



Lessons From History: How to Curb Government Centralization

There is nothing new under the sun. While the particulars regarding the current fight for liberty in America may be unique, the underlying patterns of human behavior are cyclical throughout history.

As a result, the annals of history are rife with stories of peoples who have gained, lost and regained their liberties — stories from which Americans can draw important lessons to inform the struggle to restore the constitutional government.

The cause of many of the problems confronting the nation is this overreaching, leviathan-of-a-federal-government which far exceeds the limits and constraints placed upon it by the Constitution.

This out-of-control central government is eroding states' rights, trampling on privacy and individual liberties, taxing working families into poverty, burdening future generations with debt, and sending the courageous men and women of our armed forces off to die in foreign wars that have nothing to do with our national security.

How do we rein in Washington, D.C.? By restoring the rightful balance of power, which, constitutionally speaking, means the states and the people must reclaim the powers which have been usurped by the federal government.

There are a number of viable solutions to accomplish this, including ones which have been discussed at length here at *The New American*: Auditing and abolishing the Federal Reserve, eliminating the income tax, returning to the election of U.S. senators by the state legislatures, et al.

Nullification is an important tool at the disposal of the states. Under nullification, states have the legal right to refuse to cooperate with federal policy that runs afoul of the Constitution.

But there are other solutions which have not been addressed as deeply, and they become more clear as we peer into history to examine cases in which nations have either lost their freedoms or taken them back — because in order for our understanding of the proper workings of a republic to be complete, we must not only comprehend how freedom is successfully gained, but how it is successfully destroyed.

To this end, there is a useful comparison to be made between the United States and the fledgling kingdoms of Medieval Europe.

Europe in the Middle Ages, after all, was politically a very different landscape from what we see on the Continent today. Most of the modern nation-states we're familiar with — Germany, France, Spain, Britain, Italy — did not exist in their present form, depending upon the point in time we examine. Some, like Germany and Italy, did not achieve their current state until well into the modern period.



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Others, like France and Britain, did get closer to their contemporary shapes during the Middle Ages. But even then, the dynamic within these kingdoms was far from the centralized monarchies they became by the Renaissance era.

Italy famously was a hodgepodge of independent city states until the 19th century. There was no “Italy” as a political unit; there were Venice, Tuscany, Savoy, Genoa, Milan, Sardinia, Sicily, etc.

Likewise, Germany was not “Germany” until the 19th century. Rather, there were various German states: Prussia, Bavaria, Hanover, Saxony, etc.

It’s easy to forget that other European nations that unified earlier were once in the same condition. Spain was Castille, Leon, Aragon, Catalonia and others. France was divided into various duchies and counties: Burgundy, Normandy, Flanders, Brittany, Champagne, Aquitaine.

You can draw a comparison between all this and the United States, in which we have 50 political units which are effectively supposed to operate as small countries.

Now, it was typical in Medieval kingdoms for the king to have, in effect, very little real power. While the king might wear a crown and call himself the highest monarch in the land, he depended on the nobles for revenue and for fielding armies. If the nobles refused to heed a king’s order to go to war, then the king would be out of luck and have to find a way to muster the nobles’ support.

Again, a comparison can be drawn to the United States — ideally, like the nobles in a Medieval European kingdom, the true power would reside with the nobility — that is, with the states. And you would ideally, simultaneously have a weak king — or, in today’s terms, a weak federal government.

But, much as America’s government has been centralized, the monarchs of Europe centralized power within their kingdoms, taking power away from the nobility in order to make themselves autocratic.

How did they achieve this usurpation of power?

One major step was the creation of bureaucracies. By having governing frameworks in place that were answerable to them alone, the kings were able to bypass their reliance on the nobility. We see this today with the Deep State, which is a Washington, D.C., swamp that serves its own agenda instead of the people of the 50 states.

The solution is to gut the federal bureaucracy. This means passing legislation clearing out federal employees after each presidential term, thus preventing career-insiders who have more pull in D.C. than elected officials.

King Louis XIV of France weakened the nobility by having them reside at his sumptuous Versailles palace, where he could keep them under his watchful eye and control. Similarly, Washington keeps the states under scrutiny and control by means of federal money doled out to the states — always with strings attached.

Cutting off the flow of federal pork and allowing states to both keep and spend their own money as they see fit is the answer.

Finally, a major step toward centralization and authoritarianism was the creation of standing armies answerable to the king alone. With this development, monarchs were no longer dependent on the nobles’ militias. Not only did they not have to rely on them to go to war; the kings could now use their new armies to bend the nobles into submission.

This tactic is replicated today in two ways: First, by Washington’s monopoly on military power by means



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of the U.S. military and its control of state defense forces via the National Guard — which may be run by states, but can be activated by D.C. at any time.

Second, by federal law enforcement agencies, such as the FBI and ATF, which are likewise enforcement arms loyal only to D.C. that the federal government can use to make states submit.

The answer is for states to [revamp their own state defense forces](#) (rather than investing in the National Guard) and to restrict the activities of the FBI and other federal agencies within their borders. Congress should limit these agencies' powers and, in some cases, abolish them completely.

D.C. didn't become the swamp overnight, and the restoration of our constitutional Republic won't happen overnight. But with persistence, we can bring back the rightful balance of power to ensure true freedom for future generations.



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