

Preference Change in Social Organization

Could the governments of the world reinstate slavery? Yes, they could. They possess sufficient coercive power at their disposal. But would they dare to do it? No, they would not. The prevalent social attitude toward slavery makes such an action uneconomic from the point of view of the calculus of power.

Could warlords and mafias destroy a stateless order and replace it with a statist one? Yes, they could. They might possess sufficient coercive power at their disposal. But would they dare to do it? Only if the prevalent social attitude toward statism made such an action profitable from the point of view of the calculus of power. And there is nothing inevitable as to what this attitude will be.

The pen is mightier than the sword. Ideas are stronger than violence, even that of the most organized kind. The stationary bandit is not a necessity and the defense entrepreneur is not an impossibility. To suggest otherwise is to claim that intellectual and moral progress in the area of social organization cannot happen, which, to say the least, is a historically and anthropologically dubious suggestion.