



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on May 8, 2012

How the West Is Spending Its Way to Tyranny

There has been much talk about how Arab Spring “democracy” will allow the rise of Islamist parties and thus devolve into tyranny. What is seldom discussed, however, is how the vaunted Western republics that lecture the world on the finer points of freedom are heading toward the same fate.

While there are many reasons for this, an easily grasped one is exemplified by Sunday’s elections in France and Greece. Upset about austerity, voters in the former elected their second socialist President in history, Francois Hollande; as for Greece, while no party received enough votes to govern unilaterally, an unprecedented showing was made by Alexis Tsipras’ Radical Left Coalition, which captured second place and supplanted one of the two parties that had dominated Greek politics for decades.



Both candidates make no bones about their intentions. After his historic showing, Tsipras [said](#), “The people have rewarded a proposal made by us to form a government of the Left that will cancel the loan agreements [designed to keep Greece afloat] and overturn the course of our people toward misery.” Hollande was a little less dramatic, [saying](#), “Europe is watching us; austerity can no longer be the only option.” He didn’t mention that the other option is economic collapse.

Austerity, of course, is simply a harsh label for not spending more than you have. But this common-sense policy will be resisted by people — and peoples — accustomed to living off others’ dime. In light of this, we should ponder a certain [apocryphal passage](#), one that has been disseminated on the Internet to the point of becoming clichéd but is too apropos to omit. It is:

A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largesse from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public treasury with the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy, always followed by a dictatorship. The average age of the world’s greatest civilizations has been 200 years.

Great nations rise and fall. The people go from bondage to spiritual truth, to great courage, from courage to liberty, from liberty to abundance, from abundance to selfishness, from selfishness to complacency, from complacency to apathy, from apathy to dependence, from dependence back again to bondage.

While we could quibble over some of the above details, the basic truth seems undeniable. It is this: When people become accustomed to living off other citizens’ labors, it eventually leads to budget woes. As a result, relatively responsible politicians may at times try to rein in spending. There’ll always be, however, gravy-train-delivering demagogues who the entitlement-dependent electorate can elect



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instead. This exacerbates the budget problems. This process then continues until there is complete economic collapse and its attendant social disorder.

At this point, with the rule of law and underfunded institutions breaking down, the nation is ripe for a strongman who makes big promises and will restore order with a big stick. And once he cements his power, of course, he may actually be able to control spending because he won't have to worry about winning elections. But this ability to control spending comes with the ability to control the people as well — control that will be exercised.

Now, some may mention that in 1981 France elected a socialist President, Francois Mitterrand, and her citizens are still voting today. But here it's instructive to cite Margaret Thatcher's famous saying, "The problem with socialism is that eventually you run out of other people's money." Approaching the precipice of tyranny takes a while, but other people's money is now running out. And other people are running out, too: Rich Frenchmen are [already preparing](#) to go overseas to escape Hollande's confiscatory taxation.

So what does this portend for the United States? Should we comfort ourselves with the notion that France is simply the land of the brie and home of the knaves or that the modern Hellenic mindset is Greek to us? Well, in reality, the French and Greeks are just like Americans — only more so. We're merely a few exits behind them on the same road, and this is clear if you examine our historical march toward statism and then, as with a math problem, finish the progression.

We've all heard about intrepid individualistic Americans who, although suffering privation, were too proud to accept handouts. I wrote "were," however, because such a mindset is largely a thing of the past. As evidenced by the frequent street protests against reduction in handouts, today a spirit of entitlement prevails. It's the sea-change difference between an attitude that eschews charity and one that expects it.

The lesson here is simple: As a nation's general virtue declines so do its fortunes. This is why the Russian communists aimed to subvert the West by undermining its morality, as Soviet defector and ex-KGB agent Yuri Bezmenov explained [here](#). Bezmenov also warned that this process, known as "demoralization," was more than complete already in the 1980s. So why, then, haven't we seen a socialist revolution in the United States? Perhaps we have and few noticed, blinded by what Albert Einstein called that "handy illusion": time. For our change (and hope) has been evolutionary.

As for that less illusory kind of revolution, America has traditionally been too rich to be its fertile ground. But desperate times create desperate people. In the "progressive" Great Depression era, we saw the success of "redistributionists" such as Huey Long. And today, with a 2009 Rasmussen [poll](#) showing that "only 53% of American adults believe capitalism is better than socialism," it would be far worse. If today's demoralized Americans were to suffer the kind of privation and poverty that has typified man's existence, it's unquestionable that many of them would glom on to a communist or fascist-type demagogue who promised a hot bowl of soup. Whether "many" is "most" remains to be — and likely will be — seen.



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