LIBERTY, AND OUR SHARED INHERITANCE

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Social Policy

Economics

Foreign Policy
During the last exam break, the Anglosphere marked the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta. It was during the constitutional struggles of the 17th century that Whigs like the great English jurist Sir Edward Coke invoked the memory of the Magna Carta and the principle it represented: that power must be limited and subjected to the rule of law in order to protect the liberty of people.

Power or the use of coercion is something people throughout history, whether called conservatives, classical liberals or Whigs, were careful to ensure were limited by defined boundaries. It was recognised that power always has the potential to be misused; to be employed in the service of people, who, whether for benevolent or malevolent motives, would seek to impose what they believe to be their anointed vision on society and in doing so, trampling on people’s liberty.

In a time when intellectuals and politicians of the day were enthralled by the “Progressive” values of the continental Enlightenment sweeping Europe and the French Revolution to which it gave birth, Edmund Burke pointed out that the liberal freedoms enjoyed in Britain and fought for by the Americans in the American Revolution were not just based on vague abstractions, but were due to shared inheritance. The French Revolution was undergirded by a progressive idea of history, moving inexorably onward and upward toward a utopic end point. Conservative thinkers from Edmund Burke to Russell Kirk recognised that this view of history combined with a supreme General Will with no rule of law to answer to meant that anything was justified, as long as it moved the nation onward to its envisioned eschaton. Thus the Reign of Terror and eventually the despotism of Napoleon naturally occurred, despite the tribute originally paid in the Revolution to ideas of liberty.

Our liberty did not occur in a vacuum. It is the result of hundreds of years of development, debate and inheritance. Our liberty did not occur in a vacuum. It is the result of hundreds of years of development, debate and inheritance. Such a shared inheritance including shared inherited customs, laws and institutions that form the necessary precondition for free people must not be lightly thrown aside for ethereal notions of progress, as the definition of progress can be moulded to suit a tyrant’s demands.

Today, we too must contend with the tyranny of an intolerant progressivism that has its own meta-narrative of progress, divorced of any notion of shared inheritance. We must be the Burkes of our age, acting as the conscience of our society, reminding it of its inheritance of liberty tempered with custom, lest the myth of false progress, that seeks to tear down what has made our society free and prosperous, destroys our society and silences all dissent.

The recent landmark United States Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v Hodges* is a prime example of the misuse of power to further a version of History and Progress. The majority judgement was based on the idea that history was moving toward a new
understanding of marriage and therefore it didn’t matter that the constitution has nothing to say on the definition of marriage, or even that the framers did not envision the courts to usurp the power of the legislature by deciding on policy of such vital importance. The court was determined to move History forward and impose its own “anointed” conception of rights at the cost of sound legal reasoning and the government limiting principle of the separation of powers. Due to the finality of a supreme court ruling and the way it was couched in the language of rights, religious liberty in the US is in danger. When contested rights are decided by an unelected panel of judges, liberty from arbitrary power does not exist and the existence of democratic government is in doubt. Now, more than ever, we need to grab hold of the principles of limited government and liberty that we have inherited.

The values of government under the rule of law seem to be second nature, but history tells us otherwise. Many nations have succumbed to the allure of despot, whether they be dictators or a tyrannical majority swept up by an ideology. While the rule of law protecting classical liberal freedoms is for everyone, they have been particularly strong and continuous in the Anglosphere, because these values are our shared inheritance. They have been passed down to us from the field of Runnymede, through to the trial of King Charles I, to the Glorious Revolution, brought to our shores by the First Fleet, agreed to by the Australian people in 1901. They are ours to defend today. As history demonstrates, the best way to guarantee our liberty isn’t grant utopic visions from intelligentsia like the French Revolution. It’s the recognition of our shared inheritance, handed down to us.

To stand up for conservative ideas seems daunting in this day and age. However, Premier Mike Baird serves as an example of how, with courage and integrity, the successful advocacy of centre right ideas is possible. He won the recent state election having brought to the election the unpopular, but necessary policy of partial privatisation of electricity assets. Premier Baird showed political sensitivity and pragmatism but was brave enough to advocate for what he believed was necessary, based on his conviction. He chose not to just be a pale imitation of the opposition. And the public, although apprehensive about the policy, appreciating his openness and honesty, chose to trust him.

Thus we cannot be content to just move with the flow of Progress and being on the “right side of History.” We must be on the right side of what is true. In CS Lewis’ Mere Christianity, he stated ‘We all want progress. But…if you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about turn and walking back to the right road; in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man.” Too many times in history, liberty has been reduced in the name of Progress and the results have been disastrous.

The University of Sydney Conservative Club is committed to valuing and defending our inherited liberties and values. Many of our alumni defend these values every day working in politics and business. I hope you will join us in this cause.

Chaneg Torres
JD 1
President
The US Supreme Court’s decision of Obergefell v Hodges was an act of will, not legal judgment. The right it announced has no basis in the US Constitution, or precedence. Like Roe v Wade, it represents nothing but judicial activism – legislating from the bench. Justice Scalia summed it up best when he said: “This practice of constitutional revision by an unelected committee of nine, always accompanied (as it is today) by extravagant praise of liberty, robs the People of the most important liberty they asserted in the Declaration of Independence and won in the Revolution of 1776: the freedom to govern themselves.”

The vital tenet that underpins our democracy is the Separation of Powers – the idea that power must not be concentrated into a single branch, that the Legislature ought not exercise judicial functions, and the Judiciary must be incorruptible and not turn into a quasi-legislative body. In Australia, like the U.S., and Canada, the Legislature is confined to creating law that the Constitution permits, and the Judiciary, as interpreter of the Constitution, ensures the Legislature and Executive do not overstep their Constitutional authority.

Unelected, activist judges who seek to push an agenda are a threat to our democracy, as any Court exercising legislative functions under the auspices of “liberty” or “Constitutional rights” is a violation of the fundamental principal of separation of powers. Generally, in a democracy, the power to make the law rests with those chosen representatives of the people to the extent that the Constitution permits. Accordingly, a politicised judiciary is a democratic threat, because it creates an avenue for important policy decisions that would never be achieved through the ballot box, to be achieved through litigation. By 5-4 majority, in Obergefell v Hodges the Supreme Court decided that same sex marriage was a Constitutional right under the 14th amendment’s equal protection clause.

Since the 1990s, States throughout the U.S. held referendums that amended their Constitutions to uphold traditional marriage. From the time of ratification of the US Constitution in 1788, marriage has always been a State issue, up to State Legislatures, as the US Constitution, until last month, was silent on marriage. From 1996 till 2015, thirty-one States passed Constitutional amendments to restrict marriage to between one man and one woman, and until US v Windsor in 2013, only 13 States had legalised same sex marriage. As Justice Scalia foreshadowed at the time: “By formally declaring anyone opposed to same-sex marriage an enemy of human decency, the majority arms well every challenger to a state law restricting marriage to its traditional definition.” The majority judgment in Obergefell, by Justice Kennedy started with the following words: “The Constitution promises liberty to all within its reach, a liberty that includes certain specific rights that allow persons, within a lawful realm, to define and express their identity.”

As Justice Thomas contended, the majority is invoking the Constitution in the name of liberty that the framers would not have recognised, and to the detriment of the liberty they sought to protect. Removing from it the...
flowery rhetoric, the majority’s argument in *Obergefell v Hodges* is that the 14th amendment gives same-sex couples a fundamental right to marry because it will be good for them and for society. The question here is whether a Legislator or a Judge should make that decision should we cede issues of public policy to unelected, unaccountable lawyers, or our representatives, who are directly chosen by the people?

Probably in my favourite line of the dissenting judgments, Justice Scalia quips, “If, even as the price to be paid for a fifth vote, I ever joined an opinion for the Court that began: ‘The Constitution promises liberty to all within its reach, a liberty that includes certain specific rights that allow persons, within a lawful realm, to define and express their identity,’ I would hide my head in a bag. The Supreme Court of the United States has descended from the disciplined legal reasoning of John Marshall and Joseph Story to the mystical aphorisms of the fortune cookie.”

The underlying rationale for the decision was the 14th amendment, ratified in 1868, every State limited marriage to one man and one woman, and no one doubted the constitutionality of doing so. That resolves these cases.”

What *Obergefell v Hodges* sought to do, “was take from the People a question properly left to them”, as Justice Scalia contends, “with each decision that is unabashedly based not on law, but on the “reasoned judgment” of a bare majority of this Court—we move one step closer to being reminded of our impotence.” Chief Justice Roberts agreed, saying, “five lawyers have closed the debate and enacted their own vision of marriage as a matter of constitutional law”. Prior to being shut down by the Supreme Court, the public debate over same sex marriage in America represented democracy at its best – individuals argued and debated both sides, citizens listened and put the question to a vote. The Supreme Court ended the debate without even a thin veneer of law. As Justice Scalia warns, “Buried beneath the mummeries and straining-to-be -memorable passages of the opinion is a candid and startling assertion: No matter what it was the People ratified, the Fourteenth Amendment protects those rights that the Judiciary, in its “reasoned judgment,” thinks the Fourteenth Amendment ought to protect.”

A Court is not a legislature, so whether same-sex marriage, is a good idea should be no concern to the US Supreme Court. Under the Constitution, judges have power to say what the law is, not what it should be. The people who ratified the Constitution authorised courts to exercise, in the words of Alexander Hamilton “neither force not will but merely judgment”. It is clear that the Supreme Court is no longer what the founders envisaged. It is a Court of ideology and politics, not a Court of law. It has shown through its jurisprudence of the last 50 years a willingness – no an eagerness, to pursue the goals of the Sexual Revolution. I accept that in *Obergefell* the majority spoke of the First Amendment and the protection of religious liberty – but when Judges can invent rights out of nothing, it is impossible for us to keep faith that First Amendment protections will apply to dissenters of same sex marriage in the years to come. Indeed, Chief Justice Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito explicitly warned religious traditionalists that this decision leaves them vulnerable. Justice Alito warns that *Obergefell* “will be used to vilify Americans who are unwilling to assent to the new orthodoxy,” and will be used to oppress the faithful “by those who are determined to stamp out every vestige of dissent.”

The scathing dissents of this decision provide the only consolidation that came out of the Case to conservatives and legal analysts genuinely concerned of this judicial overstep. Chief Justice Roberts remarked that: “If you are among the many Americans—of whatever sexual orientation—who favor expanding same-sex marriage, by all means celebrate today’s decision.
Celebrate the achievement of a desired goal. Celebrate the opportunity for a new expression of commitment to a partner. Celebrate the availability of new benefits. But do not celebrate the Constitution. It had nothing to do with it.” Justice Scalia was personal, “[W]hat really astounds is the hubris reflected in today’s judicial Putsch”, and “the opinion is couched in a style that is as pretentious as its content is egotistic.”

This is not an issue exclusive to the United States or same sex marriage, just earlier this year in *Carter v Canada (AG)*, the Canadian Supreme Court held that rights to broad ranging notions of “life, liberty and security” and the right to equality under the Canadian Charter of Rights, constituted a right to physician assisted suicide. Surely, euthanasia is an issue of public policy that ought to be left to the democratic debate and the Legislature to decide, rather than unelected and unaccountable judges, who think they know better? When the judiciary redefine the meaning of common words, they are moving outside the realm of activism and into an oligarchy, and I contend this is an undemocratic form of tyranny, a blatant abuse of judicial office and contemptuous disregard of the doctrine of separation of powers.

In Australia, we are fortunate, for unlike Canada or the United States, we do not have a Constitutionally entrench Bill of Rights. We have an incorruptible judiciary – when the ACT passed legislation that legalised same sex marriage, and the Commonwealth challenged the validity of the legislation, on the basis that it was inconsistent with the *Marriage Act 1961 (Cth)*, unlike the Supreme Court’s judgment which commences with grand sweeping statements of liberty and freedom, the High Court, in a unanimous judgment commence with the words: “The only issue which this Court can decide is a legal issue”. However, the threat to democracy by the judiciary in our nation is not complete– activists are pushing for a Statutory Bill of Rights, which we as conservatives must oppose. Further, with a Constitutional Referendum on Indigenous Recognition in the preamble on the horizon, activists are seeking to include a Constitutional prohibition on racial discrimination. Personally, while I support the former, I oppose the latter, for fear that like the US and Canadian experiment have shown us, we could easily create a one right Bill of the Rights, and cede the authority of Parliament to define social policy to unelected judges. We have adequate protections with the *Racial Discrimination Act*, and it need not be constitutionally entrenched.

The framers of the US Constitution did not anticipate judicial tyranny on the scale seen in *Obergefell*. The Court’s hubris and thirst for power has reached unprecedented levels, and the disease of liberal judicial activism has truly infected the judiciary. As Rod Dreher argued, “*Obergefell* is a sign of the times, for those with eyes to see. This isn’t the view of wild-eyed prophets wearing animal skins and shouting in the desert. It is the view of four Supreme Court justices, in effect declaring from the bench the decline and fall of the traditional American social, political, and legal order.”

We certainly live in interesting times.

*Alessandro is a fourth year law student and has served as the Vice President of the Conservative Club and the President of the Catholic Society.*
THE BEAUTY & POWER OF THE FREE MARKET

GEORGE EXTOLS THE VIRTUES OF FREE EXCHANGE AND VOLUNTARY COOPERATION.

The cornerstone of Conservative economic policy is the idea of the free market. Conservatives believe that markets free from government intervention achieve the best economic outcomes. The beauty of free markets lies in their ability to transform self-interest into societal gain. Indeed, as Adam Smith, the father and champion of free markets, once said ‘he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.’ But for such a core ideal of Conservatism, I wonder how equipped we are as Conservatives to come to its defence.

The reason why we champion the free market is not simply or even mainly due to a rejection of the intervention of the state on individuals. It is because free markets produce economic outcomes which result in the maximum utility, or satisfaction, for the maximum number of people. I shall attempt to canvas some of the reasons why we champion free markets, to leave readers with a greater understanding of the core of Conservative economic policy and to suggest some policy directions in light of this.

Pertinent to this discussion is a statement of what is a free market. Put simply, a free market is one where buyers and sellers engage in consensual transactions, free from government intervention. In a free market, the forces of supply and demand reign supreme and a privately optimal equilibrium is obtained where all buyers and sellers willing to transact at the prevailing market price do so. Contrast this to a fully centrally planned market, where the government directs the level of production of a good and allocates it as it sees fit to buyers. Linked very closely to the idea of a free market is the idea of competition, which prevents firms from acting like governments and controlling the market. By having many similar firms in a market, no one firm can significantly deviate from the market price lest all consumers go to another firm selling an almost identical product.

The facilitation of voluntary transactions forms the core of any defence of free markets. Rational individuals, and indeed individuals who are not completely motivated by monetary payoffs, will only ever voluntarily undertake transactions which are beneficial and profitable them; in other words, where they receive some consumer surplus – a surplus between the price the individuals would have paid for the good and the price the market set for the good. I wish to pause here for one moment to discuss the idea of the ‘rational individual,’ which forms much of the foundation of many criticisms of Conservative economics.

Opponents of the rational individual point to many anecdotal examples where individuals appear to be irrational: over consumption of alcohol leading to long term health detriments, poor financial decisions and the like. However, those who advocate this can only assert this in so far as individuals do not appear to conform to standard micro-economic modelling of consumer behaviour, in particular the exact form of individual utility functions. Once we acknowledge that individuals may gain utility from non-monetary sources, including from...
the utility of others, that individuals engage in high discounting on future utility and that individuals economise on the very act of thinking and optimisation itself, one can reach the conclusion that individuals are indeed rational. To put it simply, no individual who is sound of mind engages in self-flagellation.

Returning to the concept of voluntary transactions in the market, one can then draw the conclusion that a transaction in a free market will only ever take place if it was mutually beneficial for both agents. This is the beauty of free markets: every transaction that takes place increases social utility and makes society better off! In contrast, in markets which are not free, transactions and production decisions are mandated which would not have occurred in the free market. These transactions are not mutually and socially beneficial, as otherwise they would have occurred voluntarily. Further, no government, not even the Ministry of Truth in Orwell’s ’1984’, could understand the preferences of an individual of sound mind better than the individual themselves and claim that individuals themselves are better off as a result of such government action. The voluntariness of transactions is a central and powerful pillar of the free market.

This is the beauty of free markets: every transaction that takes place increases social utility and makes society better off.

A more nuanced, but no less crucial, argument for free markets is about price as the ultimate heuristic. The market price is far more than a ticket on the shelf of self-serve supermarkets. In the context of well-defined property rights, the price of a good reflects the true scarcity and value of the resources. It is a packet of information entangled with incentives. Prices allow market actors to overcome their cognitive and informational limitations.

However, such a market price can often be distorted by government subsidies and price controls which, save a few specific circumstances, always act to the detriment of social utility. Further, an undistorted price allows individuals to undertake truly utility maximising and rational actions and allows producers to undertake truly profitable actions. An undistorted price, facilitated by a free market, is the ultimate heuristic.

Acknowledging the above arguments, one should immediately be drawn to certain economic policies in an Australian context. One of these is the liberalisation of the labour market. The government should dramatically reduce, if not abolish the minimum wage. There are undoubtedly businesses that are willing to hire extra individuals at a wage less than $17.29/hour. There are also undoubtedly individuals who are willing to supply their labour at a price of less than $17.29/hour. If the minimum wage is lowered or abolished, businesses will be able to hire more workers; workers who previously would not have had jobs as businesses would not have viewed such employment as profitable. This means that many individuals who previously would not have had jobs, particularly those individuals who are relatively unskilled, can now earn an income, contribute to gross national product and, importantly for government, reduce their reliance on government welfare.

While it is perhaps true that for some workers who are currently proximate to the minimum wage their wage may decrease - though, this may not be the case given the stickiness of wages in the downward direction - it is equally important that individuals are given the opportunity to get a job and contribute productively to society. Further, a reduction in the minimum wage will only affect those workers who are proximate to the minimum wage, not wage levels as a whole. A reduction in the minimum wage also increases the competitiveness of Australian exports and allows the government to better regulate presently ‘underpaid’ jobs and guarantee those workers the National Employment Standards. Many arguments against the abolition of the minimum wage are simply economically unsound. One popular argument in support of the minimum wage is the idea that large and powerful firms with significant bargaining power would set wages at an unfair level.

However, this argument fails to appreciate the fact that an individual who accepts such an employment contract voluntarily must, by definition, be better off and implicitly asserts that individuals are unable to refuse any job offer with low pay. Some would retort claiming that certain individuals are under a
type of economic duress and thus are ‘forced’ into accepting these jobs. Instead, I would assert that only those individuals who are unable to provide for basic necessities would come close to the idea of an economic duress. This is a much smaller percentage of the population than advocates of the minimum wage make it out to be.

Further, as Conservatives, we believe that it is the job of government to provide for those individuals who cannot provide for themselves. If any individual was deserving of welfare to relieve themselves of economic duress, it would surely be these people. I personally would not advocate for an immediate and sudden abolition of the minimum wage. However, this view is based on the idea that markets and prices are sticky in the short run and that markets respond better to incremental changes in fundamental parameters, rather than large shocks. Thus, I would advocate for an incremental reduction in the minimum wage over time.

The free market is a beautiful and powerful economic concept which fosters the benefit of society and the individual. The free market has been the indispensible driving force behind the prosperity of the world and the improvement of the welfare of the individual. Many great people have understood the power of unfettered free markets. Thatcher understood it. Reagan understood it. Howard understood it. When Conservative governments pursue the goal of the free market, the impact they have lasts for years to come. Indeed, we owe much of the way society functions today to these individuals who were prepared to take the unpopular decisions for the benefit of society as a whole. I hope that with this article I have been able to shed some light on the core of Conservative economic policy and have inspired those who read this to advocate for free markets in the face of the ‘age of entitlement.’

George Bishop is a third year Economics/Law student and has served as the treasurer of the Sydney University Evangelical Union.
Joe Hockey’s second budget has again showed a failing on the part of the Liberal Treasurer to truly get Australia back on track and make serious reform to help bring the government back into surplus. While I do have to acknowledge that he was backed into a corner with this budget, it was largely his own doing with his failed first budget that left a deficit of $39.4 billion for 2014-15.

This was largely because spending cuts were outweighed by new spending measures and because of this Hockey left the government with nowhere to go and no appetite for reform. These failings have seen the Abbott government adopt the mantra of “It’s too hard” and giving up on pushing for fixing the mess that our federal government finds itself in. They continue to talk about the feral crossbench, while failing to engage in proper negotiations with them. As the Howard government did when The Democrats held the balance of power. We’ve gone from promises for a surplus in the first year of government, to no surplus in the forward estimates; yet somehow this is considered getting the budget back on track.

So what are the main talking points of this budget? Is it radical reform to help move towards a surplus in the near future? Is it serious tax breaks to help encourage investment in Australia? Other than the tax cut to small business (which has problems in of itself), no.

It has increased spending measures, whether it’s $7 billion to childcare which is suffering from severe overregulation pushing up costs for families, over $300 million to have the government try and fix unemployment while increasing the minimum wage locking youth out of the jobs market, $300 million to farmers while ignoring that farming subsidies elsewhere as effectively killed out the independent farms, is this really a Liberal budget when you’re talking of somehow a $35 billion deficit as a good thing?

We’ve gone from an opposition that promised budget surpluses, and talked up the first budget as being better than Costello’s first budget, when in reality the path to surplus was nowhere in sight. Yes, Hockey makes the argument of falling government revenue but revenue has continually been rising since the Howard Era (excluding 2009-10). This means that Hockey’s only solution is to wring the taxpayers further, while ignoring the underlying structural problems that are in our budget from high governmental spending. This is not a Liberal attitude, but rather that commonly associated with the left, and the desire for larger and larger government.

This was exemplified in calls to tax corporations more but not by dropping our tax rate and encouraging them to move their operations here, but to crack down on ‘tax dodging’ (or more commonly called tax minimisation). These actions will result in higher prices for consumers, and reluctance for companies to do business in Australia. Why is it that we have a Liberal Government calling for increasing the tax burden? When did we lose our spine?

But what about the tax cut for small business? While yes, it is a tax cut, it’s a poorly thought out cut.
Using an example that John Humphries from the Australian Taxpayers’ Alliance has used to explain the cut: “A 1.5% cut to businesses that have a turnover below $2 million isn’t consistent with standard efficient tax practices. It’s a move that will create a two-tiered system and favour businesses that have a high profit margin and low turnover, and harm businesses, like manufacturing, that have a higher turnover but a lower profit margin. For a forward thinking example, A business with a turnover of $10 million and a 1 per cent profit margin which has a profit of $100,000 will pay $30,000 in company tax, while a firm with a $1 million turnover and profit margin of 10 per cent, also with a profit of $100,000, will only pay $28,500 in company tax.” This creates a whole new mess within our already overcomplicated tax code. This is being done rather than focusing on creating a system based on net profit, as all tax is calculated at the moment, it’s creating a system with inherent inefficiencies and encouraging of businesses not to expand beyond the $2 million turnover unless it results in significant benefits.

Joe Hockey has shown again with his second budget that he is really in no position. Greater crossbench negotiation needs to happen, rather than attempting to ram legislation through the senate and assuming they’ll receive benefit of the doubt. Making excuses of falling government receipts (when in reality it’s falling expected receipts) shows Hockey is unable to take responsibility for his failings, and the only thing keeping him in a job is Abbott’s unwavering loyalty. To get the government finances back on track, either Hockey really needs to lift his game and call on other ministers to find serious savings in their portfolios, find savings himself, or step aside and let someone with the ability to do so to take over.

Kerrod Gream studies a Bachelor of Economics and is the immediate past president of the Sydney University Libertarian Society and on the executive of Australian Students for Liberty.

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**Why is it that we have a Liberal Government calling for increasing the tax burden? When did we lose our spine?**

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Kerrod Gream studies a Bachelor of Economics and is the immediate past president of the Sydney University Libertarian Society and on the executive of Australian Students for Liberty.
Just before the last Federal Budget, an alliance of the nation’s leading industry and business groups gave their sternest warning yet to our political leaders- neglecting reform “will set us on a path to economic despair”. This isn’t hyperbole as a quick glance at our nation’s economic indicators illustrate that Australia has rising unemployment, low economic growth, low productivity and is wallowing in government debt.

A mining boom coupled with the bold economic reforms of Hawke/Keating & Howard/Costello ensured that Australia enjoyed a quarter of a century of unbroken economic growth. We were the miracle economy, defying the widely held assumption that Australia would go into recession every 10 years or so. Against all the odds we avoided plunging into recession during the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, the 2000/01 Dotcom bubble burst and of course the 2008 GFC.

Unfortunately Australia’s dream run is likely to come to an end in the next year or two and we are at risk once again of becoming “the poor white trash of Asia”. Monetary policy can only go so far to address these issues as a historically very low cash rate of 2% means that the Reserve Bank has little wriggle room left in terms of slashing interest rates. Reducing the cash rate is also a blunt instrument, likely to help an already booming property market, and there is often a long and variable lag before the benefits are noticed to the economy.

Microeconomic reforms generally incur an even longer lag with the benefits not felt for years. No doubt part of the reason that we’re facing these economic challenges now is because of the mass exodus of economic reform during the 6 years of Rudd/Gillard/Rudd. They would no doubt claim reforms such as the carbon tax, mining tax, abolishing Work Choices and counter cyclical stimulus payments. But reform implies improvement and these policies have left Australia poorer, uncompetitive and less free.

The Coalition is also somewhat to blame, since the zeal for economic reform was far greater under Howard/Costello than it is today under Abbott/Hockey. They have taken workplace relations reform off the table and budget trims haven’t gone far enough to address our fiscal crisis. There are however some achievements to celebrate such as scrapping the carbon tax and mining tax, privatisation of Medibank Private, $2.45bn of red tape slashed, and most resoundingly, three historic free trade agreements delivered in just over a year. It is also extremely encouraging that Premier Baird was re-elected on a reform agenda.

However the problem remains that Australia has low productivity and eroding international competitiveness. This is where economic reform is needed most, not only because investment can leave Australia with the press of a button, but also because productivity is the main driver of economic growth and better living standards. Yet we are faced with the fact that Australia’s multifactor productivity fell a concerning 1.3% from 2007 to 2013 and for the first time ever Australia is no longer amongst the 20 most globally competitive nations.
AND THE REASON FOR THIS?

"The main area of concern for Australia is the rigidity of its labor market (54th, down 12), where the situation has deteriorated further. Australia ranks 137th (of 148 countries) for the rigidity of the hiring and firing practices and 135th for the rigidity of wage setting. The quality of Australia’s public institutions is excellent except when it comes to the burden of government regulation, where the country ranks a poor 128th. Indeed, the business community cites labor regulations and bureaucratic red tape as being, respectively, the first and second most problematic factor for doing business in their country." (The Global Competitiveness Report 2013-14).

To avoid becoming the ‘poor white trash of Asia’, Australia should:

**1. Reform our workplace system to at least a comparable level as Howard’s first wave of changes with the Workplace Relations Act 1996. Work Choices amended this act in 2005 but the Fair Work Act 2009 has taken Australia back to pre-1996 levels of workplace inflexibility.**

**2. Drastic budget cuts and not the trims we’ve seen are required to achieve a surplus and start paying off government debt much sooner than the 10-year prediction. Of course the Labor Party and the Senate are mostly to blame for our budget woes, but expensive programmes like Paid Parental Leave and Gonski funding should also be shelved. The Centre for Independent Studies and Institute of Public Affairs have proposed savings measures that could be easily adopted.**

**3. A serious attempt at tax reform that must involve overall reductions in taxation. Broadening the base of the GST and increasing the rate to 20% could be offset with income tax and company tax reductions. The states also need to be part of the discussion, especially in terms of abolishing their inefficient taxes like payroll. A reduction or even abolition of capital gains tax could also be offset by reforming our negative gearing loophole.**

**4. Ongoing privatisation and asset recycling as a means of addressing our infrastructure backlog. State governments in particular have a vast array of inefficient utilities, service providers and infrastructure assets that they can put up for lease or sale. Asset recycling can also serve as an important reform in improving state-federal relations.**

**5. Build on this renewed era of Australian free trade by seeking new opportunities (India has already been flagged) and also adopting the Commission of Audit’s recommendation to crack down on industry assistance. This will ensure that Australia focuses on areas where it has a comparative advantage, such as finance, agriculture, tourism and of course mining (Australia’s three largest exports are now iron ore, coal and natural gas). Manufacturing is no longer part of this mix, making up 9% of the economy but receiving 70% of the industry assistance.**

**CONCLUSIONS**

These five suggestions may weather Australia from future economic crises even if it is too late to avoid a possible imminent recession. Indeed it may take an economic crisis for Australia’s political leaders to wake up and get serious about reform. No doubt many would see these five suggestions as ‘controversial’ or ‘radical’ and opposition from Labor and a hostile Senate would almost certainly ensure their failure. But our nation’s economy is too important for populism and Labor should support economic reform in much the same way as Howard adopted a bi-partisan approach to floating the dollar, financial sector reform and tariff reductions under Hawke and Keating.

The business community should also grow a spine and not leave the task of selling reform solely to the Coalition. Scott Morrison and Joe Hockey were completely correct in labelling many in the business community as “armchair critics”. So brace yourself, without either a much more assertive Coalition and business community or an economic crisis that leads to bipartisan action, Australia could indeed have many decades of economic despair to come.

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THE SEPARATION OF MARKET & STATE: 
WHY IT SHOULD FOLLOW THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH & STATE

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN THE ECONOMY IS JUST AS PERNICIOUS AS INTERFERENCE WITH THE FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION

Religion, politics and economics. What do they have in common? Why should they be separated from one another? One of Ayn Rand’s best sentiments in her essay “What is capitalism?” makes the point that the “separation of state and economics” is necessary “in the same way and for the same reasons as the separation of state and church.” This is a very hefty assertion to make, yet it is one of the few statements that encapsulate the sole means by which free societies can exist. Perhaps one of the best sources of evidence for this view derives from none other than the founder of the welfare state: Otto von Bismarck. He made the intelligent and controversial remark that “politics does indeed corrupt the character.” If this is accurate, then surely any political involvement in religious affairs leads to the corruption of religion. By extension, any political involvement in economic affairs leads to the corruption of economics. With the same rigour and conviction as Ayn Rand, I believe that the only free society is one in which economics and the state are separate, just as religion and the state are rightly disconnected.

Thankfully, Western society has come to the common conclusion that the separation of church and state is the only way the citizens of a nation can be free from religious persecution. The benefits are manifold. Firstly, a state cannot act under the name of divinity. Secondly, the state has no authority to enforce religious beliefs and thirdly, people are free to worship the religion of their choice. Yet, Western society has not advanced far enough to assert that the separation of market and states is the only way citizens can be protected from economic corruption. The benefits of this separation are just as conclusive. Firstly, states cannot intervene under the name of the people. Secondly, states have no right to tax the incomes of productive people to finance the welfare of non-productive people. Thirdly, states cannot show political favouritism to certain companies or industries and fourthly, people are free to employ and be employed as they please.

If I could describe the separation of powers in one word, it would be ‘revolution’. Ayn Rand captured the revolution in 360 degrees; seeing the separation of the state and religion in the same light as the separation of state and markets. However, Western intelligentsia have not caught up to this idea. They have only really accepted the first view whilst ignoring the latter. This has led to a halfway revolution of 180 degrees – which is not enough to ensure the full freedom of all individuals. So how does this change when we define the word revolution?

An Oxford definition gives two alternate descriptions of revolution. The first is a forcible overthrow of power in favour of a new system using violence. Russia in 1917 is the clearest example of this kind of revolution. The Bolsheviks storm into the Winter Palace, murder the entire royal family and put themselves on the throne to establish a communist world order. In assessing the Russian revolution, Hannah Arendt wrote “A revolutionary becomes a conservative the moment they have seized power for themselves.” In this sense, it could be argued that a true revolution did not actually take place here. Replacing a previous dictatorship with a new dictatorship does not change the patterns of history, it simply repeats them. There is no change in the lives of the everyday people and hence, the only things that have changed are the faces and symbols of power, not the power itself.

The second definition better captures the meaning of a true revolution: a sudden, complete and marked change in (government). This is the 360 degree turnaround – the transformation that changes the patterns of history. A revolution occurs not in the change of government leaders but in the change of government structures. society that defies political intervention in both religious and economic affairs moves...
closer towards freedom and further away from historical tyranny. The true revolution occurred much earlier and with less bloodshed in the decisive year of 1776.

Two documents published in this year significantly changed the Anglo-American perception of political power. The first is none other than the American Declaration of Independence. Not only did America establish sovereignty as a nation, it redefined the role of state power. Stating “Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,” it paved the way for Jefferson's famous assertion of a “wall of separation between church and state.” America was the very first nation to establish a separation between religion and government. It was a unique political experiment that learned from both European enlightenment and political tyranny. Since then, the sentiment of this separation have been adopted all over the Western world and is cemented throughout constitutions and parliaments of different democratic nations. Religion no longer dictates political affairs and politics has ceased to corrupt religion.

The consequences for using political power in economic affairs is as fatal as using this same power in religion.

However, there was a less discussed but just as significant document published in 1776. Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations revolutionised the way the Western world thought about economics. Under the influence of John Locke and David Hume, Adam Smith distinguished economics from the state; separating the affairs of practical men from those in political power. This was more than a reflection of industrial growth of the time, it was an intellectual transition away from mercantilism. Mercantilism was the embodiment of political involvement in the economy that strongly justified imperial motives. Spain's colonial theft of South American gold for example, was viewed as the essential means by which national wealth could be secured.

The cruelty that accompanied this view could easily be defined as economic persecution. The acquisition of wealth was perceived as a zero sum game where the gain for one nation meant the loss for another. The revolution in thought was Smith's assertion that economic wealth was not acquired through the state and that state intervention would actually harm economic growth. This is evident where he writes “There is no art which one government sooner learns of another than that of draining money from the pockets of the people.” Whilst the emergence of the middle classes was inevitable under industrial changes in England, it was Smith's work that paved the way for the social acceptance of the middle classes after the erosion of strict feudal hierarchies. Most importantly, he led the view that states could not create economic growth. If this premise holds, then the state that acts with economic motivations in mind does more damage than benefit to the society it is supposed to represent.

The present day reveals the abhorrent consequences of using political power within religious spheres. One not need look far than in the recent developments of Islamic state, where religion is a pretext for violence, persecution and cruelty. Once could definitely argue that a separation of mosque and state is as necessary for peace and human rights as the separation of church and state. However, given the emphasis of this essay, I would like to turn attention to the state persecution that is both less discussed and less understood.

The consequences for using political power in economic affairs is as fatal as using this same power in religion. It may be noted that it is currently more dangerous because too many in the Western world don’t realise how harmful it can be. Helle Thorning-Schmidt, the Danish Prime Minister who became famous overnight in her selfie with Obama, made a statement that is the common reflection of European political thought. She says "What sets Europe apart is that we insist on a social model that consists of solidarity, equality and redistribution.” This seemingly innocent statement ignores the economic injustices of protectionism. As mentioned previously, mercantilism necessitated political involvement in the economy. It is no surprise therefore, that Keynes drew inspiration from the early mercantile thinkers. The vicious consequence of this view impacts the most important industry for the world’s poorest people: agriculture. It is truly devastating that agricultural subsidies in the developed world are one of the greatest
obstacles to growth in the third world. The OECD spends $300 billion on subsidies that lower production costs for farmers in the developed world. This leads to massive overproduction and depressing world prices. Developing farmers, who cannot lower their costs of production, sell at lower prices making losses instead of profits. This deprives the developing world of $24 billion of revenue per year. Foreign aid does not even contribute half this amount so what we are seeing is the imposition of poverty because of protectionism.

Whilst Joseph Stiglitz is not often a source of economic enlightenment, he makes a valid point when he says “brute economic power” exercised by European and American farm subsidies is an effort to “defend the privileges of the privileged and the wealth of the wealthy.” The average income of an African farmer is a $1 per day. Compare that with a European cow who earns $2 per day thanks to government intervention in agriculture. The $4 billion given to 25,000 wealthy American farmers has disastrous impacts on 10 million African farmers. Protectionism is the modern equivalent of mercantilism and it doesn’t often rear its ugly head in the academic debates of justice and equity.

It is easy for Western societies to ignore the perilous consequences of the relationship between the state and economy when they do not feel the brunt of it. Just like a dominant religion, a dominant economy feels no pain in keeping a market connected to the state. However, what applies to persecuted religion also applies to weak economies. Is it fair that one farmer makes massive profits whilst the other loses his income because of the state he is in? No. A fair global market is where profits are earned through innovation, competition and determination, not government handouts. In agriculture, it is more than just the work ethic of Western farmers that are at stake. It is the livelihoods and economic security of the world’s poorest people.

Australia made the right decision to liberalise its agricultural markets. Europe and America, however, are responsible for using the visible hand of the state to punish the invisible hand of weaker agricultural markets. I would argue that this is more than a strong government’s strategy: it is a form of economic oppression. The only way to establish economic justice is to institutionalise the notion of the separation between market and state. This needs to be a common recognition, both in Western and non–Western nations, to complete the free market revolution that began in 1776.

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RUSSIA’S CHAOS IN UKRAINE

LUCAS DISCUSSES THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE, EXPLAINING WHY RUSSIA IS COMPLICIT AND UNWORTHY OF SUPPORT FROM CONSERVATIVES

The bloodshed in Ukraine is nothing short of a tragedy. After Russia illegally annexed Crimea in 2014, the War in Donbass has now claimed the lives of thousands. There has been the sounds of deafening artillery bombardments and heartbreaking endings of ceasefires. Villages have been attacked by mortars, killing civilians and destroying homes. Ukraine’s once beautiful and buzzing Donetsk airport has now been reduced to rubble as a result of bloody warfare. The conflict even struck hearts at home, as Malaysian Airline Flight MH17 was shot down above Eastern Ukraine, killing all 298 people on board including 27 Australians.

The truth of the matter is that the Ukrainian Army is fighting a band of aggressive separatists who have been supported by a ruthless former Russian superpower who will stop at nothing to bring Ukraine back into its territory. It began in early 2014, when “unknown forces” seized Crimean government buildings resulting in a bogus referendum handing Crimea back to Russia. Russia, whilst claiming to ‘defend their brethren’, assisted separatist forces in Ukraine in their struggle for ‘self-determination’, as the Donetsk’s People’s Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR) declared themselves autonomous provinces forming a Novorossiya. Russia’s leader Vladimir Putin is obsessed with declaring his power to the world and will not stop until his interests in Ukraine are secured.

The Referendum Joke
The Crimean Referendum of 2014 was an important step towards the crisis. In what was the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution, thousands clashed with police in protest of Ukrainian President Victor Yanukoych’s decision to forfeit closer relations with the European Union. Yanukoych was overthrown and, subsequently, unknown pro-Russian gunmen suddenly stormed the province of Crimea in Ukraine’s south-east seizing key government buildings including the parliament. Less than one month later, a referendum was hosted in Crimea in order to “democratically” demonstrate the desire of the Crimean people to become part of the Russian Federation.

It should really come with no surprise at all that this so-called ‘referendum’ was a complete farce. The question of the referendum, which was proposed on 16 March, 2014, read this:
“Do you support joining Crimea with the Russian Federation as a citizen of the Russian Federation?”
“Do you support restoration of 1992 Crimean Constitution and Crimea’s status as a part of Ukraine?”

Over 95% of the people who voted went for the first option, and Ukraine became part of Russia. On its face, this may seem completely legitimate and democratic. Even Article 138(2) of Ukraine’s constitution gave the Crimeans power to “organise and conduct local referendums”. The problem with the phrasing of this referendum, however, is that it is essentially two “yes” options, and neither of them allow Crimeans to select remaining part of the status quo. Reverting back to Crimea’s 1992 referendum allows the republic to have all the characteristics of an independent nation, which is still technically governed by Ukraine, but has the power of autonomy and can choose who it wants to have relations with, including Russia. At the time, the vast majority of parliamentarians in Crimea already vowed to restore relations with Russia – no doubt, they would elect to become part of Russia. The only difference is it would take a little bit longer.

This type of sneakiness meant both questions handed Crimea over to Russia. As correctly mentioned by Keir Giles of Chatham House, an international affairs think tank, citizens
who “were content with Crimea remaining part of Ukraine on the same basis as it had been for the last 20 years [did] not have a voice in [the] referendum.” What kind of referendum asks to initiate two policy directions that have nothing to do with the status quo?

Well, the Russians and their supporters employed a shocking yet effective propaganda campaign likening the Ukrainian government, and implicitly NATO and the West, to Nazism. They argued that voting to stay part of Ukraine was a way of stopping Ukraine’s far-right radicals coming to power. Such an outlandish statement has even spread into the hearts of neighbouring countries, with pro-Russian volunteer fighters from Serbia and Bosnia saying that they are fighting to “help our orthodox brothers in their righteous fight against fascists”. Even if Ukraine was run by fascists, however, the vote could not have achieved this anyway because both options were in Russia’s interests.

The truth of the matter is that the Ukrainian Army is fighting a band of aggressive separatists who have been supported by a ruthless former Russian superpower...

In retrospect, however, this referendum does not really matter at all. Even before the vote, President Putin had been planning to retake Crimea for quite some time. In March 2015, he admitted that he had ordered his ministry to work towards the annexation of the Crimean peninsula. Following the downfall of President Yanukovych, Putin reported: “I invited the chiefs of our special services and of the defence ministry to the Kremlin and set them the task of saving the life of the Ukrainian president. And as I said goodbye, I told my colleagues that we have to begin work to bring Crimea back into Russia.”

Not surprisingly, it was four days later when those pro-Russian gunman seized the Ukrainian parliament. Unknown Pro-Russian gunmen? These men were no less than Russian soldiers. Putin, after denying that it was Russian soldiers that seized the Crimean parliament, later admitted the reality that they were Russian military. Retired Russian Admiral Igor Kastonov reported in 2015 on the use of the Russian Spetsnaz in their Crimea operations. Before the argument is made that Russia already had military forces stationed in Ukraine at their naval base in Sevastopol, it cannot merely be a coincidence that during the time of the referendum, there was heightened air and naval activity coming directly from Russia. Russia was not fooling anybody when they removed the insignia from these “little green men” in an attempt to disguise their intervention; they had done exactly the same thing in 2008 when they invaded Georgia.

It is no doubt that Russia played an instrumental part in manufacturing this crisis in Ukraine for the purpose of intervention. Putin claimed that if stability was achieved in Ukraine, he would have no reason to “escalate” a conflict. Yet, his policy of sending Russian Spetsnaz and encouraging a separatist movement is exactly what escalated instability. He essentially created a trip wire for himself and he shows no shame, announcing that February 27 – the date his Special Forces took over the Ukrainian Parliament – is now “Special Operations Forces Day” in Russia.

The Truth About Russian Interests
A question we have to ask ourselves is why? Why does Russia want Ukraine? Putin framed a response in somewhat humanitarian language, claiming he was “trying to protect Russians” who were living there.

There is no question in saying that Putin is a militarist. His proclamation of a “Special Operations Forces Day” says it all, glorifying his military’s takeover of land which used to be part of the Soviet Union. The invasion of Georgia in 2008 was another bold show of his military power. What’s even more ridiculous was sending ships to Australia’s north coast in a move to remind the G20 leaders that Russia has strong arms to bear. Hours after declaring Russia’s willingness to remain peaceful if Ukraine stabilised, he announced a successful test launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile on the Asian continent. The irony here speaks for itself.

There is consequently no surprise that Putin was punching the wall when Yanukovych was ousted. The two had struck a major deal vital to a strong Russian military. Russia’s Black Sea Fleet, currently stationed in Sevastopol, Crimea, is undergoing a new modernisation.
policy including the construction of brand new ships, submarines and a French-built Mistral helicopter carrier. Originally, the port was to be leased to Russia until 2017, but Yanukovych agreed to increase it to 2042. His ousting was therefore problematic. Solution? Annexing Crimea! It would grant Russia the power to own this port indefinitely because it would be their territory! Having the Black Sea Fleet provides Russia with the ability to project power in and around the Black Sea, which it so effectively demonstrated in 2008 when it imitated a naval blockade against Georgia. Russian air forces in the Crimean peninsula are also currently developing a new integrated air defence system which would no doubt prove vitally strategic.

Further, as with a lot of conflicts these days, Russian involvement in the Ukraine crisis will secure their energy exports to Europe which heavily depends on Ukrainian territory. Much of the problem lies with the Urengoy-Pomary-Uzhgorod gas pipeline, transporting Russian energy resource to European markets. Gazprom, Russia's largest extractor of natural gas, depends on European markets for around 80% of its exports. 50% of that gas supply to Europe is delivered through Ukraine to Italy, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Austria and Romania. Influence over the Ukrainian territory is therefore crucial, especially now when the Russian economy is plummeting largely due to Western sanctions.

There is one more thing to say about Putin, however. Critics of the USyd Conservative Club may make the point: Vladimir Putin is a self-proclaimed conservative. Why would we criticise him if he vouches to stand for conservative values? The answer to that is because he doesn’t. It is more appropriate to say, in the words of Ed West, that Putin is more of a “reactionary autocrat” rather than a conservative. Burkean conservatism is totally different to so-called ‘Russian conservatism’. The conservatism our Club stands for is based on small government and limited state power – Putin’s aggressive militarist expansionism is not at all a reflection of that.

In short, Putin’s expansionism is causing heartbreak and bloodshed all across Ukraine. From the illegitimate takeover of Crimea to the blood split in Donbass, Putin’s so-called desire to ‘protect Russians’ is an important factor in the tragedy. This article does not attempt to excuse the West; there is no doubt that United States and NATO are engaged in a thick power-play in Ukraine. However, what has nevertheless been explored in this article is the unscrupulous trickery employed by Russia to tear a country apart. Unfortunately, such devious mentality is also held by separatist leaders. When the self-proclaimed DPR ‘Prime Minister’ Aleksandr Vladimirovich was asked about the innocent civilians killed in the crossfire by pro-Russian rebels, he abruptly replied, “The enemy that came to our land is responsible for their deaths … Excuse us.” It turns out for pro-Russian rebel leaders, any wrongdoing they commit is acceptable because they were ‘invaded’ in the first place.

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Robert A. Heinlein’s “Starship Troopers” remains one of the seminal science fiction works of the 20th Century. In its presentation of an interstellar war between humanity and a vast alien threat, Heinlein crafts one of the most diverse and thought-provoking science fiction novels of the past 60 years. The reasons for *Starship Troopers*’ enduring legacy are threefold. It is a controversial and divisive response to post-WWII/Korean War era America. It envisions technological innovations that are now becoming reality. And finally, it stands as one of the most significant explorations of militaristic states and the validity of state-sanctioned violence. To the science-fiction fan, Heinlein has achieved the Holy Grail of the genre - engendering a sense of wonder coupled with controversial yet original social commentary and realist world-building. But to the conservative, Heinlein provokes an even deeper discussion – one centered on state warmongering and militarism.

The book is narrated by the protagonist Juan Rico, through a series of flashbacks. It describes the war between the Terran Federation, a government comprised of all of Earth’s nations, and the Arachnids, a spacefaring insectoid civilisation. The Federation is a government comprised of the unified nations of Earth. Terran society is one of austerity and hardship. Extreme corporal and capital punishment is used in order to instil a militaristic discipline in all of its citizens. Full citizenship is granted to those who complete their military service. Heinlein’s characters laud this use of violence in punishing the unpatriotic and deserters.

"Violence has settled more issues in history than has any other factor." - Lt. Col. Jean V. Dubois

*The chief and primary charge of a government is the defence of the nation.*

*Starship Troopers* epitomises one of the most common criticisms levelled at conservatives – an accusation of rampant militarism and violence. Despite the often hypocritical nature of these polemics from the Far Left (Trotsky’s attempted militarisation of labour anyone?), militaristic individuals do seem to be drawn to the conservative banner. But is militarism, in all forms, necessarily bad? Is war ever necessary? Heinlein covers this extensively in the now famous rant given by Lt. Col. Dubois. Dubois claims that any who thought the “pen is mightier than the sword” should speak to Napoleon, to the leaders of Europe during World War II and a litany of other examples where violence certainly did seem to work.

This author tends to agree with Heinlein in the sense that some war, while terrible, is necessary and sometimes violence is required to stop a violent aggressor. And it is precisely this that results in conservatives often getting mischaracterised as militaristic and violent. It is an overarching sense of realism that recognises that sometimes a strong arm is needed to stop an unjust aggressor. It is also the acknowledgement that the chief and primary charge of a government is the defence of the nation. It is the belief that when the liberty of a nation is threatened, it has not only the right, but the obligation to defend
itself and its citizens. Then the question arises, when does one draw the line in regards to defence? In the novel, Heinlein depicts a number of retaliatory and aggressive “pre-emptive strikes” against the Bug Homeworld.

It is not hard to draw parallels between the pre-emptive strikes of the Terran Federation and the actions of many Western countries within the 21st century especially. Both often were unjustly attacked and have a responsibility to defend themselves. Yet are pre-emptive or disproportionate retaliatory strikes justifiable as defence, or simply a reversal of the offensive belligerent in the conflict? Heinlein believes they are - that so long as an aggressor exists and is fighting back, any aggressive action is both morally and reasonably justifiable.

Are pre-emptive or disproportionate retaliatory strikes justifiable as defence, or simply a reversal of the offensive belligerent in the conflict?

It is difficult for the conservative to answer this question, as the natural patriotic desire to defend the nation is tempered by the consideration of the major long-term ramifications of aggressive and offensive actions on a society. One only needs to look at the U.S. poorly timed and executed entries into both Vietnam and the Middle East. Retaliatory and pre-emptive strikes often have unexpected long-term consequences which every conservative should consider before jumping on the war bandwagon and throwing support behind every militaristic action.

Heinlein understood the importance of war and militarism to the protection of citizens and stable government. While every conservative will differ in their opinions regarding violence, careful consideration must be given to every conflict our nation enters. One must recognise the realist necessity of some warmongering but nuance their perspective with understanding the long-term implications of such a stance. One must acknowledge that violence solves many issues . . . but it might not always be the best method.

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