

Anatomy of the State

By

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Summarized by cleangov

What the State Is Not:

The State is not a social service organization. The State is not necessary for achieving the goals of mankind. The State is not some collective “we” which acts in our best interests at all times.

The State is an organization within a particular geographical area which is attempting to be a monopoly on the use of force to achieve its ends. It is the only group in a particular area that does not get its money through soliciting voluntary contributions or by selling desired goods and services. It gets its funds through the threat of force and actual force if needed, by confiscating it from people who do earn money through production and service to others, from people who are peaceably offering those goods and services for voluntary purchase by others.

The State then goes on to regulate and dictate the actions of the people who live in that area.

What the State Is:

People come into the world with nothing. Their mission is to learn the laws of nature and then learn how to use those laws and their own self-created energy to create and produce things of value to others, things which can be exchanged voluntarily with other people who have likewise produced things of value which one needs.

By doing this one finds that the living standards of people who produce things increase tremendously. This is the “natural” path for mankind to follow, using his energy and what he knows to participate in the production and exchange of things of value to others.

By taking natural resources and exerting energy a person can thereby make natural resources his own property, which can then be exchanged for the property of similarly produced items from other people.

If people in an area do this, they can skip the kill-or-be-killed pirate-centered method of surviving by stealing what has been produced by others. Instead one has harmony and peace and plenty, through production and exchange.

The German sociologist Franz Oppenheimer called the seizure of another’s goods or services by force “the political means” to wealth. It is the action of a parasite on the productive body of the people. It reduces the total wealth in an area. It also takes away some of the incentive the producers have to produce anything beyond the bare bones amount needed for survival.

The State is that method of organizing the above process of systematically taking from producers, and making it legal, organized and oh, so inescapable. It makes the parasitic action

constant and continuous, with no interruptions, save the death of any one producer, who is promptly replaced.

States have always been born from conquest. Usually it's when one group realized after winning out over another group that they could stay in the newly won territory and set themselves up as rulers, entitled to the steady flow of loot taken from the conquered people. In such a way the winners set themselves up as "kings" or "emperors" and, often with the blessings of the local religious leaders, make it look like they have the "divine" authority to rule over the lesser beings living there. It's legal and proper and everybody should respect it and follow along.

How The State Preserves Itself:

This is the question of how does a ruling group continue in power after the initial taking of the country or area? While their main operating basis is force, they cannot continue in power without the active or resigned acceptance by the majority of the population. How do they gain that acceptance?

Because the ruling group (and the staff of the bureaucracy) is parasitic on the production of the population as a whole, the ruling group and bureaucracy is much smaller than the rest of the population. Favored groups within the larger population can be bought off with favors or subsidies or tax breaks or gifts or special economic monopolies or protected markets, etc., etc. However, that alone will not be enough to persuade the majority of citizens to accept the ruling group or caste.

For that the population must be persuaded through propaganda and education and the media that their government is good and merciful and wise and the best possible choice in governments. For that the government depends on intellectuals to create and put forth the ideas that will support that program. This results in an alliance between the State and the intellectuals, and the consequent support of the intellectuals by the State.

Some of the ideas put forth in support of the current rulers include 1) the idea that the rulers were actually descended from the gods, and so are actually gods, or in a more recent historical era, descended from Jesus Christ through a laboriously-traced bloodline. 2) The rulers have been approved by the best religious people (priests) in the land. 3) The rulers are members of the "best and the brightest," the aristocracy, and have abilities and understanding beyond the ken of mortal men. 4) The rulers are true experts in government and all that it entails, or, at least, have experts on their staff who can tell them what to do. 5) It's all very scientific and proven and beyond question, and the rulers have access to all that science.

Along with that goes the idea that government by the current rulers is indispensable to the country and disaster would befall us if they weren't running things. Plus, you can't do anything about it, so one might as well become apathetic about ever being able to change it for the better. What can one person do against the might of the government?

A few centuries ago people in Europe regarded wars as disputes between different groups of nobles, not the common people. The average Joe didn't think it affected him very much. Now war is regarded as attacks on the people of a country, and so the people must unite to defend the rulers, who are defending the people.

The longer a government continues in power, the more it has "tradition" on its side, and people will tend to go along with what has been in place for so long.

Individualism is put down, and going along with the group is elevated in status, because dissatisfaction with the group starts with one or a few individuals who do not think like everyone else. Also, the state must pooh-pooh any idea that “conspiracy theories” have any basis in fact, because if one starts looking at conspiracy theories one gets immediately into a search for individuals who have motive, means, opportunity, and something to gain from some action or current state of affairs.

So, the official line put forth, and originated or repeated by the media, over and over, is that the really basic, important events or bad situations are caused by “the society we live in,” or “a widespread trend,” or “nature” or “market forces,” or any other vague source one can think of.

The State tries to make its subjects feel guilty for being successful in life, or for doing well. The idea is put forth that successful individuals, or the successful country as a whole is somehow taking advantage of less fortunate people or is greedy or should give some of their wealth away to poor people or to the government, in the form of higher taxes for the wealthy.

The idea is put forth that the ruling caste, and their bureaucracy, do not work “for money” and have loftier goals and motivations, and work for the public good, and so we should pay them well for their work.

“Science” is increasingly used to explain how when the State robs the people of their hard-earned cash and spends it on wasteful or harmful programs created in the name of “help” or “security” or “public good” or “defense,” that is beneficial to everyone far beyond what would happen if people were left to decide for themselves how to spend their hard-earned cash.

How The State Transcends Its Limits:

As time has passed, people have attempted to put forth limits on what the State can do, and the State has, through the use of smart people, found ways around those limits. Any monitoring or limiting office or idea or principle has eventually been subverted away from its original job to in the end become an ally of the State.

The most successful of these was the Bill of Rights, and other parts of the American Constitution, but somehow the Judicial Branch has set itself up as the final arbiter, or decider of what is Constitutional or not, which means the judges can say what is Constitutional, and thereby give legitimacy to the actions of the State, which over time expand and expand from what was originally envisioned.

The judges are part of the State, and so they are in the position of judging something of which they are a part. They are supposed to be impartial and independent, but that is extremely difficult to accomplish, when matters of importance to the State are involved. The fact that some measure of justice is achieved by the courts is “something of a miracle.”

He gives an example of how the New Deal proposed by Franklin Roosevelt was given legitimacy by a decision of the Supreme Court. At the time the various programs put forth by the New Deal were not unanimously accepted ideas by the population as a whole.

Inserting into a government or a constitution, articles or rules or departments which are supposed to limit the power and growth of government over individuals without giving the people themselves somehow the power to enforce that limitation is not going to work. In the end those connected to the State will tend to argue for a greater and greater exercise of powers of the State.

One idea put forth in the case of America (not adopted) was that the individual states should be able to nullify any acts or laws of the Federal government inside the boundaries of the

state, and that the Federal government should be able to put a limit or cancellation on any encroachment on individual rights or freedoms attempted by the states. Difficulties with this are what about counties and cities having a veto power? What about other groups of people, such as bakers or farmers having a veto power? What about a state and the Federal government acting in collusion to violate individual rights? If one carried this idea far enough then the power to “nullify” a law should be extended down to each individual. Whoa there. That’s going pretty far afield from our original discussion.

What The State Fears:

Threats to its own power and its own life.

Death can come about by being conquered by another State, or by internal Revolution.

These two threats (war and revolution) trigger the maximum response by the State to convince the people to come to the aid of the rulers in defense of the status quo, via propaganda and what means of force it can employ.

War carries with it grave risk, but also great opportunities for gain, both by obtaining new territory and by increasing the State’s internal powers in the name of “defense” and “emergency” and “security.”

Compare the energy of efforts to capture and punish those who threaten the State with the energy and efforts to capture those who commit crimes against individuals, to see which category elicits the bigger response from the State.

How States Relate to One Another:

The land mass of the planet has already been divided up and laid claim to by various States. The natural tendency of a State is to seek ways to increase its Territory, which can usually only be accomplished by conquest. If an area is inhabited and it is conquered, its rulers are then replaced by the conquering rulers.

Internal efforts to limit states in the 1600s through the 1800s were most successful through the Creation of constitutions dictating powers and limits to governments. External efforts to limit war and resolve conflicts between States included the development of such things as “International Law” and “Neutrals’ Rights.”

Parts of international law arose from earlier private agreements between traders, designed to facilitate the free flow of goods and services across boundaries, and from admiralty law, regarding the flow of commerce on the world’s oceans.

The aim of the “laws of war” was to allow private commerce to continue and to preserve private property from destruction or confiscation, even while a war was ongoing.

In Europe in the 1700s, letter communications and even private travel between warring nations was quite common.

Warfare in the 20th and 21st centuries has gone way beyond the relatively “civilized” form of war touched on above. Total destruction seems to be the aim today.

Part of the need to maintain some form of peace between nations has fostered the development of an idea called the “sanctity of treaties,” meaning they cannot be altered. But logically, many of the terms of treaties are illogical in that they cannot bind the people arbitrarily to certain agreements. Yet they do.

History as a Race Between State Power and Social Power:

Freedom to pursue voluntary production of good and services, through the process of learning the laws of nature and using those laws to transform nature to the benefit of mankind, and exchange those products with other individuals voluntarily, grew exponentially during the 1600s through the 1800s, at the same time that man's efforts to limit the authority of the State achieved some success, through revolutions and the rise of various Constitutions.

However, the 1900s and the 2000s are demonstrating that the State is always looking for ways to limit individual freedom and increase the State's power to monitor and control and tax its citizens, and has once again gained the upper hand in this ongoing contest or struggle between the individual and the State.

Look at the amount of war, slavery, genocide, governmental spying on citizenry, terrorism and general destruction in the 1900s and so far in the 2000s, for an indication of where we are currently headed.

None of the Constitutional reforms and other efforts to check the power and growth of governments undertaken in the last few centuries has succeeded. All have failed. This problem of keeping the State in check is still unsolved. "Perhaps new paths of inquiry must be explored, if the successful, final solution of the State question is ever to be attained."

End of Summary:

Comments and Opinions by the Summarizer, cleangov:

A terrific book, only 55 pages in the version I read. A lot of ideas in a small package.

I highly recommend buying and reading the original book. It has more subtleties and fine gradations of ideas than what I have summarized here.

I agree with most of the points it makes. I do feel, however, that in America we have a very imperfect system which nonetheless results in more input from various individuals and vested interest groups and corporations and rich folks and provides a framework for arriving at basic agreements and rules and laws that sort of work, compared to a lot of other places on the planet. It's not that efficient, I think there are way too many restrictions on individual action, it takes way too much of my hard-earned cash, and squanders zillions of dollars on wasteful and destructive programs, but it's a lot better than many alternatives that have been proposed.

As to the last point he was making above, I suggest reading a book, "The Fourth Branch," or its summary (I guess the summary will appear here sooner or later.) by Michael L. Rees. It is an attempt to limit the federal government of America and is the best attempt that I have seen so far. It calls for pretty major changes, but would, I feel, greatly increase individual freedom and liberty. It would possibly even allow more people to achieve success in that pursuit of happiness thing.

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