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Secession and the Production of Defense

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Secession and the Production of Defence

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I

Introduction

Few people object to the private production of shoes or rock concerts. But almost everybody believes that there are certain goods that cannot be produced on a purely voluntary basis. Cultural goods such as classical music and opera, welfare services, and in particular the definition and enforcement of law have to be entrusted to compulsory organisations like the modern state.

However, according to a school of laissez-faire economists, this view is unwarranted. These economists argue that purely private production is superior to compulsory schemes in all fields, even in the production of security and defence.¹ In short, individuals and voluntary associations of individuals are not only capable of producing all goods and services that governments and other state organisations can produce. In every single case they also achieve better results than these organisations.

One practical implication of the works of this school is that government organisations in the field of law enforcement and defence should be either abolished, or reformed in such a way that they henceforth operate on purely private terms.

Such reforms may be implemented, theoretically at least, through government organisations themselves. This approach is generally discussed under the headings of privatisation, de-nationalisation, de-socialisation, etc.² However, in this paper we will focus on another strategy to abolish government control, namely, on secession, and discuss the conditions for successful secession.

¹ See, for example, Molinari (1849), Rothbard (1977, 1978), Tannehill (1984), Hoppe (1989, 1993a, 1998a), Blankertz (1995, 1997). For historical instances of private law enforcement, see also Shaloo (1933), Wooldridge (1970), and Gambetta (1993).

² See, for example, Rothbard (1998, part V; 1978, chap. 15), Hoppe (1991), Seldon (1996).

II

Secession Defined

Secession is commonly understood as a one-sided disruption of bonds with a larger organised whole to which the secessionists have been tied.³ Thus, secession from a state would mean that a person or a group of persons withdraw from the state as a larger whole to which they have been attached.

However, defining the entity from which the secessionists defect as a larger whole is not useful and defies common sense. Consider, for example, the case of a tenant, say, Smith who refuses to pay his rent. Even though Smith is but a part of a larger community of landlord and tenants, one would not therefore speak of Smith's action as secession, but rather as a breach of contract.

It is not useful to classify breaches of contract as secessions because such a definition would be too wide. Our aim is to distinguish disruptions of social bonds that are "good," because they bring about a purely private order, from inherently anti-social "bad" disruptions like, for example, theft, fraud, murder, and breach of contract. We thus have to come up with a more pertinent definition that reconciles common sense and the purposes of our analysis.

We will use the term secession to denote the disruption of what Mises calls a hegemonic bond, as opposed to the disruption of a contractual bond. As Mises (1998, pp. 196f) points out:

"There are two different kinds of social co-operation: co-operation by virtue of contract and co-ordination, and co-operation by virtue of command and subordination or hegemony. [...] In the frame of a contractual society the individual members exchange definite quantities of goods and services of a definite quality. In choosing subjection to a hegemonic body a man neither gives nor receives

³ For example, Webster's New International Dictionary (2nd ed., Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam, 1953) defines secession as "formal separation from an organised body such as a religious communion or a federation of states." The Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) defines it as the "action of seceding or formally withdrawing from an alliance, a federation, a political or religious organisation, or the like."

anything that is definite. He integrates himself into a system in which he has to render indefinite services and will receive what the director is willing to assign to him.”

One can further clarify the difference between contractual and hegemonic bonds by taking a closer look at the way by which the Misesian “director” acquires property. There are in fact only two fundamentally distinct ways of acquiring property. Either property is acquired under respect of other people’s rightfully owned property, or it is acquired by violating the property rights of other persons. In the words of the German sociologist Franz Oppenheimer (1990): Either one uses the economic means of appropriation or one uses the political means of appropriation. Tertium non datur.⁴

Violations of property rights committed by “normal” people are everywhere held in contempt. What murderers, thieves, robbers, etc. do is seen to be incompatible with life in society. By distinct contrast, the “director” violates other persons’ property without being considered as a criminal. The other members of society – or at least a substantial majority among them – regard his violations of other people’s property rights as compatible with civilised intercourse. Therefore, they actively support these activities when they are directed against other persons, and do not obstruct them when they are directed against themselves. This is the nature of the hegemonic bond between the director-ruler and its subjects.

Now, secession is the one-sided disruption of a hegemonic bond by the subjects. It thus means two things. A) The subjects no longer support the ruler’s violating property rights of other people, for example, by stopping paying taxes or serving the ruler. B) They start to resist him when he violates their own or other people’s property rights.

Secession is a special subclass of political reform. It is not the rulers who carry out the reform by modifying existing political bonds, but the ruled, who unilaterally abolish these bonds. More precisely, the secessionists abolish the hegemonic aspect of existing institutions. For example, in the area of the production of defence, secession does not necessar-

⁴ For a detailed and systematic account of the various forms of appropriation, see Rothbard (1998a, chap. 6) and Hoppe (1989, chap. 2). Mises (1998, pp. 197f) points out that the distinction between contractual and hegemonic bonds (or, economic and political means) is common to all theories of society, and refers in this context to the works of Ferguson, Spencer, Sombart, and Engels.

ily mean that a presently existing police force or a presently existing army is dissolved. The police or the army could continue to exist, provided it operates on the basis of purely voluntary bonds with the rest of society. There would then be no more draft, and their monetary proceeds would no longer stem from taxation, etc.

III

Secession as a Continuum

Secession is not all-or-nothing but covers a whole continuum of disruptions of hegemonic bonds. It may sever only a part of all existing hegemonic bonds, and it may sever geographically unrelated “isles” rather than territories with common borders.⁵

In some historical cases, continuous territories defected from a larger geographical whole, for example, when the US seceded from Great Britain in 1776, the Southern Confederacy from the US in 1861, or satellite states like Estonia, Lithuania, Ukraine, or Armenia from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

By contrast, at other times and places, secession was limited to geographical isles within larger territories that continued to maintain the hegemonic bonds. Such was the case, for example, with the seceding Swiss cities and cantons in 1291, which for centuries did not form an integrated territory, or with the Hansa cities, which in their best days were “free,” that is, not subject to imperial taxation. Also, throughout the Middle Ages, various individual cities – especially in northern Italy, but also in Flanders and southern Germany – defected for some time from the Empire. In most cases, they were then ruled by city patriarchs or became city republics.

The continuum of geographical dispersion of political régimes is best illustrated by the case of s’Hertogenbosch, a Belgian town in the Netherlands. Strikingly, this enclave is not politically homogeneous, but has Dutch enclaves within it, and these have in turn Belgian enclaves in them! Thus, some streets are Dutch and subject to Dutch laws, whereas other streets are Belgian and subject to Belgian laws, and sometimes even the

⁵ On the following examples, see Crevelde (1999). On the politico-aesthetic ideal of contiguity and connectedness of territory, and the importance of this ideal in armed conflict, see Smith (1995, 1997).

houses in one street belong to different nations and are subject to different laws (they are marked by Dutch and Belgian flags).⁶

Another good illustration of the geographical possibilities for secession is the disintegration of the Frankish Empire in the mid-800s, which re-established the feudal order so characteristic for the Middle Ages. As a consequence, the German emperors only controlled a few remaining isles of imperial fortresses (the Pfalzen) and monasteries.

Rather than being an exception, hegemonic bonds with isles of territory surrounded by independent territories were in fact the normal case for centuries of Western civilisation. By heritage, marriage, purchase, and also by secession, medieval aristocrats would come to own territories that were sometimes dispersed all over Europe. Similarly, dozens of “free” or imperial cities were only subject to the Emperor, who was weak almost throughout the entire history of the Empire, and often surrounded by territories belonging to local aristocrats. This state of affairs was particularly characteristic for Germany until the Thirty Years War reversed the tendency.

Colonial possessions of European powers in other parts of the world are another example of geographically disconnected territories under common hegemonic bonds. And the process by which, after WW II, most of these territories gained their independence was of course nothing else but secession.

Finally, as we have mentioned above, secession does not necessarily mean that all the hegemonic ties between the ruler and its reluctant subjects are severed. Here too we face a continuum. Secession might simply mean that the subjects demand lower taxes or refuse to serve in the army of the ruler. It can mean that they do not respect special monopoly privileges granted to certain individuals or groups.

Also, the bonds between governments and their various subjects by no means have to be homogeneous. This is amply illustrated by historical evidence. For example, the Jews in Central and Eastern Europe for centuries profited from a relatively independent political status, which even granted them some form of moderate territorial sovereignty. The famous “ghettos,” far from being institutions of oppression, as which they are today commonly represented, were isles of freedom from the laws that bound most other citi-

⁶ I am indebted to Barry Smith for this example.

zens (for example, the ghetto-Jews were exempt from non-Jewish jurisdiction and various forms of taxation). Another example is the case of soldiers and foreign diplomats, who are commonly subject to a different set of rules than the rest of the population, although in the case of soldiers these ties are both more severe in some respect and more lax in others. Most of these special régimes have not been created by secession. However, for our purposes it is sufficient to note that such régimes quite obviously can exist next to one another, for this proves that such a state of affairs can be a realisable goal of secession.

The only limits for the geographical dispersion of “political” régimes are given by the boundaries of private property. Theoretically, each property owner – and in particular each land owner – might choose to set up a different set of rules that the users of his property (land) have to respect.⁷

Even if the ultimate goal of a secessionist movement is the liberation of an integrated territory, the establishment of isolated secessionist strongholds is a welcome first step. Such territorial isles are usually dependent on the exchange of goods and services with other territories. The secessionists are therefore compelled to abolish trade barriers and adopt free-market policies. In so doing they provide a living example for the beneficial operation of purely voluntary forms of social organisation. Since this is the best conceivable advertisement for the idea they stand for, secessionist isles are likely to attract ever more territories to adopt their model and thus close the gaps on the political map (see Hoppe 1998b).

IV

Benefits of Secession

Before dealing with questions relating to the realisation of secessionist urges, let us point out two major advantages of political reform by secession.

First, by its very nature, secession does not transform, but abolishes, hegemonic bonds. All other forms of political reform keep these bonds intact and merely modify the

⁷ See Rothbard (1978, chap. 12) and Hoppe (1998a).

way the ruler uses his power. Core-organisations like the army, the police forces, the courts, etc. keep their monopoly and all competitors are outlawed. As a consequence, in the best of all cases, the reform makes the burden of these monopolies somewhat lighter to bear. More open-minded, tolerant persons replace dictatorially inclined office holders. More acceptable political régimes (in our days: democracies) replace régimes that do not seem to meet the political challenges of the day (in our days, for example, monarchies). However, after the zeal of the reformers has ebbed away, nothing stands in the way of a further expansion of the state's monopoly powers in other areas like welfare, art, economy, etc. And in many instances even the modest reforms of the existing state organisations come to be redressed after the zeal of the reform generation has ebbed away.

In the worst of all cases, and unfortunately these cases happen to be the majority, the reforms are brought about by the creation of additional hegemonic bonds with a more encompassing political agency (centralisation). To get rid of aristocratic privileges, the classical liberals first supported the king against the lesser aristocrats, and then concentrated further powers in the democratic central state to fight all regional and local forms of monarchism and aristocracy (see, for example, Tocqueville 1887, Jouvenel 1972 and Crevelde 1999). Rather than curbing political power, they merely shifted and centralised it, creating even more powerful political institutions than those they were trying to supersede. The classical liberals thus bought their short-run successes at very burdensome long-run annuities, some of which we have paid in the 20th century.

This is the reason why classical liberalism ultimately failed (see Hoppe 1997b, 1998c). It is important to realise that the quick successes of the classical liberals are not unrelated to the totalitarian schemes that plagued the past century. The fundamental fact is that the liberal reforms were not spontaneously adopted by the various local constituencies, but imposed on them. It is true that this "technique" was very effective in realising the classical-liberal programme at once in the whole territory controlled by the new democratic central state. Without it, this process would have been gradual, and it would have implied that isles of the Ancient Régime would have survived for a very long time. Yet like all

mere techniques, this was a two-bladed sword that would eventually be turned against life, liberty, and property.⁸

It is not inappropriate to point out an analogy with the laws of the business cycle. Just like business investments unsupported by genuine savings do not spur genuine growth, but after a brief period of growth-illusions lead straight into the economic bust, so the “imposition of liberty” does not create genuine liberty, but after a brief period of liberty-illusions leads straight into totalitarian nightmares.⁹

The fact is that neither in Europe nor in the United States of America classical liberalism has managed to establish a public order that effectively safeguarded private property and individual liberty for more than a couple of decades. This contrasts sharply with the Middle Ages, in which Christian religion for centuries circumscribed the duties and rights of all citizens of the prospective City of God. Christianity limited the medieval aristocrats in all their endeavours, and these limitations effectively guaranteed the liberties of the subjects (see, for example, Kern 1965). In Europe, classical liberalism never created deep roots in the first place, and its short-lived blossom started to perish at the end of the 19th century, leading shortly after to the well-known socialist schemes of Communism, Fascism, and National Socialism. In the US, the unsuccessful war of secession gave birth to a welfare-warfare state (see Gordon 1998), which has steadily grown ever since. It is true that the US government cannot yet compare in importance with the German National Socialists or the Russian Bolsheviks as far as its relative internal power is concerned. However, in absolute terms, it is has already become the largest and mightiest government the world has ever known, and this supremacy is felt especially in matters of foreign policy and war (see Higgs 1987, Denson 1999).

⁸ Arguably, in countries like Prussia the anti-liberal establishment initially supported the new central state to prevent the emergence implementation of isles the thorough liberal reforms of which could have served as bad examples to the rest of the population (see, for example, the case study by Krüger 1978). Needless to say, the new central-state élites eventually overthrew the old establishment.

⁹ For a systematic elaboration of this argument, see Hülsmann (1998). One implication is that current plans to establish liberalism on a global scale through armed forces of international agencies like the UN or NATO (see, for example, Annan 1999) are bound to bring about, not more liberty, but more devastating slavery, at least in the long run.

With hindsight, the real question is not – as most 20th-century classical liberals have assumed – why the happy days of classical liberalism faded away and ushered into a new era of unprecedented government control. The real question is how classical liberalism could flourish even the few decades that it did flourish. The answer is probably related to the time lag required for the new democratic central states to consolidate themselves. The new democratic ways had to penetrate the brains, the new (national) political centre-stage had to slowly gain its due place in individual consciousness, etc.

Clearly, secession avoids all these fatal long-run consequences of “imposing liberty.” It might take a long time before the conditions for successful local secession are given, and secession might then leave many dark (politically unenlightened) spots on the political map. However, at least these reforms would be genuine accomplishments that do not contain already the seeds of their own destruction.

A second and related advantage of secession is that it is the only type of political reform that is not only able to bring about a private-property régime, but that itself respects the principles of this régime. Whereas a government is by nature a compulsory organisation, the organisation of the “political means,” secession is an activity fully harmonious with the respect of private property and the “economic means.” It thus fulfils a major ethical requirement of libertarian reform, namely, that the reform itself should not create new violations of property (see Rothbard 1998, part V).

V

Conditions for Secession: Boétie’s Law

Secession does not lead to war by logical necessity. However, government has an obvious interest in the maintenance of the hegemonic bonds from which it profits. Since it is therefore likely to resist their severance by the use of force, the secessionists must find the means to overcome this resistance.

The paramount technical problem of the secessionists is, of course, that the government is usually far better equipped with arms and machinery needed in violent conflicts. Moreover, the government usually controls most of the existing organisations created for

the efficient conduct of violent conflicts (police and military). In short, government enjoys by and large a monopoly of war material and war organisations.¹⁰

However, these short-run problems can be overcome in due time. Criminals and underground military organisations (for example, the Irish Republican Army, the Rote Armee Fraktion, Action Directe or, before its immersion into the “Palestinian Authority,” the Palestinian Liberation Organisation) use to acquire the weapons they need with relative ease on the black market. Foreign governments often support them in this endeavour. Moreover, the very existence of underground military organisations demonstrates that it is possible to build up such structures, especially if foreign powers provide advisors and training grounds. And usually such foreign powers exist at all times and all places.

It is true that secessionist forces are not able to build up an industrial base in their home country and therefore have to rely on relatively light weaponry (pistols, guns, machineguns, small canons, grenades, etc.). They will not be able to enjoy the ready services of tanks and fighter jets, and still less so of combat ships or even large military bases with hospitals, arms depots, etc.

However, heavy weapons and military infrastructure seem to be especially advantageous in armed conflicts between clearly identifiable combatants each of which has a single organisation – as in the case of wars between modern states¹¹ – whereas they seem to lose their effectiveness in encounters with enemies who lack these features. Famous examples of the failure of modern state armies against such amorphous enemies are: the Vietnam War of the US Army, the Afghanistan War of the Red Army, the UN expedition to Sudan, or the attempted invasion of the Russian Army into Chechnya.¹² These cases

¹⁰ Max Weber’s definition of government stresses this technical aspect. Similarly, Mises (1998) defines the state as the apparatus of coercion. For historical illustrations of the government’s monopoly over war equipment, see Krippendorf (1985).

¹¹ Crevelde (1991, chap. 2) calls such wars “trinitarian wars” that take place in a “Clausewitzian universe,” in which a clear-cut distinction between the three groups of civilians, combatants, and political leaders prevails. He argues that the most recent past has brought about a paradigm-shift toward non-trinitarian, “low-intensity conflict” in many parts of the world.

¹² See, for example, Crevelde (1991) and Peters (1999).

illustrate that secessionist insurrections are not necessarily doomed to failure for reasons of equipment and organisation.

Neither is sheer number a problem. It is true that the secessionists are a minority of the overall population, and they might be a very small minority indeed. But this is the fate of all politically active groups, even of governments themselves. It is a fact that all members of government taken together are at all times and all places a minority, too. Government could not possibly rule if it had to supervise each citizen at every second of an hour. It can only rule because the citizens by and large comply with its commands, so that it can concentrate its energies on combating those few recalcitrant individuals or groups who do not so comply.

This is one of the great political laws: hegemonic bonds exist because a majority voluntarily complies with them. We might call it Boétie's Law, after the 16th-century French philosopher Etienne de la Boétie, who expressed the matter succinctly in the following words (1975, p. 50):

It is [...] the inhabitants themselves who permit, or, rather, bring about, their own subjection, since by ceasing to submit they would put an end to their servitude.

In short, it is not the ruler who turns the citizens into subjects. Rather, the people choose to subject themselves to the ruler. The government seems active and the citizens appear to be passive subjects, yet as a matter of fact the subjects alone are the ultimate social agency by virtue of their free decision-making power. And since by virtue of their free will they can bring hegemonic bonds into existence, they can also abolish them by the token of the same liberty.

Why do the citizens choose subjection? Because in their opinion this is the right or at any rate the best thing to do under present circumstances. Ideas or opinions that justify the existence of hegemonic bonds are therefore the ultimate foundation of political power. This why foreign rulers, who had no ideological legitimacy in the eyes of the population, often chose to rule through local vassals who, due to tradition, had such legitimacy. For example, the Romans ruled the Jews through Jewish kings, and the British Empire ruled the huge territory and population of India through local rulers. It is also the reason why modern states have taken particular care to bring organised education (schools, universities) under their control.

In short, government rules by virtue of ideologies that justify hegemonic bonds rather than by sheer force.¹³ Thus we see that the single most important factor for the success of secessions is not of technical nature. Like all transformations of society, secessions are prepared by and depend on previous transformations in the spiritual realm.¹⁴ The real foundation of hegemonic bonds is the ideology that in the eyes of the citizens justifies the actions of their government. Therefore, successful secession presupposes a previous transformation of these political beliefs.

VI

Conditions for Secession: Genocide and Expulsion

So far we have seen that a necessary condition for successful secession is that a substantial majority of the population (what this means may vary according to particular circumstances of time and place) repudiate the hegemonic bonds that they have hitherto accepted.

However, this does not mean that ideological supremacy in a territory automatically assures the success of the secessionist movement. If the rulers can mobilise enough forces to either kill or expel the rebelling population, then the secessionists might be doomed, too.

Both techniques have been frequently applied in the history of counter-insurgency. Genocide, for example, was inflicted upon the seceding Vendée, where the French Republic within a few months razed over one hundred hamlets and villages to the ground (see Ellis 1976: 58), and in the 20th century, it was also the preferred solution of communist régimes to solve their secessionist problems. Outstanding examples are Soviet Russia's extermination of the kulaks (see Graziosi 1997), and the ravages of the Khmer Rouges in Cambodia (see on this Rummel 1994, Courtois et al. 1997). Modern examples

¹³ See the classic argument in Hume (1987).

¹⁴ Few works explore the dissemination of ideas through time and space. For a social-science approach, see Fox (1935), Bryson (1948), Redlich (1953) and Smith (1999). For a bio-genetic approach see Dawkins (1976), Brodie (1996), and Blackmore (1999).

for expulsion or “relocation” as a means to combat secessionist movements include, for example, the case of the Philippines (1901-02), of South Africa (19??), and of Malaya (1954-55).

Even if the rulers can mobilise enough forces to inflict genocide or expulsion on the secessionists, he might choose not to use these forces. Apart from personal scruples, this might be the result of the other (loyal) citizens’ unwillingness to support such measures. Also, as far as a population involved in industrial division of labour is concerned, genocide would clearly be economically disastrous for the ruler himself (see Taber 1965: 23f).

VII

Secession and Private Warfare

Let us now assume that the conditions for successful secession are given. There are a substantial number of secessionists who are no longer willing to endure their hegemonic bonds. These persons no longer regard the rulers as legitimate governors, but as criminal usurpers, and the rulers themselves are either unable or unwilling to expel or slaughter the secessionists.

Now, the armed forces of these rulers are still in place and enforce the population’s financial support in the form of taxation. How can this enforcement of the old hegemonic bonds be prevented? Clearly, there is no other solution to this problem but the one applied to prevent all other forms of violations of property: the criminals must be punished for their past deeds and, through the prospect of punishment, deterred from further aggression. In short, the secessionists have to use force to combat the armed forces.

Initially, they cannot rely on any organisation to wage this war since all armed forces (police and military) are monopoly organisations that are “owned” by the ruling government. However, as we have already pointed out and as we will discuss in some more detail below, this is only a temporary problem.

The main problem is a different one. It relates to the nature of the new defence organisations with which the hegemonic forces shall be expelled. Indeed, one has to make sure that all individual and organised war measures on the side of the secessionists are in strict consonance with the very private order that they seek to bring about. They have to respect

the private-property rights of all persons involved – be they friends or foes.¹⁵ This is so not only out of ethical concern, but also out of very practical considerations. For if the military organisations that are bound to emerge in the course of the war, and of which some will become defence institutions after the war has ended, rely in their operations on violations of property rights, then the seeds of the next hegemony are already sown. At best, then, a new government will replace the old one, and the hegemony remains.

In short, it is imperative that the secessionists' war be a purely private war. From the outset, violations of property rights must not be tolerated, so that the various militias and other organisations do not become tainted with the cardinal sin of establishing hegemonic bonds. This is the only way to ensure that, after the war, they will all be healthy elements of the new private order. Additionally, it will have the effect to win ever more support for the secession among neutral persons and even among its former enemies.

Private warfare does not mean that only isolated individuals engage in combat. In fact, it is unlikely that isolated action will play any major rôle in the secessionists' war since the co-operative production of defence, like all co-operations, is more physically efficient than isolated production (see Mises 1998). However, private warfare clearly includes isolated activities of self-defence.

One might wonder whether individual undertakings have even the slightest chance of success against the established forces of police and army. Yet they do. It is true that they cannot overthrow police and army all on their own. But they can annoy them, put unexpected obstacles in their ways, terrorise them in various manners, and thus disturb them in their tranquillity. Given the context we are assuming, namely, that a great number of citizens are in a secessionist mood, it is very unlikely that the police catches an isolated warrior, because he can rely on a vast network of people willing to provide shelter and other support to persons like him. This is an important incentive that will stimulate ever more people to become part-time pains in the neck of police and army.

¹⁵ We cannot here examine which actions would be permissible in private warfare. Any such investigation will have to start from the general observations by Rothbard (1998, chaps 12 and 13) and also reconsider Augustine's doctrine of just war, and the development it has received in the hands of Aquinas, Grotius, and others.

More important than such isolated activities are, of course, the co-ordinated and organised efforts of secessionist militias. They can inflict considerable harm on the unwanted government forces. They can capture enemy forces and disarm them, they can break in arms depots and equip themselves at the government's expense, and they can disrupt the government's communication lines and logistical network. In some cases, they might even manage to control a small territory, but only for a short period of time since such small units cannot withstand the confrontation with the large masses of the army.

Such troops can surely also rely on the willingness of the population to provide them with shelter, food, and other forms of support. Yet it is important to realise that they profit from the latter in many more, and more important ways. The spontaneous help by individual citizens, families, or small groups is indeed of paramount importance for the very military operations of the secessionists. We have to bear in mind that the secessionists, at least at the beginning, do not have any kind of organised logistical support or intelligence service. The spontaneous help by the population fills this void by providing the necessary infrastructure: food, shelter, new supplies of ammunition, communication, etc. This spontaneous backing integrates the more or less isolated warriors and militias economically and socially into a larger society. They benefit from the division of labour on a much wider scale and thus immensely increase their productivity.

Although militias are commonly unpaid organisations, it is very conceivable that in the course of time a body of paid full-time warriors will emerge. This professionalisation would indeed be a natural step in a growing underground economy and it would, again, spur the productivity of the secessionist warfare.

One should not expect that all secessionist militias be organised under one single command. Quite to the contrary, the natural thing to happen is for various independent groups to form themselves spontaneously. It might be that this is not always efficient (we will examine this issue below), but it is certainly a workable procedure. For since these groups have a common goal that they all pursue by the same clearly circumscribed activities (prevention of violations of property by government forces, restitution of property to the rightful owners), they do not need to be co-ordinated by command. As long as they respect private-property rights in all their endeavours, their actions are intrinsically har-

monious and cannot possibly contradict one another. Each one of them thus contributes to the common goal, facilitating the task of the others.

Hence, we see that even short of the formation of a secessionist army under unified command, the secessionists can create much trouble for the government troops without running any major danger for their lives. The comparatively primitive secessionist warfare in many respects matches and outwits the police and military precisely because it is not just single warriors and small militias who fight the government troops. Rather, it is the whole secessionist movement that engages in the division of labour that sustains their efforts.

The results for the government are by and large devastating. Most importantly, the costs of controlling the secessionist territories rise astronomically. Soon the point is reached at which it is simply no longer economically worthwhile to attempt rule them.

VII Guerrilla Warfare

The above considerations about the effects of relatively primitive forms of private warfare are by no means a mere intellectual pastime, speculations that could not possibly be applied in the real world. Quite to the contrary, warfare of this sort on a largely private basis has been practised countless times in the history of mankind. It is “as old as the hills and predates regular warfare” (Laqueur 1976: ix). To be sure, it is not generally known as primitive private warfare, but as “partisan warfare,” “small war,” “guerrilla warfare,” or “low-intensity conflict.”

Most famous is of course the expression “guerrilla warfare” (from the guerra de guerrillas fought by Spanish partisans against Napoleon), which has been popularised by 20th-century communist warrior-theoreticians.¹⁶ Yet it was practised at virtually all times and

¹⁶ In a brilliant discussion of the history of military thought on guerrilla warfare, Walter Laqueur (1976: 100ff, 326ff) points out that guerrilla warfare had received due attention from modern military theoreticians, long before guerrilla warfare came to be associated with communist armed insurgency. Indeed, various late 18th and early 19th-century theoreticians analysed the matter in their monographs under the name of “small war” or “partisan war” (see, for example, Ewald (1785), Valentini (1799), Decker

all places, long before the politically fashionable recent guerrilla wars in China, Yugoslavia, Cuba, and Algeria took place. In antiquity, for example, Sparta successfully seceded from the Athenian League, a federation turned nation-state, in the Peloponnesian (guerrilla) War, and Judas Maccabeus fought a guerrilla war against the Syrians. In the Middle Ages, the Welsh guerrilla resisted for two hundred years the Norman invasion, which had previously swallowed England after one decisive battle against King Harold. After centuries-long struggles, guerrilla war was eventually lost in Ireland, and won in Switzerland, which declared secession in 1291 but was not recognised by the Empire until 1648. Guerrilla war was also waged for decades in Holland in the 16th century, and eventually won. More recently, non-communist guerrilla warfare was practised in the American War of Secession, by Arab rebels under the Englishman T.E. Lawrence against the Turks, and by German SS-troops at the end of WW II and after.¹⁷

Of all historic forms of military organisation, this one best harmonises with the principles of civil society. Decision-making is decentralised on the level of various militias, which communicate with one another but operate independently. The bonds between them and the population are typically contractual bonds (Mises) or, more precisely, voluntary bonds that link combatants and inhabitants of the seceding territory through a spontaneous network with a common organisational principle: respect and defence of private property.

In distinct contrast to successful conventional warfare, successful guerrilla warfare is thus particularly well suited to prepare the advent of a purely voluntary society. The

(1821), *Le Mièrre de Corvay* (1823)). Military genius Carl von Clausewitz carefully dealt with the lessons of the guerra de guerrillas, too. In his famous treatise *On War* (1943, book 6, chap. 26), he had dealt with the problems of “arming the nation” and “people’s war” rather as side issues. However, while in this published work, Clausewitz probably had to respect the sensibilities of his employer, in the courses that he taught at the Prussian War Academy, he lectured extensively on problems of guerrilla warfare (see Clausewitz 1966: 226-539). In more recent times, then, the works by Guevara (1961) and Mao Tse-tung (1961) received world-wide attention due to their authors’ success on the battlefield, and stimulated various intellectuals to further analyses (see, for example, Schmitt 1995, Debray 1974).

¹⁷ For general surveys of the history of guerrilla warfare, see Ellis (1976, 1995), Laqueur (1976), and Joes (1996). On guerrilla warfare in the American War of Secession see, for example, O’Brien (1999) and Fisher (1997). On the SS Werwolf guerrilla, see Biddiscombe (1998).

hegemonic bonds on which “regular” troops rely (in particular, taxation, inflation, and conscription) are commonly perpetuated after the end of hostilities.¹⁸ By contrast, the very weakness of guerrilla militias taken individually prevents them from abusing their position. As a consequence, there are simply no hegemonic bonds to be perpetuated after the war.

Guerrilla warfare in this century has been predominantly waged by communist insurrectionists. However, this does not contradict our contention that guerrilla warfare is essentially a form of private warfare. It was only after their victories that the communists in China, Yugoslavia, Algeria, Cuba, and elsewhere, erected compulsory régimes. They claimed that these régimes were a natural outgrowth of their guerrilla organisations and that guerrilla warfare was essentially communist warfare. Yet reality was different. Mao Tse-tung and Fidel Castro paid for their supplies in cash. Their recruits were not conscripted but joined them voluntarily. And they were able to rally the population behind them, not so much for their social agendas, but for the fact that, at least initially, they fought foreign enemies (China, Yugoslavia, Algeria) or rulers that were commonly perceived as puppets of foreign governments (Cuba).

This confirms the broad historical record that the average guerrilla is mainly motivated by patriotic, and sometimes nationalistic, motives (see Laqueur 1976: 396ff) and that virtually all insurrections are liberation movements that seek freedom for their fatherland from undesired rule, often undesired foreign rule (see Arendt 1963). The paramount importance of patriotism and liberty as driving forces of insurrection explains why guerrilla warfare could rally entire populations behind communist insurrections. To be sure, the communists claimed that it was their war per se, which won the people over to communism. Yet the people’s real desire was liberation from a government that they perceived as oppressive, and they would follow almost anybody who would take the lead of a liberation movement. They had never heard before about Marx or Lenin, and what they knew about the events in Russia – if they cared at all – they learned from fanatical communists. And, of course, they could not even imagine that things would become worse afterwards.

¹⁸ See, for example, Jouvenel (1972), Higgs (1987), and Keeley (1996).

Significantly, the above-mentioned communist guerrillas typically had some kind of primitive tax system and their political aim was, not to abolish the state apparatus they were fighting, but to take it over (which they did). However, all this changes nothing about the fact that even these guerrillas essentially relied on the voluntary co-operation of the population. A famous practitioner of guerrilla warfare emphasises the crucial importance of backing by the population for the success of insurrectionist movements:

The guerrilla fighter needs full help from the people of the area. This is an indispensable condition. This is clearly seen by considering the case of bandit gangs that operate in a region. They have all the characteristics of a guerrilla army, homogeneity, respect for the leader, valor, knowledge of the ground, and, often, even good understanding of the tactics to be employed. The only thing missing is support of the people; and, inevitably, these gangs are captured and exterminated by the public force. (Guevara 1961, p. 17)

Another astute observer, writing under the immediate impact of the communist guerrilla successes, forcefully underscores this statement:

When we speak of the guerrilla fighter, we are speaking of the political partisan, an armed civilian whose principal weapon is not his rifle or his machete, but his relationship to the community, the nation, in which and for which he fights. (Taber 1965: 18)

The population [...] is the key to the entire struggle. Indeed, [...] it is the population which is doing the struggling. The guerrilla, who is of the people in a way which the government soldier cannot be (for if the régime were not alienated from the people, whence the revolution?), fights with the support of the non-combatant civilian populace: It is his camouflage, his quartermaster, his recruiting office, his communications network, and his efficient, all-seeing intelligence service. (Taber 1965: 20)

Many failures of secessionist movements highlight this crucial fact. Wherever the insurrectionists could not obtain the support of the larger population they were never able to remain independent for any considerable time. Such was the case, for example, with the medieval northern Italian cities which, having gained their independence from the

Empire, at once started to establish hegemony over the adjacent territories, thus alienating these populations from their cause. One reason for the Vendée's near-extinction in 1793 was the alienation of the militarily competent aristocracy from the militarily incompetent peasant population. The Greek guerrilla insurrection in 1946-1949 failed because it alienated the population by conscription and raids on the villages. And more recent attempts to wage guerrilla warfare in Peru (Shining Path), Kurdistan (PKK), and in several West-European nations failed because the insurrectionists did not have any backing in the population; they were isolated terrorist groups, antagonising the population as much as the government.¹⁹

Successful guerrilla warfare is simply inconceivable without voluntary co-operation of between warriors and the rest of the population. This is why it perfectly suits the military needs of libertarian secessionist movements. It is no accident that "guerrilla warfare has been the favourite tactic of separatist, minority movements fighting the central government" and that, although the process of de-colonisation has worsened the prospects of guerrilla warfare, this is not so in the context of secession (see Laqueur 1976: 395, 409).

In short, guerrilla warfare by its very nature is warfare based on the respect of private property and voluntary co-operation. It is private warfare short of the formation of large military units. This is so notwithstanding the fact that, historically, guerrilla warfare has commonly been intermingled with statist elements such as small-scale taxation.

Guerrilla warfare being essentially private warfare on a small scale, it follows that the conditions for successful libertarian secession are the very same conditions that must be given for successful guerrilla warfare. Libertarian secession presupposes that a great number of inhabitants of a territory desire to establish a private-property order and to rid themselves of the present rulers. These persons provide the guerrillas with the civil network that enables them to wage their war, and to wage it successfully. By distinct contrast, guerrilla warfare that merely seeks to overthrow the present state and to put another régime at its place ultimately contradicts itself. Sooner or later it must replace volunteers by conscripts and donations by taxes, in short, voluntary support by compulsion. Clearly,

¹⁹ See, for example, on the Italian cities: Creveld (1999, p. 108), on the Vendée: Ellis (1976: 55ff), on the Greek guerrilla: Taber (1965: 147ff), on the history of secessionist movements in the US: DiLorenzo (1998) and Stromberg (1998), on contemporary insurrectionists-turned terrorists: Ellis (1995).

it will then no longer be guerrilla warfare and, consequently, will lose all of its advantages.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this. First, the most important activity of a secessionist movement does not take place in armed battle, but in the battle of ideas. The secessionists have to persuade their fellows of the legitimacy and importance of their cause, thus making the idea of a private-property order generally accepted. Only if they win this battle, they will be able to build up libertarian guerrilla organisations that could eventually overthrow the armed forces of the government.

There is therefore, second, no need to rely on compulsory schemes like taxation and conscription to sustain their war efforts. Either the secessionists have the necessary support of the population; then all compulsion would be superfluous and possibly counter-productive. Or they do not have it; then guerrilla warfare is no viable option for them at all and even compulsory measures could not help them.

VIII

Economic Efficiency of Private Warfare

We now have to deal with the question how economically efficient spontaneously-formed private war organisations, and even clandestine guerrilla professionals, are as compared to government troops, and whether they can be any match for the latter in purely military terms.

Voluntary military organisations do respect private-property rights in all aspects of their activities. Their soldiers are either volunteers or hired, and their funds stem either from donations or from defence contracts with private individuals or organisations. By contrast, compulsory military organisations do at least in some respect rely on violations of private-property rights. In particular, they might rely on conscription and/or compulsory finance through taxation.

Let us first consider the issue of ultimate control. Who takes ultimate military decisions in private and in statist warfare? In private warfare, ultimate control rests with each private-property owner who is somehow involved in the production of defence. Since each soldier, donor, and customer controls his property, he can keep it invested in, or

withdraw it from, the production process at any time. Most individuals do not have big stakes in the production of defence (or in any other process), yet the fact is that they do have some control over the process, and that this control is clearly circumscribed by their property. If they withdraw their patronage, if they refuse to work for the army or to finance it, they do curtail its production process in favour of non-military ventures.

They may have various motives for withdrawing their support. A person might stop working as a soldier to earn a better living in a steel mill and a capitalist might withdraw his credit to invest it in a more profitable shoe plant. But a soldier might also give notice, and a capitalist or donor might withdraw his funds, because they do not trust the management of this military unit. Or they might see no more task for the unit (for example, because there are presently no known enemies) and thus look for other productive challenges. The military might even disgust them now, etc. Yet whatever their motives are, in a private order, individuals can make their value judgements felt. Deciding how to use their time and property, they do have an impact on the whole structure of production.

In a private order, the consumption and investment decisions of all citizens rigidly connect and steadily equilibrate the production of defence with all other productions. And since investment decisions ultimately seek to satisfy consumption needs, it is the citizens as consumers who determine which defence services are produced by which technique and by which type of organisation.

If consumers feel a more urgent need for military services, for example, because they apprehend the attack of a foreign enemy, they will increase spending on military goods and services. Some will buy guns and cannons for themselves. Others will also join local or national militias, and still others will simply subscribe to the services of professional defence agencies. (For example, the standard contract of an airborne unit could provide that the unit combat enemy forces within a radius of x miles from the property of the patron.) As a consequence, the production of these defence goods and services becomes more profitable and will thus attract human and material resources that otherwise would have been invested in the production of apples, roofs, etc.

On the other hand, consumers reducing their demand of military services because they sense no immediate threat will reduce their spending on such services and, thus, make their production less profitable. The defence market will be adjusted accordingly: Its

overall size will shrink (in favour of other markets) and its structure will adjust, too. Different forms of organisations will offer different types of goods and services that fit the reduced willingness of the consumers to spend on defence. For example, it is possible that the goods and services used by defence professionals (fighter jets, heavy armament, uniforms, but also staff positions of military planners and military theorists, etc.) will be more affected by a shrinking market than those used by amateur militias (small guns, small field cannons, mobile radar equipment, etc.).

In short, in a free society, the production of defence is always as perfectly adjusted to the needs of the citizens as is humanly possible. With consumers directing and balancing all productions through their spending decisions, the producers of defence services are in permanent competition with one another and with the producers of all other types of goods and services. This forces them to use their resources as diligently and efficient as possible. They simply cannot afford waste since it would curtail their income and also the spending on their product.

Moreover, since in a free society there would be various defence organisations competing for the same human and material resources, these organisations would be embedded in a system of market prices. Hence, they could use the precious yardstick of economic calculation to select the most efficient technology and the most efficient form of military organisation for any defence problem at hand.

By contrast, in statist warfare, ultimate military decisions are typically taken by the owners of the production facilities, that is, those who control the tanks, air-fighters, ships, guns, bases, etc. This does not mean that statist military leaders are always to be found in the ranks of the generals. In most Western countries, for example, this is surely not the case, at least in peace times. In these countries the militarily relevant decisions are taken by high-ranking civil executives, such as the defence minister, the president of the republic, the prime minister, or the chancellor. Yet, in any case, statist production of defence means that those who run the state can impose their value judgements to the detriment of all other members of society. The state conscripts soldiers and confiscates property to finance its war. Whether the soldier wishes to work in the army is no longer a concern; he has to serve. Whether the capitalist wishes to invest does not count; his money is confiscated.

From an economic point of view, the overall result of this is a misallocation of resources. The state produces cannons and warships that take away the resources for the production of shoes, yoghurt, books, and cello lessons – goods and services that the citizens would prefer to enjoy if they could use their property as they pleased.

This misallocation is bound to intensify in the course of time. Since statist producers of defence can increase their income by increasing military expenditures, the military now has an in-built tendency to expand its activities without regard for all other considerations. More human and material resources are invested in military undertakings than would be the case in a free society. The state-sponsored military organisation will become artificially large, engaging in horizontal and vertical mergers. This means that the extent of defence markets and of the price system will shrink, so that economic calculation becomes increasingly impossible.²⁰ As a consequence, it becomes ever more difficult to rationally select appropriate defence technologies and forms of organisation.

Even within the military industry itself, the natural balance between the various goods and services is disrupted. The possibility to ignore the needs of the consumers gives the producers the opportunity to produce goods that only they consider being important. Since they are typically the chief executives of professional military organisations, they tend to favour the production of heavy armament and highly specialised manpower (for military staff and academies) over all other types of military products. They discourage competing non-professional defence organisations and often even seek to prohibit or reduce private gun ownership, etc.

Freed from the need to serve consumers as efficiently as possible, the producers of defence services now have a bigger margin for wasteful behaviour. The institution of conscription has particularly negative effects since it encourages military leaders to expose their troops to unnecessary danger.

Not surprisingly, compulsory schemes for the production of defence are the same economic debacle that they are in all other fields. Let us therefore turn now to the question whether, at least in purely military terms, regular government troops are superior to

²⁰ See Mises (1998, part V). On the importance of a free-market supply of military goods, see the pioneering work by Mises (1919: 117ff).

spontaneously formed, private war organisations. For if this were the case, the prospects for secessionist movements would be sinister despite all other advantages.

IX

Military Effectiveness of Private Warfare

In our examination of the comparative military effectiveness of voluntary versus compulsory organisations we can safely neglect all problems of military technique, that is, everything that relates to tactics, strategy, military aspects of organisation, etc. We are here exclusively concerned about the impact of any military unit's political organisation on its military performance.

Let us first consider which type of persons will occupy executive positions in the two political régimes. Again, we can neglect common points and focus on the differences stemming from their different political nature. A typical common point is, for example, that in both régimes the military will attract a disproportionately big number of patriotic persons. By contrast, as we shall see, the crucial difference is that compulsory military agencies, like all compulsory organisations, are subject to the pernicious influence of bureaucratisation.²¹

In purely voluntary régimes, military leaders are selected exclusively for their military expertise and efficiency. The case is clearest in militias, which commonly elect their leaders. Peacetime militias might, like many other clubs, elect particularly sociable leaders. Yet, in times of war, there will surely be a dramatic change since the election now becomes a matter of life and death. Each single militia member then has an interest to make sure that the most able person is in the lead. It is even sure that members would quit a militia if they sensed that the leadership was incapable.

Things are basically the same in professional defence agencies operating on a voluntary basis. The owner of these enterprises has a personal interest in hiring nobody but the most able persons for executive positions. If he fails to identify these persons, he runs the risk that other companies will hire them and out-compete him on the market. And he is

²¹ On the following, see the general remarks in Mises (1944).

also threatened by the prospect that the other soldiers that he hired will give notice since they too are unwilling to risk their lives under incompetent military leadership.

These mechanisms are, at least partially, destroyed, by the impact of compulsion. Conscription by its very nature prevents that soldiers quit when executive ranks are filled with incompetent personnel. Conscripts are also notoriously unmotivated, being temporary slaves. In confrontation with highly motivated private troops, be they ever so few, this represents a huge competitive disadvantage.

The effects of compulsory funding are similarly devastating. It reduces the necessity for the military agencies to satisfy customer needs. As a consequence, as we have seen, the various military executives can start satisfying their own needs, both in respect to the services they produce and in respect to the selection of personnel.

It is important to keep in mind that there is no such thing as “a defence service” or “a defence good.” All goods and service are heterogeneous concrete goods, like “one hour of guarding property X at location Y” or “fortification of hill A against possible assaults by tank divisions of the type B, or by infantry of type C.” In a free society, all consumers involved decide which concrete defence service shall be produced. By contrast, compulsory funding enables the producers to ignore the consumption wishes of their fellows and to place undue emphasis on their own satisfaction. Rather than fortifying hill A, they fortify hill H, because it is not so windy there or because it better protects the ranch of the general’s nephew. Rather than guarding private property of the civil population, they spend all their time guarding their own bases. Rather than protecting a single house, they close all surrounding streets and shut down the city, etc.

Moreover, rather than hiring the most capable personnel, they start hiring the fellows who know the best jokes, or the children of their schoolmates, or people who share their political, sexual, religious, and other preferences. Or they might hire particularly ruthless individuals, who despise common morality. Also, rather than organising the defence units in the most militarily efficient way, they acquiesce to other considerations. For example, the recent admission to the US army of females and homosexual males does not seem to be based on military, but political, expediency.

The only way to prevent such excesses is to issue specific directives to all executives on how to use their resources, and to check compliance with these directives by written

reports, inspection teams, etc. In short, one has to subject the military to a bureaucratic apparatus and regulation. Military leaders are told what to do when and where, and hiring decisions are made dependent on general standards, that is, on criteria that do not take account of the individual requirements of particular times and places.

However, at least as far as the selection of personnel is concerned, such reforms will be doomed to failure. There is only one way to test the ability of a person: One has to let him do the job and see whether he can do it. A person hired by a voluntary defence organisation will soon have shown whether he is suited for his position because such an organisation constantly has to prove its military effectiveness. Only if it is sufficiently effective, it will continue to be patronised. Yet in compulsory organisations, all the tests take place in an artificial environment. For example, one cannot tell whether a soldier or officer is too ruthless or not ruthless enough, or whether he accomplished his task with a sufficient amount of accuracy. For his ruthlessness and the accuracy of his work cannot be judged without standard. And in compulsory organisations this very standard is arbitrary to a bigger degree than in voluntary agencies.

Thus we see that private defence agencies, while enjoying all virtues of compulsory schemes, do not suffer from some specific disadvantages of the latter. In particular, they are likely to attract and select more capable personnel, and they will react to the military requirements of any given situation in a far more flexible way.

However, so far we have only dealt with small private units, as they are typical in guerrilla warfare. Our foregoing considerations about economic and military efficiency would thus merely imply that, given equally small units, the private secessionist forces would have a comparative advantage over the government troops. Yet as a matter of fact, government troops are typically much larger in size. Are our small private units able to confront these large and concentrated forces of the government's army?

Before we pursue this question any further let us observe that such a confrontation might not be necessary in the first place. The purpose of the secession is to break the compulsory ties between the secessionists and a government which they no longer accept. It concerns only the secessionists. It does not concern those who wish to continue to be ruled and protected by the government. Therefore, it is at least conceivable that, as a result of a successful secession, the government troops remain in the seceding lands, to

protect the loyal subjects. The territory would then be no longer politically homogeneous, but sprinkled in the colours of the secession and of the government. There is no reason to assume that such a setting would be inherently unstable and plagued by violence (see Rothbard 1978, chap. 12), so that we can go on with our original question.

Thus, suppose that all inhabitants of a given territory wanted to secede, but that the government troops refused to quit the country. Suppose furthermore that the troops could not rightfully claim any piece of land in the territory their own. They would then clearly be aggressors, and the inhabitants would be entitled to expel them. Yet, how can the secessionists do this? Can they build an army of comparable size to beat the enemy in the open field?

Again, we first should raise the question whether the secessionists need to build up a big army in the first place. We have already mentioned that our libertarian partisans enjoy the advantage of operating on the basis of the same principle of respect and defence of private property. This is a powerful organising principle, which gives a common direction to all their scattered individual actions and which makes sure that they hit the right target in all instances. Thus, to a very large extent they can do without a common agency. They do not need the unity of command, since they enjoy the unity of principle.

We have pointed out the benefits and limits of this stage of the secessionist struggle. Decentralised organisation in small units can be sufficient to make the costs of ruling unbearably high. Yet in most cases it will not be sufficient to rid the country of the government troops and, thus, of the taxmen.

The government troops must be beaten if they do not go on their own. Can they be beaten? This depends essentially on the question whether the government can concentrate enough forces in the seceding territories to beat any secessionist army. If it can, the formation of larger units would be futile, and the secessionists are best advised to continue their guerrilla struggle until better opportunities arise.²² If the government cannot mobilise enough forces, then the formation of larger secessionist units is advisable. This can

²² Thus, it might be that the Amercian South lost the War of Secession because it relied on conventional warfare, whereas it would have been better advised to choose a guerrilla strategy. See Kerby (1973), McWhiney (1982), and Beringer et al. (1986, esp. 340-347). I am indebted to Jeffrey Tucker and Joseph Stromberg for bringing this point to my attention.

be effectuated under the three forms of concentration known from civil business: 1) growth, 2) merger, and 3) joint venture.

The possibility to form big private armies through growth and merger is amply illustrated by history. In fact, all armies are in a way “private” since they are controlled by one agency. And during most of history, armies were owned by individual human beings, the warlords, who personally led their forces on the battlefield. Famous owner-warlords of the past include Alexander the Great, Caesar, Attila, Otto the Great, Wallenstein, and Frederick the Great.

Yet even short of merger and growth, history has demonstrated again and again that, in times of dire crisis, private defence organisations have formed joined ventures to meet great threats. At crucial junctures in the history of Western civilisation, spontaneously joined forces confronted overwhelming enemies. Examples are the battles against the Huns in 451, against the Saracens in 732, against the Magyars in 955, against the Turks in 1683, against Napoleon in 1813, and against Hitler in 1941-45. Even secessionist movements have successfully practised military joined ventures, for example, in the case of the Netherlands and Switzerland.

To sum up, private defence organisations are ceteris paribus more effective than compulsory organisations. Successful secessionist warfare does not necessarily require the expulsion of the government troops, but might lead to different, equally satisfying settings. Expulsion of the enemy requires a concentration of troops of similar size, which in turn can be accomplished in ways common to other business.

X

Conclusion

We have seen that secession is the only type of political reform that does not by its very nature contradict the goal of establishing a purely private order.

We have furthermore emphasised the harmony between libertarian secession (which essentially is resistance by denying support to any type of ruler) and private warfare (which is property-respecting resistance by using force against the rulers). Successful libertarian secession presupposes that a substantial majority of the population has adopted

the secessionist agenda. The very same conditions must be given for individuals and spontaneously emerging troops to wage a successful war on a purely voluntary basis. If they are given, the libertarian secessionists can take up any enemy, enjoying superior efficiency and military effectiveness.

On the one hand, we thus have to re-emphasise the traditional libertarian stress on education as a means to prepare the advent of a free society. On the other hand, one should not expect the establishment of a free society to be a singular event covering at once the entire territory formerly controlled by the rulers. Rather, secession is most likely to be a gradual and spontaneous process that involves various sub-territories, and even various strata of the population, at different points of time.

These results might not satisfy the aesthetic predilections of those who abhor political maps sprinkled in different colours. But it will help those who strive for liberty long before their fellows are ripe for it, because it sets their minds free to care about what is attainable here and now.

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