

Control is War



Send him mail.



“One Voluntarist’s Perspective” is an original bi-weekly column appearing every other Monday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found here. OVP-only RSS feed available here.

War is clearly destructive. Even war fought totally in self-defense is destructive; destructive to life, liberty, and property. Murray Rothbard wrote an excellent analysis of war titled “War, Peace, and the State”. I highly recommend reading it. As a voluntarist, I oppose war on philosophical, ethical, spiritual, and economic grounds. The question I’d like to examine here, however, is “when does war begin?” And I think the answer is “when you attempt to forcibly control someone else without their permission.” If so, what are the implications of that?

Among Society

The implication of attempting to forcibly control others in society is a permanent state of war within communities, cities, states, and nations. Forcible control happens when laws are legislated or decreed prohibiting certain activities. When these activities are peaceful, meaning that they are not aggressively invasive against other peaceful people, the violence created by their prohibition affects not only law enforcement and those engaging in the activity, but everyone else. The War on Drugs and laws against prostitution are but two examples. These wars are fought in our backyards. They produce real victims: victimless criminals and innocent third parties caught in the line of fire, literally in the case of gang and cop violence in the streets, or figuratively in the case of women and girls being kidnapped and sold as sex slaves.

But legal prohibitions are hardly the root of the war. When one group of people forcibly controls the rest of society through both the monopolization of judicial services and taxation, justice is denied to those who suffer at the hands of the monopoly. When justice is denied, violence often ensues. In other words, wherever coercive monopolies exist, for whatever good or service, those whose liberties have been violated are in a state of perpetual war with the monopolizers.

Among Family

The weakest members of society are prime recipients of control by the strongest. Children are no doubt the weakest members of any society. Parents have it within their power to exercise an incredible amount of control over their children. And most parents exercise quite a bit of control, much to the detriment of their children's growth and development as human beings. Thus in the long run, society likewise suffers.

Controlling others is learned as proper behavior. Children learn that "might makes right" because control is usually accompanied by violence or the threat of violence. Sans violence, parents manipulate their children with threats of discomfort or promises of reward. Yes, the younger the child the more control a parents must have over him, but we shouldn't confuse physical handling with forcible control. For example, picking up a toddler to hug and kiss who is protesting the action is forcible control; carrying a baby around is physical handling. I suppose it's a spectrum, but usually children will display their dissent. Their dissent should be respected, just as dissent by an adult should be respected.

Final Thoughts

I don't know what the above will mean to you. To me it means that I want to do everything in my power to avoid war by avoiding control. I don't want to control my neighbors, nor do I want to control my children (on the contrary, I want to guide and mentor them). I value peace at home as much as I value it in my community, my nation, and the world. I adhere to the counsel that we should continually "renounce war and proclaim peace." I believe this means that we should renounce control and proclaim cooperation. Life is too short to spend all of our time fighting wars. I want peace and love-filled moments with my family and friends, and I hope you want the same.