

Rock-Paper-Scissors

At some point early in my childhood I was introduced to the game of “rock-paper-scissors.” In this classic hand game of what beats what we are told that rock smashes scissors, scissors cut paper, and paper covers rock. Even as a child I found this logic wanting. Yes, scissors definitely cut paper, and yes, rock does smash scissors (even if it takes a few attempts), but how does paper covering rock equal a victory for paper?

It wasn't until many years later that I found a fitting metaphor for my childhood skepticism. Rock, you see, is force. It wins by smashing things, and even though it may in fact be covered by paper, its nature remains unchanged. So government, like rock, wins by visiting destruction on its opposition. Some argue that paper—like the Constitution—will somehow serve to mitigate the negative attributes of rock and they go through elaborate charades to illustrate how paper covers rock. In the end though, when rock comes flying through your window, whether or not it is covered by paper is really quite immaterial. The rules of the game notwithstanding, it takes more than paper to beat rock.

— Parrish