its importance or to fail to put it in context. Luckily both of these events are as important as Cohen says they are, but there is still much to be learned.

## Departing from the national-security state

Jeffrey Sachs's book, *To Move The World*, also focuses on Kennedy's American University address and what he calls "JFK's quest for peace" with the Soviet Union in the last few months of his presidency. Instead of focusing on Kennedy's daily activities, Sachs focuses on several of his speeches that he gave on this topic.

Sachs is an economist who has written books titled the *End of Poverty* and *Common Wealth* and who seeks global government cooperation to create "inclusive and environmentally sustainable growth." He views the Cold War confrontation as the issue of that time and the impact of corporate globalization as the issue of our time. He uses the examples of Kennedy's speeches and leadership as a model for how someone of today could bring those issues to the world stage.

Sachs also makes note of Kennedy's speech on civil rights that followed his address at American University and writes that "in the course of these two days, with these two speeches Kennedy crossed the threshold from charming, skilled politician to moral leader." However, Sachs notes that Kennedy's address at American University was

not simply an idealistic hope for peace, because in it Kennedy set out a practical vision of how to move the world towards peace by taking cooperative steps that would improve relations with the Soviet Union.

"By defining our goal more clearly, by making it seem more manageable and less remote, we can help all people to see it, to draw hope from it, and to move irresistibly towards it," said Kennedy.

"Here, in one sentence," Sachs argues, "is the art of great leadership. Define a goal clearly. Explain how it can be achieved in manageable steps. Help others share the goal — in part through great oratory. Their hopes will move them 'irresistibly' toward the goal."

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**Kennedy was taking a bold new course with this speech that he knew went against the prevailing currents of American foreign policy.**

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Both Sachs and Cohen show that this speech by Kennedy was unusual. Most presidential foreign-policy speeches are passed around various departments of the national-security state in order to get feedback. The department heads often find ways to slip in key ideas

that they want into the text. However, Kennedy was taking a bold new course with this speech that he knew went against the prevailing currents of American foreign policy. Indeed ever since then, no president has given an address like it.

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### The Defense Department had been planning for war and not peace.

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Every president since World War II has come into office managing a giant, in-place bureaucracy, as described in the book *National Security and Double Government*, by Michael Glennon, with its own goals, objectives, and even operations. The Cuban exiles had already been training for their invasion of Cuba when Kennedy got in office and the CIA director told him that if he didn't approve of the invasion he would have a "disposal problem" with them, meaning that word of what they had been training for would get out. The Defense Department had been planning for war and not peace. Air Force generals such as Curtis Lemay rather envisioned more nuclear missiles being built, not fewer.

So Kennedy had only a very small circle of close advisors help him write the address and then passed it on to his secretary of State

and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the very last minute without even asking for their feedback. That is about the only way a president can present a major initiative that represents a departure from the national-security state and it is becoming an increasingly rare thing to occur.

Richard Nixon used this strategy often, especially with respect to China and expanding the Vietnam War into Laos. Presidents since then have done so less and less and I am doubtful Barack Obama has ever done so. It is a symptom of the fact that the size of government and the national-security bureaucracy itself has grown larger and more powerful and influential over the years.

Jeffrey Sachs and Andrew Cohen both show how Kennedy's words in these speeches were inspiring, but by focusing on them like a laser they do not show the larger political realities behind them and why such leadership seems unlikely today. In fact Kennedy's civil-rights address was delivered in response to events and not as some grand personal initiative. And there were none announced in it. It took years of civil-rights agitation and chaos in the streets to make it happen. One

wonders what kind of leadership we will see more of in the White House in the future. Over the past fifteen years we have seen foreign-policy wrecks in Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan. Will the next president be able to redirect the nation's energies in a better direction or simply continue to react to events? Judging by recent history the latter seems more likely. In that regard

Kennedy's "quest for peace" offers lessons for today that not even Sachs writes about.

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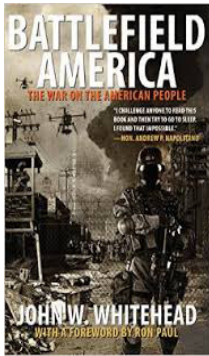
*Economics as a positive science is a body of tentatively accepted generalizations about economic phenomena that can be used to predict the consequences of changes in circumstances.*

— Milton Friedman

# The Police State's War on America

by David D'Amato

*Battlefield America: The War on the American People* by John W. Whitehead (SelectBooks, 2015), 352 pages.



John W. Whitehead is among the most dedicated and articulate civil libertarians of his generation. His latest book, *Battlefield America: The War on the American People*, is a cogent argument that today the clear and present danger to Americans and their freedom is government. *Battlefield America* argues convincingly that the American people have docilely accepted a police state — that while we were entranced by the news media's continual, color-coded warnings of ter-

rorist attacks, desensitized by gradual exposure to increasingly militarized police, and eagerly awaiting the next iPhone, we missed the materialization of a fully developed police state right before our eyes. Freedom has not been wrested from us violently, Whitehead argues, but relinquished voluntarily, for “a cheap price: safety, security, bread, and circuses.”

*Battlefield America's* grim story, accented by references to *Blade Runner* and *The Terminator*, shows government power without shackles, primed to create a real-life dystopia through militaristic infrastructure already long in place. Before finally calling us to action in part 5 of his book, “The Resistance,” Whitehead buries us in an avalanche of evidence. The result is an alarming and sobering look inside the gears of power, the bowels of an imperial state that sees the citizenry as its enemy. Whitehead challenges us to think about how we see ourselves, about whether we will accept the Brave New World of the police state or rebel in favor of freedom.

“The forces of science, technology, and history,” Whitehead writes, “have ushered in a new era of how we view ourselves.” The corporate-state hopes to exploit this change, reducing us to a series of statistics

and metrics, to data sets that it can use to perfect total control. The Progressive Era ideal, government experts with expansive administrative powers, unconstrained by old-fashioned, inconvenient constitutional restraints, has been realized. With the Internet's constant percolation of new content, requests, and interactions — our connections with it and each other at their most uninterrupted — there is no shortage of data for the federal government and its willing accomplices to mine.

The goal is to harvest as much information as possible, and to harness new technologies to interpret it, always with “total population control” in mind and national security as the professed rationale. Everything is couched in the language of science and safety. Perhaps the strict rationalist in each libertarian can sympathize with the impulse, if not the actions that grow out of it. After all, the modernists — fascists, progressives, socialists, and others — hoped to leverage new scientific revelations in an effort to create a neater, cleaner, more orderly social system. As Whitehead notes, quoting Jeffrey Tucker, fascism promises “a new and more scientific way of managing national life.” But Socrates and Friedrich Hayek, among many others, had lessons to

teach us about how much we are actually able to know, about how difficult indeed it is to usefully apply even the little that we can know with some certainty to indeterminate things such as society or the economy. It ought to come as no surprise, then, that the high-water mark of modernism was also the nadir of respect for human life, the 20th century witnessing a long list of atrocities.

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In reading Whitehead's impressive and illuminative study of the “wolf in sheep's clothing” that is the American police state, one thing becomes clear about our “age of authoritarianism,” its roots, and its development: The police state *just is* the modern state, a product of a specific time during which totalitarian government power seemed the wave of the future, its supposedly impartial, scientific institutions orchestrating and harmonizing all aspects of society. Such ideas about elite control and government power are characteristic components of high modernism, which

James C. Scott describes as “the ideology par excellence of the bureaucratic intelligentsia, technicians, planners, and engineers.” It also happens to be the ideology of the “oligarchic elite of government and corporate interests” that now rule in the United States.

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**Perhaps no element of America's unique fascism establishes this blurriness more clearly than the defense industry.**

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Whitehead demonstrates that the complicity of America's largest and most powerful corporations has been necessary for the execution of the Orwellian surveillance plan and tyrannical over-criminalization instituted by the federal government. We learn once again that these alliances are a feature of historical fascism, a system of political economy that blurs the lines between economic institutions and those of the formal state.

Perhaps no element of America's unique fascism establishes this blurriness more clearly than the defense industry. To help us understand the military-industrial complex's transformation of American government, Whitehead borrows constitutional law scholar Arthur Miller's use of the idea of *syzygy*.

*Syzygy* is “the conjunction of two organisms without either of them losing its identity,” and libertarian thinkers have long remarked that the concerted growth of big business and big government has redounded to the benefit of both. It is a great and often very useful myth that one of the two apparent sides extends its power and influence only to the detriment of the other, as if the two weren't aligned in their interests, even made up of the same rotating core of elites. The myth's believers may not have noticed that our congressmen become lobbyists, that our top military and intelligence officials become defense-industry executives, that our political institutions are hopelessly intertwined with Big Banks, Big Pharma, Big Defense — the list goes on.

*We are the enemy.*

The *real* political contest does not pit conservatives against liberals, Republicans against Democrats, but instead positions the power elite against all the rest of us; Whitehead understands that this contest, libertarians versus authoritarians, cuts through partisanship and cable news punditry. As John Stuart Mill said in *On Liberty*, genuine progress, that is, movement in the direction of liberty, is necessarily “antag-



onistic to the sway of Custom,” “the spirit of liberty” aiming at a far freer, and therefore radically different, world than the one offered by tradition and convention. On the other hand, insofar as modernity and “progress” have made themselves the enemies of the spontaneous orderings of a free, natural society, libertarians must look — often quite conservatively — for a revival of those self-organized societal institutions that have been suppressed by the modern state, treated as rivals to its machinery of power.

For these reasons, libertarians may at once be *both* conservative and radical in orientation. Where liberty is a constant, a principle that endures from age to age, terms like “conservative” and “progressive” are relative and contingent. We should expect to find among both groups apologists for and opponents of the police state described in *Battlefield America*. And the police state has been searching methodically for its potential ideological enemies. Whitehead describes two Department of Homeland Security reports, released in 2009, that define as “Rightwing Extremists” those who “are mainly antigovernment, rejecting federal authority in favor of state or local authority, or rejecting government authority entirely.”

As Whitehead notes, “These reports indicate that for the government, so-called extremism is not a partisan matter. Anyone seen as opposing the government — whether they’re Left, Right, or somewhere in between — is a target....”

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Whitehead observes that the American police state has made it increasingly dangerous to own a firearm, even completely legally.

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As a corollary of traducing libertarians as “Rightwing Extremists,” Whitehead observes that the American police state has made it increasingly dangerous to own a firearm, even completely legally; “possessing one,” he writes, “can now get you pulled over, searched, arrested, subjected to all manner of surveillance, treated as a suspect without ever having committed a crime, shot at, and killed.”

Of course, the agents of the state, equipped with hand-me-down military-grade weaponry, will never have their guns taken from them, will never be harassed for exercising a legitimate right — or even for needlessly and abusively harassing others. *Battlefield America* points out the deep hypocrisy and injustice of disarming peaceful citizens while police officers “are

rarely given more than a slap on the wrist” for improper uses of their weapons against unarmed Americans. Quite contrary to the oft-repeated canard that full and consistent respect for the fundamental right to own a firearm leads necessarily to a violent culture, Whitehead contends that we ought to reassess the U.S. government’s role in creating that culture. Government at all levels actively cultivates “the steady diet of violence that permeates everything in our culture,” the trappings of a pernicious military worship everywhere at hand.

It is government, not perfectly nonviolent firearm owners, that occupies our neighborhoods like a conquering foreign force, brandishing high-tech automatic weapons, assault vehicles, and grenade launchers. Homogenized culture and standardized education have weakened our natural responses to such displays and exercises of absolute power. Indeed, we have known little else, products of a political system that draws all power to its gravitational center. Steadily, the exceptions to the rule of law that protects our civil liberties have encroached upon the rule, narrowing its parameters, finally swallowing it altogether.

If it ever did in the first place, government today does not belong to us and is not responsible to us, representing the interests of a public-private faction of elites. *Battlefield America* calls for a new American Revolution, one of neither violent insurrection nor of the largely hollow propitiation of voting. Whitehead advises nonviolent resistance, directed by fundamental principles that teach us to “question everything” and escape the vapidness of the “electronic concentration camp,” the world of mindless hypnotism induced by our cherished electronic devices.

It is refreshing to see a libertarian counsel us — completely without condescension — to avoid the distractions of America’s culture of empty materialism and consumerism. *Battlefield America* understands the character and the importance of the moral choice before us, the choice between a free society and a society that is a prison “without visible walls.”

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