

FREEDOM!

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Introduction

Right now is an amazing time to be alive. The human experience is as rich and delightful as ever and every day carries the promise of a better world. Not everyone

sees it that way, but on the whole, "Team People" is doing very well. We have come a long way and that's something worth taking a step back to appreciate. But the current path is not sustainable. Governments are transferring more wealth than ever from the poor to the rich. We are rapidly approaching a point where we must adapt or perish. The short view of history tempts pessimism. We might see the recent steps backward as the triumph of evil over good, or at least a turn toward mutual annihilation. They are merely the steps backward in a long progression of one step backward and two steps forward.

A truly free society does not exist just because we have been convinced we are free. A truly free society cannot exist when we have been so thoroughly propagandized as to define "freedom" in terms of government-granted privilege rather than as a universal moral principle. However, a free society is inevitable because the global paradigm is shifting as we learn how to better assert our right of self-ownership.

We all know life is better with freedom – that our own individual experiences don't mean nearly as much without the ability to assert our will, rather than having our choices limited by force. Many of us today still experience lives dominated by the edicts of others. Many still live under the threat of death from war. While some are doing relatively well and enjoying a great deal of personal wealth and autonomy, many are not. Even those who are doing well are living in a less vibrant and robust environment due to violations of individual freedom around the world.

Any act of violence or threat of violence between individuals represents a violation of someone's freedom. The great illusion of the current paradigm of statism is that governments achieve a worthwhile reduction of violence. Governments are the greatest cause of violence in the world today. They are coercive monopolies with only an illusion of public support. Everything they do is based on a presumed right to point guns at people who are acting peacefully.

Many of us are dependent on government, and because it takes on a large role in society, one can claim that everyone benefits to some degree. This doesn't mean the benefits justify the cost, and the vast majority of us experience a net loss due to government. Even if we are convinced that most people have a net gain from government, we can always do better without using violence.

Freedom is the ability to exercise your will within your rights without the threat of force from anyone else. It's really that simple. You own yourself. No one can claim even partial ownership over you without violating your rights. By abolishing statism we will achieve a world free of miserable victims and miserable victimizers. We will create a world in which all relations are free of force and coercion. We will see each other as partners in the human experience, united in our desire to live free and realize our potential. We are destined to build a society based on respect and cooperation.

1. The Philosophy

I. Freedom

Freedom is what you have when no one is forcing their will on you. Everyone inherently recognizes this as a good thing because we all value our power to make decisions. We all value making decisions without being threatened. Unfortunately, most of us have not taken the time to consider the precise nature of freedom and its

foundation in universal undeniable principles. Applying those principles to big issues may be complicated, but the concept of freedom is not. When applied consistently, it shows the way to a more harmonious society.

If somebody is forcing their will on us, clearly, we are not free. So perhaps it is helpful to think of freedom not as a substance, but as an ideal state of social harmony in which no one is forcing their will on anyone else. A violation of freedom is an attack on a particular victim whose will is being forcibly hindered by taking their life, stealing their property, or threatening them with assault. Freedom is not just an ideal state of society, but a moral code for respecting the rights of others.

Self-ownership is an integral part of being human. You own yourself. You own your body. You own your labor. For anyone to assert otherwise is to attempt to restrict your freedom or make you a slave.

Because you own yourself, it is wrong for someone to initiate force against you or your property. Acceptance of this simple fact is the foundation of a free and peaceful society. This universal non-aggression principle applies to everyone, and it is therefore wrong to kill, injure, assault, steal from, or threaten another person. Anyone who directly violates others, supports the violation of others, or violates others on behalf of someone else is holding us back from achieving our potential through the harmonious and mutually beneficial transactions that take place in freedom.

II. Government

Very few people, even among government workers, have taken time to consider a precise definition of government. Governments get away with what they do because their true nature is obscured by propaganda. Most definitions describe “government” as the people in charge, but the foundation of control is always the threat of force. The authority claimed by governments is unique because it is considered license to use force or coercion against peaceful people. There is simply no way around it: government is control by force.

Government apologists claim it’s acceptable for a government to do something that an individual would never be allowed to do. This is why governments come up with special words to obscure what they’re really doing. War is mass murder. If an individual commits murder on their own, it is a crime and they should face consequences. But if an individual commits murder as part of a massive organized effort they might get a medal. Taxation is theft. If an individual kidnaps you for not giving them half your income, they go to jail. But if someone does that to you on behalf of government, they get a nice salary as a tax collector. No justification for these actions changes their fundamentally immoral nature. Nothing about the “divine right of kings,” the “will of the people,” or the “rule of law” has the power to justify an immoral act. Violent enforcers are essential to governments because without them, their threats would be meaningless.

To say that governments are premised on immorality is not to say everything they do is immoral. They often claim monopolies over very important functions in society, like helping the poor or protecting natural resources. The poor would be much better off and the environment would be much better protected if we did not entrust those functions to the same people who make war. Even when a government gives money to someone in need it must first steal that money from someone else. No noble

act can excuse theft, as much as governments would like us to believe.

Government is fundamentally immoral because it is based on violating the rights of individuals. As much as we have progressed, it has not been because of governments but despite them. As free, beautiful, independent human beings, we own ourselves and should never let anyone tell us otherwise. We deserve self-rule. We deserve to be in charge of our own lives. No one has the right to control others by force, even if they claim to have the majority behind them.

It may be that in the course of society's development, some control by force was inevitable. Out of weakness, we support some institutionalized violence only because we haven't figured out a better way. We may have been convinced that government is a "necessary evil," but because persuasion is always more powerful than coercion, it is inevitable that we will render it unnecessary.

Government is like a cancer. Less government is better than more government, just as less cancer is better than more cancer, but as long as it exists, it's a threat. As long as society accepts the idea that force is the way to solve problems, the only limit on violence is what enforcers cannot be convinced to do. Government today could be described as a global tumor. While it can be eradicated locally, we will only be safe when it has been completely abolished.

Government is control. Government is exploitation. Government is a protection racket. Government is disorder, violence, and conflict! Government is an idea "so good" that it has to be forced on us. Government is a group of people claiming a monopoly on the initiation of force in a specific territory. Government is the institutionalization of our worst desires to control, dominate, and take advantage of others by force. Governments reflect our tolerance for oppression, and all we need to do to defeat them is demand self-government.

III. Statism

Systems of control that depend on victim participation reflect the way we think. If we believe a strong central authority with power over us is necessary, that is the kind of government we will get. Seeking and resisting control have always been part of life, but over time we have demanded more self-government. We have moved from acceptance of crude slavery and serfdom to demanding some role in "participatory" government. Statism is the ideology of turning to organized force to solve problems better solved through peaceful persuasion.

Considering how much force and violence have shaped our destiny, it is understandable why statism is so tempting. Do you care about the poor? Want to protect the environment? Care about national security? Value a society that makes education freely available? Governments would like you to think you have done your part on important social issues by voting and paying your taxes without thinking critically. The threat of violence makes government monopolies and other organized crime distinct from voluntary organizations. Even the good things they achieve are made possible by coercion.

Over the course of human history, as we have demanded more self-government, the government racket has adapted. At one point, it was accepted that whoever could pick up the biggest rock was in charge. Then we had to be convinced of the divine right

of a king or queen. Then we needed a vote to be satisfied. The racket will be plenty lucrative until we see it for what it is. As we demand self-ownership, rather than participation in the oppression known as democracy, the racket will become impossible.

If it is wrong for one person to do something, why is it acceptable when 51% of a voting population agrees to hire someone to do it for them? Democracy is not freedom. When fully living up to its ideal, democracy is at best a majority coming up with an excuse to impose its will on a minority. More often, it is a completely bogus pretense for the powerful to exploit the rest of us as much as possible without creating more discontent than they can manage. Democracy also conveniently provides a false outlet for discontent with the promise of “change” from the next election.

As long as people demand a protection racket, they will get one. Regardless of what it is called, or what false ideology is used to justify it, government is based on forcing ideas on people. Statism is the dominant paradigm today because most of us are in denial or ignorant of its true nature. Dependence on government makes it scary to consider something new. When enough of us realize the ideals of freedom, and turn to cooperative solutions instead of turning to force to solve problems, the paradigm of statism will have passed, and the government racket will be seen for what it really is, before it is quickly abolished.

IV. Property

It takes severely twisted logic and a low sense of self-worth to deny that you own yourself. The very act of asserting this falsehood proves it wrong because the act of self-expression is an exercise of self-ownership! Anything less than self-ownership is slavery. All concepts of rights come from self-ownership. Your self-ownership is the acknowledgement by others of your right to control yourself. If you do not assert control over something of value, someone else will. Without the assertion of self-ownership, there is no freedom.

Self-ownership means you have freedom of speech, because you own your voice and can say what you want. If someone beats, steals from, or imprisons you for your speech, they are not “violating your right to free speech,” as much as they are violating your self-ownership, because they didn’t like what you said. Self-ownership means you have the right to remain silent, because to force someone to speak is an attempt to control their property by threatening them. Self-ownership means your body is a manifestation of your own unique, conscious choices and no one can take that away from you.

Because you own yourself, you are responsible for your actions. If you break something that belongs to another, you owe them what is necessary to make them whole. This also means you are responsible for and own what you produce. If you create something of value by combining natural resources with your labor, you have a right to control it. You can destroy it, consume it, trade it, or give it away. This simple framework for property by itself has the potential to solve many important disputes.

It is not possible for everyone to enjoy perfectly equal access to natural resources, but in a society which respects the rights of individuals, it is wrong to limit anyone’s access to resources that are not being utilized. Thus, it is wrong to pollute in a way that spoils natural resources others could use or enjoy. It is wrong to claim land in

order to prevent its use. It is wrong to limit access to natural resources for those who would put them to good use.

Just as you have a right to defend yourself and decide how to do it, you have a right to assign relative value to your property and decide how to defend it. Under the current paradigm of statism, many governments take away these choices. Whether you like it or not, part of your income will fund a system that is based on injustice and a corrupt sense of property. A thorough respect for the principles of property is essential to a free, cooperative, and peaceful society.

Most conflicts center around property disputes. Disputes are sometimes based on confusion or sincere disagreement, but more often they are based on false claims to property. Such false claims are central to governments, which often assert that they, or the collectives they represent, own your income or your body. Governments also serve to enforce all types of false property constructs to serve the interests of the super rich. By obscuring the simple concept of property rights, governments have been able to commit untold injustice by transferring property from the poor to the rich. Justice requires a solid foundation in property rights.

V. Voluntaryism

From the foundation of self-ownership, we can build a system of justice based on property rights and the non-aggression principle. From this sense of justice, we can see that a free society would be one with only relationships free of force and coercion. This ideal would be a society free of violent control, and thus without anything like that which we call "government" today. This ideal society would be voluntary.

When all relations are voluntary, it means we enter into every exchange with another person by choice. We choose those exchanges based on what is in our best interest, rather than what someone else has chosen for us. When our rights are violated, some choice is taken from us. When governments say you can't do something, it means if you do it, force will be used against you. While many of us still enjoy a great deal of independent decision-making, every aspect of our lives is affected by the threat of force.

Self-ownership means not only that you own yourself, but everyone owns themselves. The best way to ensure respect for our self-ownership is to respect the rights of others. Fortunately, most of us have no problem recognizing this principle and applying it in our daily lives. Even including government employees, relatively few people make their living directly by theft and murder. Unfortunately, society tends to carve out a special morals-free area for government agents. When you learned "don't hit" and "don't steal," it wasn't "unless you work for the government." When you learned not to kill, it wasn't "unless a politician says it's ok." Everything government does is made possible by violating someone's rights.

Because people are prone to interpersonal violence, the absolute ideal of a purely voluntary society might be impossible. There could be a truly free and voluntary world, but the moment someone gets punched in the face, for the victim, the world is not very free! However, that does not mean we should not strive for a more free and peaceful society, or not work vigorously to eliminate violent aggression.

We are living in the most peaceful times in all of human history. Right now, we

are less likely than ever before to be subject to violence from another person. That is a beautiful thing and it should be celebrated! Imagine how much more difficult life was for our ancestors living in a world where they had to live in relative fear of their fellow humans! Imagine how much more difficult trade and cooperation were with a lower level of trust. Sadly, governments today have more than replaced our distrust with other false fears and our lives are more thoroughly governed by force than ever before.

In a world without government (a world in which forced relations are the rare exception), trust is high, individual rights are respected, and the climate for cooperation is ideal. Only in this situation is every person capable of achieving their potential. Every time we fail to respect the self-ownership of others it diminishes our potential. Every threat of force limits choices. Every act of violence holds back humanity. The understanding that we should work toward a free society by ridding all relations of force is known as voluntarism.

2. A Brief History of Power

I. Evolution of the Government Racket

Once humans could generate more than needed to sustain themselves, it became worthwhile to exploit them. To understand the origins of government and interpersonal violence, we need to go all the way back to the state of nature, or perhaps even earlier to our biological origin. We have always sought to meet our needs by controlling the world around us, including other people. Most human relations have been cooperative and nonviolent, but the desire to control others by force evolved from the first temptation to steal to the modern governments we know today.

If government is defined as rule by force, we might have never experienced a state of nature without government. In some primitive hunter-gatherer groups, people had to accept that whoever was strongest was in charge. Perhaps it was in the best interest of the individual to go along with such a system because to challenge it could mean you would be on your own, or worse, injured or killed.

Because we are pack animals, we developed complex languages that allowed us to communicate and coordinate. Suddenly, the guy who could pick up the biggest rock wasn't necessarily in charge! It was the best hunter – the guy who could effectively lead a coordinated effort that required communication and cooperation. Then great hunters started calling themselves chiefs, and the first ongoing protection rackets that might resemble modern governments started to emerge.

Technology has played a primary role in determining social order because it determines what productive capacity can be exploited. Before language or tools, people could only gather relatively little in excess of their needs. With the invention of the tools needed for hunting, there was often excess food that freed up creative energies for other production, but also for other manipulation. With the development of agriculture, people could create far more food than they could consume and could support a whole variety of specialized labor, including the unique profession of the “government leech.”

With the rise of industry, the productive output of the individual increased dramatically, and so did society's overall ability to support people who were completely unproductive, or even counterproductive. If governments took half the income of

primitive peasants who could barely get enough food to feed themselves, they would all die or revolt against such massive theft. However, if governments take half the income of modern industrial workers whose salaries can feed ten families, then use some of it to convince them it's for their own good, they might even vote for higher taxes. Or at worst, they'll vote for the other politician who will steal just a little bit less from them on behalf of the same sponsors.

As we have become more productive per person, we have become better educated and more aware of governments. As a result, governments have used education and mass media to make us think that the racket is essential, or even beneficial, but the effects are in decline. We have come to demand more control over our own decisions, and to go about our lives without being robbed or assaulted.

The history of government has been defined by two arcs: the development of our capacity to tolerate theft, and our awareness that we deserve to live without being robbed. The first arc will continue to grow exponentially with technology, but the second arc will eventually outpace the first. This can be seen in the development of modern participatory democracies. Of all the various forms of government, this is the last one before achieving a truly free society.

The long view of history provides an inspiring story of the development of self-government. If we only look at the current period, we might see it as a struggle for democracy. Fighting for "equal participation" in the forced control of others prevents us from achieving the greater goal of a society that respects self-ownership. Democracy is a way to pretend that we are all equal slave-owners. The reality is always going to be far less than the champions of democracy promise, because it is based on a fundamentally immoral ideal. No one has the right to force a leader on anyone else and no mandate from the majority gives any leader the right to use force against anyone.

Democracy is the justification for most of what the super rich were going to do to everyone else anyway. If anything, it provides a very convenient cover for them to do whatever they want, because democracy allows them to say they are doing it according to the "will of the people." This has given rise to the modern bureaucracies that make it seem like every aspect of our lives is affected by government, or more precisely, controlled by threats of violence. Yet the illusion of participation through voting keeps us coming back for more.

Because we are pragmatic creatures who cannot disagree with the existing social order if we cannot eat, we have more or less gone along with the progression of the racket. While productivity has increased and governments have grown, the demand for self-government is accelerating and the illusion of democracy won't satisfy it. Major historical revolutions have made the racket more difficult, even unworkable at times, but only after the global paradigm shift to freedom will we shed the racket once and for all.

As society evolved, we retained our primal instincts. We are a communal species, not dependent on each other, but dependent on cooperation to maintain our standard of living and to enhance our chances of survival and reproduction. Because cooperation is superior to coercion, we have continuously developed better ways of organizing society to foster cooperation. The era of modern governments represents an important step in the process, but it is by no means the final one. The adoption of a new paradigm based on freedom will soon render all forms of organized exploitation laughably obsolete.

II. Patriotism

People have always derived a sense of identity from affiliation with groups. We compare ourselves to lesser groups to boost our sense of self-esteem. This inherent feature of the human psyche has been widely exploited to manipulate societies into tolerating oppression. Even if we accept the creation of strong group identities as a service, governments have used monopoly privileges to charge far more than their services are worth. In the case of modern governments, the price of strong national identities has been widespread war, theft, and manipulation.

The original grouping we all seek affiliation with is family. There is a natural, healthy instinct to see those who gave us life as superior to anyone who didn't. Unfortunately, this is easily perverted into a fear of outsiders, or people who are different from those we identify with as family. When a family or a tribe is threatened, this instinct can be very helpful, even essential to survival. When there is no threat, fear of outsiders can block cooperation.

Many governments directly exploit this tendency by trying to get people to think of their country as a family and the political leaders as parents. This not only allows a government to take on a more controlling role in general, but especially when it comes to relationships between countries. Patriotism perverts natural group identities into national identities. This term is often defined as "love of one's country," but when that country is defined by lines drawn on a map by politicians, wars, and circumstances of history, that love is for a false sense of group identity created and supported explicitly to strengthen the psychological grip of governments over their victims.

Patriotism is an artificial, bordered "love" designed to create a distinct lack of love for those on the other side of the borders. There is nothing wrong with loving yourself, or those similar to you – those who share your values or intrinsic traits you value in yourself – but to assign love based on the borders of a violent racket is an inherently dangerous idea. The most insecure and vulnerable people are most likely to be the most enthusiastic patriots, and thus governments always have an interest in keeping us afraid of outsiders, disconnected from the rest of the world, and stunted in emotional maturity.

Insecurity and a tendency to seek identity as part of a group can lead people to do dangerous and irrational things. Patriotism has been used to justify the most horrific crimes in history because people more strongly identified as members of a group than as morally strong individuals. Patriotism inherently means lowering ourselves to be members of a group like primitive pack animals. This leads to the diversion of responsibility essential to government, and to the unthinking obedience that deludes people into believing that saying "I was just following orders" will excuse immoral behavior.

Governments rely on a sense of patriotism in their victims to get them to go along with policies not in their best interest. They need us to believe we are sacrificing for the common good when we are really aiding our victimizers. They need us to go along as part of the herd. They need us to accept the proclaimed selflessness of politicians acting only out of "love" for the artificial collective. They need to ensure that not too many of us victims are emotionally healthy thinkers who demand self-government and

are secure in our identities as free, beautiful, independent people. Patriotism is proof that a patriot isn't free.

III. Propaganda

The great government lie is that it exists for the good of its victims. To obscure the truth, governments go to great lengths with propaganda intended to change the way we think and thus how we act. Propaganda spreads misinformation that can affect our decisions, deflect blame from governments, encourage infighting, promote dislike of outsiders, and create a sense of patriotism, or identification with the country or even the government itself. The greatest measure of what governments are capable of with propaganda is how much they have convinced us to identify with them so that anyone who challenges their power is seen as an enemy of the people. Fortunately, the same technology that makes propaganda possible today has finally caught up in terms of empowering us to question government, and we may have already passed the high point of the effectiveness of propaganda.

In the early days of government, propaganda was simple and crude. Perhaps the first example was a big caveman with a spear grunting angrily at a neighboring tribe, goading his people into attacking. "Bad guys! Over there! Be a patriot! Go get 'em!" As communications technology has advanced, so has the complexity of society, so has the complexity of the racket, and so has the power of propaganda. At first, if only to coordinate subdivisions, communication technology was essential to government growth. With mass public communication, the effects of propaganda became much stronger. It also made it worthwhile for governments to invest very heavily in the development of propaganda techniques. Governments use propaganda to create support for a wide array of policies that any free-thinking society would never tolerate.

The development of mass communications technology enabled governments to assemble massive armies of poor men, not only to fight and die in rich men's wars, but to do it enthusiastically. Not only could they convince people to support massive welfare programs, but they could make them enthusiastic taxpayers who expect and tolerate enormous waste, fraud, and abuse. Not only could they take over broad segments of the economy by seizing private property, they could get people to believe that without governments, society couldn't function! The propaganda techniques are so sophisticated, governments have convinced people to attack anyone who points out the uncomfortable truth.

Governments and their representatives lie to us directly, but the lies are so much more effective when someone else is delivering them. Governments have always materially supported propagandists who tilt the general conversation in their favor. Religion has long played a supporting role in oppression, as governments will promote religions that advocate obedience to government. Through sponsorship (and in some places takeover) of education, governments can strongly favor those who reinforce their narrative. Governments and their sponsors give credibility to their propaganda by supporting think tanks. They control mass media by corporate licensing, censorship, monopoly management of infrastructure, and limited access.

Staged conversations between preselected talking heads are a common tactic of propagandists because the best propaganda is the kind the targets don't recognize.

Experts who supposedly represent all sides of a debate have a lopsided conversation which draws people in with sensationalism and the credibility of personalities. The audience gets to decide who they agree with “independently.” A third option is not considered or is presumed irrelevant. Dissent is not acknowledged. And while the people think they are free because they are vigorously debating one socially-divisive issue or another, they are not considering the validity of the presumptions of the propaganda: government is good, government is here to protect us, we couldn't possibly survive without government.

While propaganda has had a great multiplier effect on the effectiveness of the racket, (explaining its widespread use) its effectiveness is on the decline. While publication technologies once empowered governments disproportionately, we now have such an abundance of information at our fingertips that it is much more difficult to lie to us. As long as there are governments, there will be propaganda. As long as propaganda is effective, governments will always be possible. But because we are capable of questioning propaganda like never before, it will eventually be irrelevant.

IV. Government VS Technology

In many ways, the arc of government has followed the arc of technology, but their relationship is much more complicated. Governments are often empowered by technology in ways the public is not, sometimes secretly. Technology has allowed governments to be far more destructive than they would be without it. In many ways, technology is now empowering us to challenge government power. As long as we are susceptible to the racket, available technology will determine the nature of the oppression, but eventually technology will empower the general population to demand self-government and render the psychological roots of statism irrelevant.

The prevailing state of technology is the primary determinant of the productive capacity of the average member of society. Excess productivity makes government possible. The development of agriculture suggested a racket centered around various forms of tenant farming. The development of industry created a much more regimented and coordinated economy that suggested taxing income. Developments in printing and enforcement of currency regulations made possible the underpinning of nearly all modern governments: monopoly creation of money. Technology has also driven the arc of our ability to destroy ourselves to the point where complete annihilation seems feasible. If we can get past statism now, we will have averted the possibility of the destructive arc of government overtaking the peaceful and empowering arc of technological development.

Technological development leads to wealth development. By increasing the capacity of the average laborer, technology raises the standard of living (despite government always taking larger portions of our output). When people barely had the ability to feed their families and pay off their landlords, they didn't have time to organize protests. With the development of a wealthier society overall, the level of individual empowerment has increased along with access to information. This has been the primary driver of the increased demand for self-government.

Despite the rapidly-developing internet, some politicians think they can still get away with the old deceptions. Sometimes, politicians will say one thing, then say the

opposite thing in another town the next day, only to find video of the two statements edited together online the day after. When so many of us have nearly the entire wealth of human knowledge at our fingertips, it's very difficult to lie effectively.

When a victim of bullying stays silent, the bully is emboldened. Like any bully, governments want their victims to stay quiet. They try to keep victims isolated and prevent them from banding together. The internet has created a conversation in which we can share our stories of victimization and see that we are not alone. The worst government atrocities are now viral videos. The new conversation does not favor governments.

Understanding government as institutionalized violence allows us to see its psychological roots. People turn to violence and are tempted into conflict by insecurity and fear. Technology is empowering us to be much more aware of mental health. One might argue that mental health is historically low because of current governments, but even if that is true, lower rates of interpersonal violence would suggest a much more empowered society. In the long run, technology will empower connectedness, harmony, and cooperation much more than governments.

Because governments depend on an enforcement class to do violence against people who are acting peacefully, the ability to limit and control information that gets to the enforcement class is very important. The general abundance of communication technology makes that much more difficult. It is easy to convince a soldier to kill someone if he can be convinced his victim is somehow less than human. It is much more difficult if they can video chat online. Technology is making it more difficult for governments to isolate people.

Before the internet, governments could control cutting edge communication technology effectively. Many desperate governments limit access to the internet or apply targeted censorship, but this marks the beginning of the end of the racket. As the internet continues to become more widely available, it will become much more difficult to deceive people. Able to connect like never before, we are already developing the relationships that will render government obsolete.

3. War

I. The Greatest Crime Against Freedom

If the worst crime that can be committed against an individual is murder, then the worst possible crime is organized, deliberate, self-righteous, mass murder. "War" is just a word that governments use to make mass murder and theft seem acceptable. Only the sickest and most deranged individuals support murder as a matter of policy and only the sickest and most deranged governments engage in war. To get away with it, they have to convince a critical mass of the population to materially support it. It's not too difficult when they are already convinced that murder is acceptable if enough people do it.

None of the propaganda around war can disguise its true nature. It is massive organized violence for the purpose of expanding government power. It is the height of statism and it is the greatest affront to freedom. Governments will go to great lengths to convince people that war is glorious and those who oppose it are cowards. None of this

changes the physical reality of war: mass destruction of human life, shooting people because of the racket they are fighting for, bombing people for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and poor men dying for the benefit of government sponsors. Wars make governments more powerful and more powerful governments are better at ripping people off.

The destruction of combat is an affront to freedom and denies us the prosperity of peace. Governments use war as an excuse to increase taxation. When they can frighten people with a foreign threat, this is much easier. Once convinced, not only will they pay their taxes enthusiastically, they will attack anyone who suggests taxes should be lower. When fear fails to trick enough young people into joining the military, governments enslave people with "conscription." War diverts an incredible amount of productive capacity from serving demand in the market to destruction. Immeasurable future labor is lost from the dead and wounded.

To make a society support the crazy ideas behind war, governments need to instill an intense sense of collective identity, which is in itself an affront to freedom. The great tragedy of war is the deception behind it. Yes, it's quite tragic when someone is murdered, but it is far more tragic when mass murder is so clearly preventable. War is the height of statism and the greatest crime against freedom. It is only possible because individuals are willing to commit horrific acts when doing a government's bidding.

II. Soldiering

Once a government has developed a strong sense of national identity and patriotism among its citizens, it is not particularly difficult to convince a large number of them to sign up to defend the collective. This is still true for governments with consistent records of sending people to kill and die in ways that clearly have nothing to do with defense. But being called a soldier does not separate you from responsibility for your actions.

The human tendency to cooperate is much stronger than the tendency to fight, so it takes a significant amount of conditioning to make war possible. It starts with the general propaganda of collectivism and demonization of outsiders. The sacrifice of individuality and dehumanization of the self necessary to be a soldier makes it easier to condition a soldier to dehumanize the enemy. Once the enemy is seen as less than human, killing is much easier. When soldiers are so detached from reality, they are easy to manipulate with rewards of honor and praise represented by bits of cloth and metal pinned to their chests.

In every military system, a certain kind of leadership is praised and promoted. Some of the values promoted by militaries are universally positive traits, but they emphasize leadership because it takes a unique ability to so severely misdirect our good intentions. It takes a certain kind of leader to get people to follow orders without question. It takes a certain kind of propaganda to make it so easy to kill. It takes a certain kind of person to entrust their moral decision-making power to an institution so inherently misguided.

To be a soldier is to take a stand against your own freedom. It is to endorse the protection racket in the most significant way. It is to give up any moral authority you might claim. It is to sacrifice your autonomy to the collective. It is to serve government

sponsors. It is to make yourself subservient to your oppressors. It is to give up responsibility for your own life. It is to be merely a paid killer, or at least an enabler of paid killers. It is to be used as a dumb animal, a pawn for politicians. Joining the military means removing yourself from the productive sector of society to join the parasite.

Soldiering is sold as fighting for freedom, and governments want us to be grateful for their wars, but just by putting on that uniform, every soldier makes the citizens less free. Being a soldier is a choice. No one can force you to do something immoral. When we see through the propaganda of collectivism, there will be no more militaries. When we hold each other accountable for individual acts of violence, there will be no more war. When we demand our freedom, there will be no more soldiers.

III. The Motivation for War

Understanding governments as competing protection rackets makes it possible to understand the reasons for war. Governments give all kinds of noble reasons for starting wars, but they are only as legitimate as any other propaganda. Today, most of them claim they only use military force for defensive purposes, but if all governments only fought defensive wars, militaries wouldn't be necessary! Governments start wars to expand or strengthen their protection rackets.

Nothing encourages patriotism like war. Governments like war because patriotism leads people to sacrifice for the imagined collective and tolerate more oppression. Patriotism reinforces the essential myth that governments act on behalf of the people, and the language of war often confuses the government itself with the people. When two countries are at war, we often say that one country attacked another, but that is a misrepresentation of one government attacking another government's territory. Or more precisely, a group of people wearing uniforms of one color from one place, killing people wearing uniforms of a different color from a different place. Countries don't attack other countries. Governments use violence to expand their power.

Governments also like war because it is extremely profitable for a few special interests. Just the constant threat of war is enough to make the arms industry very profitable. Other than politicians, no one is more eager to buy bombs than a frightened population willing to give up everything to be safe. When a population is frightened enough to support a war, it will support increased taxation and buy war bonds. It will support a massive increase in the money supply, supposedly to pay for soldiers' salaries and equipment, even though it will only enrich the bankers by devaluing everyone's savings. Although war spending is clearly a way of diverting productive resources to destructive purposes, governments always count this spending in positive economic measurements to perpetuate the most dangerous myth that war is good for the economy.

War gives governments the excuses necessary to do the things they always want to, but usually can't in peacetime. During war, governments claim to need new powers, supposedly necessary to protect from a new threat. Those who stand to profit from such wartime policies will attack opponents as unpatriotic. They always say these powers are temporary, but they're often permanent. War has been used as an excuse to raise taxes, destroy privacy, enslave through conscription, and demand greater loyalty to the

collective.

We might think a protection racket would not want to kill too many of its subjects, if only because of the loss of productivity, but governments don't always behave rationally. They are always seeking more efficient means of exploiting us, but if they have to kill large numbers of people to maintain their oppression of the rest, they will. Sometimes they get carried away and kill so many that some of the oppressors are affected. Sometimes, governments and their beneficiaries truly lose out in the struggles between competing protection rackets, but war is still a very effective tool. Even with the loss of productivity, wars make governments more powerful.

IV. The Isolation of Intervention

Violence is the greatest obstacle to commerce and cooperation. When governments do not intervene, commerce between countries brings us together. When they make war, it drives us apart. When governments intervene in the affairs of other countries, just as when they intervene in the lives of individuals, productive relationships are displaced by coercive relationships. While the immediate costs of war are often extremely high (in numbers counted as profits by some), the indirect costs are many times that.

Free trade is dependent upon mutual respect for the self-ownership and property rights of others. War is the ultimate act of disregard for human rights. To the extent that a war is supported by the people, it says, "We would rather kill you than trade with you." To the extent that it is opposed by the people, but happens anyway, it says, "We respect you and want to trade with you, but not badly enough to stop our government from trying to kill you." Allowing relations between countries to be managed by governments isolates us and keeps us from enjoying productive relationships.

While not considered war by some, embargoes and blockades represent widespread threats of force, and can be just as destructive as war. A complete blockade says, "If you do business with anyone in this country, we will attack you." This is easier when the victim is seen as having committed some significant collective crime, but governments frequently impose lesser international trade restrictions that cause problems (and unfair trade advantages) on a massive scale. With countries so interdependent, the consequences of cutting one off from the rest can lead to widespread shortages of essential goods like food, fuel, and medical supplies.

Because war drives resources from productive uses to destructive ones, it also limits the people of a country at war in their ability to engage in trade with people of other countries. However, the international trade cut off by war, embargoes, or some form of managed trade is far more significant. When an embargo is declared, it says anyone engaging in certain trade will be shot or bombed. As a result of that single threat, thousands of regular daily exchanges essential to the standard of living of millions may be cut off, and countless more potential exchanges might never happen. While the measurable costs of war in lives and resources might be so immense as to be unfathomable, the total costs of war are incalculable.

V. Foreign Aid

One of the many ways modern governments pervert the good will of their people is with foreign aid. For citizens who want to vote away their problems and never have to think about them again, electing a politician who “cares about poor people throughout the world” is a nice option, but it doesn’t change reality. Foreign aid takes money from the poor in one country through taxation, and gives it to the rich in another country through handouts.

Like many problems that governments pretend to be solving, the problem of foreign suffering is one we want to solve. Despite governments taking such a large role with stolen funds, we still give generously to foreign charities. While some foreign charities are frauds, all government foreign aid programs are frauds because if we don’t like how our money is being spent, we only have two choices: pay our taxes or go to jail.

Governments love foreign aid because it allows them to buy off smaller governments and expand their influence without wars. Only people who believe governments are efficient would want them to handle foreign aid donations. Governments tend to give the money not to the people of other countries, but to the governments. Even if the majority of this money is used for its stated purpose, it will serve to entrench the existing power structure and the diversion of only a small part of it is enough to make plenty of corrupt politicians more than rich enough to buy the next few elections. Thus, foreign aid can serve to prop up governments that might otherwise fail due to excess corruption or unpopularity. When foreign aid is disbursed based on where there is terrorism, starvation, or disease, it ends up subsidizing terrorism, starvation, and disease.

There are tragedies going on all over the world and many caring people genuinely want to help. When we pool resources, amazing things can happen. Sometimes, even governments accomplish great feats of relief. Unfortunately, foreign aid funded by theft and carried out by people who are unaccountable for the results predictably leads to diversion of funds for personal gain.

VI. War on Terror

Governments come up with many excuses for war, but the “war on terror” is especially dangerous because it can be used to keep a country in an endless state of war. Because government programs are very difficult to end, an armed conflict against an unspecified enemy is every government’s dream come true: perpetual war. The policies of the war on terror, as with most government programs, cause more of the problem. Governments of developed countries that occupy and intrude on developing nations cause terrorism. People resent having their societies taken over by foreign militaries, and after seeing their families killed and their way of life destroyed, resentment can become so great as to drive people to horrific violence. Foreign occupations cause such despair that victims often find their lives worth so little as to be easily sacrificed in resistance.

Governments have always used war as an excuse to restrict individual freedoms at home in the name of security. The war on terror is especially dangerous because it is based on an ever-present hypothetical threat that can affect every aspect of our lives – giving governments an excuse to regulate every aspect of our lives. Restrictions of speech and privacy are especially useful because they make people less likely to figure

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