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The larger the island of knowledge, the longer the shoreline of wonder.

— *Ralph W. Sockman*

FUTURE OF FREEDOM

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The VMI Controversy

by Jacob G. Hornberger



Last year, the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) in Lexington, Virginia, came under scrutiny for alleged acts of racial discrimination against black members of the corps of cadets. The controversy began with an article in the *Washington Post*, which was followed by a call by the governor of Virginia for an official state investigation into racism at VMI. Under pressure, VMI's superintendent, who is equivalent to a college president, resigned and was replaced by a temporary superintendent, who is black. Pending the outcome of the state's investigation, the school removed a statue of Confederate hero Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson from the parade ground in front of barracks, where it had stood for many decades.

The controversy raises interesting questions regarding independence, discrimination, state finan-

cial support of colleges and universities, and the concept of freedom. The controversy has particular interest for me because I graduated from VMI in 1972.

One of the things that surprised me when I got to VMI was how important the Civil War was to many of the students, especially those from Virginia. They knew all about the war. And having had stories about the war passed on from one generation to the next, they were deeply passionate about it. One of the most popular classes at VMI was a two-semester course on the Civil War in the history department.

VMI is an unusual place. Today, almost 50 years after I graduated, I still have mixed feelings about the school. I received a great liberal arts education, for which I am still very grateful. It enabled me to get into the University of Texas law school, one of the best in the country.

VMI also taught me the importance of honor, for which I shall always be grateful. VMI arguably has the strictest student honor code in the country. It's run entirely by the cadet corps. We elected the members of the honor court, and they had the full authority to accuse cadets of honor violations, put them on trial, and evict them from the

school. From the very first day I arrived at VMI and continually thereafter, it was emphasized that no cadet would lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who did. The honor code is a centerpiece of life at the Institute.

It was the military side of VMI about which I still have misgivings. Of course, that was several years before I discovered libertarianism, a philosophy based on individualism, liberty, free markets, and limited government, all of which are opposite to the highly regimented, controlled, and regulated way of life that comes with a military structure.

**It was the military side
of VMI about which
I still have misgivings.**

Whenever people ask me about my four years at VMI, I tell them that I learned what it's like to live in a harsh socialist and totalitarian system. That type of education, ironically, is invaluable for a libertarian because it actually helps to inculcate a deep love and passion for liberty. At VMI, we were awakened and put to bed at set hours. We assembled in military form for all meals and then marched to the mess hall, singing cadence songs in the process. Daily life was strictly

regulated, monitored, and controlled. We all were required to wear uniforms, even when we went into Lexington, the small town in which VMI is located. We were not permitted to have cars before our senior year. We had a Marine Corps superintendent who apparently believed that cadet life should be modeled after boot camp at Paris Island. Justice by the VMI administration, if you can call it that, was usually arbitrary and capricious.

I survived VMI's harsh military environment, but I wasn't enamored with it. Many cadets responded positively to the highly regimented and controlled environment and even ended up making the military their career. Others were like me — grateful for the education but all too ready to escape the military environment upon graduation.

Transforming VMI

Founded in 1839, VMI's mission is to educate and train "citizen-soldiers," men who will graduate and return to civilian life but who are trained in warfare and are expected to come voluntarily to the assistance of their country in times of peril. It is, of course, a mission that is entirely consistent with the libertarian philosophy and also with the limited-government, anti-

standing-army system on which the United States was founded and that remained in existence until after World War II, when the federal government was converted into an all-powerful national-security state consisting of the Pentagon, the CIA, and the NSA.

There is a plaque on barracks listing VMI cadets who “died in service to the nation” in Vietnam.

When I was at VMI, the Vietnam War was in full swing and I fully expected to be sent there. Luckily, the war was winding down by the time I graduated and so I ended up spending eight years in the Reserves as an infantry officer. During my four years at VMI, the VMI administration aligned itself with the U.S. national-security establishment and its intervention in Vietnam. Thus, when an increasing number of cadets began turning against the war in 1969–1971, including me, administration officials frowned upon us as being “unpatriotic.”

Today there is a plaque on barracks listing VMI cadets who “died in service to the nation” in Vietnam from 1961 to 1975. That’s standard Pentagon-CIA propaganda. The truth is that the more than 58,000 U.S. soldiers who died in Vietnam,

many of whom were conscripted (i.e., forced to “serve”), died serving their government, not their nation. Or to put it another way, they died for nothing.

There is another plaque on barracks that states that VMI cadets died in the 2003 war in Iraq as part of the U.S. government’s “global war on terror.” That’s sheer nonsense too. The truth is that the U.S. government’s war on Iraq, a Third World nation that never invaded the United States, was an unprovoked war of aggression, a type of war that was declared a war crime at Nuremberg.

Moreover, the concept of a “global war on terror” itself is nonsensical and has proven more destructive to the liberties and well-being of our nation than even the national-security establishment’s Cold War “global war on communism.”

It is unfortunate that the VMI administration still does not understand these basic truths about what former General and President Dwight Eisenhower called the “military-industrial complex” and its policy of foreign wars, foreign interventions, and an empire of foreign military bases.

The rooms in which VMI cadets lived in barracks were exceedingly

small. In my freshman year, there were five of us living in one room. We each had a cot and a desk. Each morning, we were required to roll up our mattress and stack the frame of the cot against the wall, which enabled people to have more room to walk around.

One of my four roommates was black. It was the first year that VMI had admitted blacks into the school. I was told that the school was operating under orders or pressure from the federal government. There were five blacks admitted that year. From what I know, there was never any incidence of racial bigotry or discrimination against any of them. On the contrary, everyone got along extremely well. Three graduated. One left after our sophomore year. Unfortunately, the black cadet in our room drowned in an accident the summer after our freshman year.

At the time, VMI was an all-male school. That was normal for Virginia, which was filled with men's schools and women's schools. VMI and the women's schools would often co-host formal balls with each other.

Several years ago, VMI encountered another demand from the federal government. This time, the demand was to admit women into the school. The controversy became

heated, not only among VMI officials but also among VMI alumni. I have no way to measure the reaction among the alumni, but if I had to bet, I'd say that most preferred keeping the school all-male.

**It's none of the government's
business how a college or
university operates.**

The question naturally arises: What business does the federal government or the Virginia state government have interfering with VMI's operations?

In a purely educational sense, no business at all. It's none of the federal government's or state government's business how a college or university operates or conducts its business. In a genuinely free society, people run their lives and their enterprises any way they want, so long as they don't initiate force or fraud against other people.

That includes the right to discriminate on any basis — race, color, creed, sex, national origin, or anything else. The free society is a society that recognizes and honors the principle of freedom of association, which necessarily entails the right to discriminate against others.

In a free society, people are nudged toward moral behavior

through such things as loss of customers or social ostracism rather than through the force of the state. That's very likely what would have ultimately pressured VMI into admitting blacks into the school. Nonetheless, if the school had steadfastly resisted such pressure and chosen to remain an all-white school, that was its right under the principle of freedom of association.

In a free society, VMI would be free to keep Stonewall Jackson's statue on its parade ground.

We have become so accustomed to the federal government's integration laws that people naturally think that integration would never have happened without federal intervention. That's pure balderdash. Ask yourself: Why did southern states enact segregation laws in the first place? If everyone in the state of Alabama was a racial bigot, why would the bigots need a law requiring people to segregate? The reason the bigots needed segregation laws was that people were integrating naturally.

Thus, all that should have been done is to repeal segregation laws, which would have preserved the principle of freedom of association while, at the same time, nudging

society toward racial integration and harmony.

Of course, it goes without saying that we are talking here about private discrimination. Never should government itself be permitted to discriminate against people on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, or national origin.

The principle is the same with respect to all-male and all-female schools. In a genuinely free society, people are free to establish and attend schools that limit registration to men or to women. My hunch is that given that there is little stigma attached to all-male and all-female schools, VMI would have remained an all-male school had the federal government not forced it to admit women.

The principle is also the same with respect to the statue of Stonewall Jackson on VMI's parade ground that the VMI administration recently removed. That statue was there long before I was there 50 years ago. Freshman cadets were required to salute the statue on the way out of Jackson Arch, the main arch in VMI's "old barracks," where the cadets sleep. Within the arch was inscribed the following quotation by Jackson, which had a profound effect on me: "You may be whatever you resolve to be." Will

state officials now order VMI to remove that quotation as well?

Heck, why not just burn VMI down again, which is what the feds did during the Civil War? After all, isn't every vestige of the Confederacy expected to be eradicated to show how enlightened people are today?

Honoring Confederates

Virginia's governor, Ralph Northam, has been leading the charge to conduct an official state investigation into allegations of racism at VMI. Ironically, he too is a VMI graduate. After he was elected governor, someone disclosed a photo of what appeared to be Northam in blackface while attending graduate school. Northam was almost pressured out of office but he survived the controversy. His charge against VMI for alleged racial bigotry now has the appearance of trying to redeem himself by showing how enlightened he has become.

In a free society, VMI would be free to keep Stonewall Jackson's statue on its parade ground. It would also be free to continue commemorating the deaths of the cadets killed at the Battle of New Market, a Civil War battle that took place in 1864 about 70 miles north of the Institute. The battle had reached a stalemate when the VMI

cadet corps was called into service. In what angered the feds then and undoubtedly continues to anger them today, the VMI cadets, displaying tremendous courage, ended the stalemate and routed the Yankee forces, causing them to flee the battlefield in fear and humiliation.

If people don't like VMI's honoring Jackson, they can choose to go to school elsewhere.

What's wrong with celebrating that military defeat of the Yankee forces? What's wrong with celebrating the military genius of Stonewall Jackson, who was a military professor at VMI? What's wrong with remembering Jackson's famous line at the battle of Chancellorsville when he saw VMI men all around him: "The Institute will be heard from today"?

After all, if people don't like VMI's honoring Jackson and commemorating the battle of New Market, they can choose to go to school elsewhere. Anyway, didn't Gen. George Patton and don't military historians pay homage to Erwin Rommel for his military genius and prowess, notwithstanding the fact that he was serving the Nazi regime? Don't military experts do the same with Võ Nguyên Giáp, the

North Vietnamese military strategist responsible for defeating both France and the United States in the Vietnam War?

There are those who say that to celebrate and commemorate Confederate war heroes and their military strategies constitutes a defense and support of slavery of the South. That's pure nonsense. For one thing, the Civil War was never about freeing the slaves. That may have been the outcome, but it wasn't the aim of the war. Abraham Lincoln himself made that clear at the very outset of the war.

It was secession that motivated Lincoln to wage his war.

The war was about secession. Did the Confederacy have the right to leave the Union or not? That, not ending slavery, was why Lincoln had his army invade Virginia and wage war against the South.

In other words, if the Confederacy had declared an end to slavery at the moment it seceded, Lincoln would still have invaded the South. It was secession, not slavery, that motivated him to wage his war.

There is no doubt that some people in the South were fighting to preserve slavery. But most of them were fighting for their country, for

at that time people considered their respective states to be their country. That's why, for example, Robert E. Lee refused Lincoln's request to command the Northern forces and instead, in an act of deep patriotism, returned to Virginia to command the Army of Northern Virginia. It's also why Supreme Court Justice John Archibald Campbell resigned his lifetime appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court to return to the South to fight against Lincoln's war of aggression.

Indeed, if Lincoln's war was aimed at freeing the slaves, then why was his Emancipation Proclamation limited to freeing only some of them? The truth is that it was only after Lincoln had seen the horrible death, suffering, and destruction that his war had unleashed that he decided to use it as an opportunity to end slavery. In that way, he could rationalize the horror he had unleashed by claiming that the war was about ending slavery rather than the more ignoble goal of preventing the South's secession.

Indeed, is it inappropriate to point out that Lincoln believed that blacks were inferior to whites and that he felt that it would be better to simply "send them back to Africa"?

We also shouldn't forget about the war crimes that Lincoln, Ulys-

ses Grant, and William Sherman committed in the course of their war to prevent secession. There was, of course, their burning down of VMI to punish the school for defeating and humiliating the Northern forces at New Market. But their war crimes were much worse than that. They also waged a brutal war against women, children, and seniors in the South, burning their homes and crops and destroying their livestock in the hope of killing them and thereby demoralizing their husbands, brothers, and fathers who were fighting the war.

If defenders of the right of the South to secede are to be charged with supporting slavery, then why not charge supporters of Lincoln's war with supporting war crimes and, for that matter, with supporting Lincoln's shameful destruction of civil liberty when he suspended habeas corpus, which is the linchpin of a free society, and monetary liberty when he enacted a legal-tender law?

Controlling VMI

I don't know whether current VMI cadets have engaged in racial bigotry or whether the VMI administration has knowingly permitted an environment of racial bigotry to exist. I just know that it's VMI, not

the state of Virginia or the federal government, that bears the responsibility for rectifying any wrongs that are taking place at the school.

So why doesn't VMI simply tell Northam to butt out of its affairs? Two reasons: one, VMI is a state-owned school and, two, VMI receives tax-funded subsidies from the state. It doesn't have to be that way. The state could divest itself of ownership of VMI and let it go private, and VMI could cease being on the state dole.

Why not charge supporters of Lincoln's war with supporting war crimes?

We have become so accustomed to state-supported colleges and universities that many people now blind themselves to the highly immoral nature of such tax-funded subsidies. When the state government gives money to a school, it must first secure that money from people. It does that through the force of taxation.

Why shouldn't VMI and other colleges and universities be required to make it on their own, through tuitions and voluntary donations? VMI might respond, "We couldn't survive that way because people wouldn't donate enough to keep us going."

But doesn't that just demonstrate the immoral nature of what is taking place? If people refuse to donate enough money to VMI, VMI's response is to use the state to take their money from them. Thus the dark irony is that while the VMI corps of cadets has a strict honor code that prohibits stealing, the VMI administration, like other state-supported colleges and universities, is engaged in an act of political stealing to fund its operations.

Moreover, it is not at all certain that VMI would go under if it went entirely private. Consider Hillsdale College in Michigan. To maintain its independence from both state and federal control, Hillsdale takes no government funds and will not even permit its students to take government grants. Not only is it totally independent of government control, it is also very prosperous,

thanks largely to donations from its supporters.

That's what VMI should still do. If it fails to survive, so be it. But at least it would be taking the high road — the moral road that is devoid of political stealing — the road of independence from governmental control over the school.

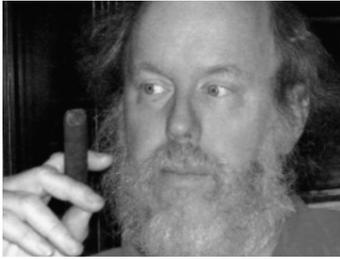
For their part, the people of Virginia should lead the nation out of this statist morass by ending state subsidies for all of Virginia's colleges and universities.

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

NEXT MONTH:
**“James Woolsey’s
Conspiracy Theory, Part 1”**
by Jacob G. Hornberger

Will Treason Mania Destroy America?

.....
by James Bovard



At the start of the Biden era, America is being torn apart by more allegations of treason than at any time since the Civil War. Historian Henry Adams observed a century ago that politics “has always been the systematic organization of hatreds.” And few things spur hatred more effectively than tarring all political opponents as traitors.

The Founding Fathers carved the Constitution in light of the horrific political abuses that had proliferated in England in prior centuries. That was why there was a narrow definition of treason in the Constitution: “Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort. No Person

shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court.”

After the end of Reconstruction, treason charges became relatively rare in American politics. Wars were probably the biggest propellants, with anyone who opposed American intervention abroad being tagged with the scarlet T. But by the late 1960s, when the futility of the Vietnam War was becoming clear, treason charges had largely lost their political clout. Gen. Alexander Haig, who later became Richard Nixon’s last White House chief of staff, denounced the Pentagon Papers as “devastating ... a security breach of the greatest magnitude of anything I’ve ever seen ... it’s treasonable” But the Nixon administration’s protests failed to sway the Supreme Court to block the *New York Times* from publishing the secret official records of decades of U.S. government deceit on Indochina.

Unfortunately, the political exploitation of the 9/11 attacks included reviving treason accusations against anyone who did not cheer George W. Bush’s promise to “rid the world of evil.” On December 6, 2001, Attorney General John Ashcroft informed the Senate Judiciary Committee, “To those who scare

peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty, my message is this: your tactics only aid terrorists, for they erode our national unity and ... give ammunition to America's enemies." At that point, Bush had already suspended habeas corpus and his underlings were busy sabotaging laws limiting federal surveillance of American citizens. But regardless of how many civil liberties were actually destroyed, critics were traitors.

Run-up to 2016

While Bush was rehabilitated by the mainstream media in recent years as a reward for criticizing Donald Trump, his 2004 reelection campaign relied on tacit treason accusations to tarnish Democrats, liberals, and even a few libertarians. At the 2004 Republican National Convention, keynote speaker Democratic Sen. Zell Miller implied that political opposition was treason: "Now, at the same time young Americans are dying in the sands of Iraq and the mountains of Afghanistan, our nation is being torn apart and made weaker because of the Democrats' manic obsession to bring down our commander in chief."

There was no evidence that such criticism of Bush's foreign policy was ripping America asunder —

but trumpeting the accusation made Bush critics appear a pox on the land. Other Republicans used the same theme. John Thune, the Republican U.S. Senate candidate in South Dakota, denounced Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle: "His words embolden the enemy." Bush campaign manager Ken Mehlman condemned the Kerry campaign for "parroting the rhetoric of terrorists" and warned, "The enemy listens. All listen to what the president said, and all listen to what Senator Kerry said." Former New York City Police Commissioner Bernie Kerik, stumping for Bush, told audiences, "Political criticism is our enemy's best friend." Six weeks before the 2004 election, the *Washington Post* noted, "President Bush and leading Republicans are increasingly charging that Democratic presidential nominee John F. Kerry and others in his party are giving comfort to terrorists and undermining the war in Iraq — a line of attack that tests the conventional bounds of political rhetoric."

In 2006, the *New York Times* revealed that the Bush administration was illegally seizing personal financial information of millions of Americans. Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.), chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee,

declared, “We’re at war, and for the *Times* to release information about secret operations and methods is treasonous.” Sen. Jim Bunning (R-Ky.) also labeled the *Times* guilty of “treason.” Rep. Ted Poe (R-Tex.) suggested that the *Times* had become the “Benedict Arnold Press.”

The Founding Fathers neglected to include “embarrassing the government” in the Constitution’s definition of treason.

After Barack Obama was elected in 2008, treason allegations simmered down, except for occasional allegations that Obama was a secret Muslim scheming to impose Sharia law on America. Former NSA employee Edward Snowden’s leak of NSA documents was the biggest treason boomlet of that era. Numerous congressmen called for Snowden to be charged with treason, though the Founding Fathers neglected to include “embarrassing the government” in the Constitution’s definition of treason. House Intelligence Committee chairman Mike Rogers (R-Mich.) and former NSA chief Michael Hayden publicly joked about putting Snowden on a government kill list.

But the Snowden uproar was a kerfuffle compared to the Pandora’s

box opened by the 2016 presidential campaign. Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton repeatedly effectively asserted that Republican nominee Donald Trump was a Russian tool, betraying the nation.

Treason in the White House

After Trump’s surprise victory in November 2016, treason became the coin of the realm for denigrating political opposition. Democratic politicians, activists, and their media allies responded to Hillary Clinton’s surprise defeat by smearing Donald Trump for colluding with Russia. Leaks to the media from the FBI, CIA, and other federal agencies spurred raging controversies that contributed to Trump’s firing FBI chief James Comey. That resulted in the appointment of Robert Mueller as Special Counsel to investigate Trump. Endless wrangling followed, including a claim by prominent Democrats claiming that Republicans would be guilty of treason if they released a memo detailing the FBI’s abuse of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

Mueller quickly became sacrosanct; liberals even bought votary candles with his likeness. A piece I wrote for *The Hill* on Mueller’s lawless record as FBI chief spurred

1,500 comments, including denunciations of me as a treason weasel, bearded grifter, Alt-moron, lackey, lickspittle, and librarian (some folks can't spell "libertarian"). In April 2019, Mueller finally admitted that there was no substantive evidence of collusion but that did not stop the endless "RussiaGate" refrain and treason accusations from Trump critics. Most of Trump's presidency was permeated by charges of treason against him.

But the Mueller-induced treason prattle was child's play compared to what followed disputes over the 2020 presidential election. As law professor Jonathan Turley noted, after the media announced Biden won, "All court challenges [to election results] then became unethical for lawyers and all congressional challenges became sedition for members." Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro this past December denounced one challenge to the election results as a "seditious abuse of the judicial process" that was guilty of "misleading the public about a free and fair election and tearing at our Constitution." Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) wailed, "The most serious attempt to overthrow our democracy in the history of our country is under way." Twitter's left-wing tilt has helped spur

hashtags such as #GOPSeditious-Traitors and #TreasonAgainstAmerica. One leftist activist got 65,000 "likes" when he declared that "Donald Trump should replace Benedict Arnold in history as America's most reviled traitor."

**Unfortunately, many pundits
and politicians know
only a fairy-tale version of the
Civil War.**

On the other side of the political divide, some Republicans sounded equally hellbent on demonizing any opposition to their demands. Republican lawyer Lin Wood declared that Vice President Pence would be guilty of treason for certifying the election results and that he "will face execution by firing squad." The Pro-Trump duo Diamond and Silk tweeted, "After listening to the leaked call put out by the *Washington Post* we are convinced that Georgia's secretary of state and his lawyer need to be arrested for Treason!"

After protesters crashed into the U.S. Capitol on January 6 (some crashed into the building while others sauntered in), treason accusations went into overdrive. The definition of treason was vastly expanded to include members of Congress who filed a lawful challenge against

the 2020 electoral tally. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared that Republicans who signaled they would not ratify the Electoral College results earlier that month “gave aid and comfort to [protesters] with the idea that they were embracing a lie ... that the election did not have legitimacy.” A court of law would never convict Republican members of treason, but Pelosi can convict them in the court of public opinion, thanks to the hanging judges at CNN and MSNBC.

Civil War politics

Many Trump opponents are invoking 1861, denouncing any Republican challenges to the election as the same type of treason supposed to have been committed by states that exited the union. But the Civil War illustrates the catastrophic damage that can result from broad-brush definitions of treason. Northern politicians quickly persuaded their supporters that all Southerners were traitors — a capital offense. In 1864, Gen. William Sherman wired the War Department in Washington, “There is a class of people — men, women, and children — who must be killed or banished before you can hope for peace and order.” Union armies in Virginia, Georgia, and elsewhere

late in the war intentionally devastated civilian populations who were considered collectively guilty of secession and treason.

Unfortunately, many pundits and politicians know only a fairy-tale version of the Civil War. The fact that Trump had high support in many southern states is spurring bizarre proposals that would be the final coffin nails into any hope for a semblance of peaceful coexistence between Americans with different views and values. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.), the media’s favorite progressive congresswoman, declared, “The only way our country is going to heal is through the actual liberation of southern states.” She didn’t specify whether she favored the type of military dictatorship that was ended only by a historic compromise after the fraud-ridden 1876 presidential election. *Politico*, one of the most respected Washington publications, printed a piece titled, “What Ulysses Grant Can Teach Joe Biden about Putting Down Violent Insurrections.” The piece stressed, “Grant’s approach relied on a combination of brute military force and a drastic curtailment of civil liberties, yet it nevertheless has relevance for the current moment.” The article stressed the need for “overwhelming force” to sup-

press the type of people who violated the sacred space of the U.S. Capitol on January 6.

Any federal attempt to expunge political dissent in America with “brute military force and a drastic curtailment of civil liberties” would very likely provoke a civil war. But that could be the end result of current trends of presuming that political opponents are traitors who must be exterminated. While Democratic members of Congress and some Biden officials are comforted by the thousands of National Guard troops now occupying Washington at their behest, they would be unwise to presume the troops would obey orders to scourge their countrymen in every nook of the land.

Perhaps the ultimate cause of the proliferation of treason accusations is that politicians have captured far too much control over Americans’ lives. The more power politicians seize, the more unhinged political rhetoric becomes.

American politics is increasingly becoming toxic because presidents nowadays are elective dictators. Rather than a process of selecting a chief executive who will uphold the Constitution and enforce the laws, elections nowadays confer a license to run amok over the lives and property of practically anyone who falls

under federal sway. Government has amassed so much power that the vast majority of Americans no longer trust Washington.

The surest recipe for curtailing political vitriol is to reduce political power so elections are not demolition derbies that doom losing sides. Thomas Jefferson in 1799 offered the ideal that can rescue America from strife today: “In questions of power, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution.” And if presidents and members of Congress choose to openly scorn their oaths of office and constitutional constraints on their power — well, many Americans would consider that to be treason.

James Bovard is a policy advisor to The Future of Freedom Foundation and is the author of the ebook Freedom Frauds: Hard Lessons in American Liberty, published by FFF, Public Policy Hooligan, Attention Deficit Democracy, and eight other books.

NEXT MONTH:
**“The Deep State
Defeats Donald Trump”**
by James Bovard

Would the Republicans Have Saved Us?

by *Laurence M. Vance*



If Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.) had not gotten sick and resigned his Senate seat, then the title of this article would have been “Will the Republicans Save Us?”

After serving in the Georgia state house and senate, Isakson served three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives before being elected to the U.S. Senate in 2004. He was re-elected in 2010 and 2016. Although his Senate term did not expire until January 2023, in August 2019 he announced that because of his Parkinson’s disease and other health challenges, he was resigning his Senate seat effective at the end of 2019. Under Georgia law, the governor — Brian Kemp, a Republican — was allowed to make an appointment to fill the unexpired term until

the next regularly scheduled state-wide election (November 3, 2020). He selected Republican Kelly Loeffler, the co-owner of the Atlanta Dream of the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA), who had never held political office. She assumed office in January 2020.

Under Georgia election law, all candidates for a special election, regardless of their political party, compete in a “jungle primary” where every name is on the November general election ballot. If no candidate in what is usually a crowded field receives more than 50 percent of the vote, then a runoff election is conducted in January. All told, there were twenty-one candidates — including a write-in candidate who received seven votes — most of whom received less than 1 percent of the vote. Loeffler finished second in the special election with 25.9 percent of the vote. That is why she was in the January 5 runoff election for the Senate seat she held at the time. But although Loeffler claimed to be the most conservative Republican in the Senate, and was considered to be the richest member of the Senate, she lost in the runoff election to the Democrat Raphael Warnock by the slim margin of 50.8 to 49.2 percent.

It is because of this special election that Georgia was the only state

to hold two Senate elections in 2020. In the Senate, the 100 senators are divided into three classes with staggered terms. Thus, only one-third of the Senate seats are contested at any election, and never more than one Senate seat in a state. In the regular Senate race in Georgia, the incumbent Republican David Perdue — the cousin of former Georgia governor and Trump administration Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue — was seeking a second term. But as he received only 49.7 percent of the vote (47.9 percent went for Democrat Jon Ossoff and 2.3 percent went for Libertarian Shane Hazel), Georgia law required a runoff election between the top two candidates. But in the January 5 runoff election, Ossoff defeated Perdue by a margin of 50.4 to 49.6 percent.

Life under Democratic rule will be especially dangerous to privacy, liberty, and property.

Winning these two Georgia Senate seats is how the Democrats wrested control of the Senate from the Republicans, who had controlled the Senate since January 2015. Prior to the Georgia runoff election, there were 50 Republicans in the Senate and 48 Democrats

(including the two independent members of the Senate, Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Angus King of Maine, who caucus with the Democrats). So now that the Senate is tied 50-50, the Democratic vice president, the former senator Kamala Harris, gets to cast the tie-breaking vote, effectively giving Democrats control of the Senate.

The Democrats

One-party control of the government is dangerous. Gridlock in the Congress helps prevent one party — whether Democrats or Republicans — from exercising unbridled power. Thus, even if one Georgia Senate seat had been won by a Republican, it could have stopped bad legislation proposed by Democrats from passing (assuming that all of the Senate Republicans voted together). But the reality is that life under Democratic rule will be especially dangerous to privacy, liberty, and property. Now, we know that the Democratic Party for many years has been the party of liberalism, progressivism, collectivism, socialism, paternalism, statism, environmentalism, “social justice,” economic egalitarianism, organized labor, taxpayer-funded abortion, public education, climate change, affirmative action,

welfare, higher taxes on the “rich,” universal single-payer health care, increased government regulation of the economy and society, increased government spending, larger and more-intrusive government, and assorted income-transfer programs and wealth-redistribution schemes. The Democratic solution to every problem, injustice, or crisis — real, imaginary, or contrived — is invariably more government, more government intervention, or more government money.

The Democratic Party is not just going to pick up where it left off at the end of the Obama administration. Democrats in Congress will stop at nothing to achieve their agenda. The Democratic Party of today is even more radical than it was twelve years ago during the first two years of Obama’s first term, which was the last time that Democrats had total control of the federal government (House, Senate, presidency).

What’s on the table

In an episode of “The Libertarian Angle” recorded just two days after the Electoral College vote was certified, Future of Freedom Foundation president Jacob Hornberger and Citadel professor Richard Ebeling examined the question of life

under Democratic control and it was not a pretty picture they painted. According to Hornberger and Ebeling, we are going to see massive increases in federal spending, and the debt ceiling rendered totally irrelevant; massive foreign intervention, since Biden is essentially owned by the national-security state; increased focus on official enemies, expansion of the role of the military in American life, expansion of the welfare state, the revitalization of Obamacare, the attempt to implement a full-fledged government health-care system, and the expansion of the war on drugs (a war that Biden supported when he was vice president and Harris supported as a prosecutor); increased federal regulations, massive welfare-state socialism, a more centrally planned economy, massive debauchery of the currency, tax increases, increased anti-trust enforcement, a national increase in the minimum wage, elements of the “green new deal,” and emphasis on equality of outcomes and proportional representation of minorities in all groups; and more money creation by the Fed, increased inflation, wage and price controls to combat inflation, and a more interventionist foreign policy. They concluded that under a Biden adminis-

tration, everything is on the table that could be a danger to our liberty, privacy, income, wealth, property, and freedom in the marketplace.

Everything is on the table that could be a danger to our liberty.

To this we can certainly add increased deficit spending, further increases in the national debt, unrestricted funding for Planned Parenthood, loosened restrictions on taxpayer-funded abortions, increased enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, expanded gun-control laws, a federal family-leave policy, government-funded child care, increased resources devoted to fighting climate change, increased violation of privacy and civil liberties in response to the coronavirus, fewer welfare-work requirements, and increased promotion of the transgender movement.

On the basis of statements in the 2020 Democratic Party platform, the recommendations in the “Biden-Sanders Unity Task Force Recommendations,” and statements from Biden himself, we can also look forward to extended unemployment benefits, a \$15 per hour minimum wage, and more-generous refundable tax credits that give even more Americans tax refunds of money

that they never paid in; increased funding for food stamps, WIC, and school-meal programs; greater “investment” in mass transit and transportation public-works projects, “fair” trade policies and deals, expanded farm and housing subsidies, a national goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions for all new buildings and vehicles, and “environmental justice”; increases in corporate tax rates, aggressive attempts to increase the supply of “affordable” housing, increased government efforts to close the racial wealth gap, increased spending on K-12 education, tuition-free college, increased federal education grants, extended student-loan payment suspension, and student-debt relief; and making Washington, D.C., the 51st state, an increased push for a reduction in the use of fossil fuels, the ending of cash bail, the passing of an Equal Rights Amendment, increased condemnation of “hate speech,” the reauthorization and expansion of the Violence Against Women Act, the securing of equal pay for women, and increased funding for arts and culture.

The Republicans

Could the Republicans have saved us from this unprecedented imminent upheaval and destruction of liberty, freedom, wealth, pri-

vacy, and property in America? If either Loeffler or Perdue had just received a few thousand more votes and kept the balance of power in the Senate with the Republicans, could the Republicans have saved us from the impending doom we face? Since anything is possible in politics, the answer has to be that, yes, the Republicans could have saved us from the Democrats. No matter what evil legislation the Democratic-controlled House passed, and the Democratic president was eager to sign, the Republican-controlled Senate could have stopped it (assuming that the Republicans had no defectors). Because Republicans are, after all, Republicans, the nature of this “salvation” would certainly have been limited and ephemeral, but at least Americans would have a temporary reprieve from the Democratic debacle that we are facing. But a more important question than “Could the Republicans have saved us” is “Would the Republicans have saved us.”

Unfortunately, the answer is that the Republicans would not have saved us, and for two reasons, one historical and the other philosophical: (1) Republicans have never saved us from the bad policies and programs of Democrats, regardless of whether they had partial

or total control of the government and could have done something, and (2) Republicans are philosophically not much different from Democrats, regardless of how often and how loud they recite their conservative mantra about the Constitution, the free market, limited government, federalism, traditional values, free enterprise, a balanced budget, individual freedom, free trade, and property rights.

Republican failures

Republicans failed to save us when they had partial control of the government. After World War II, the first Republican majority in Congress (1947–1949) since the New Deal under Harry Truman authorized millions of American taxpayer dollars to be spent on foreign aid for Greece and billions more for the Marshall Plan. Passing the National Security Act of 1947 that reorganized the military and established the National Security Council (NSC) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was one of the worst things that the Republicans have ever done.

The Republicans had a majority in the Senate during Ronald Reagan’s first six years in office, but never made an attempt to repeal the Great Society. Instead, the budget

increased, the deficit exploded, the national debt skyrocketed, the drug war expanded, and Social Security and Medicare tax rates were raised.

During the last six years of Bill Clinton's presidency, the Republicans had majorities in both houses of Congress. Yet federal spending went up every year and the national debt increased by \$1.4 trillion. Republicans expanded the welfare state by increasing the refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) every year and creating a new program, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), to provide federally funded health insurance to children in families with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid. No real attempt was ever made to eliminate a major government program or agency.

Republicans failed to save us even when they had total control.

The 114th Congress of 2015–2017, which met during Barack Obama's last two years in office, had huge Republican majorities in both houses of Congress. Yet profligate federal spending continued, and the national debt climbed to almost \$20 trillion. Donald Trump still had a Republican-controlled Senate his last two years in office, but even be-

fore Congress opened wide the spigots of federal spending to combat the coronavirus pandemic, federal spending on the welfare and warfare states continued to climb.

Republicans failed to save us even when they had total control of the government. That has happened three times since World War II. During the 83rd Congress of 1953–1955, when the Republicans had absolute control of the government during the first two years of Dwight Eisenhower's presidency, they could have repealed the New Deal in its entirety. They, of course, failed to do anything. And Eisenhower even wrote in a letter,

Now it is true that I believe this country is following a dangerous trend when it permits too great a degree of centralization of governmental functions.... But to attain any success it is quite clear that the Federal government cannot avoid or escape responsibilities which the mass of the people firmly believe should be undertaken by it. The political processes of our country are such that if a rule of reason is not applied in this effort, we will lose everything — even to a possible and dras-

tic change in the Constitution. This is what I mean by my constant insistence upon “moderation” in government. Should any political party attempt to abolish social security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history. There is a tiny splinter group, of course, that believes you can do these things.... Their number is negligible and they are stupid.

The second time the Republicans had total control of the government was when they had a majority in Congress for more than four years under George W. Bush. Republicans effectively controlled both houses of the 107th Congress from January to May 2001 (the Senate was split 50/50 with the Republican vice president having the deciding vote), and had actual control of the entire 108th Congress from 2003 to 2007. But instead of repealing the Great Society, they almost doubled the budget and the national debt, created the Department of Homeland Security and the TSA, greatly expanded the Department of Education, instituted Bushcare (the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modern-

ization Act), passed the USA PATRIOT Act, began letting the NSA spy on all Americans, and started two senseless wars — which led to indefinite detention, indiscriminate drone strikes, kangaroo military tribunals, Gitmo, torture, assassinations, and secret prisons, all to keep us safe, of course.

The third time the Republicans had total control of the government was when they had majorities in both Houses of the 115th Congress (2017–2019) during the first two years of Trump’s presidency. But again, more failure. The Republicans failed to repeal Obamacare, failed to cut federal spending, failed to balance the budget, failed to lower the national debt, failed to end the welfare state, failed to end federal control over local education, failed to reduce the size and scope of the federal government, failed to end the foreign wars, failed to close overseas military bases, failed to bring any troops home, and failed to end the national-security/police state. About the only thing that the Republicans succeeded in doing was increasing military spending, which of course, is not a good thing.

Republican values

Republicans are philosophically not much different from Demo-

crats. George Wallace famously said during his third-party bid for president in 1968, “There is not a dime’s worth of difference between the Democratic and Republican Parties.” But if one ignores the conservative mantra and the libertarian rhetoric that comes out of the mouths of Republicans, and instead looks at their actual proposals and actions, no other conclusion is possible. Here are just a few examples.

Republicans are not much different from Democrats.

Although Republicans used to call for the elimination of the federal Department of Education, they, like Democrats, fully support federal involvement in all facets of education: Pell grants, student loans, accreditation, mandates, research grants, and school breakfast and lunch programs.

Republicans, like Democrats, believe that some Americans should be forced to pay for the health care of other Americans through Medicare and Medicaid.

Republicans, like Democrats, have always supported refundable tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) that give some Americans tax refunds of money that they never paid in. And

they not only supported their existence, they regularly increased their payouts when they controlled the Congress.

Republicans, like Democrats, are big believers in federal subsidies to certain occupations and sectors of society: agriculture, the arts, cultural organizations, scientific and medical researchers, low-income renters. And in spite of their professed opposition to abortion, Republicans in Congress have regularly funded Planned Parenthood — America’s largest abortion provider.

Republicans, like Democrats, think it is perfectly acceptable for the federal government to take money from hard-working Americans and give it to foreign countries with authoritarian governments and corrupt regimes that regularly violate the human rights of their citizens — countries that many Americans couldn’t locate on a map or haven’t ever heard of.

Republicans, like Democrats, believe in an interventionist foreign policy. Trump and congressional Republicans continued military actions against the very same countries that Obama and congressional Democrats did.

Republicans, like Democrats, have no philosophical objection to any government program. They just

prefer that it looks as though it is run efficiently, doesn't appear to waste too many taxpayer dollars, doesn't have too much fraud, or furthers some right-wing agenda such as sex-abstinence education or school vouchers.

Republicans, like Democrats, fully support federal anti-discrimination laws that violate the rights of private property and free association.

Although Republicans, like Democrats, rail against socialism, they are huge supporters of the largest social socialist program in the United States: Social Security — an intergenerational wealth-redistribution scheme that takes money from those who work and gives it to those who don't. In fact, both parties strive to convince Americans that they will “save” Social Security for future generations.

Republicans (no matter how “conservative” they claim to be at election time), are statist just like Democrats. They believe that the federal government should take money from some Americans and redistribute it to other Americans: individuals, groups, organizations, and businesses — after it is filtered through a massive government bureaucracy — in the form of subsidies, vouchers, loans, EBT cards, grants, and cash payments.

Democrats are setting the stage for a massive crackdown on civil liberties in the name of fighting domestic terrorism. For this they have a good example — Republicans after the 9/11 attacks. When South Carolina senator Strom Thurmond officially left the Democratic Party in September 1964 and joined the Republican Party, he declared that the Democratic Party was “leading the evolution of our nation to a socialistic dictatorship.” That day is now here. And not only would the Republicans not have saved us from it, they have actually hastened its arrival.

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NEXT MONTH:
“What Is Missing
in the Arguments against a
Minimum-Wage Hike?”
by Laurence M. Vance

Jacques Novicow, Sociologist of Peace and Freedom

by Richard M. Ebeling



One of the most important classical liberal crusades of the nineteenth century was to at least tame, if not end, the death and destruction of war. From time immemorial, wars have been the scourge of mankind. Huge numbers of ordinary people have been uprooted from their homes and families to be the human sacrifices in battle to serve the purposes of kings and princes, dictators and tyrants, and even democratically elected governments declaring that they represented the peaceful purposes of their citizens.

It is one of the tragic failures of the classical liberal movement that its efforts to bring war to an end did not come to fruition. The liberals of

that earlier time — liberals devoted to individual rights and personal liberty, to peaceful and voluntary human association both inside and outside of the marketplace, to impartial rule of law, and to constitutionally limited, representative government — were originally hopeful and confident in bringing an end to military conflict among the nations of the world.

Classical liberal attempts to end war

They lobbied governments and reasoned with them to stop arms races, especially among the “Great Powers” in Europe after the awful quarter century of warfare among those nations in the wake of the French Revolution and during the rise of Napoleon with his wars of conquest from the Atlantic to Moscow between 1792 and 1815.

They persuaded political leaders to at least consider and occasionally abide by arbitrations and plebiscites in place of armies set loose to settle political disputes among nations. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, they helped inspire and organize international conventions on the rules of war to treat prisoners more humanely, to respect the lives and property of civilian populations occupied by a belligerent power, and to restrain and demar-

cate the use of various weapons to minimize the damage done in the midst of battle.

The productive capital of many lifetimes has been razed to the ground in bombings and battles.

However, as the nineteenth century was ending and the twentieth century was dawning there were those who warned of the dangerous game of open and secret military alliances among “the Powers,” the huge costs of standing armies and navies that always had to be more expensively modernized with the latest technologies of combat, and the emotional fervor of imperialist and nationalist jingoism that found expression in the far-flung colonial empires of those European powers.

The costs of war to the world and America

Those concerns were more than proven justified. In the twentieth century, wars, great and small, have inflicted terrible consequences on peoples all over the world. It is estimated that 20 million or more men, women, and children were killed during the First World War (1914–1918). An even larger number, upwards of 50 million, possibly perished as a result of the cruelty and

mass barbarity of the Second World War (1939–1945). Another 10–15 million or more lives have been lost in wars and civil wars in the period since 1945.

Millions upon millions more people were left permanently disabled, physically or psychologically. Families were torn apart and sometimes made into enemies set upon defeating and killing each other. The accumulated, productive capital of many lifetimes has been razed to the ground in bombings and battles. The historical heritage and architectural artifacts of hundreds or even thousands of years past have been ruined, destroyed, or intentionally obliterated in all of the violent conflicts just over the last 120 years.

America’s foreign wars have not been without their human cost. In the First World War, there were more than 116,600 deaths and 204,000 wounded; in the Second World War, 405,400 deaths and 670,850 wounded; in the Korean War, 36,500 deaths and 92,135 wounded; in the Vietnam War, 58,210 deaths and 153,300 wounded; in the war in Afghanistan, 2,215 deaths and 20,050 wounded; in the Iraq War, 4,500 deaths and 32,225 wounded. Almost 625,000 Americans lost their lives in foreign wars

since 1914, along with nearly 1.2 million wounded.

Jacques Novicow's life and interests and fame

Among those classical liberal voices at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century for international peace and associative human freedom was the Russian sociologist Jacques Novicow (1849–1912). Almost forgotten today among both sociologists and classical liberals, Novicow was one of the most well-known and prominent social thinkers of his time.

Born in Constantinople, Turkey, of a Russian father and a Greek mother, his family settled in the Imperial Russian port city of Odessa on the Black Sea when Novicow was four years old. Educated at the University of Odessa, he inherited a profitable private enterprise from his father, which gave him a degree of financial independence to pursue what was clearly his first passion, the scholarly study of society in its various historical, political, cultural, and economic forms and evolutionary patterns.

Stifled by the political censorship that constrained intellectual openness and debate in Imperial Russia, Novicow spent a good part

of his adult life in Paris, France. Much taken by the French language, he often wrote on the superiority of French over English as an “auxiliary” vernacular for intellectual discourse among Europeans.

Novicow was one of the most well-known and prominent social thinkers of his time.

It is not much of a surprise, therefore, that almost all of his significant works on social, political, and cultural themes were written and published in French. Only a handful of his writings have ever been translated into English, but among classical liberals on the European continent and among academic sociologists he was highly respected and widely known during his lifetime. In fact, for a period of time he served as vice president of the International Institute of Sociology, headquartered in Paris.

Nowadays, most people abhor the idea that war is both necessary and good for the betterment of nations and peoples. Two devastating world wars consigned most rationales and justifications for war as an institution that advances civilization and improves the human species to the past. Wars are being fought and, no doubt, will continue

to be fought for the foreseeable future. But war, itself, as something glorious and uplifting, is rarely defended or proclaimed.

Yet, for a good part of human history and well into the twentieth century, war was often glorified. The classical liberals of the nineteenth century worked hard to refute this idea. And one of the most determined and uncompromising was Jacques Novicow.

The fallacy that war strengthens a nation's people

Novicow's book *War and Its Alleged Benefits* (1911) is a devastating critique of virtually all the war-praising arguments of his time. "Bloodshed never will succeed," he said. "Since the beginning of history wholesale murder has been committed thousands and thousands of times without resolving anything. It will be committed thousands and thousands of times again without yielding a better result. Each war merely sows the seeds of a future war."

A common argument, Novicow explained, is that war weeds out the weak and invigorates the strong, leaving the human race better than before. He asked how this could be, when a moment's reflection makes it clear that it is the physically heart-

iest who are normally sent off to war, and they are the ones who are left dead on the battlefield, leaving behind those who are genetically weaker and less physically fit.

The fallacy of economic gains from war

War has been often proclaimed as a necessary means by which one nation and people materially improve themselves by conquering and subjugating another country and its inhabitants for purposes of plunder and enslavement of the defeated. But the supposed economic gains through spoliation are illusory. To be victorious, an aggressor nation must first incur huge financial and material expenses to have the military wherewithal and capacity to come out the winner of an initiated war. Before booty may be extracted from the defeated nation, many of the aggressor's own soldiers will be lost in battle, thus, reducing the successful nation's "human capital."

Those deaths are usually heavy "costs" before any "profits" may be gained from the conflict. Furthermore, enslaving those among the defeated who have not been killed in battle, or exploiting those who remain in the defeated land, has its own negatives. Slave labor is far less

productive than free labor, reducing the net gain presumed to result from war. Furthermore, history shows that a conqueror bears the burden of occupation and the constant fear of rebellion and attacks on the occupiers by those resentful of their oppressed state. Novicow attempted to give a financial price tag to the “glories of war”:

Since 1648 [to 1912] war has cost the European nations alone \$80 billion [in inflation-adjusted 2020 dollars, \$20.9 trillion]. It would not be exaggerating to say that in the entire historic period war has cost at least ten times that amount. Then, at the very lowest estimate, war has cost in all, \$800 billion [in inflation-adjusted 2020 dollars, more than \$200 trillion]. What does this mean? It means that a certain number of days of work, the money value of which is equal to that sum, were employed by men in killing one another. Suppose the same effort had been expended in cultivating the soil, irrigating the fields, weaving cloth, building houses, leveling roads, channeling harbors, and so on, is it not

perfectly clear that the world's face would be entirely different to-day? We should be at least ten times as prosperous, or, in other words, the sum of suffering would have been perceptibly less for us unhappy beings.

War neither unifies nor civilizes.

Another rationale for war, Novicow said, was the belief that only war has unified peoples in larger political entities to reduce the number of petty states that clutter the political map, preventing the civilizing possibilities that can come only when numerous people live under one political roof; it also reduces the Tower of Babel of many languages, producing a leading few through which people may converse. Novicow replied to this:

Civilization is not made by the relative number of spoken languages, but by the sum of the scientific knowledge and artistic treasures accumulated by mankind. Europe is now divided into eighteen main principalities. It might have been divided into fifteen or twenty-five, and civilization would in no wise have been affected....

... It is not to wholesale slaughter on fields of battle that we owe the existence of those glorious historic entities called England, Germany, France, and Italy. It is to a galaxy of geniuses and talents of all kinds, to Dante, to Shakespeare, to Descartes, to Goethe, and the rest.... Suppress war, and the unity of the human race in its entirety is instantly realized.

Peace, Novicow insisted, is the father of civilization, of prosperity, of cultural achievements. War siphons off the accumulated wealth of multitudes of people, and creates constant fears that distract from more productive and creative activities that enrich and improve all of humanity. “Why should there have been more light in Europe after a stupid Roman soldier murdered Archimedes than there had been before?” Novicow could not see how it could be.

Other advocates of war had insisted that war engenders the highest moral values and attitudes. Novicow wondered, “How can robbery, parasitism, intolerance, despotism ennoble communities. How can the practice of all these crimes develop the virtues?... If the 8,000

wars of the historic period could not make us moral, what chance is there that the eight thousand and first will effect the result?”

War requires indoctrination.

At the beginning, wars were the activities of small bands led by some tribal chieftain. Since most people are reluctant to risk losing their lives, there must be some anticipated benefit worth such a risk. The tribal chief would promise that when victory was won he would divide the spoils with his loyal lieutenants, along with booties for the common soldiers in his band. But now that war has been taken out of private hands and “monopolized” by governments that insist on concentrating the plunders of war for themselves, how do you get large numbers of ordinary persons to go into battle and possibly lose their life? Explained Novicow,

But when war came to be monopolized by the heads of a state, the advantages to a soldier ceased to be apparent. To get men to decide to fight it is necessary to employ an amount of complex measures which Tolstoy very accurately describes as the hypnotization of the masses. A number of in-

stitutions — the Church, the school, and many others — lay hold of a man when he leaves the cradle, and impress certain special ideas upon him. He is made to believe that it is to his interest to be ready at any moment to throw himself upon his fellow-beings and massacre them.... One of the most effectual ways of keeping up the military spirit is to represent to people that they are always on the defensive and their neighbors alone are aggressors. That illusion has taken hold of all the nations.

Competition for survival and betterment need not lead to war.

Novicow was especially critical of those nineteenth-century proponents of war who had taken up a particular interpretation of Charles Darwin's notion of the evolutionary "survival of the fittest" and who concluded that since "struggle" for existence was inseparable from the circumstances of all living things, violent warfare among peoples for survival was no less inevitable.

Animals kill each other for food, and men have certainly done that enough against themselves, but violent, murderous methods for exis-

tence are not the only ones open to human beings. Men have the capacity for reasoning, for conceptualizing courses of action in terms of desired ends and imagined means for attaining them.

The superior and far more productive and moral one, Novicow explained and reminded his readers, is peaceful cooperation through numerous forms of exchange. Competition among men need not be limited to murder for the material means to life. Competition can also take the form of peaceful rivalry through voluntary trade that better the overall condition of humanity as a whole, without any of the destructiveness of war. Said Novicow,

Here struggle has by no means disappeared, but goes under the form of economic competition, lawyers' briefs, judges' sentences, votes, party organizations, parliamentary discussions, meetings, lectures, sermons, schools, scientific associations, congresses, pamphlets, books, newspapers, magazines, in short, by spoken and written propaganda.... In short, economic, political, and intellectual competition will never cease among them.

Hence antagonism will always exist, but as soon as men stop butchering one another solidarity among them will be established.

Peaceful exchange the foundation of freedom and prosperity

If *War and Its Alleged Benefits* was his response to the proponents of violent human conflict, Novicow's positive statement in behalf of personal liberty, freedom of trade, and peaceful relationships was offered in "The Mechanism and Limits of Human Association: The Foundations of a Sociology of Peace" (1912), first published in French and then in English in the *American Journal of Sociology* (November 1917).

Men trade commodities for services and exchange services, one for the other.

"Exchange" is the fundamental element of all human existence. All that man does is a deliberative decision to trade one circumstance that he finds himself in for another that he views as better, superior, or more desirable to his current one. Isolated man enters into exchanges with himself all the time in choosing how to transform the world in

which he lives, when he must "struggle" with nature to make it give up what he needs to better his circumstances.

Associations among men include the exchange of commodities that are respectively desired, and for which each is willing to part with something, exchanging what they value less for what they value more. Men trade commodities for services and exchange services, one for the other. The entrepreneur gives money salaries to those he hires, salaries that represent a quantity of purchasable commodities those employed may buy, and in turn the hired supply of labor services enables the entrepreneur to manufacture a product to offer in exchange to still others in the market.

The gains from trade are made permanently beneficial through processes of interdependent division of labor that in its limit incorporates all of humanity in every corner of the globe. And the same, in principle, would apply if intelligent life were to be found on other planets. Novicow reasoned that if there were men on Mars with whom we could communicate, there could be intellectual and culture interchange with them that would enrich both groups. "That

exchange would fasten the bonds between the Martians and ourselves, and the two groups, heretofore two completely separate societies, would henceforth form a single vast society.”

Even if people are separated by great distances, as this interplanetary example suggests, peaceful and mutually beneficial association through exchange of various sorts would be both possible and desirable. Novicow argued it is not necessary that all the individuals in various groups separated by such great distances know anything about each other in the everyday sense. It is sufficient if the self-interested bonds of trade connect them together in ways from which each benefits, even if they know virtually nothing about all the multitudes of others with whom they have formed peaceful interdependencies of commerce and intellectual and culture networks of shared experiences.

Interracial humanity

Writing at a time when “race consciousness” was widely held by many Europeans and most certainly among a large number of Americans, Novicow touched on the delicate subject of interrelationships among whites and blacks. He accepted as an existing fact that many

whites, especially in the United States, viewed blacks as inferior and unwanted in any close social relationships. But nonetheless he anticipated a time when race prejudice would be gone and the mixing of whites and blacks — including interracial marriage — would eventually take place, and from which all would gain and be better off as members of humanity as a whole. In Novicow’s words,

In the United States, however, there is a much deeper prejudice against the Negro [than in other places], and fusion of the two races is a much slower process. But they are nevertheless amalgamating.... When prejudice will disappear in the United States as it has disappeared in Brazil — and prejudice is purely a psychical fact arising from social conditions — the fusion between Negroes and [white] Americans will be accomplished in a few hundred years....

We are unable to tell now whether or not all the human races will some day become one.... One thing is certain, however, and that is that the life of the human species will be more intense when they are

amalgamated than if they remain differentiated.

Also, in an earlier article, “The Yellow Peril” (1897), Novicow refuted the accusations and fears that Chinese competition and migration threatened the economic and cultural well-being of the white man’s civilization, by emphasizing the positive and universal behavioral qualities and characteristics in all human beings, regardless of time and place, that made us all one people in a shared world.

Foundations of a peaceful world

All that Jacques Novicow saw as the experienced and potential benefits from the peaceful and productive associations among human beings, however, was dependent on the end to a spirit of both international war and domestic plunder in the form of misguided government interventions; the worst of such domestic forms of plunder and societal disintegration, he said, would be if socialism were to triumph anywhere in the world.

The prerequisites for such a possibly world-enveloping association of exchange in all their economic and social and cultural facets were

the foundational principles of a recognition and respect for the individual liberty and rights of each participant in the societal networks; a system of recognized and secured property rights; and organized justice so that violence may be minimized and disputes might be peacefully adjudicated.

Jacques Novicow’s analysis of the tragedies of war and the benefits from a peaceful, liberal world of individual liberty and freedom of trade remain as relevant and timely today as when he penned them more than a hundred years ago.

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NEXT MONTH:
“An Old Geezer on Learning
about Liberty and Its Loss”
by Richard M. Ebeling

The Continuing Disaster of the U.S. Drug War in Latin America

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by *Ted Galen Carpenter*



The following is a statement to the Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission: *Charting a New Path Forward*, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, December 3, 2020:

I wish to express my appreciation to the chairman and members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs for the opportunity to submit this statement. The Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission is addressing an important, but frequently underexamined, issue in our relations with our hemispheric neighbors. For decades, the United States has pursued a vigorous campaign to stamp out the trafficking in

illegal drugs, as well as the use of such substances by American consumers. The campaign escalated dramatically when President Richard M. Nixon declared a “war” on drugs in 1971, and it has remained a high priority for U.S. policymakers since then.

That war has both demand-side and supply-side components. The latter seeks not only to interdict shipments of illegal drugs, but to eradicate drug crops, principally marijuana, cocaine, and opium poppies, in drug-source countries. The effect of the U.S.-led policy has been especially pronounced on Mexico, Central America, and the Andean countries of South America. The strategy has not only failed to achieve the desired results, but has unfortunately fostered increased corruption, social strains, and disorder in those societies. Worse, it has helped enrich and empower the most violence-prone criminal drug cartels. The Commission wisely seeks alternatives to the current, failed policy.

Washington’s focus on the Andean region peaked during the 1980s, 1990s, and the initial years of the twenty-first century. It subsequently has shifted north to Central America and, especially, to Mexico. The Andean phase exacerbated so-

cial tensions in Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. Aerial spraying programs to eradicate coca and other drug-source crops were especially unpopular in Colombia during the years they were in effect because of both health concerns and adverse economic effects. It was during this period that the Colombian drug cartels rose to unprecedented prominence and influence. Astonishingly, Colombia's defense minister, Carlos Holmes Trujillo, stated just this week that he wants to resume the aerial spraying programs that were suspended in 2015, despite that dismal track record. Indications are that the U.S. government would enthusiastically endorse such a resumption.

**Income from drug trafficking
has helped fund Venezuela's
authoritarian regime.**

The negative impact of drug eradication campaigns in Peru and Bolivia is somewhat less severe than in Colombia, but it has been bad enough. Among other consequences, it helped create extensive political support for radical left-wing political figures such as Bolivia's former president, Evo Morales. Beleaguered coca farmers long have been the core of his political base. More re-

cently, income from drug trafficking has helped fund and empower Venezuela's authoritarian regime.

Such examples hardly exhaust the list of adverse unintended consequences in the hemisphere from Washington's war on drugs. Even apparent triumphs usually turn out to be hollow. U.S. officials celebrated the decline of the Colombian drug cartels, but control of the illicit trade merely shifted northward to Mexico, facilitating the rise of equally violent cartels in that country. It was an example of the "push-down, pop-up" phenomenon. Drug war "victories" in one arena simply lead to the emergence of new, dominant players in another locale where the pressure is not as great. The United States and its hemispheric allies continue to play this grotesque game of "whack-a-mole" with predictably unsatisfying results.

Spiraling murder rates

The outcome has been especially tragic in Mexico. In 2006, George W. Bush's administration pressed Mexico's newly elected president, Felipe Calderon, to wage a more vigorous campaign against the cartels. Calderon then made the military the lead agency and launched a vigorous armed offensive. The result was outright warfare between the

military and drug-trafficking organizations and a surge in fatalities that — except for a modest interlude from 2012 to 2016 — continues to spiral upward.

The fracture of the Sinaloa cartel created power vacuums and led to turf fights of unprecedented severity.

A key reason for the temporary flattening of the curve was the ability of the Sinaloa cartel under the leadership of Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman to gain control of an estimated 50 percent of Mexico’s illicit drug trade. The resulting weakness of his competitors reduced the number and severity of turf fights. When Mexican authorities captured Guzman (for the third time) in January 2016 and extradited him to the United States, leaders in both countries were ecstatic. But the achievement triggered another set of highly unpleasant, unintended consequences. The decline and eventual fracture of the Sinaloa cartel created power vacuums and led to turf fights of unprecedented severity.

Mexico’s nearly 35,000 murders (most of which were related to the drug trade) in 2019 set a new record — breaking the previous record in 2018. The first six months of

2020 saw an additional increase, despite lockdowns and other restrictions on movement imposed in response to the COVID pandemic. Mexico’s homicide rate in 2005, the year before Calderon ordered the military to launch its offensive against the cartels, was 10 per 100,000 inhabitants; in 2019, the figure stood at 29 per 100,000.

In October 2019, armed enforcers of the Sinaloa cartel battled units of Mexico’s National Guard on the streets of Culiacan, a city of 800,000 people, for more than eight hours to free two sons of El Chapo Guzman from jail. In a stunning development, they defeated the Guard troops and compelled the national government to release the suspects. That incident is just one indication of how powerful the cartels have become. Major swaths of territory in Mexico are under their effective control, and government security personnel venture into such zones only at their great peril.

Economic law

The consequences of the war on drugs in Central America are at least as bad. As pressure on the cartels from Mexico’s government mounted after 2006, traffickers relocated many of their processing and distribution operations to

Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. It was yet another manifestation of the “push-down, pop-up” effect. As a result, those already fragile and turbulent societies have experienced a massive spike in both corruption and violence. Major portions of all three countries are now under the de facto control of one or more cartel armies. Among other actions, those organizations forcibly recruit teenagers and young adults into their ranks. Many of the people in the large refugee flows coming from Central America through Mexico in recent years are not fleeing generic poverty in their home countries, as bad as that poverty might be; instead they are attempting to escape the depredations of the drug cartels. Once again, Washington’s hemispheric war on drugs has produced horrific unintended consequences.

The existing hemispheric drug policy defies the basic laws of economics. The cartels are powerful because there is a sizable consumer market for drugs in the United States and other countries. The prohibition policy to which Washington and its allies stubbornly cling drives up prices (usually by several hundred percent), thereby enriching and empowering the organizations that control such a lucrative

commerce. Much of the violence, especially in Mexico, is the result of turf fights to control valuable trafficking routes to the United States.

Reformers very likely look to the model that Portugal adopted nearly two decades ago.

Officials in some countries are now balking at Washington’s continuing demand for uncompromising anti-drug crusades. Several years ago, Uruguay embraced a policy of widespread decriminalization, and Mexico’s current government openly discusses the option of full decriminalization or even legalization of drug consumption. In doing so, reformers very likely look to the model that Portugal adopted nearly two decades ago. Portuguese authorities shifted from viewing drug use as a matter for the national-security and criminal-justice systems and instead addressed it as a public-health issue. Instead of jailing drug users, officials made drug-treatment programs more widely available. Contrary to the prediction of soaring drug use and crime under such a system, the reforms have led to less crime and even to less drug consumption.

The new Biden administration should respect the wishes of such

advocates of reform among our hemispheric neighbors. Moving away from the failed policy of drug prohibition would be a more effective strategy to defund the cartels and curb their power. Even the limited decriminalization or legalization of marijuana in some portions of the United States has drastically reduced the revenue flow from that source to the trafficking organizations. Not surprisingly, most American consumers prefer to get their marijuana from legal enterprises rather than unsavory gangs, if they have that choice. Applying the same principle to harder drugs would strike an even bigger blow to cartel revenues.

Such an approach requires policymakers to accept a frustrating, unappealing reality. As much as we might wish otherwise, millions of Americans (and other populations) will continue to use mind-altering substances, whether they are legal or illegal. Government edicts and

actions cannot suppress the trade in such substances when a high level of consumer demand is present. Where a robust demand exists, suppliers inevitably will arise to fulfill that demand and reap the profits. Government policies will determine only whether honest businesses or violent criminal gangs control the supply. The hemispheric war on drugs, as did America's ill-fated experiment with alcohol prohibition, has guaranteed that it will be the latter option. Washington's strategy has created enormous grief both in the United States and in other countries throughout the hemisphere. It is long past time to adopt a totally different approach.

Ted Galen Carpenter, a senior fellow in security studies at the Cato Institute, is the author of 12 books and more than 850 articles on international affairs.

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