

Committee 4
Military and Police - Public or Private? Explorations
in the Theory and History of Security Production

Draft – February 1, 2000
For Conference Distribution Only



The Will to be Free: The Role of Ideology in National Defense

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The Twenty-second International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences
Seoul, Korea February 9-13, 2000

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The practical superiority of markets over governments has become readily apparent. Only the most dogmatic of State apologists continue to deny this obvious fact--at least with respect to the production of many goods and services. Free-market economists and libertarians go much further, of course. They affirm the market's superiority in nearly all realms. Yet only a handful of anarcho-capitalists, most notably Murray Rothbard, have dared claim that a free market could also do a better job at providing protection from foreign States.¹ National defense is generally considered the most essential of all government services.

This widely conceded exception to the efficacy of markets seems to have irrefutable empirical confirmation. If private defense is better than government defense, why has government kept winning over the centuries? Indeed, the State's military prowess has more than seemingly precluded the modern emergence of any anarcho-capitalist society. At one time, as far as we know, all humankind lived in Stateless bands of hunter-gatherers, and had done so since the emergence of modern man some 50,000 years ago. But beginning around 11,000 B.C., a gradual transition to plant cultivation and animal husbandry--in what is variously

identified as the Neolithic, Food Production, or Agricultural Revolution--fostered a steady increase in population densities. These denser, settled populations became susceptible to what the distinguished historian William H. McNeill has aptly termed "microparasites" and "macroparasites." Microparasites are the assorted diseases and other pests that have constantly plagued civilization until the development of modern medicine. And macroparasites are governments, which either arose through conquest or in reaction to the threat of conquest, until they now dominate every corner of the globe.²

Radical libertarians, such as Rothbard, explicitly acknowledge the historical triumph of governments over primitive Stateless societies when they embrace the conquest theory of the State's origins.³ Yet this boxes them into an apparent paradox. How can they attribute the origins of government to successful conquest and simultaneously maintain that a completely free society, without government, could prevent such conquest? It is this paradox that I will attempt to address in the following pages. Doing so obviously hinges on establishing a crucial difference between the conditions that permitted government's to arise in the first place and those that would characterize a future free society. So let us initially turn our attention to the first set of conditions, and ascertain exactly what about the Agricultural Revolution created such fertile soil for the growth of coercive monopolies.

I

Unlike the State, warfare predates the Agricultural

Revolution. It was endemic among bands of hunter-gatherers. But it never led to permanent conquest. Why not? The explanation is simple enough. Hunters and gatherers could easily exit to new land. "Where population densities are very low," writes Jared Diamond, "as is usual in regions occupied by hunter-gatherer bands, survivors of a defeated group need only move farther away from their enemies."⁴ This option ceases to be viable only with the higher concentrations of population supported by food production. "No doubt, if tax and rent collectors pressed too heavily on those who worked the fields," admits William H. McNeill, "the option of flight remained. But in practice, this was a costly alternative. It was rare indeed that a fleeing farmer could expect to find a new place where he could raise a crop in the next season, starting from raw land. And to go without food other than what could be found in the wild for a whole year was impractical."⁵

In other words, hunting and gathering tends to prevail when land is relatively abundant. Yet this very abundance condemned hunting and gathering to a Malthusian dilemma. Without any serious land scarcity, hunting-gathering societies had little incentive to establish or enforce clear property rights in natural resources. Population therefore expanded, subjecting this most basic form of production to diminishing marginal returns. The most extreme manifestation of the resulting over-utilization of common resources are the species extinctions that many authorities now attribute to primitive hunters. Such extinctions have their modern counterparts in the current

inefficient harvesting of whales and other resources from the commonly owned oceans.

Whether humans were the primary agents in the disappearance of woolly mammoths and some two hundred other species of large mammals in the late Pleistocene is still debated. But the lack of enforceable property rights in land indisputably created a free-rider or negative externality problem among competing bands of hunters and gatherers that caused their numbers to steadily expand. At some point the growing population drove returns to hunting and gathering so low that settled agriculture and animal husbandry became more productive. This greater productivity then provided incentives for the necessary innovations in plant cultivation and animal domestication. Thus, rising population densities became both the most important cause and one of the most important consequences of the Agricultural Revolution. Migratory bands of scattered hunters and gatherers were supplanted by larger, relatively sedentary populations of farmers and herders.⁶

Property rights in land now emerged, as the spread of agriculture made this resource increasingly scarce. At the same time, however, settled populations became increasingly vulnerable to both microparasites and macroparasites. Macroparasites could take the form of marauding raiders who merely plundered their victims and perhaps exterminated them. But "[a]daptation between host and parasite always tends toward mutual accommodation," as McNeill puts it.⁷ The most successful macroparasites were the warriors and rulers who stumbled into some kind of long-run

equilibrium with their coerced subjects. They extracted enough resources through tribute and taxation to be able to ward off competing groups of macroparasites but not so much that they killed off their host population. They, in short, usually operated within the range of the Laffer curve's apex, for those rulers who seized too much or too little wealth often suffered military defeat at the hands of other rulers. In this fashion, egalitarian bands evolved first into tribes and then into chiefdoms and finally into hierarchical States.

The free-rider problem, long presented by economists as a normative justification for the State, is in reality a positive explanation for why the State first arose and persisted. All the earliest governments about which we have any knowledge had relatively small ruling classes dependent upon wealth transfers from a much larger subject population. Why did not the more numerous subjects ever rise up and overthrow their masters? The free rider is the key. Revolutionary activity is always extremely risky. But nearly all subjects would benefit from a successful revolution, regardless of whether they participated in it or not. This remained an enormous obstacle to organizing the masses. Small, concentrated ruling classes, in contrast, faced fewer free-rider problems in carrying out their conquests. The history of the State, therefore, over the millennia from the Agricultural Revolution to the present has become an always dreary and sometimes horrific litany of special interests triumphantly coercing larger groups.

Numbers are not utterly irrelevant, however. All other

things equal, bigger armies have an advantage over smaller ones. As governments continued the hallowed human tradition of waging war, they found it useful to motivate their subjects to fight for them. This helped bring about the oft-cited alliance between State and religion, between Throne and Altar, between Attila and the Witch Doctor.⁸ All States promote some ideology, whether religious or secular, that legitimizes their rule.

Legitimization makes the State's subjects more docile generally but in particular provides more willing fodder for war. It "gives people a motive, other than genetic self-interest," quoting Diamond again, "for sacrificing their lives on behalf of others. At the cost of a few society members who die in battle as soldiers, the whole society becomes much more effective at conquering other societies or resisting attack."⁹

Governments ruling over greater populations, consequently, could more easily defeat their rivals. Even today, it is fairly obvious who would win a war between Germany and Luxembourg, between China and Hong Kong, or between the United States and Grenada. Recall, moreover, that the State owes its origins to the rising populations of the Agricultural Revolution. When ancient governments intruded upon remnant bands of hunter gatherers, the population difference was severe. Couple that with the devastating impact of the microparasitic diseases spawned and spread by denser agricultural societies on peoples not exposed long enough to develop some natural immunity, and the population difference became even more overwhelming. Whether it was the indigenous San (Bushman) of South Africa being driven to

the marginal lands of the Kalahari Desert by the cattle-herding Bantu, or the Aboriginal Australians being decimated by the guns and diseases of the invading Europeans, Stateless societies of hunter gatherers were for this reason always displaced.

II

Population is obviously not the only factor influencing military outcomes. A casual perusal of the intermittent warfare that has characterized the long history of governments helps us identify several others. Wealth and technology are at least as important, with wealthier or more technologically advanced societies enjoying a clear advantage. This was another factor that worked against primitive Stateless societies. The concentrated populations of the Agricultural Revolution also fostered the emergence of trade and cities, and the resulting mutual gains, as McNeill observes, "are as much a part of the historic record as are [the] exploitation and lopsided taking" by governments. To this contemporaneous development of markets we owe all the accouterments of civilization.¹⁰

"For centuries," McNeill continues, "exchanges of goods and services, which were freely and willingly entered into by the parties concerned, flickered on and off, being perpetually liable to forcible interruption. Raiders from afar and rulers close at hand were both perennially tempted to confiscate rather than to buy; and when they confiscated, trade relations and voluntary production for market sale weakened or even disappeared entirely for a while. But market behavior always tended to take root anew because of the mutual advantages inherent in exchange of goods

coming from diverse parts of the earth or produced by diversely skilled individuals."¹¹ Over the long-run, those governments that permitted trade, with its concomitant wealth creation and technological innovation, had more and better physical resources to devote to war.

Geography is another determinant of war. Rivers, bodies of water, sea lanes, and ocean barriers can play diverse roles in military maneuvers. Some countries are endowed with more easily defensible terrain, because of mountains, forests, deserts, disease environments, or other natural obstacles. The geographical unity of China, bound together by two, long navigable river systems, partly hemmed in by high mountains, and with a rather uniform coastline, has favored both its political unity for much of the time since 221 B.C. and its vulnerability to the barbarian invasions of horse-mounted nomads. This stands in stark contrast to Europe, divided up by an irregular coastline, mountain ranges, and water obstructions that have left it politically, linguistically, and ethnically fragmented to this very day. The importance of geography is underscored by its role in the survival of a few isolated enclaves of hunter-gatherers well into the twentieth century, long after the world's States had staked out their territorial claims to the planet's entire land surface.

A final factor affecting warfare is, as we have seen, the motivation of the people themselves. Ideas ultimately determine in which direction they wield their weapons or whether they wield them at all. Morale has not only affected military operations

directly but also has affected indirectly the capacity of governments to impose their rule. Much successful State conquest has been intermediated through local ruling classes, who remain legitimized among the subject population. This is well exemplified in the cases of British rule over India and the Spanish conquest of Mexico. The effective dominance of would-be conquerors who possess military superiority but face the implacable hostility of an ideologically united population is more problematic. The English hold on Ireland was, due to this factor, always tenuous, and one can find similar instances into the modern day. This is another advantage sometimes possessed by hunter gatherers and primitive agriculturalists in their struggles with more centralized societies. Contrast Spain's fairly rapid conquest of the Indians of Central and South America, already habituated to indigenous State rule, with the much more drawn out European campaigns against the North American Indians, who were slowly expropriated, expelled, and exterminated over several centuries but never really fully subjugated until the twentieth.¹²

We can analyze the waging of war, therefore, in a manner somewhat analogous to the economic analysis of production. The same three categories of productive factors--labor (human resources), land (natural resources), and capital goods (wealth and technology)--serve as inputs into any military endeavor, with the labor applied having both a quantitative dimension and a qualitative, human capital dimension. The combatant who can marshal a greater input of any one of these factors, *ceteris*

paribus, has a military advantage, although there will be numerous situations under which governments decide that actually allocating these resources to war is not worth the potential gain in territory and revenue. It would be nice if we could expand this analysis into a fully articulated theory allowing us to predict the size and shape of States.¹³ Alas, we are not even close to such knowledge, but we nonetheless can detect some crucial relationships.

Prior to the Industrial Revolution no region of the globe experienced the sustained economic growth that has come to be expected nowadays as ordinary. Some places and times, perhaps ancient Rome, might have enjoyed a temporarily higher level of average wealth per person than others, but general economic stagnation, without any regular, long-run increase in output per capita, remained the prevailing condition for thousands of years after the outset of the Agricultural Revolution. It was a stagnation, moreover, in which the State's expropriations "tended to keep the peasant majority of civilized populations close to bare subsistence."¹⁴ Disparities among States in wealth and technology, above and beyond those that inevitably resulted from disparities in population, consequently played a secondary role in warfare. Only with the unprecedented economic advances accompanying sustained growth did military capital become so decisive that it outweighed mere numbers and permitted handfuls of Europeans to subdue hordes of natives.

It has now become almost a commonplace observation that the Industrial Revolution first erupted in Western Civilization

because of Europe's political pluralism. In nearly all prior civilizations, imperial States came to encompass the entire area within which significant trade was conducted. Only in Europe did the trading area and a common culture extend beyond the borders of many small States, creating a truly polycentric legal order. The downside of Europe's political fragmentation was frequent and fratricidal wars that reached their fateful culmination in the mass destruction of the two World Wars. But fortunately every military attempt to consolidate the continent, whether by Philip II of Spain, Napoleon Bonaparte, or Adolf Hitler, proved abortive. The benefit of this competition among various jurisdictions was that it encouraged--like competition always does--innovation, in this case the institutional innovations with regard to property and markets that were the prerequisites for capital accumulation and sustained growth.¹⁵

A simple way to model what happened is to conceive of long-run shifts in the Laffer curve. The short-run Laffer curve depicts the immediate trade-off between tax rates and tax revenue, or more broadly, between the State's rate of expropriation, aggregating all its exactations, and the total revenue it manages to extract from the economy.¹⁶ Only by reducing the expropriation rate well below what will generate maximum revenue can governments lay the preconditions for secular increases in output. Over time, ironically, this will shift the Laffer curve upward so even at the same expropriation rate the government will capture more total revenue. Just as private savers must give up consumption in the present to gain more

consumption in the future, governments had to give up revenue in the present in order to stimulate the growth that would make them wealthier and stronger in the future.¹⁷ In the intensely competitive political environment of Europe some States were finally able to discover this formula for eclipsing their rivals.

The same political competition has more recently exposed the utter economic failure of socialism. Without the dramatic comparison with the more prosperous West, the collectivist economies of the Soviet Union and China might have survived politically for eons--despite the inescapable increasing immiseration of the masses and retrogression to the stagnation of the ancient world. But competition among States cannot all by itself account for either the Industrial Revolution or the collapse of socialism. There also must be some mechanism that generates variation in government policies in the first place. And that brings us back to the realm of ideas, culture, and legitimization. What I am suggesting is a process of natural selection among States, similar to the natural selection among living species. Whereas genetic mutations cause the changes and adaptations that drive natural selection among living organisms, the decisive causal agent for governments is ideology.

III

Ludwig von Mises was the first to explain and predict the collapse of socialism. But this was just one part of his comprehensive, utilitarian defense of laissez faire. The other part was Mises's critique of what he called interventionism, or what economics texts used to refer to as the mixed economy and

what became known historically in Europe as social democracy. While central planning was incompatible with the prosperity wrought by the Industrial Revolution, a more limited welfare State was, in Mises view, inherently unstable. Each specific government measure would cause such social disruption that it would either bring on further intervention or force its repeal. Society would ultimately end up with either pure socialism or laissez faire, and since of the two, only laissez faire could support the living standards to which Europeans had become accustomed, the choice was obvious.¹⁸

Events proved Mises to have been absolutely right about central planning but wrong about interventionism. Indeed, the truth about the client-centered, power-broker State is diametrically opposite Mises's prediction. Rather than being inherently unstable, it is the gravity well toward which both market and socialist societies sink. And public-choice theory, which in Mises's terminology works out the praxeology of politics, has provided us with the reason. Because concentrated groups face fewer free-rider problems in seeking government transfers, they have an inordinate influence on policy. Today, just as was true at the dawn of civilization, the State's strongest incentives are to benefit special interests at the expense of the general public.¹⁹

Because of the rent seeking that this incentive structure encourages, not only did Britain and the United States recede after 1900 from perhaps the apogee of limited government in world history. But also Russia's rulers had retreated in practice from

the pure Marxist goal of abolishing all markets long before the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991. The Brezhnev-era reign of the *apparatchiks* and *nomenklatura* was a far cry from the systematic central planning of Stalin's Five Year Plans, much less the fanatical assault on all monetary exchange of Lenin and Trotsky's War Communism.²⁰ The macroparasitic governments in both cases had been extracting revenue well below the potential maximum of the short-run Laffer curve. And whereas Soviet special interests found that they could gain greater transfers with bribes, corruption, and other practices that in effect relaxed the government burden on the economy, the temptation for British and U.S. rulers to exploit the short-run gains in revenue by moving up the Laffer curve was too great, even at the possible cost of long-run growth.

Public choice analysis, however, is in the awkward position of raising an across-the-board theoretical obstacle to any changes that drive the economy off this social democratic, neo-mercantilist midpoint. There must be some force causing perturbations and oscillations in government policy, or else nearly all humankind would still be slaves groaning under the Pharaohs of Egypt. Most public-choice theorists simply rely upon such historical accidents as wars, revolutions, and conquests to sweep away existing distributional coalitions.²¹ But attributing changes to accident is simply saying the difference is unexplained. "[T]he economic historian who has constructed his model in neoclassical terms has built into it a fundamental contradiction," concedes Nobel Prize winning economist Douglass

C. North, "since there is no way for the neoclassical model to account for a good deal of the change we observe in history."²²

The missing variable is ideas. All successful States are legitimized. No government rules for long through brute force alone, no matter how undemocratic. Enough of its subjects must accept its power as necessary or desirable for its rule to be widely enforced and observed. But the very social consensus that legitimizes the State also binds it.²³ Ideology therefore becomes the wild card that accounts for public-spirited mass movements overcoming the free-rider problem and affecting significant changes in government policy. For ideology can motivate people to do more for social change than the material rewards to each individual would justify. "Casual observation . . . confirms the immense number of cases where large group action does occur and is a fundamental force for change," writes North.²⁴ Russia was driven to the excesses of Bolshevism by a secular ideology--not mere rent seeking. At the other end of the spectrum, classical liberalism had to generate similarly potent ideological altruism that overcame free-rider disincentives in order to roll back coercive authority in many Western nations.

We know even less about what ultimately causes ideas to succeed than we do about what ultimately determines the size and shape of government jurisdictions. The famed zoologist, Richard Dawkins, has offered the intriguing proposition that ideas have striking similarities to genes. Many apparent paradoxes in biological evolution disappeared once biologists recognized that the process was driven by the success with which "selfish" genes

(rather than individuals or species) could replicate themselves. Dawkins suggested the term "memes" be applied to ideas, whose capacity to replicate in other minds likewise determines their spread.²⁵ No matter how useful this parallel between cultural and genetic evolution may ultimately prove, it at least helps to disabuse us of the illusion that an idea's validity is the sole or primary factor in its success. Those who doubt that false ideas can be tremendously influential need only glance at the worldwide success of so many mutually exclusive religions. It is not simply that they cannot all be true simultaneously; if one is true, then many of the others are not just false but badly false.

Or to seize an example still closer to our topic, observe the tremendous popularity of invalid ideas that legitimize the State among those whom the State exploits. Other things equal, the truth of an idea might give it some advantage, but other things are rarely equal. The one consolation we can draw is that a meme-based theory implies that the spread of ideas is similarly independent of government. The State, for instance, appears to have played no part in the birth and initial growth of Christianity, and the draconian efforts that many governments devote to the suppression of dissent testifies to the threat posed by that kind of autonomous ideological development.

Successful ideas therefore can induce alterations in the size, scope, and intrusiveness of government. The steady advance of civilization presents a succession of such surmountings of the free-rider obstacle. But the duration of any alterations have in turn rested on other factors, especially the intensity of the

competition among States. Over the long-run, only those changes in policy that helped a society survive were likely to endure. Even then, ideological altruism and rent seeking remained in constant tension. Free-rider dynamics were always tending to unleash a process of decay, enfeebling a society's ideological sinews and ravaging its ideological immune system. Public-choice theory thus puts real teeth into the famous maxim: "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance."

IV

For most proposed reforms, policy issues can and should be separated from strategic issues. Whether the repeal of minimum-wage laws would have desirable economic consequences, for instance, is distinct from the question of whether the repeal of minimum-wage laws is politically attainable. But when considering protection services, this dichotomy breaks down. As I have pointed out elsewhere, protection from foreign governments is merely a subset of a more general service: protection from any government, whether we label it foreign or domestic.²⁶ The privatization of this service is tantamount to the abolition of the State. The territory constituting the United States is in a very real sense already conquered--by the United States government. Only when Americans have liberated themselves from that conqueror will they have effectively denationalized defense. In other words, the policy question--can private alternatives provide more effective protection from foreign aggressors?--and the strategic question--can any people mobilize the ideological muscle to smash the State?--are intimately intertwined.²⁷

Hence it makes good sense to try to imagine what society would look like if minimum wages were repealed without any other change. But it makes far less sense to imagine what society would look like if government were abolished--and especially to ask how such a Stateless society might protect itself--without any other change. By the very act of overthrowing the domestic government (whether peacefully or forcibly), the former subjects will have forged powerful tools for protecting themselves from foreign governments. The same social consensus, the same institutions, and the same ideological imperatives that had gained them liberation from their own State would be automatically in place to defend against any other States that tried to fill the vacuum.

So let us assume that in some country, somewhere, government has become so completely delegitimized that it ceases to exist. How might such a society fare militarily within a world of competing States? The result, it turns out, still depends on the same elements we listed above as determinants in military conflict: wealth and technology, geography, population, and motivation. With regard to wealth and technology, a modern Stateless society would enjoy a major advantage. It will not only achieve more rapid increases in economic output and technological improvement upon the ending of government macroparasitism, but it should already have an economic edge because the most likely candidates for government abolition are countries where intervention is already minimal. The compounding effects of a higher growth rate will only enhance this potential

superiority in military capital over time, so that a future free society may have as little to fear militarily from rival States as the United States currently has to fear from such economic basket-cases as Mexico, India, or even Indonesia. Thus, what was one of the greatest weaknesses for hunter-gathering communities will become one of the greatest strengths of anarcho-capitalist communities.

Geographical endowments, in contrast, are pretty much a matter of serendipity and could go either way. Population fits a similarly unpredictable pattern. A small anarcho-capitalist population will be more vulnerable than a large one. This is just a reflection of the sad fact of reality that how much government I suffer is affected by what my neighbors believe. Even arming myself with privately owned nuclear weapons is not a strategically wise way to protect myself from taxes, so long as most of my countrymen think taxes are just and necessary. But unlike bands of hunters and gatherers, a future free society will at least not inevitably suffer from a population disparity with respect to its statist neighbors.

Nor need such a disparity be permanent, if it does exist at the outset, once the fourth military determinant, motivation, is brought into play. A people who have successfully fabricated the ideological solidarity necessary to overthrow their domestic rulers would not merely be extremely difficult to conquer, as we have already observed. Posing no threat of conquest themselves, they can tap into the sympathies of a foreign rulers' subjects better than any other opponent such rulers might take on. Would-

be conquerors could find their own legitimization seriously compromised. Just as the American Revolution set out sparks that helped ignite revolutionary conflagrations in many other countries, a vibrant economy free from all government will arouse such admiration and emulation that it will surely tend to expand. In short, a future Stateless society has the best prospects of working ideological dynamics, both internally and externally, to its benefit. To switch to Dawkinsesque terms, anarchy is a meme, which if it were to take hold in one location, has indeed the potential to spread like wildfire.

But we cannot leave the ideological factor on a totally optimistic note. The problem of achieving a free society is similar to the problem of maintaining one, but not absolutely identical. Ideological fervor has waxed and waned throughout history. I can offer no guarantee that after several generations of liberty and abundance a Stateless community will never suffer the same kind of decay that has afflicted so many polities in the past. Ideological altruism is a hard motive to keep burning strong even for a single lifetime. David Friedman has persuasively argued that anarchy will bring us to "the right side of the public good trap." In other words, once government is gone, the underlying incentive structure is altered. People now individually gain the most from supporting "good laws" that produce net social benefits rather than "bad laws" that provide transfers at the cost of deadweight loss.²⁸ But his argument may implicitly require an resolute social consensus that prevents any reintroduction of taxation. Can such a consensus fend off all

potential conquerors, foreign and domestic, forever?

V

Let us summarize. The State triumphed in the distant past over Stateless bands of hunter-gatherers because of the favorable interaction of two major factors. The earliest governments, arising as a consequence of the Agricultural Revolution, could draw upon (1) the denser, more disease-resistant populations that food production supported and (2) the superior wealth and technology accompanying the appearance of trade and cities. Hunter-gatherers, even when they fought with steadfast morale, were easy prey unless they also were shielded by inaccessible geography. Neither of these two factors, however, would necessarily handicap a future anarcho-capitalist society. The sustained economic growth that began with the Industrial Revolution has steadily increased the leverage of wealth and technology in military conflict. Since there is an inverse relationship between the size of government and the rate of economic growth, Stateless societies would almost undoubtedly have an advantage in military capital. The population of any future community without government will admittedly vary with historical circumstances. The larger its population, the greater its ability to prevent conquest. But helping such a community both to resist invasion and to expand its area would be motivation. Any ideological movement powerful enough to abolish government in the modern world would certainly be a meme capable of international propagation.

Everything said, the human species may still be unable to

rid the earth of macroparasitic States, just as it may never eliminate all microparasitic diseases. But the possibility that disease is inevitable would never be entertained as an adequate justification for abandoning medicine's efforts to eliminate this scourge. The history of Western Civilization demonstrates that great strides are feasible--both in curtailing illness and in curtailing government. Although we may never finally abolish all States, there is little doubt that we can do still better at constraining their power, if only we can motivate people with the will to be free.

Notes

¹See particularly Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto*, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 263-94, and "War, Peace and the State," in Rothbard, *Egalitarianism as a Revolt against Human Nature: And Other Essays* (Washington, DC: Libertarian Review Press, 1974). My own contributions to the argument for denationalizing defense include Jeffrey Rogers Hummel, "National Goods Versus Public Goods: Defense, Disarmament, and Free Riders," *Review of Austrian Economics*, 4 (1990), 88-122; "National Defense and the Public-Goods Problem" (with Don Lavoie), in Robert Higgs, ed., *Arms, Politics, and the Economy: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1990); "A Practical Case for Denationalizing Defense," *The Pragmatist*, 3 (Apr 1986), 1, 8-10, and (Jun 1986), 3-4; "On Defense," *Free World Chronicle*, 2 (Jan/Feb 1984), 18-23; and "Deterrence vs. Disarmament," *Caliber*, 9 (Oct/Nov 1981), 8-10. Other advocates of private defense against foreign aggressors are Jarret B.

Wollstein, *Society Without Coercion: A New Concept of Social Organization* (Silver Springs, MD: Society for Individual Liberty, 1969), pp. 35-8; Morris and Linda Tannehill, *The Market for Liberty* (Lansing, MI: Tannehill, 1970), pp. 126-35; and Hans-Hermann Hoppe, "The Private Production of Defense," *Journal of Libertarian Studies*, 14 (Summer 1998), 27-54. Although Ayn Rand believed that national defense was a proper government function, she held that it should be funded voluntarily: "Government Financing in a Free Society," in *The Virtue of Selfishness: A New Concept of Egoism* (New York: New American Library, 1964). One of her followers who agrees is Tibor R. Machan, "Dissolving the Problem of Public Goods," in Machan, ed., *The Libertarian Reader* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982). In contrast, David D. Friedman is an anarcho-capitalist who questions whether a Stateless society can provide effective national defense in *The Machinery of Freedom: Guide to a Radical Capitalism*, 2nd ed. (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989), pp. 135-43.

²The literature on what I prefer to call the Agricultural Revolution is immense, but the three works that I have found most insightful are Douglass C. North, *Structure and Change in Economic History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), pp. 71-112; William H. McNeill, *The Global Condition: Conquerors, Catastrophes, and Community* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 67-100; and Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997). Of the three, North has the best grasp of economics and yet ironically takes the most favorable view toward the State. I have followed Diamond in using calibrated radiocarbon dates, which puts the beginning of the Agricultural Revolution at 2000 years

earlier than the more conventional, uncalibrated radiocarbon dates. The date of 50,000 years ago for the emergence of modern man refers to the appearance of the Cro-Magnons in Europe. The origins of our species, *Homo sapiens*, can be pushed back much farther, to half a million years ago.

³The conquest theory of the State's origin was most notably expounded in Franz Oppenheimer, *The State* (1914; reprint ed., New York: Free Life Editions, 1975). But it resonates throughout more recent studies of this quintessential anthropological question, including Robert L. Carneiro, "A Theory of the Origin of the State," *Science*, 169 (21 Aug 1970), 733-8; Ronald Cohen and Elmar R. Service, eds., *Origins of the State: The Anthropology of Political Evolution* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978); Carneiro, "The Chiefdom: Precursor of the State," in Grant B. Jones and Robert R. Kautz, eds., *The Transition to Statehood in the New World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Keith F. Otterbein, "The Origins of War," *Critical Review*, 11 (Spring 1997), 251-77; and Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, pp. 53-66, 265-92. For an engaging account of the role of warfare in the rise of one State that occurred late enough for Europeans to observe and record, see the first half of Donald R. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears: The Rise and Fall of the Zulu Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966).

⁴Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, p. 291.

⁵McNeill, *The Global Condition*, p. 82.

⁶This economic analysis of the Agricultural Revolution's causes basically follows North, *Structure and Change in Economic History*, pp. 72-89, who considers and critiques other hypotheses.

⁷McNeill, *The Global Condition*, p. 87.

⁸The allusion to Attila and the Witch Doctor comes from the introductory essay of Ayn Rand, *For the New Intellectual* (New York: Random House, 1961). For a scholarly explication of the same theme, see ch. 14, "From Egalitarianism to Kleptocracy," of Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*.

⁹Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, p. 278.

¹⁰McNeill, *The Global Condition*, p. 75.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Thomas Sowell, *Conquests and Cultures: An International History* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), offers several case studies of the relationship between conquest and culture.

¹³Preliminary attempts are David Friedman, "A Theory of the Size and Shape of Nations," *Journal of Political Economy*, 85 (February 1977), 59-77, and Kenneth E. Boulding, *Conflict and Defense: A General Theory* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

¹⁴McNeill, *The Global Condition*, p. 74.

¹⁵Both McNeill, *The Global Condition*, pp. 113-4, 117-22, and Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, pp. 409-19, emphasize political competition within Europe, but the author who has pushed this analysis furthest is the Marxist historian, Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern-World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth*

Century (New York: Academic Press, 1976). On the other hand, North, *Structure and Change in Economic History*, pp. 158-86, pays more attention to the institutional developments in property rights as a factor in the Industrial Revolution.

¹⁶Unlike demand-and-supply diagram, there seems to be no firm convention among economists yet about which variable belongs on which axis for the Laffer Curve. I have seen texts present it both ways: with tax rates on the horizontal and tax revenue on the vertical and vice versa. I have worded my discussion assuming that revenue is on the vertical axis. If you put it on the horizontal, then the long-run curve would of course shift outward rather than upward.

¹⁷An empirical study of the relationship between government revenue and economic growth--James Gwartney, Robert Lawson, and Randall Holcombe, *The Size and Functions of Government and Economic Growth* (Washington: Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress, 1998)--finds that the rate of growth rises as government spending falls over all observed ranges of government size.

¹⁸This analysis of both socialism and interventionism are in, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics*, 3rd rev. ed. (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1966), Ludwig von Mises's *magnum opus*. See particularly pp. 855-61 for a summary. Mises book-length treatment of the socialist calculation problem is *Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), first published in German in 1922.

¹⁹Some of the most important works in the development of public-choice theory are Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper

and Row, 1957); James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962); William A. Niskanen, Jr. *Bureaucracy and Representative Government* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1971); Albert Breton, *The Economic Theory of Representative Government* (Chicago: Aldine 1974); and Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982). See also Tullock, *The Social Dilemma: The Economics of War and Revolution* (Blacksburg, VA: University Publications, 1974).

²⁰David Ramsay Steele, *From Marx to Mises: Post-Capitalist Society and the Challenge of Economic Calculation* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993), does the best job of charting this Marxist retreat.

²¹Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations*, exemplifies this approach. I am reminded of a conversation I once had with Gordon Tullock in which he attributed British liberty as an unintended result of the completely random and therefore unexplainable adoption of trial by jury.

²²North, *Structure and Change in Economic History*, pp. 10-11.

²³My discussion is deliberately vague about many subjects is enough and how tightly they bind the State. Our theoretical understanding of government requires much further development before we can systematically answer those questions. For a fascinating argument that a single social consensus may create multiple stable equilibria with respect to State power, see Timur Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995). This would create

for government policies the kind of path dependency that economists have rejected as significant on the market.

²⁴North, *Structure and Change in Economic History*, p. 10. Another economic historian who has brought ideology back in is Robert Higgs in *Crisis and Leviathan: Critical Episodes in the Growth of American Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

²⁵Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, new ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 189-201. Another author who has pursued the concept of memes is Daniel C. Dennett, in his philosophical tour de force, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), pp. 333-69. An older but not incompatible approach to the sociology of ideas is in Thomas S. Kuhn's classic, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

²⁶Hummel, "National Goods Versus Public Goods," pp. 96-7, 117.

²⁷To his credit, Rothbard perceptively recognized that defending a free society was partly a strategic question posing as a policy question. See his discussion in *For a New Liberty*, pp. 248-50.

²⁸Friedman, *The Machinery of Freedom*, pp. 156-9.