

Propping Up State Violence

Classical liberalism was always a cosmopolitan doctrine. It supported the free movement of goods, capital, and people. It recognized states as propagators of destructive collectivism, as oppressors at home and war makers abroad. It sought to chain governments and limit their power and reach.

Its cosmopolitanism was not only preached, but embodied in some of its leading expositors. Two of the twentieth century's greatest classical liberals, Ludwig von Mises and F. A. Hayek, were themselves international migrants. Milton Friedman was born in the USA, but his parents had migrated there from eastern Europe. These icons and their followers recognized that division of labor, specialization according to comparative advantage, and free trade, along with unrestricted migration and capital flows on an international scale, offered the best prospect for the greater prosperity and personal freedom of all the world's peoples.

Libertarian anarchy, which grew out of classical liberalism and pushed it to its logical conclusion in favor of the complete privatization of economic life and the phasing out of the state, continued for a long time to be as cosmopolitan as its antecedent doctrine. But in recent years some anarchists have been misled by twisted and fantastical constructs to suppose that so long as states persist, they ought to employ their powers to keep migrants out and preserve some sort of imagined national cultural purity. This is a tragic turn, and it is having highly pernicious effects on efforts to oppose the state across the board and ultimately eliminate its evils altogether.

Classical liberalism and libertarian anarchism were never meant to prop up state violence against unoffending people in general, and certainly not against those whose only offense is peacefully crossing a state's established border. I pray that the recent ideological wrong turn will prove transitory, that the fever will abate, and that all who cherish human freedom will again recognize that it can never be the exclusive property of any tribe, but must always be upheld as the rightful heritage of all human beings.