

Of all the great evils of the world, war is undoubtedly the greatest. War is *total aggression*; the mass murder of human beings and the complete abandonment of all reason and morality.

War rationalizes the violation of all rules of civilized behavior: During war civil liberties are obliterated, industry is collectivized, and dissenters are jailed or killed as traitors. Atrocities normally condemned by even ardent statist—the torture of women and children, the fire-bombing of cities, and the mass murder of entire civilian populations—are lauded by priests and presidents alike as “noble” and “heroic” when committed in the name of “preservation of the state”.

“The state” is simply the organization of socially permissible aggression, force incarnate. War is the state’s “finest hour”.

Libertarians oppose aggression in all of its manifestations, including taxation which is theft, conscription which is slavery and war which is murder. In the place of coercive social orders, libertarians advocate societies based upon voluntary association, private property and the free market. But the question arises: How could a libertarian society protect itself from the armed and deadly nation-states of the world without taxation and government-organized national defense?

As I will argue here, military defense without a state is neither possible nor absurd. Stateless territorial defense rather becomes evident as a natural outgrowth of the institutions of a free society, once statist myths of national defense are refuted. It is to these myths which I now turn . . .

Myths of Defense

Defense Myth No. 1: The United States today is well protected from foreign attack. If by “protected” one means “kept from harm”, the fact is that the United States today is totally *unprotected* from any all-out foreign attack. If the Soviet Union decides to launch its nuclear missiles and bombers against the United States, this country will be devastated if not rendered totally lifeless. We have no protection from conventional nuclear weapons, much less from “suitcase atomic bombs”, poisoning of the water supply and biological devices. Rather what we have today is a balance of terror: We supposedly deter the Soviet Union and other hostile nuclear powers from attacking us because our offensive weapons—buried underground, hidden beneath the sea, in orbit above the earth—are sufficiently safe that even if the United States were devastated by a nuclear attack, we would retain a “second strike” capability to devastate our attacker in turn. This is known as “Mutual Assured Destruction” (or MAD for short), and even its proponents admit that it only guarantees mutual destruction in the event of war.

Why are offensive weapons so devastating and defensive weapons so ineffective? Part of the answer may be technological: Nuclear weapons are very difficult to protect against, it is claimed. But this answer is partial at best. Year after year, the amount of money allocated for offensive weapons research is tremendously greater than the sums allocated for defensive weapons research. Why haven’t anti-missiles,

missile-destroying lasers, anti-radiation drugs, orbital coherent particle beams, civil defense programs, and the dispersal of industry been more seriously pursued? As I will argue later in this essay, such programs, and other, more imaginative systems, have every capability of providing protection for Americans without threatening the murder of millions of innocent foreign citizens.

The reason that such systems have not been developed is not primarily technological, but rather principally political. *For most of recorded history, governments have been responsible for national defense, and governments are far more interested in power, domination, tribute, and conquest, than they are even remotely interested in protecting their own citizens.* The average citizen now is and always has been regarded by government as an expendable pawn during war. To create an economic demand for, and hence a technology of defensive weapon systems, military spending must first be taken out of the hands of government.

Defense Myth No. 2: Only government can afford to pay for national defense. This myth is easily refuted. There is no such thing as “government’s money”. The only money that government has is what it grabs from us. The United States government is not an apparatus of production, but an apparatus of control. The government does not make a profit and in fact produces virtually nothing of value; it only regulates others and redistributes the wealth which others have created. *Anything that government now “pays for”, necessarily the American people can pay for because they already are paying for it*

In addition, the government itself produces virtually no weapons systems. Rather government controls the demand for weapon systems by using our tax dollars to contract for them. This virtually guarantees that weapons will be produced far less economically than if they were produced in the free market. Defense analyst Seymour Melman (author of *The Permanent War Economy and Pentagon Capitalism*) reports that *overall it costs two-and-a-half to twenty times as much to produce military hardware as it does to produce civilian products*, because of an institutionalized military “cost-maximization” system. (Some of the specific inefficient elements of this system include • division of labor into small, inefficient details, • labor efficiencies of 50% or less, • unnecessary duplication of weapon systems between the major services, and • government rescuing of inefficient defense contractors.) In addition, only one-fourth of the present military budget goes for nuclear deterrence. As Melman documents, the other 75% goes to finance *Pax Americana*, which the U.S. government defines as “a variety of world power configurations to be used as a basis for the U.S. to maintain world hegemony in the future,” or in plain English, U.S. world military dominance.

By confining the role of the U.S. military to protection of the United States, the military budget could thus be reduced from current levels of around \$110 billion to approximately \$27 billion. This works out to about \$270 per working American, per year. Not only is it false that “only government

can afford to pay for national defense,” but the converse is more likely true, “we can only afford to pay for national defense without government.”

Defense Myth No. 3: Socialist nations like the Soviet Union are a grave military threat to the capitalist West because such “command economies” are very good at producing “public” goods, unlike “demand economies”. In fact socialist countries are not much good at producing anything, consumer goods or “public” goods. Werner Keller demonstrates in *Are The Russians Ten Feet Tall* that for 500 years the Russians have been grabbing most of their technology from the capitalist West. Researcher Anthony Sutton goes even further. In *Western Technology and Soviet Economic Development and National Suicide*, Sutton documents that *there is no such thing as Soviet technology*. In particular, every type of military technology—from miniature ball bearings, to processes for manufacturing alloy steel, to entire advanced weapons systems—have been begged, borrowed or stolen from the West, particularly from the United States, by the Soviets. The same suicidal process of technological aid has now begun with Communist China.

Such transfers of technology would be greatly diminished in a libertarian society simply because there would be no government to protect defense contractors from their own folly. Today, whenever a defense contractor sells a military or industrial system to the communist and thereby increases the enemy’s military potential, *that very sale creates an incentive for the U.S. government to build up its armament*. But if there were no government and companies had to protect themselves, weapons sales to the enemy would not be “good business” but pure suicide.

In the absence of transfers of goods and technology to the Soviet Union, Russia would be unable to feed itself, maintain a modern industrial economy and would quickly cease to exist as a viable military threat to the West—eliminating the need for most national defense.

The Moral Nature of Libertarian Defense

Libertarianism is based upon the principle of the inalienable rights of all persons, regardless of their age, their race, their sex or their nationality. Libertarianism holds that a person has a right to defend himself from aggression, but that he does *not* have a right to kill innocent persons in the process.

By libertarian standards, reliance on devastating nuclear weapons for defense is inherently immoral since it threatens the lives of millions of innocent people in the process (and without even protecting Americans at that!).

The only weapon systems consistent with libertarian moral philosophy are therefore defensive and selective weapon systems, such as: • missile-destroying lasers, • “smart bombs” used against military targets, • chemical weapons which incapacitate rather than kill, • sabotage of enemy offensive weapons on the ground, and • arming dissidents in communist countries.

Another truly libertarian means of defense is the development of an “overkill” capacity to

assassinate enemy military and political leaders should they launch an attack. Today the leaders of major enemy nations are likely to survive nuclear war in their bunkers while their cities perish from nuclear missiles. But if we had a corps of highly trained assassins, "deep cover" agents, and appropriate technological devices, we could guarantee the death of enemy leaders without threatening their cities. The assurance of one's own death is, for most people, communist and non-communist, a far greater deterrent than the threat of death of other people.

Organization and Finance of Stateless Defense

Defending a libertarian society would be much less expensive than defending a statist society since (1) free market weapon systems would cost a fraction of weapons produced for government, (2) a lot less defense would be needed since armaments manufacturers would be much less inclined to sell weapons to the enemy, and (3) a non-interventionist society, relying upon defensive weapons provokes much less aggression than an interventionist, statist society. In addition, defending a libertarian society is sociologically easier than defending a statist society.

A libertarian society would have no centralized power structure to destroy, no pre-existing power apparatus to take over and use, and no tradition of obedience to authority to exploit. The citizens of a free society would also be free to arm themselves with any defensive weapons they choose—from handguns to X-ray lasers.

Military defense of a libertarian American would cost between \$13 and \$27 billion (depending upon how much transfer of technology to communists was curtailed). There are three primary likely ways these funds would be raised: (1) fees from specific special interest groups needing various defense services, (2) charity and (3) insurance fees.

1. Specific service fees. In a libertarian society, each social group would be responsible for its own defense, creating an economic demand for various weapon systems. (Even today, large corporations maintain sophisticated guard forces, crime-ridden communities create neighborhood patrols, and some fishing boats mount deck guns.) Given a serious threat of foreign attack or invasion, people will act—individually and cooperatively—to protect themselves.

In a libertarian society, common carriers would arm their vessels or contract for protection from "defense companies". Multi-national corporations could create private armies to protect their property from foreign expropriation and domestic attack. Large corporations, business associations, homeowners associations and similar groups could raise money in various ways to protect their property.

2. Charity. In 1977 Americans voluntarily contributed over \$30 billion to charities. In addition, they involuntarily contributed over \$500 billion to government. In the absence of government, people would have a lot more money to spend. In the absence of state "welfare," people would have a lot more motivation to be charitable. If people now voluntarily contribute \$30 billion dollars to the welfare of others, it is not unreasonable to expect that professional

charity drives could induce them to part with another \$10 or \$15 billion to preserve their lives, perhaps via charity drives organized by the Chamber of Commerce.

3. Insurance Premiums. *Question:* How do you provide military protection for my community from nuclear attack without protecting the housing development next door?

Answer: You can't, but you can do the next best thing by offering war insurance which pays premiums (for example, from Swiss banks accounts) in the event of war or invasion.

Today, life insurance is a \$22 billion a year business. People naturally buy life insurance to provide for the welfare of their loved-ones in the event they die or to provide for their welfare if their loved-ones die.

War insurance premiums would be used to finance city defense systems (such as lasers and particle beam weapons). Sophisticated computer analysis of probable damage if intercepted missiles struck could be used to apportion defense costs between different communities and cities. Why would people buy such insurance?—To protect their lives, their property, and their loved-ones. Why would insurance companies invest in city-defense systems?—To protect their lives, their property, provide a demanded service, and competitively lower their premium charges.

In addition to these three primary sources of funding for stateless defense, funds could also be provided from • technological spin offs of weapons research, • contributions from police departments, courts systems and other groups particularly interested in societal protection, and • subsidies from contract and property insurance fees.

Freedom and Self-Defense

After food, clothing and shelter, safety is one of man's most fundamental needs. The need for safety is one of the primary motivation for the creation of government. Unfortunately government, like all forms of involuntary socialism and institutionalized violence, is immoral, inefficient and unnecessary.

Man has free will and can choose to create different social forms in the future than those which he has created in the past. With sufficient imagination and courage, a completely voluntary society can be created which fulfills all of man's needs incomparably better than collectivism.

The nation states of the world today and their collectivized national defense promise only the eventual destruction of the world. A free libertarian society offers the prospect of defense without annihilation, protection without taxation and security without coercion.

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