

State Power and How It Might Be Undermined

Editor's Pick. Written by Robert Higgs.

State power is the most dangerous force in modern life. State rulers, seeking their own aggrandizement and enrichment, employ this power systematically to plunder and abuse their subjects. Of course, they cannot act in this way without the assistance of many others, among whom some assist willingly, some in return for adequate compensation, and many only under duress.

To maintain their grip on power, state rulers (1) bamboozle as many subjects as possible; (2) co-opt those whose cooperation or support is essential by bribing them with various sorts of payoffs; (3) intimidate those who are not essential and not fooled by threatening them with fines, imprisonment, and other punishments; and (4) kill those who are not essential, are not fooled, and will not bend to intimidation.

Anyone who seeks to stymie or overturn state power must block these state actions or render them less effective. Resisters therefore have many options.

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