

Introduction

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Notes On Liberty

A reassessment concerning international relations and foreign policy has been long overdue for classical liberals and libertarians (henceforth libertarians).¹ The logic of the Westphalian nation-state continues to pervade their thinking in this area of inquiry. This is both forgivable and understandable, as the Westphalian state system has spread across the globe since the end of both World War II and Europe's major empires.²

Yet libertarians have managed to make important, distinctive inroads in other areas of inquiry, especially in the disciplines of economics and philosophy, using the theoretical foundations of spontaneous order (D'Amico 2015), anti-nationalist liberalism (Kukathas 2006, pp. 182-207), and polycentric governance (Lemke & Lofthouse 2022) as their guide. There is no good reason why libertarians cannot do the same when it comes to interaction between polities.

Indeed, libertarians have long been concerned with the interaction of polities, which are central to issues of war and peace, poverty and wealth, and human flourishing or degradation. This interest predates the Westphalian state system, too. Adam Smith, for example, was interested in how the British monarchy—a political body of English and Scottish aristocrats divided into legislative, judicial, and executive branches—could form deeper political bonds with its colonies around the world. The Westphalian nation-state and its sovereignty had no bearing on many of his thoughts about the interaction of polities in the world.³ The American federalists, faced with the terrifying prospect of rivalrous bloc formation in North America, advocated for a federal union between the former colonies of British North America rather than as thirteen sovereign states (Hendrickson 2003, Deudney 1995, Edling 2018 and Totten 2020). In their example, Westphalian nation-statism is present in their logic, but it's not a given and it's something to be avoided.

Alternatives to the Westphalian nation-state and its balance of power system continued to be favored by libertarians through the end of World War II and into the 1950s. F. A. Hayek and Ludwig von Mises both called for more political bonds to be formed between polities, with Mises suggesting a supreme central government without constitutional checks and balances for eastern Europe (Mises 1944, pp. 271-278) and Hayek, in 1939, calling for “the abrogation of national sovereignties” under an international legal regime (Hayek 1976 [1939], pp. 255-272).

The Cold War and the decolonization of the world into nation-states buried this creativity. In its place arose two doctrines, both borrowed from statist, that called for the supremacy of the nation-state in international affairs: non-interventionism in the Anglo-American world, and non-

federal economic cooperation in Europe. These new doctrines were likely borrowed because of their utility in American domestic political spats regarding its new role in the world.⁴ Yet even though the Cold War is over, and the nation-states of the decolonization era have shown themselves to be deadly fictions, libertarians continue to embrace the supremacy of the Westphalian nation-state as a template for interpolity orders.

This Special Issue is a first step aimed at changing this sordid state of intellectual affairs. The Westphalian nation-state still figures prominently in its articles, but the rich traditions of inquiry found in spontaneous orders, anti-nationalist liberalism, and polycentric governance have driven the template of this Special Issue. The groundwork has already been laid for a libertarian foreign policy. It can be found in the work of thinkers like Adam Smith, James Madison, F. A. Hayek, and Vincent Ostrom. Contemporary scholarship has sought to build upon this foundation,⁵ but with this Special Issue it is my hope that the non-interventionism and nation-statism of the Cold War can finally be elbowed aside so that sovereignties, world orders, and federations can again be fully explored as paths forward for a more libertarian world.

I'd like to give my eternal gratitude to David Andersson and Leslie Marsh for taking a chance on me and awarding me a slot for guest editing this Special Issue. I believe I was the last guest editor ever awarded a slot by David before his well-deserved retirement from *Cosmos + Taxic*, so in addition to his generosity I must give my double thanks to Leslie for taking on the task of editing such a large volume and for a project that he may not have entertained were he the editor-in-chief.

I'd also like to thank the scholars who served as referees for these chapters. One of the benefits of *Cosmos + Taxic*' approach to guest editing is having to find your own referee pool. I ended up utilizing twenty-eight scholars as referees for this Special Issue, and I subjected each manuscript to a triple-blind peer review, so all twenty-eight scholars had to spend a generous amount of time on this project. These scholars were not paid. In many cases, I approached the referees unexpectedly, and all were kind enough to not only volunteer their time but point me in the direction of similar-minded scholars who might be willing to serve. I made many friends during the review process (and probably also some enemies) and I cannot thank them, or *C+T*'s editorial team, enough for giving me the opportunity to publish what I believe will be a cornerstone for libertarian foreign policy discussions over the next half century.

NOTES

- 1 I am aware that there are important distinctions between libertarians and classical liberals, but I am short on space, so see Van de Haar 2015 for details on these distinctions.
- 2 For interesting discussions on the spread of Westphalian nation-states, see Zacher 2001 and Spruyt 2000, 2017
- 3 Winch 1996 has a helpful explanation.
- 4 See Deudney 2007, pp. 181-189 and 215-243 for context regarding the compound republic's role in postwar Europe
- 5 See Salter & Young 2019, Andersson 2012, Fay 2017, MacDonald 2019, Christensen 2021, and Coyne and Goodman 2020.

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