

Foreign Policy III: AnCapistan

In my first article on foreign policy, I discussed normative foreign policy in the context of the United States Constitution. In the second article, I focused on a specific aspect of foreign policy when I posited that the United States should diplomatically recognize Liberland. In this article, I discuss “foreign policy” in a stateless society: “AnCapistan,” if you will.

What would foreign policy look like in a territory with no government? To someone yet infected with vestiges of statist philosophy, the question is absurd. Such a one may believe foreign policy is the exclusive province of governments.

Strictly speaking, in current political science parlance, this may be true. Britannica defines foreign policy thus: “General objectives that guide the activities and relationships of one state in its interactions with other states.” In the absence of a state, this definition takes us nowhere. However, practically, an individual can engage in all the usual foreign policy domains: diplomacy, trade, military action, and humanitarian action.

Diplomacy on an individual scale is probably the most straightforward foreign policy activity to engage in, especially with modern technology. Sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, and others let you network with people around the world for business, common interests, etc. The absence of the state simplifies the situation significantly: instead of a few people engaging each other with millions of lives on the line, people would just have to choose to be nice to each other or suffer relatively minor social consequences.

Trade is really a faux element of foreign policy. While governments obviously do buy things, the vast majority of economic activity is done by private individuals and companies. Governments often interfere in this trade (in the name of foreign policy, usually) with tariffs and other restrictions. In the absence of a state, individuals would be free to choose with whom to trade. If you wanted to punish a group of people by declining to engage in commerce with them, that would be your prerogative. I suspect that this sort of thing would be much less common in a stateless society since it mostly happens only by force under the current paradigm.

Governments often undertake humanitarian action as part of their foreign policy. However, as with everything else, private entities do it better and more efficiently. Organizations like the Red Cross and the Free Burma Rangers engage in humanitarian action far more efficiently than governments can or will. Also, without huge portions of income being stolen through taxation, people would have more resources to share voluntarily. Better yet, they’d have more resources to create and grow enterprises, multiplying resources so many fewer people would need charity.

Military action is possibly the most apparent aspect of foreign policy, and also the one most would assume is the exclusive province of states. However, even now private citizens go to fight ISIS. Americans did the same in the Spanish Civil War. Others fought independently in the Cuban War for Independence. Some of these actions are of dubious legality now, and some might be of questionable morality as well. Both points could likewise be made about most wars initiated by governments. Naturally, in the absence of a state or states, the legal question would be moot, while the moral issue would become much more clear. Often, bad and pointless wars are blindly supported by people who would know better if they had to write a check or pick up a gun themselves. For an exciting budget film by a U.S. combat Veteran that explores this point indirectly, check out *One Man's Terrorist*.

In a territory without government, individuals would be free to be friends with whomever they wanted, trade with whomever they wanted, support whichever side of a military conflict they chose, and offer humanitarian aid to whomever they preferred. Also, without taxes, they'd have more resources to do these things.