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# Statism and the Illusion of Choice

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son two weeks later. There was no due process – the President unilaterally assassinated a US citizen on foreign soil.

If any individual killed another person, it would be a heinous crime. When a state kills someone, it's for the greater good and often remains secret for supposed "reasons of national security."

Any military age male (18-35) is considered a militant by the U.S. army unless proven otherwise. According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, from 2004 to 2012, between 2,562 and 3,325 people were killed in drone strikes in Pakistan alone. The U.S. also operates drones in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen and Somalia. Some 474 to 881 of those killed in Pakistan were civilians, including 176 children. Another 1,300 were wounded. These numbers are likely to be low, because the U.S. and Pakistani governments seek to obfuscate the severity of the carnage.

Why should we give more power to the guys with the guns and expect that to solve our problems? We need human-scale solutions. We must dig to the root of the issue, which is state-capitalism itself; or the economic system where state power protects illegitimate ownership claims and creates artificial scarcity to protect profits. The state is what makes capitalism (but not *markets*) possible.

The state and the capitalist class are not antagonistic forces, and America is nowhere near a "free market." Big business hates authentically free markets – capitalists prefer mercantilism. Unless you are member of the ruling class, you should do everything you can to bring about a less violent, non-statist paradigm—because states have a nasty tendency to start putting certain people in camps and you never know who will be next.

Neither candidate exhibited reservations about a century of on-going American imperialism, with 700 military bases spanning the globe, or that this country spends more than the next 19 largest spenders *combined* on the military-industrial-congressional complex. Instead, they bickered over social issues like an individual's right to marry whomever they want. In an anarchist system, marriage exists outside of the state; couples don't need state approval to declare their union legitimate.

The corporation-state is *the* dominant institution of modernity. The logic of state necessity and inevitability rests upon many uninvestigated premises. These assumptions must be interrogated; otherwise court-intellectuals and demagogue-pundits distract us by dramatically rearranging deck-chairs on the Titanic. As Noam Chomsky wrote, "The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum."

The media always drum up the race as the most important election in history. Those that actually study the history of politics realize that platforms have been blending and triangulating—moving unceasingly in the direction of statism. Left and right may polarize, but they share essential authoritarian characteristics. For example, both candidates favored the National Defense Authorization Act – which strips Americans of their right to a trial before jury and allows for indefinite detainment. Furthermore, both parties are beholden to the dictates of the financial sector, empowered and cartelized by the Federal Reserve.

During the election, both Romney and Obama differed on a slim few substantive issues, and one candidate may be marginally better than the other. However, being forced to choose between these two candidates is like deciding to poison the well with either cyanide or arsenic; innocent people die either way.

Obama is a militaristic president. For example, Obama authorized the drone killing of Anwar al-Aulaqi (a United States citizen living in Yemen) in September 2011. The CIA killed his 16 year old

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corporate plunder despite extensive evidence that worker-owned enterprises are far more efficient (no policing costs and workers have an incentive to increase revenue when they share in the profits).

4. Fake regulatory agencies like the FDA, EPA, USDA and SEC which protect corruption under the guise of consumer / taxpayer protection. They are foxes guarding the henhouse, made up of the same individuals that worked in the supposedly regulated industry just prior. Phenomena known as “regulatory capture” and the “revolving door.”
5. And lets not forget: imperialism, conscription and mass murder. The CIA, the military-industrial complex, the FBI, NSA, Homeland Security, TSA, and the DEA. In sum, the modern welfare-warfare state that knows best for you.
6. Enforcing a monopoly on the issuance of a fiat currency, the value of which derives from government’s future ability to tax. This money is devalued by printing more, which transfers purchasing power from those who get the new money last to those that receive it before circulating (The Cantillon Effect). In this case, Federal Reserve member banks are the beneficiaries. This is an invisible tax.

## **Illusion of Choice and the Presidential Elections**

The epic electoral battle staged every four years is meant to juxtapose two presidential candidates as polar opposites, like Zeus and Hades. But lest we forget, they were brothers. As rhetorical wars are fought and bought with corporate money, the truly substantive issues are never brought up because both teams have a vested interest in the *statist* quo.

their sake and interested in their welfare.” To this day, oppressed people believe the state is looking out for them. The reality is that the state breaks the legs of the poor and hands out taxpayer-funded crutches.

## State Violence

State violence is proffered as a solution to the consequences of past state intervention, like these:

1. Creation of a legal entity called the limited-liability corporation, which absolves capitalists of crimes and protects their personal wealth from judicial penalty. The state recently decided to give these legal “persons” speech rights. Corporations are immortal, and enjoy considerable tax advantages. The wealthy pay a pittance in capital gains tax, the commoners pay the heftier income tax. Corporations were originally chartered to build bridges and public works and then disband; modern corporations live on – insatiably seeking greater profits regardless of social consequence – the “fiduciary responsibility.” This un-empathetic behavior characterizes psychopathy.
2. States subsidize politically connected businesses like Wal-Mart, Monsanto, Halliburton, Lockheed-Martin, Goldman Sachs and Exxon. These companies externalize their diseconomies of scale onto the taxpayers, including disproportionate use of roadways, government research, and monopolistic patents (which deprive people of access to vital generic forms of drugs, for example).
3. Weakening and co-opting labor unions, actively suppressing worker-owned modes of production (workers’ cooperatives). In the previous elections both Romney and Obama favored

*“Power is not to be conquered, it is to be destroyed. It is tyrannical by nature, whether exercised by a king, a dictator or an elected president. The only difference with the parliamentary ‘democracy’ is that the modern slave has the illusion of choosing the master he will obey. The vote has made him an accomplice to the tyranny that oppresses him. He is not a slave because masters exist; masters exist because he elects to remain a slave.”* – Jean-François Brient

The state is that entity which claims a legitimate monopoly on the use of violence in a given territory, according to Max Weber. The Hobbesian, Rousseauvian, Lockean perspectives are that the state arose from a world of chaos via a social contract that happens to empower a ruling class (for the good of the people, of course).

The funny thing is, nobody can point to the precise moment when the state arose. Perhaps it was a place like Çatalhöyük (ca. 7500 BC) or Sumer (ca. 2900 BC)—where a stratified society was structured on the basis of might and religious doctrine. The earliest monarchies, empires, and republics—they derive power from violence and the *legitimacy of the erroneous inevitable*. Inalienable rights were unheard of – if you blasphemed God (or one of his temporal bureaucrats in the Vatican) within the Holy Roman Empire, you could be excommunicated and any schmuck could kill you without reprisal. Government is rule by some men [sic] over others, nothing more. So is ours—which, let the record show, was built out of slave labor justified by a profound sense of faith in the arbiters of White moral supremacy. In some sense, it still is.

## Voters place their hope in God-Kings called Presidents, expecting sociopaths to lift them out of servitude.

One feature unique to states is *taxation*, or the forcible extraction of property to be used in a way that the victim would not use themselves. When other groups take your property (or money, which equals time plus energy), it is called theft. Social goods like roads, schools and medical care can be and are best provided by the market. The state has little incentive to provide a quality product because it has no competitors. Capital intensive projects are not better handled by the state due to diffusion of responsibility and bureaucratic opacity. Taxation is extortion at gunpoint, a vestige of tribute paid by a subservient group to conquering armies, according to David Graeber, in his 2011 treatise *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*.

The only way we justify taxation is to claw back the monopoly profits “earned” (stolen) by the class that has taken control of the machinery of the state (capitalists). But redistribution does not address the root of the problem: state-secured privilege conferred to the politically connected capital class. Capitalism is not to be conflated with free markets, which have existed in various forms (including *really* free exchange, like Marcel Mauss’ gift economies) throughout human history.

Although controversial, the present scheme, state-capitalism, has only been around since the Early Modern Period. To paraphrase Gary Chartier in *Markets Not Capitalism*, this system is a symbiosis between big business and government, where the workplace is ruled by an individual called a boss. It is not inevitable that we should live in a system where there are more empty houses than homeless people, or that there can be such a thing as a permanently impoverished *working* class.

Voters place their hope in God-Kings called Presidents, expecting them to lift them out of servitude. The funny thing is, the rulers are drawn from the same elite class that holds essentially the same ideology as the prior masters. There are exceptions – Presidents who grew up poor, but they became wealthy prior to their inauguration and executed policies that favor the elite. One cannot become president without *selling out* to corporate interests because of campaign financing. Insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting different results.

## What about the poor?

Saying nothing of colonialism and imperialism—strictly the purview of states, policies that originated much of the world’s destitution—capitalism requires poverty to function. Someone must do the dirty work, staff the military, and subjugate themselves to others in exchange for depressed wages.

The welfare / social safety net cash doled out to the poor covers only bare necessities; the Marxian *opium das volkes*, a mere placation of radical revolution that would threaten state-conferred capitalist privilege (Marx was an astute critic but a dreadful problem solver – state violence can’t be remedied by augmenting state power). Supporting the welfare state is rational on realpolitik grounds, but not as an endgame. However, the deeper question is this: *why are there so many working poor, when an entire class of people need not work at all yet find themselves stubbornly wealthy?*

Jesus did not originate the welfare state in an act of benevolence. Rulers employed payouts to bribe the population under a structural-functionalist logic: to keep the system alive and buy their allegiance. In the 1870s, Otto von Bismarck crippled the German Socialist movement by offering a palliative concession, saying “my idea was to bribe the working classes, or shall I say, to win them over, to regard the state as a social institution existing for