

Security and Liberty: The Great Compromise

by Aaron Hsu

“There must always be a balance between liberty and security.” So said a recent politician at a conference regarding the bombings and subsequent security measures taken by the U.K. security forces. What rubbish! At what point in this illustrious history did the personal security and comfort of citizens become equal, and more suprisingly, contradictory to the unalienable rights upon which this entire nation is built? As citizens of the United States of America, it must be categorically and unequivocally affirmed and asserted that the highest priority, in fact, the *only* priority of America’s federal, state, and local governments is the security of its citizens’ unalienable rights; nothing else must be permitted to weasel its way into legislation, policy, or mentality; most importantly, there must never be a compromise of unalienable rights in exchange for any other convenience, security, comfort, or commodity that can ever be offered by any government, commercial, or seemingly good natured entity at any point in time, for *any* reason.

In order to see the importance of such a hard line philosophy, and, indeed, the absolute necessity of such a strong, black and white policy and political agenda, one must first examine the subject; namely, one must understand rights, and the corresponding chain of priorities to which rights belong. One must understand government, its purpose, and its various incantations. Only by understanding the underlying philosophies regarding rights can one understand how far one has drifted from a philosophy which will best secure the future happiness of ourselves and our future generations.

All this begins with rights. Rights are the universal connection, and the most powerful legal concept that exists. Rights directly and indirectly play the key, lock, and knob on a political door. It is absolutely vital that one fully understand rights, particularly, human rights. The essence of rights is buried into various ancient cultures, but was rarely expounded in complete philosophical detail until the time just before and after the founding of the United States in 1776. These ideas of rights began to see more eloquent expression at the penning of the Magna Carta in Britain. The Renaissance and the Reformation played important roles in reigniting and reviving the implicit declarations of liberty which had been drowned during the Dark Ages from its liberal exercise during the spread of Christianity. An important point must be realized here; specifically, that rights do not, and *cannot* exist in an atheistic world. While many atheistic periods in time espoused rights in various forms, they were inevitably flawed through a general disregard for the origin of rights. Anyone who did actually deal with the origin of rights, inevitably pointed to a higher power as the source of rights, even during such humanistic times as the Renaissance, though many chose government as that higher power.

Though it is left to the reader to more deeply study the logic and propositions here noted, a brief outlining of the origin of rights will greatly clarify future points.

Rights, and in this connotation, rights explicitly mean unalienable rights, by their very definition, demand some higher authority from which to derive these rights. What this means is simple. When one says that a right is unalienable, one means that it is a right universally given to a person, by an authority greater than that person, and as a result, unable

They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.—Benjamin Franklin

Freedom seems to ring less and less while police sirens seem to wail more and more—Dr. Peter A. Liliback

We ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained.—George Washington

In God We Trust—National Motto

America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.—Alexis DeTocqueville

God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when one has removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the Gift of God?—Abraham Lincoln

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports.—George Washington

Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.—John Adams

to be removed or taken away from that individual by anyone of lesser authority than the giver of the right.

This necessarily gives rise to a few philosophies on rights. One such philosophy attempts to declare rights as a thing which exists simply because man exists. This, of course, fails to answer the basic questions of who or what gives rights. As a result, if one looks at this philosophy as atheistic, one must then conclude that man is the governing entity over rights, because ultimately, the philosophers decide what the people's rights are.

The next attempt at origin and validation of rights again comes from atheism. They assert that government is the giver of rights. Of course, this requires that one make government greater than the people. This essentially raises the governor to a state of god. This is asking for tyranny; it is assumed somehow that supernaturally good natured people will be the only ones who ever reach a position of power in government. History can readily be seen to utterly contradict this thought. Instead, power over all inevitably corrupts, turning men into despots. What then? Rights are reduced to nothing, because, as shown above, this philosophy attributes rights to Government. Such a system is doomed to rapid failure.

In this second philosophy on rights, one must also see that it attempts to raise one or more human beings to a status above that of common man, declaring that they are superior, thus making them the only people fit for government service. The same proponent will often fight for equality among man. It cannot be denied that acknowledging rights for all people is asserting that all of man is created equal.

The only philosophy which does not degrade irrevocably into power being the *only* security of rights, and the only security of man, is to see that rights are given by someone above man. If men, in one form or another is deemed the giver of rights, it follows that man can take them away. Since all men must be equal, all men have an equal ability and authority to determine rights. This means that only by enforcing one's will upon others can one hope to have rights. This is a fancy way of saying, "might is right." If, instead, God is the giver of rights, no man, being, by definition, lower than God, has the authority to alter the rights of another man. This is the only plausible logic which results in rights which are unalienable by the will of man.

When one ascribes to unalienable rights, one has a strong foundation to direct one's thoughts regarding government. The politics surrounding governments and why they exist is very great. The United States of America was founded on one such philosophy. This is best described by the Declaration of Independence. It reads, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,..."

These clauses epitomize the philosophy of American Government, and, in fact, the philosophy of any truly free nation. First, one must recognize the three unalienable, foundational rights. As they state further along in the declaration, any government which violates these rights of innocent citizens, is a government which has forfeited its authority and power, and it is the duty of every citizen to abolish such usurpations of their liberties and rights.

... And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion... reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.—George Washington

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness...—Declaration of Independence

We should run every risk in trusting to future amendments. As yet we retain the habits of union. We are weak & sensible of our weakness. Henceforward the motives will become feebler, and the difficulties greater. It is a miracle that we are now here exercising our tranquil & free deliberations on the subject. It would be madness to trust to future miracles. A thousand causes must obstruct a reproduction of them.—James Madison

Without God, there is no virtue... If we ever forget that we're one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under.—Ronald Reagan

Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants; it is the creed of slaves.—William Pitt

One of the common failings among honorable people is a failure to appreciate how thoroughly dishonorable some other people can be, and how dangerous it is to trust them.—Thomas Sowell

Another important point here is that governments exist only to ensure that citizens' rights are not violated by anyone. What this means is that Governments have only the ability to ensure the justice to which all men are entitled; they collectively represent the power, governing the people under the people's consent, to which every human being not under a government is entitled. Government cannot rightly do anything which an ungoverned man does not have the right to do to another man. That is to say, government cannot violate the rights of any citizen for any reason. One way of looking at this is that government is just like another citizen tasked with preventing injustice to its citizens. It is given the power every citizen naturally has, but no more. That is, every citizen who does not belong to a governed society has the right to defend his rights. Government cannot rightly do anything which an ungoverned human could not rightly do to another human. Government must be further restricted to only preventing the violation of one man's right from another. It cannot encroach upon the individual actions of one man who has not violated anyone's right, or who has no intention to do so, without violating that person's right of liberty. as such, a Government has little it can do justly. However, its relatively restricted area of responsibility is of incalculable value.

The above quote also exemplifies the status of government among people. Government, as an extension of the simple rights of man, is necessarily subservient to the people. The easiest way to look at Government is as a judge, who sees the violations of one man's rights, and exacts justice upon the perpetrator. He can do nothing more. He may make laws clarifying what is a violation of rights and what is not, as well as acceptable punishment; he may go out and stop one man from violating another's right, but he may do no more.

Using this manner or definition of government, it is easy to see that no government exists today which completely obeys such a philosophy. They have all been too changed and twisted to mean something else. The only government which has ever come anywhere close to this ideal is the United States of America.

It may be said that man has other rights, and in fact, most other governments are built on this implicit belief. Most, if not all, of these additional rights are social in nature, meaning that they declare man to have, by right, certain social or economic benefits guaranteed to him. Let these extra rights be quickly examined.

The most common, and indeed, the foundational right which people add to the three as an unalienable right, is that of economic well being or happiness. By this measure are all forms of welfare declared just.

People often cite the third right as a right to "happiness" or "property." These definitions of the third right would then necessarily demand government welfare. These definitions, however, are insufficiently precise, and lack clarity. The third right is actually a right to the *pursuit* of happiness, or to the *ownership* of property. A simple lesson in grammar is sufficient to see this as the case. With this clarification in place, it is evident that social/economic well being as a right must be declared as a separate one altogether.

If one does ascribe "social/economic well being" to a fourth right, we must then see if this right is in fact logically consistent to the other three explicitly declared rights. If this "right" is found to be inconsistent with such, one can safely disregard it as *not* a right. In fact, one must declare

Without virtue, happiness cannot be.—Thomas Jefferson

No free government, or the blessings of liberty, can be preserved to any people but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue; and by a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles.—Patrick Henry

Human rights can only be assured among a virtuous people. The general government... can never be in danger of degenerating into a monarchy, an oligarchy, an aristocracy, or any despotic or oppressive form so long as there is any virtue in the body of the people.—George Washington

Of all tyrannies, a tyranny exercised for the good of its victims may be most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those torment us for our own good will torment us without end, for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.—C. S. Lewis

Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become more corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters.—Benjamin Franklin

History fails to record a single precedent in which nations subject to moral decay have not passed into political and economic decline.—Douglas MacArthur

it as not a right, for to declare it as such after finding it to violate or be inconsistent with the other rights would be wrong. Doing so could only serve to misdirect both the people and the government. The powers of the people would be pulled into opposite and conflicting directions that would make the government essentially impotent.

What one finds after embarking on such a quest is that in order to guarantee social rights and well being to anyone, this wealth must first be gathered from somewhere. Taxes and fines are the only feasible method of achieving this reliably. Of course, to entitle one to property of a given amount necessarily declares that such money must be taken forcibly from someone else. The only other alternative to such is to accept donations or become a business. All these methods violate either the purpose of government or the rights of an individual from whom money is taken. The last two methods absolutely nullify the reason or motivation of government to begin with. The other option violates at least one person's right to the ownership of property.

Given this, one must conclude that the only reasonable or declared unalienable rights must be restricted to those three rights stated in the Declaration of Independence and elsewhere, namely, life, liberty, and the ownership of property.

Now it has been seen, hopefully with a good deal of clarity, how rights and Government exist, why they exist, and what things one may exclusively consider to be unalienable rights. Many will declare how little they care for such a seemingly tedious and over-detailed exposition, nor will they see the use of such information. The current issue should now be examined in light of this knowledge, and its reason and use shall become quite clear.

When the first quoted politician spoke of security and liberty he spoke of a security from terrorism—which necessarily implies security by military and police force—and liberty as the right of liberty. He placed these on an equal level. In addition, he positioned these ideas as opposites, and necessarily contradictory. It shall be seen what a dangerous concept he has proposed, and how utterly destructive such a philosophy is to the future freedom of a nation.

Who can deny the appeal of both security, and, correspondingly, peace? It is the natural and perfectly good desire of every reasonable human being. The critical and disastrous mistake which most citizens of a free nation make is thinking government to be the right, best, and, in fact, only means of achieving peace and security. How then may society reasonably ensure that they enjoy peace and tranquility if government cannot, and, indeed, must not be the means of such? This will be dealt with later on. What must first be understood is how and why government must not receive the burden of effecting security and happiness amongst its citizens.

Many readers will have already noted the obvious direction in which this essay is headed. In order for government to enforce security universally, it will have to monitor, police, and guard everyone at all times. The practical concerns of this are quite evident. Monetarily, this would put an insurmountable strain on government spending and financing. Humanly speaking, this is to demand that every citizen has at least some form of human monitoring on them. This would require a massive increase in police force. Only with this huge system in place could government ever hope to enforce any policy of safety to a complete extent. Some would say

The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as they are injurious to others.—Thomas Jefferson

I believe there are more instances of the abridgement of freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations.—James Madison

Liberty has never come from government. Liberty has always come from the subjects of government. The history of liberty is a history of resistance. The history of liberty is a history of limitations of government power, not the increase of it.—Woodrow Wilson

The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not sufficient warrant.—John Stuart Mill

It is seldom that liberty of any kinds is lost all at once.—David Hume

I believe that any man who takes the liberty of another into his keeping is bound to become a tyrant, and that any man who yields up his liberty, in however slight the measure, is bound to become a slave.—H. L. Mencken

I would rather be exposed to the inconveniences attending too much liberty than to those attending too small a degree of it.—Thomas Jefferson

that a much lesser level of force would be necessary to ensure safety for its citizens. Unfortunately, unless citizens are always guarded, they cannot always be kept safe. Additionally, if welfare and security were rights, the government would be held fully responsible for the assurance of them, and this would mean complete protection such that no citizen would need to ever defend themselves again.

Now it should be clear why such a policy is impossible to justify in the previously outlined government. The government here outlined is limited to enforcing unalienable rights of man. The right of liberty can most accurately be described as the right to do whatever a person would like to do without interference so long as his doing so does not infringe upon the rights of any other man. Monitoring and invading the privacy of all men would universally violate this right by making the government involved whether or not a citizen had done anything to violate the rights of another. Government must not be allowed to chase and monitor people where there is no reasonable, decisive evidence of criminal intent.

Another terrible consequence of a police-state is its corruptibility. When the people are so tightly controlled and regulated by their government, the ability of those people to defend against an encroaching tyranny is reduced almost to nothing. Every despot ever successful in the world has ensured that the liberty of the people has been adequately suppressed before he or she chooses to parade full-scale despotism. He most often does this by trading their liberties for the promise of better security, if they will only accept a small “inconvenience.”

You can see why protecting Liberty is such an important thing, and why, despite any good intentions one thinks his government may have in beginning this trade off, the weakening of one’s position and our liberties is a violation not to be tolerated, even by the most benevolent of administrations. There is no cause great enough to warrant the voluntary or involuntary destruction of one’s unalienable rights, ever, period. Losing the ability to be free people is always bought back at the heavy price of human lives.

We have so far seen how the trading of liberty for security always results in one step closer to Tyranny, the great weakening of our position, and the inability of the government to do its job. Hopefully now it is understood how rights play a role in one’s life, and how important government is in securing these rights. It should be clear how necessary it is to restrict government to only that capacity of preventing violations of rights perpetrated by another human being, or group of persons. It should be clear upon what accounts the above quoted politician was grossly incorrect; namely, that security is on an equal level with liberty, that government ought to and has an obligation to oversee the security of citizens by monitoring non-criminals, that there should ever be a balance of security and liberty, and finally, that a citizen should give up liberty for safety.

The question must then be asked, “by what means and method shall a nation achieve peace and security if, as has been shown, government cannot provide such protection?” This is very essential, for peace and security are the goals of every citizen, even if they are yet below liberty and freedom in priority. Since government is incapable of doing so, both practically and philosophically, another method is necessary to successfully bring this about within a nation.

What really ought to be mentioned first is the role government *does* play in providing protection to its citizens. No one solution or entity

What is ominous is the ease with which some people go from saying that they don’t like something to saying that the government should forbid it. When you go down that road, don’t expect freedom to survive very long.—Thomas Sowell

We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government; upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.—James Madison

Rightful liberty is unobstructed action according to our will within limits drawn around us by the equal rights of others. I do not add ‘within the limits of the law,’ because law is often but the tyrant’s will, and always so when it violates the rights of the individual.—Thomas Jefferson

We love peace, but not peace at any price. There is a peace more destructive of the manhood of living man, than war is destructive to his body. Chains are worse than bayonets.—Douglas Jerrold

Everything that is really great and inspiring is created by the individual who can labor in freedom.—Albert Einstein

The policy of the American government is to leave its citizens free, neither restraining them nor aiding them in their pursuits.—Thomas Jefferson

can ever be relied upon, nor a single action trusted, to provide absolute security to a nation. The reason is that security demands responsibility in almost all realms of civilization, and such a broad requirement necessarily spans the individual jurisdiction of each entity in society. A cohesive and complete approach and steadfast dedication must be maintained by all sectors of a nation and all people within that nation if there is ever to be any hope in obtaining any long truly term peace or security. Government must be made to stay its course and remain within its bounds, and the people must be responsible for their actions as well. Checks and balances are the only hope that a flawed people, as is all man, have to be able to maintain liberty, peace, and tranquility for any amount of time.

Government's chief responsibility in these matters is that of justice; ensuring that criminals are caught, tried, and sentenced justly. When the people have confidence knowing that no criminal will be set free and no citizen wrongly accused or convicted, government will have fulfilled an important aspect of its obligation. Government must not allow dangerous criminals from entering society, whether by immigration or by loose sentencing.

When government has done its job, it makes it much less likely that citizens will ever deal with things such as terrorism, murder, theft, or rape. When these do come up in society, then it is a citizen's right and duty to defend himself, and those around him. He should not stand idle and expect other's to take the slack, or expect government to go beyond it's responsibilities and mandates.

Individual responsibility and accountability is a lost virtue today, but it is what ultimately makes or breaks a nation. When the only one who can be blamed is an individual, a problem's only solution lies with that individual, and demands they rise to the occasion. In matters of social well-being, wealth, etc., this is stated with one word, "capitalism." Capitalism brings about competition and rewards for working harder, while at the same time allowing for the private distribution of charity to those who are unable to help themselves; to those who really need it, there are always channels of relief available without the intervention of the government being necessary or even desired. In matters of crime, the people become the main defense, other than the preemptive strikes being executed by the government against proven criminals; the people hold their own. The people are free to defend themselves, and form a force stronger, greater, and faster to action than can any police force ever be. When the citizens are armed and deadly, criminals and outside forces are much less likely to even try to attack them, and doing so is much more dangerous for them. The additional benefits also include a more manageable and controllable government less susceptible to abuse, as the government is not so easily able to tyrannize the people.

The bottom line is that a well defended country where government ensures that outsiders who would harm the purposes and goals of that country are not admitted or allowed to operate, and where criminals who are inside the country are prosecuted and not allowed to harm society, and with an armed and educated populace, will have the greatest chance of being truly secure, both from outside attacks and from collapse from within.

Another way of looking at this is simply that all areas of society must be responsible in order to have security. That is, each branch such as government, family, and individuals must each be careful to execute their

If we consider that each person owns his own body and can acquire ownership of other things by creating them, or by having ownership transferred to him by another owner, it becomes at least formally possible to define "being left alone" and its opposite, "being coerced". Someone who forcibly prevents me from using my property as I want, when I am not using it to violate his right to use his property, is coercing me. A man who prevents me from taking heroin coerces me; a man who prevents me from shooting him does not.—David Friedman

The individual can never escape the moral burden of his existence. He must choose between obedience to authority and responsibility to himself. Moral decisions are often hard and painful to make. The temptation to delegate this burden to others is therefore ever-present. Yet, as all of history teaches us, those who would take from man his moral burdens—be they priests or warlords, politicians or psychiatrists—must also take from him his liberty and hence his very humanity.—Thomas S. Szasz

Liberty is often a heavy burden on a man. It involves the necessity for perpetual choice which is the kind of labor men have always dreaded.—Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

Liberty must at all hazards be supported. We have a right to it, derived from our Maker. But if we had not, our fathers have earned and bought it for us, at the expense of their ease, their estates, their pleasure, and their blood.—John Adams

duties faithfully, and yet, never over reach their bounds. Only then can progress be made.

In summary, the liberty of the people must always be of the highest concern to the government, and no concessions of liberty must ever be made in exchange for any temporary (for they are all temporary) security or comfort, if men are to remain free people. The responsibility for security lies mostly with the people, and they must take up this yoke gladly. The rights of the people must remain the highest priority of government, and no compromise must ever be made. This is the only priority of true government, and it is irresponsible, downright negligent, for citizens such as ourselves to not take action against those who would change this. Citizens must universally and unconditionally hold the government accountable for all their actions, and take it upon themselves to enforce the rights to which they are entitled should the government fail to provide for the proper assurances of these rights. The People own the government, not the other way around. Never should anyone submit themselves to any lessening or compromise of their rights, for any reason. In the words of Patrick Henry, who said it best, "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be bought at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God. I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death."

The history of Liberty is a history of the limitations of governmental power not the increase of it.—Woodrow Wilson

It is asserted by the most respectable writers upon government, that a well regulated militia, composed of the yeomanry of the country, have ever been considered as the bulwark of a free people. Tyrants have never placed any confidence on a militia composed of freemen.—John Dewitt