

# **Goal: Minimizing Aggression**

**By Roy Minet** (Rev. 11/03/17)

The Non-aggression Principle (NAP) is the key to a happy, prosperous and free civilization. The NAP simply says that the only justification for using force (or the credible threat of force) on an individual is as a counter to that individual having used force first or having done something fraudulent. So, force used for self-defense is fine, but initiating the use of force is not (and of course fraudulent behavior is not OK either).

As an individual, you can't *initiate* the use of force on any another individual; you can't gang up with other individuals to use force on somebody; and you can't gang up on him by forming a "government" and having the government use force on him either. It's almost exactly what you'd tell a little kid before turning him loose on the playground: "Don't hit any of the other kids and don't take their stuff. If another kid hits you first, you may hit back to protect yourself."

Forming the "best" civilization is an optimization problem: How do we minimize the use of force on peaceful, honest people? (It's not clear whether or not this fairly messy optimization problem can be labeled a "pure ideology.") Almost everyone can agree that minimizing aggression in the world would be a good thing. Adhering to the NAP as your "guiding star" will enable you to unravel even the most complex issue and come down on the correct side of it.

Suppose we begin our optimization problem with no government at all – anarchy. Contrary to popular perception, anarchy would not be so awful. People do pretty well at cooperatively solving problems when left alone.

Some advocate anarchy, but it would not likely be the optimum. Inevitably, bad actors will violate the NAP. The burden of protecting rights (enforcing the NAP) would fall on each individual or various ad hoc organizations formed to defend against violent individuals and gangs.

Most of us agree that it would be better to form one big organization (call it a government or "minimal state") and grant it a monopoly on the use of force so it could secure everyone's rights and perhaps provide a very few truly public goods (e.g., roads). This is a good thing if, and only as long as, it achieves an overall reduction of the use of force on peaceful, honest people.

But a government must have resources to support its operation. The only way it can obtain resources is to forcibly confiscate wealth from citizens – essentially theft. So in order to come out ahead, the reduction in aggression has to be greater than that added for taxation.

The government will also need to use some force, such as the execution of search warrants, as a part of the process of prosecuting those who may have done fraudulent things or initiated force against others. So in order to come out ahead, the reduction in aggression has to be greater than that added for enforcement of valid laws as well.

Obviously, government cannot use force for any other purpose or it would immediately become part of the problem it was formed to solve.

Any entity with a monopoly on force is very dangerous. Our founding fathers understood all this very well and were hesitant to create a strong central government. Especially Ben Franklin warned against it breaking out of control. George Washington correctly described government as pure force and likened it to fire. Fire can do some useful things when carefully limited and controlled, but lots of property and people get burned when it breaks out of control. Just one dramatic example is the current situation in Venezuela.

The only economic system consistent with the NAP is the free market (or capitalism) because it is the only economic system that operates without any force. Everything is completely voluntary. The free market optimizes allocation of scarce resources and the creation of wealth to best satisfy people's wants. The introduction of force can only reduce its effectiveness at doing these beneficial things.

The term "crony capitalism" is an oxymoron. If there is any cronyism, it's not capitalism. The correct term should be "crony statism" as it is the hijacking of government force to benefit certain individuals.

A common question is, "Shouldn't the government 'do something' (use force) to control monopolies?" No. It's well-nigh impossible to maintain a monopoly for any length of time without the use of force or fraud. So the government should focus on its proper job of eliminating force and fraud from all dealings (securing individual rights). Temporary monopolies arise and disappear all the time and are not a problem. We even grant a temporary monopoly (patents) on inventions to encourage entrepreneurs to invest in new developments.

There is widespread antipathy toward the industrial revolution's "robber barons" (a loaded and prejudicial label). This is motivated by envy of the rich and is irrational. People mistakenly have the gut feeling that the rich get that way by taking wealth away from others. That is only possible through the use of force and fraud. Without force or fraud, the only way to get rich is to do a great job of satisfying the wants of many other people – an entirely good thing.

Despite crony statism and employee mistreatment problems, the 19<sup>th</sup> century magnates were undoubtedly a net benefit. They raised the standard of living for millions by making important goods and services available for the first time at affordable costs. The net benefits could have been even greater if the force and fraud had been eliminated.

The monopoly we really need to be worrying about is government force. The true robber barons of today are the "establishment politicians" who shamelessly misuse government force and utilize fraud to benefit cronies, pad their own nests and stay in power.