

I Reject the Right of the Government to Choose My Friends and Enemies for Me

Written by Robert Higgs.

"I reject the right of the government to choose my friends and enemies for me." – Bill Kelsey

Indeed, Bill, it makes no sense to allow the government to do so.

But the situation is much worse than such nonsensical allowance by the people at large. From time immemorial, the reigning myth of rule has been that the rulers provide a quid pro quo: in exchange for the people's submission and payment of tribute, the rulers protect the people from the enemies who lurk "out there." The promise was often unfulfilled, however. The lord of the manor might well flee into his castle, leaving the peasants outside the walls to suffer whatever outrages an invader chose to wreak on them. Or the lord might haul them off to a distant war in which they had no real interest, merely to satisfy the lord's feudal obligation to the baron or duke just above him in the feudal pecking order.

Most important, however, is the sheer fact that the ordinary people's most dangerous enemy, the one by far the most likely to plunder and abuse them, was their own impudent lord, the selfsame "nobleman" who forbade them to leave their place of birth or to engage in a variety of tasks and pleasures they might prefer—that is, the man who held and exploited them in a condition of serfdom.

Today as always, the "bad guys" from whom the government purports to protect the people are as a rule not a particularly serious threat to the people's enjoyment of their life, liberty, and property in their own country. And when the threat is real, it is usually the product of provocation by the presumptive protector who rules the people at home. That people allow this rapacious government to decide one's friends and enemies abroad (or at home, for that matter) is indeed preposterous. The root cause, however, is now ideological; it is the people's nationalism, which causes them to stand idly by—or, in many cases, to cheer wildly—as their true enemy, the one who plunders and oppresses them every hour of every day, goes on its merry way of creating and supposedly combating foreign devils in order to frighten the people into submission, loyalty, and continued payment of tribute to their de facto lord of the manor.