

The State Is Not Great: How Government Poisons Everything

By Jacob Spinney

Government is not reason, it is not eloquence - it is force. The thing that differentiates the government from any other group of people is that it is a territorial monopoly with a commonly believed right to engage in aggressive violence. It's time we stop fooling ourselves into believing that the government is the entity which allows us to achieve collective goals and start recognizing it for what it really is, the entity that enables one group of people to violently aggress against another; that allows one individual to benefit at the expense of another. Taxation, that is to say coercively taking people's property against their will, and regulation, that is to say coercively preventing or restricting individuals from engaging in voluntary activities, is enslavement by another name. But let's ignore the ethics and just focus on the economics.

Under voluntarism, all interactions are mutually beneficial. In other words, all trades leave all parties better off than they were before, otherwise the trades would not have happened. Likewise, the more someone is allowed to keep what they produce, the more incentivized they are to produce in the first place. But under coercion, at least one of the parties will always be worse off than they were before, otherwise coercion would not be necessary. And the more one uses aggression to take away what they produce, the less incentivized they are to produce in the first place. Because of this, violence leads to less prosperity, and eliminates both the state's incentive and ability to wisely allocate the resources that it monopolizes.

In a voluntary market, businesses have the incentive to offer the best good or service at the lowest price, because if they didn't, their customers will take their business elsewhere. But if you feel that the state is spending the money it collected through taxes on something you don't think it should be spending it on, or if you feel that the state is being wasteful in how it spends that money, then you can't simply decline to pay your taxes. You are forced to pay them anyway. Imagine, for moment, that you owned a business and that all of the sudden you were given the right to force your customers to buy your products. Would you not be tempted to increase the price and work less hard, since they're going to buy your products anyway? Can you imagine the outrage people would have if a business actually were permitted to coerce its customers into buying their products? Yet the state does this very thing and people applaud it for doing so. Because the state is allowed to use coercion to collect its revenue and to maintain a monopoly over whatever good or service it wishes, it is far more incentivized to offer a worse good or service at a more expensive price. States are also much more incentivized to go to war with each other, not only because they are able to externalize the risk of being killed onto the unfortunate soldiers, but also because they are able to externalize the financial cost onto the taxpayers. And because it is already aggressing against its own citizens, it has no problem at all aggressing against foreign countries they believe they can exploit as well. From 1900 to the present, governments have killed around 45 million soldiers and around a quarter of a billion innocent civilians. And it is impossible to calculate the countless numbers of people that governments have indirectly killed by holding back the progress of scientific and economic advancement.

This is not to say that the state has no incentive to care about satisfying the wishes of its citizens. The rulers do indeed care, but only to the point that it helps them to maintain their political seat. In fact, they have the incentive to allow at least a moderate amount of freedom; that way they can have more money to tax. The longer that the state monopolizes a good or service, the more difficult it is for people to see the prosperity that voluntary alternatives would otherwise bring and, because of this, people begin to believe that the state is the only institution capable of providing these things. The rulers might also create a corporatized market by passing laws and regulations that allow corporations to cartelize and monopolize the marketplace and defer their risks and losses onto the taxpayers. Then the rulers will point to the higher prices, lower wages, asset bubbles, and insane wealth disparities that this corporatism creates and blame it on the free market that didn't exist in the first place. The more the state is able to hide the positive effects of voluntarism and scare people into wishing for institutionalized aggression, the less accountable and more exploitative the state can be.

Let's say that there is a public pasture open for all shepherds to use to feed their sheep. Can you guess what happens? Of course, the shepherds see an opportunity to offer free food for their sheep. And so rather than their incentive being sustainability, their incentive is to get their sheep to eat as much of the grass as possible before the other guy has his sheep eat it all. The end result is consuming more grass than the land is able to replenish itself with. This means that in the long run, the shepherds will run out of grass to feed their sheep, the sheep will starve, and then the shepherds themselves will starve. This problem is known as the tragedy of the commons; which, put simply, is a scenario that privatizes gains, but collectivizes losses.

The government is a perfect example of the tragedy of the commons, especially democratic ones. The majority is granted the right to decide on how to spend other peoples money. Can you guess what happens? Of course, everyone votes on how they think other peoples money should be spent, because if they didn't, someone else will. And since there is no personal risk involved in spending other people's money, people are incentivized to spend a lot more of it and to be more careless about how efficiently it's spent. The same is true with representative democracies, except that the rulers, who call themselves representatives, are also incentivized to be short-sighted and offer bribes and promises to the present voters while subtly deferring those costs onto future generations. And because the majority of people are not familiar with sound economic principles, most people fall victim to common economic fallacies that seem to make sense on the surface, but have the opposite effect in practice. And since the majority of people hold to these economic fallacies, the state will as well. Not only will this system end up creating laws that destroy prosperity and slow down, or even stop, societies progress, but it is doomed for failure, because eventually it will run out of other peoples money. The wish for a base level standard of living for all human beings is a noble one. But it cannot be fulfilled through the use of coercion. Because the more coercion you use, the less prosperity there will be to divvy out in the first place, and the less incentive and capability there will be to spend that money wisely.

Imagine, for a moment, that grocery shopping was decided by a coercive democracy. You are forced to buy whatever foods the majority tells you to. The best you can do is cast your vote for what you want to buy and hope for the best. But because of the very nature of democracy, what will most likely happen is that a one-size-fits-all solution will be imposed and everyone will end up being forced to buy many foods they do not want and be prevented from buying many foods they do want! And representative democracies make this problem even worse, since instead of being able to vote on specific foods, you are now only able to vote on specific people with their own list of foods they think you should eat. That is to say you may very well not want 99% of the foods this guy wants you to eat, but you vote for him anyway since he will at least give you 1% more of the foods you want than the other guy. Compare this to a voluntary system of grocery shopping, where you are allowed to buy what you specifically want, and you can see the unnecessary waste and conflict that a coercive democracy naturally brings. Rather than focusing on the voluntary means of exchange, innovation, and efficiency in order to increase prosperity for everyone, democracy incentivizes everyone to instead bicker with each other over which group of people should be allowed to exploit the other. The irony is that the distorted incentives that legalized coercion creates are what sow the seeds for the very doomsday scenarios that voluntarism is feared to bring.

But let's just say that there is some way the state is able to overcome all of these distorted incentives that a coercive institution brings; checks and balances, a constitution etched in stone, a magic robot that executes any ruler who makes the wrong decision, what have you, and that the state is able to place an incorruptible angel in power who has nothing but the best incentives to spend our money as wisely as possible. Even then, this is economically impossible. The more of a monopoly the state grants itself over offering certain goods and services, the less voluntary exchange can occur within that sector. The less voluntary exchange that can occur, the more impossible it is to have any market prices. Meaning that it is impossible to know how much these goods and services should cost and it is impossible to know how many, in what quality, and in what form these goods and services should be provided, or even if they are the best allocation of the scarce resources needed to produce them. This is why private contractors love dealing with the government so much. Since the government has no way of knowing how much things should cost, the private contractors are able to charge however much they want.

Let's take a car for example. Thanks to market prices, you now know that the cost of car X is \$10,000, let's say, and you also know that the cost of producing the car is \$5,000, let's say. Thus, if you produce car X and sell it, you will make a 100% profit on your investment. This is the market's way of telling you that producing car X is the most efficient way to use those scarce resources as opposed to using them to make something else. However, if the car costs \$10,000 and it would cost \$20,000 to produce it, then that's the market's way of telling you that producing the car is not the most efficient way to use those resources. But now let's imagine that you are the ruler of the world and you now own everything within it. Since you cannot exchange with yourself, there cannot be market prices. Without market prices, how do you then determine

whether producing car X is the most efficient way to use those resources? It's like being spun around ten times and then having to stand up straight. We're not just talking about what consumers want or how to produce product X. Those things are relatively easy to figure out. The thing that is impossible to figure out without market prices is how to know whether you should use resource A to produce product X, product Y, or product Z. Without market prices, it is impossible to align the fact that consumers have an infinite demand for every product imaginable with the fact that there are only so many products that are able to be produced in so many ways. Because it is impossible to calculate these things without market prices provided by voluntary exchanges, the state will inevitably provide a shortage or excess of a worse product at a higher price while wastefully depleting the scarce resources needed to produce it.

Coercive institutions have had monopolies over many goods and services for so long that considering voluntary solutions seems completely foreign to us. And because humans naturally fear change, we hold impossible standards that the voluntary proposals must meet. But if you prefer voluntarism to coercion, then I invite you to choose to be curious of what I am about to propose rather than dismissive.

So how would this voluntary market work? Before I answer this question, I would encourage you to stop for a moment and thoughtfully consider the points that I have made so far. We cannot begin to think about possible solutions before recognizing what the problem is. So if you still think that the state is somehow able to solve all of these incentive and calculation problems, then that is what we should talk about. But if you are like me and you have finally accepted that a coercive monopoly can never solve these problems, because it is the very cause of them, then let's talk about a possible alternative.

The solution is simple. People must stop granting legitimacy to coercive monopolies and begin to organize society in a more voluntary way. This solution will end all of the incentive and calculation problems, because the goods and services being provided by a coercive monopoly, with the incentive to offer lower quality at higher prices, will instead be provided by voluntary competing organizations, who thus have the incentive to offer the highest quality at the lowest price. And because we are now able to have market prices derived from voluntary exchanges, we are now able to calculate how to allocate resources toward maximizing the satisfaction of consumers. Rather than wealth being secluded to a small percentage of the population, as is what happens under corporatism, it will instead be shared much more widely through lower prices and higher incomes, since, due to increased competition, businesses are now incentivized to pay higher wages to their employees, lower salaries to their CEO's, and offer lower prices on their products; that is if they don't want to be taken over by a competitor who will do these things. And not only will your income also increase because of the fact that you no longer have to pay any taxes, but also because you have a much higher incentive to produce in the first place since you are now able to keep the fruit of your labor. Because of these characteristics, this voluntary society will achieve the highest amount of peace, progress, and prosperity.

Other than offering the foundation of voluntary interaction within a competitive market, I can really only offer guesses as to how I think this society might work. Let's say for a moment that, for as long as we can remember, the government has claimed a coercive monopoly over offering the good of apples. People like me would point to the outrageous price and poor quality of government apples and explain how apples would be better and cheaper if they were provided under the voluntary means of trade and charity. And inevitably, we would be met with hostility and textbook scare-story arguments.

"But food is a necessity! We can't live without it! Are you really willing to take the risk of starving to death?! What about the poor who no doubt would never be able to afford apples in your 'free market?' And charity?! Ha! If you don't like government apples, you can move to a deserted island and grow all the apples you want! If we let the naive laissez faire ideologues be in charge of providing apples, then THEY'LL be ones overcharging! One time the government gave one guy the exclusive right to sell apples and he charged even more than the government did! The free market at work! Can you point to anywhere in the real world where your fantasy land actually exists?! The fact that you can't proves that this is just a pie-in-the-sky fairy tale that will fall apart into Mad Max chaos! If the world was filled with angels who weren't looking to take advantage of us whenever they could, then maybe we can give this voluntary thing a try. But until then, apples are far too important to be taken over by GREED. We need to entrust them to the wise and caring hands of our state overlords. But ok., Mr Economics, I'll give you a chance. Who would supply the apples? How many apples would be available in each city? Exactly how would they produce the apples? How would the apple producers be able to get enough capital in order to produce enough apples? How many different competing apple producers would there be? What would be the price of these 'free market apples?' Who would ensure the safety of these apples? How many apple inspectors would there be? Who would fund these apple inspectors? Why would the apple producers take the risk of letting the apple inspectors inspect their apples? What's to stop the apple producers from cartelizing and charging monopoly prices? What's to stop the apple cartel from colluding with the apple inspectors and paying them under the table for AAA ratings so that they don't need to worry about the safety of their apples?"

Now I cannot possibly answer all of these questions, because the very point of instituting a free market to solve these problems is because it is impossible to predict the best solutions. If I were able to predict exactly how everything would work, then there would be no need for a free market and it would be an argument for making me the supreme dictator of the world. But we are human beings. We do not have infinite knowledge. Because of this, we have to rely on the next best thing. Just like the biological evolutionary process of random mutation and natural selection, the voluntary market is the economic process of calculated risk and consumer selection. Entrepreneurs under a voluntary market are incentivized to constantly find new ways to offer better, faster, and cheaper goods and services. Those who are the best at actually doing this are rewarded with profits. Those who are not so good at doing this are punished with losses. Thus, you have a natural weeding out process that puts capital in the hands of those who are the best at allocating it correctly. Whereas the exact

opposite happens within a government. When a state program is failing, they use that fact as their excuse for acquiring even more funding. Who do you think is more trustworthy? Someone who is willing to put their money where their mouth is, or someone who is only willing to put your money where their mouth is? In a voluntary market, you have a constant auction for scarce resources with each person taking the risk of believing they know the most efficient and profitable way to allocate that resource at the price they are bidding for it. And because of this bidding process, not only can you be assured that those scarce resources will go to the person who knows how to allocate them in the most efficient way, because he has the most to lose if he's wrong, but you are now able to calculate profit and loss. Whereas under a government there is no way to calculate whether what you are producing with those resources is more valuable than the resources themselves. The stewards of capital in a voluntary market have earned their position by proving their value to those who have voluntarily chosen to trade with them, rather than the politicians who win the right to use violent aggression through the false certainty they project and hollow promises they make in popularity contests. Unlike the rulers in the state, I'm not going to lie to you and act like I know how apples should be provided, but I do know that a voluntary market is the best way for finding out.

That being said, I do have a few guesses about how I think this voluntary market might work. But please keep in mind that these are all just guesses. Let's start with the fundamental foundation - property. Ethically, in a voluntary society, you would own your body, the property that you have acquired through trade, and the property that you have acquired by mixing your labor with previously unclaimed scarce resources. I imagine the general rules in voluntary communities will be that the first person who makes use out of that land will be the default owner of it. And if there is more than one person who intends to make use out of the same plot of land, then they could simply hold an auction where the winning bidder gets the right to make use out of the land within 6 months, let's say, and the proceeds are divvied out among the losing bidders. And if he doesn't make use out of the land within that 6 month period, then the land becomes up for grabs once again. Practically, who owns what and by what legitimate means do they acquire it would be decided by property claims organizations who would in turn make those decisions based on what that particular community believes about property rights. The more wide sweeping and ridiculous the property claim, the more likely no property claims organization would recognize it, because if it did, then all of that organizations claims would no longer be recognized by any of the other property claims organizations. Because these organizations want their claims to be recognized by everyone else, they have the incentive to cooperate and recognize each others claims, and only make reasonable claims themselves. Individuals would be free to register their claim with any property claims organization they wish, and the more reputable the organization is, the more legitimate their property claim will be in the eyes of everyone else.

But what about the roads? Leveling some land and laying down asphalt is not the most complicated or expensive thing in the world. The thing that catches people up is how to build roads within already existent communities. But the reverse is what actually happens. Roads are built before the communities are. A home builder would have a much tougher time trying the sell his house if there is no road that goes to and from it. A

mall would have a much tougher time trying to get any customers if they did not build any roads going to and from the surrounding neighborhoods. In the circumstance that a road builder is wanting to build a road on already acquired land, he can use options and nondisclosure contracts in order to avoid any holdout problem. That is to say he can purchase the option to buy a spot of land from a series of landowners while also agreeing to a nondisclosure contract so that the owner of the last spot of land the road builder needs is not aware that they are the last person, and thus will not be tempted to charge a ridiculous sum of money for their land. And if there is someone who has some kind of sentimental value to their property and refuses to sell it for any price, then the road builder can buy options contracts for another route, or he can simply tunnel underneath them. Neighborhood roads would likely be funded by Homeowner's Associations and car insurance companies wanting to minimize their payouts for tire replacements. Roads going to and from businesses would likely be funded by the businesses themselves wanting more customers. These residential and business roads could also be funded through voluntary donations. And highways would likely be funded by charging a monthly bill based on usage. Or perhaps this voluntary society would rely much more heavily on public transportation rather than private. It's impossible to know these things in advance. While eminent domain laws do seem tempting for the purpose of building roads, they are not a necessity, and the increased efficiency of these voluntary organizations would more than make up for the higher cost of buying the land voluntarily rather than coercively, as well as avoid all of the other inherent problems that come along with using coercion.

Now just because we've gotten rid of legitimized coercive monopolies does not mean that the murderers, rapists, and thieves will magically stop murdering, raping, or stealing. Because of this, there would be a very high market demand for protection. It is quite likely that businesses will provide security on their property so as to incentivize people to do business with them. Aside from that, I believe that the best way this demand for protection will be met is by Homeowners' Associations and protection insurance companies.

For Homeowners' Associations, the model is pretty simple to understand. The real estate developer might go into the middle of nowhere and make use out of some unclaimed land or he could buy already claimed land from a previous owner. Then he could create a neighborhood of houses that he will rent out under the condition of agreeing to a one-year HOA contract which could entail a monthly fee of X amount of dollars to be specifically spent on offering communal services such as neighborhood security, a justice court, medical center, fire department, plumbing, electricity, road maintenance, and so on and so forth. Because of the the fact that it's easy for renters to simply up and leave right down the road to another HOA if the renewal to their contract is not to their liking, all of the HOA's have the incentive to offer the best communal services at the cheapest prices. But what's the difference between a Homeowners' Association and a government? It is the difference between voluntarism and coercion. Not only will the government lay claim to vast sections of land that they will never use merely for the purpose of excluding competition, but they will also claim ownership over already acquired land and threaten to kill or imprison any of the previous owners who

disagree. Whereas the real estate developer can only claim the land that he will make use out of, and if there is someone already owning that land, then the real estate developer can only acquire it through voluntary trade. The government grants itself the right to violently impose costs, goods, services, and rules upon you against your will. But an HOA is not allowed to impose anything upon you without your express written consent.

People often say, "If you don't like the government, you can leave!" Well let me ask you a question. Let's suppose that I come up to your door and I say, "Hello there! I'm the state and I'm just here to inform you that the majority of your neighbors have voted that I now own your house, and by deciding to live here, you have implicitly agreed to the social contract, even though you never signed any such thing, and the social contract says that it's OK for your neighbors to vote to give me your house. So uh, I'm sorry, but I own your house now. But you know what, I'm a nice guy. I won't kick you out. You just have to start paying me however much tax the neighbors and I decide to charge you for living in my house. And, of course, you'll have to start obeying my house rules. If you refuse, then I will regrettably be forced to have you arrested and imprisoned. But hey, I have some great news; if you don't like it, you can move!" Does this sound like a legitimate justification for my actions?

But what's to stop the HOA's, or anyone else, from violating their contracts with you? Simple. Within the contract itself, you might have a clause in which both of you agree to a certain impartial third-party arbitrator to solve any potential disputes, as well as what amount of authority the both of you agree to give the arbitrator in order to enforce his decision. Perhaps both of you would each pay half of the arbitration fee at the time of signing the contract. Or perhaps the arbitrator will collect his fee from the losing party in the event that a dispute arises. There could also be the possibility of taking on contract insurance so that even if the person in the wrong is unable to pay the full restitution, your contract insurance will be able to cover the rest of what you are owed. These contract insurance agencies would thus be incentivized to find ways to minimize the amount of contractual breaches that take place. They might do this by offering contract scores, much like how banks offer credit scores, so that if someone is found guilty of breaching their contract, then he will be given a very low contract score which will disincentivize anyone from entering into any future contracts with him.

Under this scenario, there would likely be a high market demand for impartial arbitration agencies. Because people would have a very legitimate concern of the arbitrator being paid off to rule in favor of the other guy, arbitration agencies would have the incentive to enact preventative measures and severe punishments for any of their arbitrators accepting bribes. Competing arbitration agencies would also have the incentive to look over their competitors cases with a fine tooth comb and publicize any suspicious rulings they find, so as to get more customers to switch to their arbitration agency. Surely, there could still be the possibility for accepting bribes in cases that could go either way, but this is far less likely to happen in a voluntary market than in government courts. If one of the arbitrators in an arbitration agency is caught accepting a bribe, then the arbitration agency will lose customers. But in a government court, if a judge is caught accepting a

bribe, the very worst thing that will happen is that the judge will be replaced by someone else. The government court itself will lose nothing at all.

Another possibility is protection insurance companies. People could take on insurance policies against being assaulted or stolen from. The protection insurance company might also include crime investigation, as well as access to the legal system, so that you can sue someone if you've had your rights violated, as well as legal representation. And the insurance companies, wanting to minimize their risk of payouts, would likely offer lower premiums to customers with alarm systems and firearms so that they can better protect themselves. They might also be incentivized to pay for a security agency that would be on call and offer patrols around the neighborhoods of their customers. And out of a public demand for a base level of universal security, as well as the wish to not have to confirm that you are indeed a customer before getting any help, these security agencies would likely be incentivized to offer help to anyone they see in need. I imagine the same methodology would probably have fire insurance companies funding fire departments and health insurance companies funding medical centers. Of course these services could also be open to voluntary donation as well. The fact that people can freely choose their own insurance company and switch services at the click of a button incentivizes these insurance companies to continually strive to offer the best quality at the lowest price. Now since this would be a voluntary society, most people would consider violence to be the absolute last resort. Under this framework, security agents would only be permitted to use physical force and arrest an individual when they see for themselves that the individual is in the very act of violating someone's person or property. Aside from this circumstance being met, security agents would only be allowed to use nonviolent means to get cooperation. Namely, the very underrated, but extremely effective, voluntary method of blacklisting. That is to say that individuals have every right to dissociate themselves from you and ban you from their property for whatever reason they wish. Casinos cooperating with each other to blacklist cheaters is a good example. If you are blacklisted, then no one in this society, or any other society it's networked with, will offer you food, water, electricity, nor any protection or legal recourse against anyone who wishes to do you harm. Perhaps, just like credit and contract ratings, there would also be reputation ratings, and the more of a jerk you are, the lower and lower your reputation rating until the point that you are blacklisted. And so society can lay out under what circumstances security agents would be allowed to reduce your reputation rating in order to encourage cooperation.

So let's say that person A is murdered. Person A's protection insurance company now investigates the crime and reasonably suspects that person B was the murderer. And so the insurance company charges person B with murder in front of a very well respected impartial third-party court. Person B is invited, but not forced mind you, he is still innocent until proven guilty, to come to the trial and defend himself. If he refuses, then the court might try him in absentia. If he is found not guilty, then obviously nothing happens. If he is found innocent, then perhaps the insurance company would have to offer restitution for accusing him. And if he is found guilty, then he would have to offer restitution to person A's estate and submit himself to whatever the court decides is just; whether that be therapy, job training, or whatever else they believe will stop this

individual from committing any future crimes. And, just like contract and reputation ratings, there might also be crime ratings. If he refuses to submit to the courts decision, then his property could be forfeited to person A's estate and he would be blacklisted from society until such a time that he does decide to submit to the courts decision. But what if person B had his own protection insurance company who rejects the finding of the court? Then protection insurance companies A and B would agree on which court to hold the trial. If person B's insurance company refuses to hold the trial in any reputable court and instead will only agree to hold the trial in a kangaroo court, then what will most likely happen is that the kangaroo court and person B's insurance company will be blacklisted and person B will have to submit to the ruling of the original court or face having his property forfeited and being blacklisted as well. If person A's insurance company never does find the murderer, or the murderer ends up not being able to pay the full restitution, then the insurance company will have to pay up on the insurance policy to person A's estate.

But wouldn't people be able to free ride on the security, fire, and medical services offered by these insurance companies? Sure. But they would not be able to free ride off of the insurance itself, as well as many other things such as crime investigation, legal recourse, and legal representation in the case of protection insurance for example. Even though you can free ride off of some services, the fact that you are not able to free ride off of many of the essential services incentivizes you to continue paying for coverage. The more severe a free rider problem might become, the more incentivized society is to use voluntary measures to counteract it. Such as insurance companies offering discounts to customers who are more conglomerated with each other so that their service coverage can be more zoned in, or the insurance companies having their services be more selective in the free riders they offer to help, or stores offering discounts to insurance holders, or even individual stores deciding to ban any free riders, or even society itself deciding to blacklist or reduce the reputation ratings of any and all free riding insurance companies or individuals. Or perhaps society would just lean more toward the Homeowner's Association method of organization which is completely immune from this free rider problem. These voluntary methods of encouraging cooperation could also be used to gather funding for collective causes such as assistance for the disabled and victims of natural disasters, research into the best solutions for any possible climate changes, and defense agencies who would offer military power to defend the voluntary society against potential foreign invaders.

So how would these defense agencies fare against a foreign invading state? Far better than if society decided to place its defense on the shoulders of a coercive monopoly. Because of the very nature of the incentives in a voluntary competing market to offer products that are better, faster, and cheaper, defense agencies would be able to buy better weapons and defenses at a fraction of the cost compared to the invading state. They would also have the incentive, and the ability to calculate how, to fight in the most efficient and effective way; whether that is offering asylum to the unfortunate soldiers the invading state is using as pawns, or informing the invading state's citizens of their wish for peace, or, if all else fails, using the most advanced weaponry and ingenious military strategies to deter and repel the invaders. History has shown that states are

only good at fighting other states. If a state were to attempt to invade a voluntary society, it would be akin to the Vietnam War with the technological roles reversed. But this is not to say that all voluntary societies are impervious to being taken over. In reality, a voluntary society, no matter how efficient, could indeed be overpowered by the brute force of a much larger army. But at least they would put up a better fight than if they had a coercive monopoly do the fighting.

But what's to stop the defense agencies from monopolizing and forming their own state? The simple fact that society would not want them to! As long as most people within this voluntary society wanted to maintain its existence, they would enact measures to ensure against this very possibility. Perhaps society would, under threat of blacklisting, induce any would-be defense agencies into contractually agreeing to open itself up to random audits, inspections, and interviews. Perhaps they would also have to agree to have all of their funds, including those funds that go toward buying weapons, ammunition, and paying the salaries of their soldiers, to be held in bank accounts that could be instantly frozen the very second that society even suspects them of intending to become a state. Perhaps they would also have to have a large sum of money in an escrow account that would be used to place bounties on their own heads if they decided to aggress against anyone in any way. As well as getting them to contractually agree to team up with all of the other defense agencies to take out any individual defense agency that has gone rogue. Society might also decide to place a limit on the market share that any individual defense agency can have to the point of any effective cartelization being practically impossible. Surely, the possibility for a defense agency to become a totalitarian state is still there, but it is far less likely than the possibility for an already existent state to become totalitarian. With an already existent state, you are one martial law order away from the state being allowed to have complete control over you. But a defense agency still has all of these barriers that it has to jump over just to become a state in the first place, let alone a totalitarian one. But let's just assume that it is inevitable that this voluntary stateless society would, under all circumstances, eventually form into a state. Even then, that is not a reason to simply give up and let the state have its way with us. It does not logically follow that we should all kill ourselves, just because eventually we're all going to die anyway.

Now I could be completely wrong in every single one of these guesses I've made about how this voluntary market might organize itself. But even if I am, that does not mean that a coercive monopoly is the solution. It just means that we need a voluntary market in order to figure out what the solution is. It wouldn't surprise me in the slightest if the voluntary market employed ingenious solutions that have yet to even be conceived. We already know that the "solutions" offered by coercive monopolies will always be one-size-fits-all and provided in a shortage or excess at a lower quality and higher price and, worse yet, increase the likelihood for totalitarianism and aggressive mass warfare. But if we don't know what a voluntary market's solution would be, then that is a reason to try it out and see what happens, not to give up and simply pretend to know that the result will be worse than a state.

Have there been any historical examples of this voluntary society? So far, there have only been glimmers in history of this kind of voluntary market being tried. Having no state does not automatically mean that a voluntary market will be the form of organization that society will employ. Surely there could be many forms of statelessness that are just as bad as many governments. But there have indeed been plenty of cases in history of societies working perfectly fine without having to have any coercive monopolies rule over them whatsoever.

The merchant law that took place in medieval Europe is a perfect example of a completely stateless and voluntary legal system whose rulings were abided by even though they were only enforced through the voluntary means of boycott and ostracism.

Another very interesting case is Celtic Ireland, which for many centuries was the most advanced and civilized country in all of Western Europe. Individuals would become members of a Tuath (too-wa) which can be thought of as offering the communal services of insurance companies and, just like insurance companies, you were able to decide upon whatever tuath you wanted to be a member of. Disputes and crimes were resolved by professional arbitrators who were referred to as brehons (breh-hens). And you could decide upon whatever school of brehons you wanted to arbitrate your case. The law was centered on restitution rather than punishment. And if someone was found guilty and refused to pay this restitution, then they would be blacklisted from society. Rather than this stateless society falling apart into chaos or forming into a state from within, it existed by-and-large in peace and stability for over a millennium and it required hundreds of years of constant assault from the outside superior military might of the conquering British Empire to finally overthrow it.

The claim that we need a coercive monopoly to maintain law and order is logically and empirically false. The fact that this voluntary market society has yet to be truly enacted in the real world is evidence of only that. Not that it could not possibly work. Those who advocate voluntary solutions are often labeled as dogmatic absolutists. Well let me ask you, which is a more dogmatic and absolute position to hold? That you don't know all of the answers and therefore should not be given the right to aggress against others? Or that you are so certain of what the answers are that you should be given the exclusive right to violently impose them over peaceful people? Statism seems to be predicated on the belief that we are all too stupid to run our own lives and find voluntary solutions to our problems, but that the state is able to solve these problems for us by somehow having people rule over us who are not stupid like we are. People who are incorruptible, wise, and selfless enough to overcome all of the distorted incentives their coercive position lures them into. People with supernatural knowledge so that they can allocate resources better than a voluntary market. People who don't need a state to rule over them like we do. In order for statism to work, we have to believe not only that gods exist, but that they are running our government; which isn't too far from how states started in the first place. The state has been promising for tens of thousands of years that allowing them to aggress against us is the solution to our problems and over and over again they eventually collapse and impoverish and kill countless numbers of people along the way. The state is the ultimate expression of violent intolerance against the smallest minority

on earth - the individual. Maybe it's time we choose to stop buying this snake oil and finally begin to think about how to organize society in a more peaceful, sustainable, prosperous, and voluntary way.

How much was this essay worth to you? I'm grateful for whatever support you can give.
<http://www.jacobspinney.com/donate>

Blog: <http://www.jacobspinney.com/blog>

Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/jacobspinney>

Backup: <http://www.youtube.com/otherjacobspinney>

Recommended Books: <http://www.jacobspinney.com/books>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/jacobspinney>

Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/jacobspinney>

Editing help

<http://www.youtube.com/stargazer5781>

<http://www.youtube.com/safnerism>

<http://www.youtube.com/t3hsauce>

<http://www.youtube.com/onedaywearefree>

Links

Government Death Count: <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/NOTE1.HTM>

The Story of Your Enslavement: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xbp6umQT58A>

Government Intervention Caused The Financial Crisis: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDp65Juibes>

Who Watches The Watchers?: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oR0ZXu5brQo>

Free Trade: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVAOpFstlls>

Exploitation: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTgJNWs-gWA>

Free Market Monopolies: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eO8ZU7TeKPw>

Historical Voluntary Land Claim Associations: http://mises.org/journals/jls/3_1/3_1_2.pdf

Current Private Roads: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5DCmDXJun4>

Historical Voluntary Fire Brigades: <http://www.firemarkcircle.org/documents/goodstory.htm>

Historical Voluntary Mutual Aid Societies: <http://www.thefreemanonline.org/featured/friendly-societies-voluntary-social-security-and-more/>

<http://libertariannation.org/a/f12l3.html>

What About Somalia?: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtGkTRnocZI>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBuPECU0_P0

Celtic Irish Law: http://mises.org/journals/jls/1_2/1_2_1.pdf