

# Mercy, Forgiveness, Peace

They're Not Just Church Words

W.J. Astore

In Trump's America, a lot of words have gone out of style. Words like compassion, generosity, forgiveness, grace, mercy, and especially peace. "Punch 'em when they're down" Hegseth symbolizes the fake-tough-guy attitude of Trump and crew. Combat footage from Iran showing equipment and buildings being obliterated by U.S. missiles is all the rage on the mainstream media. Indeed, gunsight footage of exploding buildings is perhaps a fitting symbol of the Trump administration's rage. That, and the shootings of "domestic terrorists" like Renee Good and Alex Pretti.

It's been awhile since I've been to a Catholic service, but at least in church I hear sentiments like mercy, grace, and peace being celebrated.

Which brings me to this post I wrote on mercy. I wrote it eight years ago, and it seems like it needs to be repeated and amplified in America's age of "warrior ethos" and unending military conflict.

## On Mercy

Mercy has been on my mind since re-watching "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy. There's a nasty little character known as Gollum. Before he was seduced by Sauron's ring (the one ring of power), Gollum was known as Smeagol. Twisted and consumed by the Dark Lord's ring, Smeagol becomes a shadow of himself, eventually forgetting his real name and becoming Gollum, a name related to the guttural coughs and sounds he makes.

Gollum loses the Ring to Bilbo Baggins, a Hobbit of the Shire. The Ring extends Bilbo's life but also begins to twist him as well. As Sauron returns to power in Mordor, he needs only to regain the Ring to defeat the combined might of the peoples of Middle Earth. Bilbo passes the Ring to his much younger cousin, Frodo, who together with a Fellowship consisting of representatives drawn from men, elves, dwarfs, and hobbits as well as the wizard Gandalf, journeys to Mordor to destroy the Ring and vanquish Sauron.



Gollum/Smeagol, at war with himself, consumed by desire for the Ring

Mercy, Forgiveness, Peace

From Bill Astore from Bracing Views <bracingviews@substack.com>  
Date Wed 3/25/2026 7:10 AM

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APRIL 6 2026

Early in his journey to Mordor, Frodo says he wishes Bilbo had killed Gollum when he'd had the opportunity. (Gollum, drawn by the Ring, is shadowing the Fellowship on its journey.) Gandalf sagely advises Frodo that Gollum may yet play an important role, and that mercy is not a quality to disparage. As the Fellowship is separated and Frodo has to journey to Mordor with only his faithful friend Sam beside him, Gollum soon becomes their indispensable guide, and Frodo begins to pity him. Frodo, by showing Gollum mercy, reawakens the good within him, calling him Smeagol and preventing Sam from hurting him.

But the corrupting power of the Ring overtakes Smeagol again, and Gollum reemerges. Even so, without Gollum's help, Frodo and Sam would never have made it to Mordor and the fires of Mount Doom. On the brink of destroying the Ring, Frodo too becomes consumed by its power, choosing to use it instead of casting it into the fire. Here again, Gollum emerges as an instrumental character. He fights Frodo for the Ring, gains it, but loses his footing and falls into the fires of Mount Doom, destroying himself as well as the Ring and saving Middle Earth.

It was Bilbo and Frodo's mercy that spared the life of Gollum, setting the stage for Gollum's actions that ultimately save Frodo and the rest of Middle Earth from Sauron's dominance. Without Gollum's help, Frodo and Sam would never have made it to Mount Doom; or, if by some miracle they had, Frodo in donning the Ring would have been ensnared by Sauron's power and executed by him. If Frodo is the hero of the tale, Gollum is the anti-hero, as indispensable to Middle Earth's salvation as Frodo and the Fellowship.

Another story about the role of mercy came in one of my favorite "Star Trek" episodes, "Arena." In this episode, Captain Kirk has to fight a duel with an enemy captain of a lizard-like species known as the Gorn. It's supposed to be a fight to the death, overseen by a much superior species known as the Metrons. When Kirk succeeds in besting the Gorn captain, however, he refuses to kill the Gorn, saying that perhaps the Gorn had a legitimate reason for attacking a Federation outpost. A Metron spokesperson appears and is impressed by Kirk, saying that he has demonstrated the advanced trait of mercy, something the Metrons hardly suspected "savage" humans were capable of showing.

Perhaps war between the Federation and the Gorn is not inevitable, this episode suggests. Diplomacy may yet resolve a territorial dispute without more blood being shed, all because Kirk had the courage to show mercy to his opponent: an opponent who wouldn't have shown mercy to him if their fates had been reversed.

Mercy, nowadays, is not in vogue in the USA. America's enemies must always be smited, preferably killed, in the name of righteous vengeance. Only weak people show mercy, or so our national narrative appears to suggest. But recall the saying that in insisting on an eye for an eye, soon we'll all be blind.

The desire for murderous vengeance is making us blind. The cycle of violence continues with no end in sight. Savagery begets more savagery. It's as if we've put on Sauron's ring and become consumed by it.

Do we have the courage of Bilbo and Frodo Baggins, and even of that man of action, Captain Kirk? Can our toughness be informed by and infused with mercy?

Happy Easter:

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Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom

CIRCA 400 AD

If any man is devout and loves God, let him enjoy this fair and radiant triumphal feast. If any man be a wise servant, let him rejoicing enter into the joy of his Lord. If any have labored long in fasting, let him now receive his reward. If any have worked from the first hour, let him today receive his just recompense. If any have come at the third hour, let him with thankfulness keep the feast. If any have arrived at the sixth hour, let him have no misgivings; because he shall in nowise be deprived. If any have delayed until the ninth hour, let him draw near, fearing nothing. If any have waited even until the eleventh hour, let him, also, be not alarmed at his lateness; for the Lord, who is jealous of his honor, will accept the last even as the first; he gives rest unto him who comes at the eleventh hour, even as unto him who has worked from the first. And he shows mercy upon the last, and cares for the first; and to the one he gives, and upon the other he bestows gifts. And he both accepts the deeds, and welcomes the intention, and honors the acts and praises the offering. Therefore, enter all of you into the joy of your Lord; and receive your reward, both the first, and the last. You rich and poor together, hold this high feast. You sober and you reckless, honor the day. Rejoice today, both you who have fasted and you who have disregarded the fast. The table is full-laden; feast sumptuously all of you. The calf is fatted; let no one go away hungry. Enjoy all of you the feast of faith: Receive all of you the riches of loving-kindness. Let no one worry over his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one weep for his sins, for pardon has shown forth from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the Savior's death has set us free. He that was held prisoner of it has annihilated it. By descending into Hell, He made Hell captive. He embittered it when it tasted of His flesh. And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry: Hell, said he, was embittered, when it encountered You in the lower regions.

It was made bitter, for it was abolished.

It was made bitter, for it was mocked.

It was made bitter, for it was slain.

It was made bitter, for it was overthrown.

It was made bitter, for it was fettered in chains.

It took a body, and it met God.

It took earth, and encountered Heaven.

It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen.

O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory?

Christ is risen, and you are overthrown.

Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen.

Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice.

Christ is risen, and life reigns.

Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave.

For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be glory and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen.

# Definition of the crime of aggression

The crime of aggression is defined in art. 8bis in the Rome Statute of the ICC adopted at the 2010 Review Conference in Kampala. In essence, three elements are required:

First, the perpetrator must be a **political or military leader**, i.e. a “person in a position effectively to exercise control over or to direct the political or military action of a State”.

Second, the Court must prove that the **perpetrator was involved in the planning, preparation, initiation or execution of such a State act** of aggression.

Third, such a State act must amount to an **act of aggression** in accordance with the definition contained in General Assembly Resolution 3314, and it must, by its character, gravity and scale, constitute a **manifest violation of the UN Charter**. This implies that only the most serious forms of illegal use of force between States can be subject to the Court’s jurisdiction. Cases of lawful individual or collective self-defence, as well as action authorized by the Security Council are thus clearly excluded.

For more analysis of the definition, please consult our Handbook. Article 8 *bis* reads as follows:

## **Article 8 *bis***

### **Crime of aggression**

1. For the purpose of this Statute, “crime of aggression” means the planning, preparation, initiation or execution, by a person in a position effectively to exercise control over or to direct the political or military action of a State, of an act of aggression which, by its character, gravity and scale, constitutes a manifest violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

2. For the purpose of paragraph 1, “act of aggression” means the use of armed force by a State against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of another State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations. Any of the following acts, regardless of a declaration of war, shall, in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 3314 (XXIX) of 14 December 1974, qualify as an act of aggression:

(a) The invasion or attack by the armed forces of a State of the territory of another State, or any military occupation, however temporary, resulting from such invasion or attack, or any annexation by the use of force of the territory of another State or part thereof;

(b) Bombardment by the armed forces of a State against the territory of another State or the use of any weapons by a State against the territory of another State;

(c) The blockade of the ports or coasts of a State by the armed forces of another State;

(d) An attack by the armed forces of a State on the land, sea or air forces, or marine and air fleets of another State;

(e) The use of armed forces of one State which are within the territory of another State with the agreement of the receiving State, in contravention of the conditions provided for in the agreement or any extension of their presence in such territory beyond the termination of the agreement;

(f) The action of a State in allowing its territory, which it has placed at the disposal of another State, to be used by that other State for perpetrating an act of aggression against a third State;

(g) The sending by or on behalf of a State of armed bands, groups, irregulars or mercenaries, which carry out acts of armed force against another State of such gravity as to amount to the acts listed above, or its substantial involvement therein.

# Trump Rides Crazy Train Straight to Hell

The president threatens to bomb a nation of 93 million people "back to the Stone Age, where they belong."



JOHN LEAKE  
APR 01, 2026



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After listening to President Trump ignominious, incoherent, and depraved address about the Iran War, I racked my brain to think of other leaders in history who combined mendacity, stupidity, and arrogance in such equal measures.

I couldn't think of any other foreign policy utterance in history that matched the lowliness of Trump's. However, as an association of ideas, I thought of Herodotus's portrait of the Persian King Xerxes in *The Histories*. The story's tragic disaster begins with Xerxes boasting that he will bridge the Hellespont and march all the way through Europe, claiming he will extend Persian territory to "the heaven of the gods."

It's a testament to Herodotus's literary prowess that the reader knows Xerxes is setting himself up for overreach and humiliation before the action even begins. And yet, despite his bluster, glimmers of insecurity flicker forth. Part of Xerxes senses he's embarking on a dangerous path, but because he suffers from emotional instability (which the Greeks considered the ultimate form of weakness in a man) he is susceptible to external influences. Ultimately he is influenced by the aggressive counsel of Mardonius while ignoring the prudent counsel of his uncle Artabanus, who foresees disaster in underestimating Greek resolve. Though Mardonius is largely responsible for inciting the disaster, he redeems himself by dying on the front line of battle at Plataea—an act of manly courage we NEVER see from our flabby old warlords in Washington.

The main difference between Xerxes and Trump—and this is a testament to the extraordinary genius and humanity of Herodotus—is that the former is a tragic and even sympathetic character, despite his innumerable flaws.

Being Greek, Herodotus could have easily lapsed into a jingoistic screed about Greek superiority. Instead, he frequently criticizes the Greeks for their political disunity, greed, and arrogance. Despite writing for a Greek audience, he doesn't shy from pointing out the fractiousness of the city-states, the brutality of some Greek leaders, the perils of Greek hubris as well as Persian.

Trump's speech about his war of aggression against Iran was remarkable in that it didn't contain a single honest, noble, or redeeming quality. Listening to it, I was reminded of the famous wooden sculpture of Auerbachs Keller in Leipzig of Dr. Faust

riding a wine cask out of the cellar—a cheap and demonic trick performed by Mephistopheles (the devil), symbolizing the madness and disorder of drunk, greedy, lustful, out of control humanity, ungoverned by reason and wisdom. Though initially tempted by this element of life, Dr. Faust ultimately becomes disgusted by it.

The carved wooden sculpture is endlessly fascinating and mesmerizing to behold.



Right at the beginning of this Iran misadventure, I knew that Trump would eventually lapse into the revolting Curtis LeMay “bomb them to the stone age” school of Satanic warfare, in which civilian infrastructure and helpless civilians are ultimately targeted. The monster LeMay killed hundreds of thousands—possibly a million civilians—in North Korea and destroyed 85% of all the buildings in all the cities.

Even though LeMay’s air war against North Korea failed to bring about its capitulation, the cretin remained Air Force Chief of Staff until 1965 and advocated bombing North Vietnamese civilian infrastructure just as he’d done to North Korea’s civilian infrastructure.

During his 1968 campaign as George Wallace's running mate, he proclaimed that rather than negotiating, the U.S. should “bomb them back into the Stone Age.”

Sure enough, just as I predicted—amid the incoherent, contradictory gibberish of the rest of his diatribe—Trump issued the same pronouncement straight from hell.

“We will bring Iran back to the stone age where they belong.”

And so, we see how the United States government has come unmoored from the Greek and Christian roots of Western civilization, and has sunk into atavistic, technologically sophisticated barbarity.

# War and Morality

by Andrew P. Napolitano | Mar 27, 2026 | 1 Comment

War is the most horrific series of events upon which any government can engage. It is systematic, industrialized, indiscriminate killing. It kills innocent adults and little girls. It often ruins the post-war lives of the killers. It is young men violently fighting old men's power games. It is the health of the state.

The war President Donald Trump is waging against the people and the government of Iran is immoral, unconstitutional and unlawful. Yet, because Congress is not doing its job, there appears to be no relief in sight until Trump finds a face-saving way to erase his grave mistake from the public's long memory.

An act of a person or a government is moral when it conforms to a universal set of principles designed to induce good over evil and justice over injustice. These principles are discoverable by all unimpaired adults exercising reason. Adults should comply with them. Children often know them.

To address this, we start with the primacy of the individual over the state. The individual is morally superior to the state because all persons have natural rights, consciences and free will; and because in the U.S., "We the people" created the state. We are, of course, free to obey our consciences or to violate them; free to respect the natural rights of others or to transgress them.

When we transgress the natural rights of others, our behavior — whether lawful or unlawful — is immoral. When laws enforce natural rights, laws are valid and moral. When laws themselves transgress natural rights — by, for example, punishing speech or seizing property or restraining free movement or invading personal privacy — the laws themselves are immoral.

The government — which is an artificial creation based on a monopoly of force in a defined geographical area — does not have a conscience or a free will. In a liberal democracy, the government can only morally do what the governed have affirmatively authorized it to do.

Thomas Jefferson, writing in the Declaration of Independence, recognized that the government derives its "just Powers from the Consent of the Governed." From this it follows that if the government exercises powers to which the governed have not consented, then its powers are unjust and their exercise is immoral.

Can the governed give immoral powers to the government? Yes, they can. Suppose the governed consented to a war against another country not based on self-defense but based on their collective hatred of the race or ethnicity or religious beliefs of the inhabitants of that country. Such a war would be immoral, not just because killing not in self-defense is always wrong but because killing based on hatred of immutable characteristics is immoral, even if consented to.

I offer this brief philosophical roadmap to address the morality of Trump's war. When using deadly force, the government has a heavy burden to overcome. It can only overcome that burden by offering publicly scrutinizable facts to demonstrate its claim of the immediate necessity of killing others who are not engaged in violence against us.

The government has not done so.

In the case of war, the bad to be corrected must be clear and obvious and the good to be achieved must be morally superior to that which impelled the war and one that can reasonably be expected to come about from the war.

The war must be initiated by a lawful authority; its objective must be clearly stated and winnable. And the means — the damage produced — must be proportionate to the evil to be eradicated.

None of these is the case in Trump's war on Iran. He has not stated a moral goal. Ridding the Iran government of nuclear weapons cannot be considered a moral goal as the mere possession and nonuse of these weapons — which last June Trump stated did not exist — is not immoral. Only their use is.

The mere possession alone of these weapons cannot be a moral basis for invasion as both invading nations — the U.S. and Israel — have nuclear weapons, which the U.S. has used and Israel has not.

At the start of the war, Trump told the Iranian people he would help them to “take over your government. It will be yours to take.” If that is Trump's purpose, this is a war of aggression, not defense.

Was the war commenced by a legitimate authority to which consent was given by the governed in America? It was not. Under the U.S. Constitution, only Congress can define an enemy and decide to attack it by declaring war. This war was commenced by the president alone, with no definition or declaration by Congress.

Neither the president, nor his secretary of state, his secretary of defense or his director of national intelligence have articulated the existence of an imminent threat posed by Iran to the U.S.

What could it be? Iran does not have nuclear weapons. Its missiles cannot reach the United States. North Korea, on the other hand, does have nuclear weapons and missiles that can reach Hawaii and California, and its leader is an erratic megalomaniac. Is North Korea next?

Two weeks ago, Trump's senior counterterrorism official, who saw the same classified data that Trump's advisers saw, stated affirmatively in his resignation letter that Iran poses no imminent threat to America. His boss, the director of national intelligence, refused to state under oath if Iran posed an imminent threat to the U.S.

What's going on here?

What's going on is what James Madison feared. He argued that it is vital for the war making and the war waging powers to be separated — as they are in the Constitution — because, if a president could both declare and wage war, he'd be a prince; like the one from whom the colonists seceded. Of what value is a Constitution that is directly dishonored by those sworn to uphold it?

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# From Karbala to Today: Beginning To Understand Shi'a Islam

by Pat Elder | Apr 2, 2026 | News | 1 Comment

We must go back in history to understand the split between Sunni and Shi'a Islam before we can understand the animosity between predominantly Sunni nations like Saudi Arabia and Shi'a Iran today. Please suffer through the names and dates.



This painting depicts the Battle of Karbala (680 CE), showing the small camp of Husayn ibn Ali and his followers on the left, surrounded by the much larger, highly organized forces of the Umayyad caliph Yazid. The nearby river, likely the Euphrates, highlights a central tragedy of the event – Husayn's group was cut off from water for days before the final assault. Vast troop formations closing in emphasize the overwhelming imbalance of power, as Husayn and his small band, including family members, faced near-certain death. The scene captures the moment of impending destruction that, in Shi'a belief, represents not just a battle but a profound act of moral resistance and martyrdom in the face of injustice.

The prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is traditionally understood to have died in 632 CE. In the decades after the Prophet Muhammad's death, disputes over leadership divided the Muslim community, with Shi'a Muslims holding that religious authority belonged to the Prophet's family, beginning with Ali ibn Abi Talib.

After years of conflict and the rise of Umayyad rule in Damascus under Muawiya I, power was transformed into a hereditary system and passed to his son Yazid ibn Muawiya.

The following brief history is crucial in understanding the religious undercurrents behind the Iran war.

Imam Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, refused to pledge allegiance to Yazid ibn Muawiya. This is not obscure stuff! It matters today.

In Shi'a belief, Yazid was an illegitimate and tyrannical ruler whose brutality, impiety, and injustice stood in direct violation of the moral principles of the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet's family.

Allegiance to Muawiya would have meant legitimizing corruption and oppression. Husayn's stance is understood as a moral obligation, rather than a bid for political or military power.

Imam Ḥusayn left Mecca (in Saudi Arabia today) after receiving letters from people in Kufa (in Iraq today) asking him to lead them against the ruthless Yazid. However, by the time he approached Iraq, those supporters had been crushed by Yazid's men.

Ḥusayn and a small prayerful group of family members and devotees, including women and children – were intercepted and forced to stop in the desert of Karbala.

On the 10th of Muharram (Ashura), June 25–26 this year, Ḥusayn's camp faced a vast army sent by Yazid's authorities. One by one, his companions and family members were killed.

Ḥusayn was ultimately killed at Karbala after refusing to legitimize Yazid's rule. Although he did not seek war and was vastly outnumbered, he stood in principled opposition and was drawn into a fatal confrontation. In Shi'a belief, his death is understood as martyrdom (*shahāda*) – a conscious sacrifice for truth and justice.

This is among the greatest events in all of world history, yet largely absent in the western mind.

Religious scholars compare Husayn's martyrdom to the crucifixion of Jesus.

Husayn's martyrdom at Karbala endures today as a powerful emotional and religious symbol of resistance to tyranny and a moral line that must not be crossed.

Perhaps 15% of all Muslims today are Shi'a. The rest are Sunni. Iran, Bahrain, Azerbaijan, North Yemen, and Southern Lebanon are predominantly Shi'a. Doesn't it make more sense now? (Except for the Bahrain part).

Today's standoff between Saudi Arabia and Iran stems from the Saudi embrace of Wahhabism. This tradition vehemently rejects practices central to Shi'a practices like shrine veneration and intercession

In Shi'a Islam, intercession (*shafā'a*) is the belief that the Prophet Muhammad and his family – especially figures like Ali ibn Abi Talib and Husayn ibn Ali – can plead with God on behalf of believers. This intercession is understood to occur only by God's permission, as these figures are seen as spiritually close to God but not divine. It's like Christians who pray to saints or to Mary.

From a Shi'a perspective, rightful authority in Islam did not pass to political and military rulers, but remained within the family of the Prophet – beginning with Ali ibn Abi Talib and continuing through a line of divinely guided Imams.

These Imams are not regarded as prophets, but they are viewed as holy interpreters of the Qur'an and guardians of the faith. This belief bestows great importance to Husayn's martyrdom at Karbala as an ethical stand that continues to shape Shi'a actions and belief.

Ali ibn Abi Talib was the first Imam. His elder son, Hasan ibn Ali, was the second Imam. Husayn ibn Ali was the third Imam.

Muhammad al-Mahdi, (Mahdi), is the son of the eleventh Imam, Hasan al-Askari. According to this strongly held belief, he was born in the 9th century (around 869 CE) and became Imam as a child. Mahdi was described as being very young, sometimes characterized as "a boy" or "about twelve."

These accounts are similar to stories of Jesus with great wisdom in the Temple in

Jerusalem at 12 years of age.

Shi'a belief holds that shortly after inheriting the Imamate, Mahdi entered a state known as the Occultation (ghayba), a divinely ordained concealment from the world. This occurred in two phases: an initial period of limited contact through appointed representatives, followed by a longer "Major Occultation" that continues to the present. During this time, he is believed to be alive but hidden, sustaining a spiritual role even in absence.

In Twelver Shi'a belief, Muhammad al-Mahdi is expected to reappear openly at a time of widespread injustice and moral disorder, ushering in a restoration of truth and justice. His return is often associated with Mecca, where he will publicly call humanity back to the true path and assume rightful leadership. He will not act alone: traditions describe him as being joined by a small, devoted group of followers – often numbered symbolically as 313 – and, most significantly, by Isa ibn Maryam, (Jesus, son of Mary) who will support his mission and affirm his authority. Together, they are understood to defeat oppression and fulfill the moral struggle embodied in events such as the Battle of Karbala, bringing history toward a final realization of justice.

In contrast, the Saudi religious tradition, rooted in Sunni Islam and shaped by the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, rejects the idea of divinely appointed Imams and does not accept the Shi'a doctrine of a hidden, living Mahdi. While acknowledging Karbala as a tragic historical event, it does not grant it the same central theological significance, and it opposes many devotional practices associated with the veneration of the Prophet's family. From a Shi'a viewpoint, these positions amount to a rejection of the spiritual authority of the Prophet's family and the enduring legacy of Karbala.

Neither Shi'a nor Sunni Muslims claim that Muhammed is God. They believe there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God. They greatly revere Jesus as a prophet but they reject the notion that he is the "Son of God."

Since Vatican II Christians have transformed their thinking around Islam. For instance, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992), §841, states, "The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day."

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# The Unz Review • An Alternative Media Selection

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## The Problem Isn't "Kings", the Problem Is US Presidents

CAITLIN JOHNSTONE • MARCH 24, 2026 • 500 WORDS • 3 COMMENTS

[VIDEO LINK](#)

There's another giant "No Kings" protest scheduled for this weekend, and right now all I can think about is how disgusting it is that this is the closest thing to a mass-scale antiwar protest in the United States right now.

The problem with the "No Kings" protests is right there in the title. They're saying "We don't want a king, we want a president!" But Donald Trump is not a king. He is a president. And that's the *real* problem: US presidents are extremely evil men who do extremely evil things.

Donald Trump is a US president who is doing US president things. US presidents consistently murder people with unforgivable acts of mass military violence, mistreat immigrants and marginalized communities, and promote tyranny for the benefit of corrupting special interests in defense of the US empire and the capitalist status quo. That's what their job is. If they weren't willing to do these things, they wouldn't get the job.

Trump is not some freakish aberration; he is the product of the same American political status quo as his predecessors. He became president the same way they did, and the powers he now wields were given to his office via mundane executive, legislative and judicial decisions and precedents before he was ever elected.

But because the "No Kings" protests are organized by liberal defenders of that same political status quo, the demonstrations cannot address any of this. The whole thing is designed to be as large and inclusive as possible while also ensuring that it doesn't disrupt the established order in any meaningful way. They make no real demands. They coordinate the demonstrations with police and government officials. Protesters show up for a few hours with their brunch signs and their orange guy shirts, and then they go home without inconveniencing anybody.

They are not protesting against the US empire. They just want a more polite, photogenic empire.

They are not protesting the corrupt oligarchic political system which gave rise to Donald Trump. They just want the corrupt oligarchic political system to give rise to presidents who make them feel less uncomfortable.

The problem is US presidents, not kings. The problem is the US empire, not Trump. The United States needs drastic, revolutionary change, not daytime protests designed to be as inoffensive as possible. As long as Americans are protesting against fictional monarchies and easily replaceable oligarchic puppets instead of resisting the actual imperial machine, the abuses are going to continue.

The war in Iran is the most obviously evil American war in generations. People should be flooding the streets in every major US city. Washington DC should be on fire. Soldiers should be deserting en masse. Instead we're seeing these stupid fluffy lib theater conventions where people get together to do nothing.

Americans of conscience should be feeling deeply embarrassed right now.

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# There Is No Property-Rights Case for Birthright Citizenship

April 3, 2026

By Ryan McMaken

Mises.org

The US Supreme Court now has before it the case of *Trump vs. Barbara*. The Trump administration is arguing that birthright citizenship is not guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. Since the Amendment's adoption in the 1860s, advocates of immigration and widespread naturalization have argued that the amendment applies to *anyone* born on US soil, even if his or her parents are only temporarily traveling within the US. Others have argued that the amendment was intended as a measure designed only to avoid statelessness for former slaves and their children in the United States. That is, the amendment was a post-Civil War measure designed to address a problem of the time.

I have covered this controversy in some detail in an article titled "[Birthright Citizenship Isn't Real](#)." That article, however, was centered on legal arguments. Whatever one makes of claims surrounding the constitutionality of birthright citizenship, *legal* arguments alone can't establish a moral case for birthright citizenship, or establish citizenship as a natural right. A government-created legal "right" is not the same thing as a natural right. History has shown that government judges and their allies argue for all sorts of special legal "rights" that are not derived from natural rights at all. The Supreme Court has ruled, for example, that residents of the US effectively have a "right" to public schooling—paid for by taxpayers, of course—under the so-called equal protection clause. Government judges have also decided that US residents have a "right" to kill human babies in utero, and a "right" to vote. None of these "rights," however, are based on any property rights derived from the natural rights of life, liberty, and property. The legitimate natural rights—as explained by early classical liberals such as Thomas Jefferson and John Locke—are founded in legitimately held property, such as that acquired through homesteading, peaceful exchange, or the natural ownership of one's own physical body.

Birthright citizenship, on the other hand—i.e., automatic naturalization based on the political jurisdiction in which one is born—is one of these *invented* legal "rights."

This helps explain why, among those who claim to be the protectors of property rights—i.e., many self-described "libertarians"—we virtually never encounter an argument for naturalization based on property rights. For example, in a new press release from the CATO institute, emailed out this morning in response to oral arguments at the Supreme Court (see below), all of the CATO scholars quoted rely entirely on legal arguments about constitutional law and on consequentialist claims about alleged benefits of federally-mandated mass naturalization. Private property is never mentioned. David J. Bier does mention "rights of every...citizen" but, tellingly, no actual property rights are mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, even if we are talking about protecting the property rights of non-citizens, that is an entirely separate question that does not depend on naturalization or citizenship. If the question is "do non-citizens have property rights in the United

States?" the answer is an emphatic "yes." The Bill of Rights, after all, clearly doesn't limit itself to citizens. Moreover, the Bill of Rights does *not* guarantee a right to naturalization or, by extension, a right to vote. In other words, the authors of the Bill of Rights clearly did not view "rights" as reliant on the government-issued status we call "citizenship." This is because classical liberals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not believe that voting and citizenship were akin to property rights like "life, liberty, and property." (I explain in more details [in this article](#).)

So, let's look more closely at why naturalization is not a property right and why there is no property-based argument—and thus no libertarian case—for mass naturalization or birthright citizenship.

### **Property Rights vs. Naturalization "Rights"**

The first important distinction that must be made is between immigration and naturalization. The two are not at all the same thing.

Immigration is the process of human beings moving from one place to another. In the current context, this nearly always means migration across an international boundary. Immigration *policy*, therefore, is the process of restricting—or *not* restricting—the movement of these persons. In practice, the question of immigration policy necessarily raises the question of whether or not government authorities *ought* to restrict migration by various regulations. Immigration regulation necessarily involves the regulation of property, whether we're talking about the property of the migrant—in his physical person—or the property of landlords and employers (and other market participants) who seek to contract with migrants.

Naturalization is something different altogether. Naturalization is the process by which persons gain access to *political* institutions. This requires an administrative act of a government agency. Citizenship can bring with it greater access to taxpayer-funded amenities like the welfare state, but the most crucial aspect of citizenship, in democratic states, is that citizenship provides access to the ballot box and to public office. Unlike immigration policy, naturalization policy *does not involve the regulation or property*.

Indeed, citizenship is not *any* type of property and there is, therefore, no natural right to citizenship. In the libertarian view of property, one can acquire property either through homesteading or through contract. Citizenship, in contrast, cannot be obtained through the same means of obtaining property. One cannot "homestead" citizenship or purchase it from the "owner" of citizenship in the private sector.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, property exists in nature regardless of the existence of civil governments or states. Citizenship, however, does not exist independent of government institutions at all. Citizenship is fundamentally a creature of the state.

This important distinction between bona fide property and citizenship is clear in the real world, as demonstrated by the fact that, worldwide, many millions of immigrants are free to live and work in places where they are not citizens. In the United States, for example, countless non-citizens are free to own property, hold a job, and travel freely. It is not necessary to become a citizen to enjoy natural property rights or even to enjoy *procedural* rights such as due process rights for criminal trials. In other words, non-citizens can enjoy the same property rights that citizens enjoy.

### **Do Libertarians who**

### **Favor Expanded**

### **Naturalization Have an Argument other than “The Constitution Says So”?**

It is difficult to find articles by libertarian writers that even *acknowledge* these distinctions. Even fewer attempt to address it in any detail. The Mises Institute is a rare exception to this. Murray Rothbard provides some brief comments on the artificial nature of citizenship as a product of state power. I have an article covering it here.

With the exception of a handful of Rothbardians, libertarians have been virtually silent when it comes to making a specifically libertarian case for or against naturalization. This has apparently been the case for quite a while since, back in 2012, Mark Krikorian of the Center for Immigration Studies publicly asked—not snarkily, but earnestly—if there is a libertarian position on citizenship *at all*.

At the same time, Krikorian *did* note that in exactly one case he had personally encountered a libertarian who acknowledged the difference between naturalization and immigration. According to Krikorian:

[T]he only time I recall a libertarian addressing the citizenship issue ... was Jacob Hornberger of the Future of Freedom Foundation. During a panel we were both on Hornberger was challenged that immigrants would vote for socialism; he responded that immigration and citizenship are separate issues, and that immigrants shouldn't necessarily be allowed to naturalize and vote ...

Assuming this anecdote is true, Hornberger is correct on the matter. Like Rothbard, he also gets to the core and key issue of naturalization and citizenship: voting.

This voting issue was also acknowledged, very briefly, in an article by Sheldon Richman, in one of the rare cases where a libertarian has attempted to argue for expanded citizenship on libertarian grounds. Unfortunately, like most articles by libertarians ostensibly about citizenship, it's *mostly* an article about immigration mixed in with a bit of legal positivism. However, near the end of the article, Richman admits that the article is really just advocating for immigration and he says “The case presented here might seem to justify no more than legal residency.” To remedy this, Richman provides exactly *three sentences* on the matter of naturalization. He writes:

What about citizenship? To take that step, one need only consider that a legal resident is subject to the government's power to tax and regulate. Since his bid for exemption from U.S. government impositions would not be recognized, we are forced to the second-best disposition, namely, that the legal resident ought to have a say—as small as it is—over government policy, that is, the privileges and immunities of citizens.

This seems to be all we're going to get from immigration expansionists on the topic of citizenship, and it is only a minor afterthought following 800 words of appeals to Constitutional authority. But, at least Richman has bothered to say *something* about the topic based on an appeal to some sort of presumably libertarian principle.

Every single other "libertarian" article on citizenship I have seen relies solely on legal arguments or, in some rare cases, appeals to the practical benefits of expanded citizenship. (Here's one that says expanded naturalization is good because it helps "assimilate" immigrants, as if assimilation has something to do with libertarian goals.)

There are a couple of problems with Richman's very short argument, though. First of all, Richman does not in any way establish that citizenship is a property right of any kind. As such, "protecting" this non-right of citizenship is not mandated by any libertarian principle. This is not necessarily a fatal problem. A libertarian argument could still reasonably advocate for more naturalization on the prudential and pragmatic grounds that expanded naturalization limits state power. That may be Richman's tactic here.

Yet, it is not at all apparent that the extension of citizenship and naturalization have served to limit the size or scope of the state anywhere. Certainly, the example of expanded citizenship during the French Revolution points in exactly the *opposite* direction. Indeed, citizenship has historically been an important tool in building the modern centralized state.

Moreover, if expanded citizenship means an extended franchise—which it does in the modern West—then an argument in favor of expanded citizenship would rest on evidence that an expanded franchise has limited state power. It seems that exactly the opposite has happened. Indeed, it is probably not a coincidence that the total war and totalitarianism of the twentieth century closely followed the rise of the modern democratic state.

Richman tells us that citizenship and the vote is a means of residents protecting themselves from the excesses of government taxation and regulation. Yet, in the United States, an ever-expanding franchise has caused—or at least failed to prevent—a multi-fold increase in the burden of taxes and regulations.

It is likely that the early libertarians like the Levellers and John Locke—who opposed the idea of an unlimited franchise—were right all along.

The reasons for this were put into a modern context by Ludwig von Mises who showed in 1944 that that once a sizable portion of the population becomes accustomed to demanding material benefits from the state, then the size of the state will only grow.

So, it appears that the expansion of naturalization and citizenship are not justified by any libertarian claim, whether rights-based or pragmatic. This may be part of why most libertarian pundits so often avoid the issue altogether.

***Appendix: The CATO press release on the Supreme Court's consideration of birthright citizenship does not appear to be available online. Here is the text:***

Following today's oral arguments before the Supreme Court, Tommy Berry, director of the Cato Institute's Robert A. Levy Center for Constitutional Studies, was present for the arguments and released the following statement:

*"Chief Justice Roberts had the line of the morning when he said, "It's a new world, but it's the same Constitution." That really does sum up why the government's policy-based arguments had no bearing on the constitutional question.*

*"Today's oral argument focused on the original public meaning of the Fourteenth Amendment's text, which is the correct approach. And a clear majority of the Justices were unconvinced by the government's argument that this meaning has been misunderstood for over 150 years. As multiple Justices noted, the government's argument is very difficult to square with the reasoning of the Supreme Court's Wong Kim Ark decision from more than a century ago. Yet the government did not even ask the Court to overrule that decision if the Court interpreted it to protect traditional birthright citizenship.*

*"Based on today's argument, it seems that the most likely outcome is a simple opinion reaffirming that the Court meant what it said in Wong Kim Ark: those born on U.S. soil are U.S. citizens, with very rare exceptions for those who are to some extent exempt from following U.S. law. I expect the challengers to the President's order will receive somewhere between 6 and 8 votes in their favor."*

Alex Nowrasteh, the senior vice president for policy at the Cato Institute, released the following statement:

*"The United States is an immigrant-assimilation machine partly because birthright citizenship makes all their US-born children equal under the law. The legal arguments in favor of continuing birth-right citizenship are solid; the social case is overwhelming."*

David J. Bier, the Director of Immigration Studies at the Cato Institute and occupies The Selz Foundation Chair in Immigration Policy, released the following statement:

*“The implications of ending birthright citizenship for the rights of Americans are stark. Not only would it expose some native-born Americans to deportation, but it would also deny all Americans the use of their birth certificates as the only foolproof defense against immigration arrest, detention, and removal. Especially with the administration carrying out papers-please profiling throughout the country, ending or curtailing birthright citizenship would imperil the rights of every natural-born American citizen, regardless of ancestry.”*

Ilya Somin, the B. Kenneth Simon Chair in Constitutional Studies at the Cato Institute, also released a statement:

*“As Justice Barrett suggested in today’s oral argument, the Trump Administration’s rationales for denying birthright citizenship to children of undocumented migrants would also have denied it to numerous freed slaves and their children. That goes against the main purpose and original meaning of the Citizenship Clause. It is, by itself, sufficient reason to reject the administration’s position, even aside from all the many other reasons why that position is wrong.”*

—

**1** Rather than defending the private-based worldview of libertarianism—the radical wing of classical liberalism—these advocates of mass naturalization appear to be motivated more by a political program that rather naively asserts that voting—a form of political participation closely tied to naturalization—and written constitutions will somehow meaningfully restrain government power. For a more complete view of this naive view of politics and libertarianism, see: <https://mises.org/podcasts/libertarian-scholars-conference-2026/classical-liberalism-has-not-failed-and-we-need-it-now-more-ever>

**2** In a purely private society, “citizenship” would be replaced by “ownership” in which the resident would have a property-based stake in the community. Early liberals, by restricting the vote to people perceived to have “skin in the game” or to have a stake in the community, were attempting to mimic this idea. With the creation of universal suffrage, however, citizenship lost all connection to any notion of having to be invested in the community in which one participates politically.

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IDF spokeswoman Anna Ukolova threatens on Russian RBC radio Russian authorities to be killed if they take anti-Israel position in the war. She said that Israel controls all web-cameras in Russia and could hit easily whoever it wants including Putin.

# Trump Continues the '47-Year War' Against Iran

This is part 3 in a series. Read part 1 and part 2.

by David Stockman | Mar 16, 2026 | 5 Comments

As we showed in Part 2, a nation being attacked by a neighbor armed with the best modern weapons available from the US and France, saddled with a military disabled by an embargo blocking its acquisition of spare parts and desperately sending untrained teenagers into battle as cannon fodder in “human waves”, might well and truly have believed that it faced an “*existential threat*”.

In fact, after the Iraq invasion in 1980 that was exactly the plight of the new Iranian regime.

It should therefore also not come as a surprise that imperiled in this manner, Iran might also have sought to lash out with whatever means remained at its disposal. And we mean especially against that same intruder in its geographic neighborhood that had also stationed several hundred US Marines in the middle of a Lebanese civil war, which was none of Washington’s business.

That is to say, the attack on the lethally armed US Marines in the Beirut barracks in September 1983 didn’t flow from Iran’s hatred of America’s freedoms way over here; it was in retaliation for Washington’s help to Saddam Hussein slaughtering their barely armed teenage conscripts way over there in their own backyard.

And, yes, we are talking about Washington’s utterly gratuitous 1980s alliance with the very one and same Saddam Hussein, who swung from the end of an American rope 20 years later. Of course, by then he too was deemed an inconvenience by the neocons – Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney and George Dubya Bush – who were then ruling the national security roost in Washington.

So context and history do make a difference. The truth is, the MAGA propagandists who always open their “Iran’s 47-Years War on America” Big Lie by citing the 1983 Marine Barracks bombing have no clue about how, why and when it happened.

We do. We were there as a member of the NSC (national security council) and saw it all up close and personal. Needless to say, our viewing was akin to the proverbial visit to the sausage factory: That is, it was unappetizing in the extreme.

As it happened, the errors that led to the stationing of Marines in Beirut and the tragic deaths of 181 soldiers in September 1983 stemmed from the same old, same old. That is, the imperatives of Empire and the utterly mistaken notion that America needed allies in the Middle East and had to engage in active policing of the region in the name of national security.

Alas, that was barking tommyrot then and in the hindsight of history is even more risible today. After all, 1983 marked the fading hours of the Soviet Empire. The latter was collapsing from the sheer dead-weight of communism internally – not anything externally that the far-flung cold war Empire Washington had concocted was doing to “contain” the Soviet Union via NATO in Europe or other alliances and bases in the middle east and anywhere else around the planet.

After all, world communism was on the march alright – straight into the dustbin of history, to use one of Karl Marx’s more felicitous phrases.

The fact is, by the early 1980s Washington had become the seat of a veritable Warfare State. Armed to the teeth and in possession of military bases, Naval armadas and globally

dispatchable air and land forces, there were literally hundreds of thousands of bureaucrats at DOD, State, USAID, Radio Free Europe and its clones who drew their paychecks and self-importance from manning the Empire.

Likewise, there were also armies of their counterparts on Congressional committees and in the K-street corridors chock-a-bloc full of military-industrial complex lobbyists and money-bag dispensers of campaign cash. And all of these bureaucrats, apparatchiks, politicians and grifters functioned on the premise that the American Empire was the natural order of things and the indispensable lynch-pin of America's Homeland Security.

Alas, that was a Big Lie then and its persistence four decades later is its hideous legacy – the fetid fruit of which gave rise to Trump's utterly insane war on Iran, and thereby on the Persian Gulf at large and the vital arteries of global commerce which are fueled from it.

So we need to return to the Marine Barracks Bombing, which almost as much as the 444-day Embassy Hostage Ordeal gave rise to Evil Iran narrative that led to the current disaster.

Needless to say, at the time in 1982-1983 when this all got underway we were too busy fighting for budget cuts and resisting the Big Spenders on Capitol Hill – along with their allies who had finagled their way into the Reagan Administration Cabinet and agencies – to take close note of the unfolding crisis in Lebanon.

When we did catch up with the details, however, the NSC was already in the midst of negotiations led by the State Department designed to separate the warring factions in Lebanon. This especially included finding cover for the invading Israeli Army in south Lebanon and arranging safe passage for tens of thousands of PLO operatives from their camps there to Tunisia and other places removed from the Lebanese cauldron.

In short order, of course, the mainly US manned Multinational Peacekeeping Force that had been dropped into Beirut was caught up in the aftermath of a vicious genocidal attack on the the Palastinain refugee camps at Sabra and Shatila, followed by the counterattack in the Marine Barracks which occurred a few weeks later.

But here's the thing. In virtually all of the urgent NSC discussions which perforce transpired on nearly a daily basis it was never explained as to how America's Homeland security would be enhanced by getting in the middle of this new Israeli spat with its neighbor to the north. Nor was there much understanding of the background in terms of Lebanon's decades-old, bitterly fragmented polity along sectarian lines, the Lebanese civil war after 1975 and the brutal Israeli invasion lead by hardliner General Sharon in 1982.

As the crisis heated up, needless to say, we began to wonder about why we were there at all. So we took the trouble to get a series of private briefings from CIA analysts with regards to these matters. We recall these briefings quite vividly because they showed that it was well understood down in the bowels of the national security apparatus even then that the Reagan Administration was plunging into a veritable hornets nest of historical religious, political and ethnic animosities that were almost beyond comprehension.

Alas, the predicates of Empire simply over-ruled any influence of plain facts and common sense. That is, the predicate was that America needed to assist its ally, Israel, even as it attempted to stabilize the surrounding region, which was afire with essentially irrelevant conflict.

By contrast, had Washington followed the wise advice of the great Senator from Ohio, Robert Taft, at the outset of the Cold War in the late 1940s and 1950s and repaired to a Fortress America defense backed by an invincible nuclear deterrent a far different scenario would have ensued. The administration of Ronald Reagan in 1982 simply would not have

been in the business of aiding Saddam Hussein in his war on Iran or plunging American servicemen into a red hot cauldron of armed conflict in Southern Beirut.

Stated differently, even the NSC of Ronald Reagan was blinded by the imperatives of Empire. Accordingly, in the aftermath of the barracks bombing the NSC deliberations reached a low point of absurdity, which is a reminder of why a global empire should not be run from the banks of the Potomac.

To wit, the hawks on the NSC wanted to retaliate for the bombing, but had only vague intel that the perpetrators had evacuated to the Chouf Mountains that surrounded Beirut. These warhawks, of course, wanted to send in a huge increase in US forces to hunt the perpetrators down and kill them all.

As it happened, however, Ronald Reagan had not forgotten the lessons of LBJ's disastrous escalation of the Vietnam War in 1965 after an equivalent setback, and insisted that there must be another way and that less risky options be considered.

And at that point, a Keystone Cops moment actually ensued, when it was suggested during a NSC meeting in the Cabinet Room that perhaps the perpetrators in the Chouf Mountains could be hit by the big guns on the battleship *New Jersey*, which was stationed near the Beirut harbor. In that context, of course, the question immediately arose as to the range of the big guns on the the battleship.

A military aide sitting in the row of chairs along the wall of the Cabinet Room quickly supplied an answer: "35 miles plus or minus". At that, a huge map of the Beirut region was rolled out on the Cabinet table, where America's Secretary of State sitting next to President Reagan already had one finger on the Beirut harbor and another on the Chouf mountains. Holding his fingers up in the air to mark the coordinates, he then pronounced after testing his fingers' span against the "scale of miles" on the map that it was his conclusion that the bad guys could be hit by the big guns on the *New Jersey*. Accordingly, no boots on the ground would be necessary to extract revenge for the bombing!

As it happened, some heavy duty shelling occurred for a limited period of time, but in his wisdom Ronald Reagan decided to "reposition" the remaining US Marines to a safer location in the deep Mediterranean. So at least that incipient "Forever War" was avoided.

But it was a close call that never should have even been the agenda for an emergency NSC meeting because the America's Homeland security was not engaged in any way whatsoever in either Beirut or on Saddam's side on the battlefields in the Iranian deserts and mountains. Indeed, as summarized below, this opening chapter of the Iran's alleged "47-Year War on America should never, ever have occurred.

To understand this, we needs go back to the reasons for the presence of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in southern Lebanon during the 1970s and early 1980s. The latter was a pivotal factor in escalating tensions that ultimately drew in Washington mediations and the peacekeeping force including the US Marines, which, in turn, set the stage for Iranian retaliation amid the broader Iran-Iraq War.

As it happened, the PLO's establishment in Lebanon transformed the region into a volatile front line. Following the 1967 Six-Day War, where Israel decisively defeated Arab coalitions and occupied the West Bank, Gaza, and other territories, Palestinian nationalism surged. The PLO, founded in 1964 under Yasser Arafat's leadership from 1969, became the umbrella organization for various Palestinian factions seeking to liberate Palestine through armed struggle.

However, internal Arab politics complicated their operations. The PLO originally operated out of Jordan, but its growing military presence led to Black September in 1970. During the

ensuing civil war, King Hussein's forces expelled PLO fighters, killing thousands and forcing survivors to flee.

Many relocated to Lebanon, where existing Palestinian refugee camps – established after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War – provided a ready base. Lebanon, however, with its fragile sectarian balance codified in the 1943 National Pact, was ill-equipped to handle this influx, to employ an understatement.

Illustrative of the long-arm of history, the 1943 pact had allocated power based on a 1932 census: Maronite Christians held the presidency, Sunni Muslims the premiership, and Shia Muslims the speakership of parliament.

By the 1970s, however, demographic shifts favored Muslims, particularly Shias which populated the south of the country, thereby straining the confessional system. But it was the PLO's arrival that exacerbated the the sectarian tensions to the breaking point, especially after it established a "state within a state" in southern Lebanon, known as "Fatahland".

This designation was reference to Arafat's Fatah faction. Refugee camps like Rashidieh and Sabra became militarized hubs, housing not just civilians but PLO training facilities, arms depots, and launch sites for cross-border attacks into Israel.

From these camps, PLO fedayeen (guerrillas) conducted raids, rocket attacks and infiltrations targeting Israeli civilians and military outposts. These actions, in turn, provoked Israeli retaliations and often indiscriminate airstrikes and artillery bombardments on Lebanese villages and camps. The resulting large-scale civilian casualties fueled resentment among locals, particularly Shias who were the dominant population of southern Lebanon and who bore the brunt of the Israeli retaliations.

The PLO's presence also intertwined with Lebanon's internal divisions. In 1969, the Cairo Agreement, brokered by Egypt's Nasser, granted PLO autonomy in 16 refugee camps, allowing them to bear arms and conduct operations against Israel, provided they respected Lebanese sovereignty.

However, the PLO frequently violated these rules, clashing with Lebanese forces and Christian militias like the Phalange, founded by Pierre Gemayel in 1936 as a Maronite paramilitary.

Christians viewed the PLO as a threat to their dominance, while leftist Muslim and Druze factions allied with the PLO against the status quo. So by the mid-1970s, southern Lebanon was a veritable powder keg.

The PLO's Katyusha rocket barrages into northern Israel (Galilee) disrupted life there, prompting evacuations and economic hardship. So Israel responded with operations like the 1973 Verdun raid in Beirut, killing large numbers of PLO leaders.

This cycle continued to intensify, contributing to the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975. In April of that year Phalangists ambushed a bus in Ain al-Rummaneh, killing 27 Palestinians, sparking widespread fighting. The PLO sided with the leftist National Movement against Christian forces, further entrenching their role.

The camps symbolized Palestinian resilience but also became symbols of occupation for the Lebanese. Shias, traditionally marginalized, initially sympathized but grew resentful as PLO dominance led to lawlessness, extortion, and collateral damage from Israeli reprisals.

By 1978, Israel launched Operation Litani, invading southern Lebanon up to the Litani River to create a buffer zone, displacing 100,000–250,000 and killing hundreds. In response, the

PLO withdrew temporarily but returned and rebuilt its fortifications.

This period highlighted the PLO's dual role: As liberators for Palestinians and destabilizers for Lebanon. Their camps hosted up to 10,000 fighters by 1982, launching attacks that killed dozens in Israel annually.

In turn, this set the stage for Israel's 1982 invasion, aimed at eradicating the PLO threat once and for all. The Israeli invasion was code-named Operation Peace for Galilee and was a direct response to the PLO's entrenched presence in the south, but it evolved into a broader campaign under Defense Minister Ariel Sharon's ambitious vision.

Launched in June 1982 it marked Israel's second major incursion into Lebanon, following 1978's Operation Litani, and aimed to eliminate PLO infrastructure, expel Syrian forces, and install a pro-Israeli government. In this context, Sharon, a hawkish general turned politician, had long advocated invading Lebanon to crush the PLO and reshape the region.

He envisioned a "new order" where Bashir Gemayel, the Christian Phalange leader, would become Lebanon's president, signing a peace treaty with Israel, and Syrian influence would be curtailed.

The operation began with airstrikes on PLO targets in Beirut and southern Lebanon, followed by a ground invasion involving three divisions: one along the coast to Sidon and Beirut, another through central Lebanon to the Beirut-Damascus highway, and a third engaging Syrians in the Bekaa Valley.

Officially, the goal was a 40-km buffer zone to push PLO rockets out of range of northern Israel, but Sharon expanded it without full cabinet approval, advancing all the way to Beirut by June.

As it unfolded, the Israeli invasion overwhelmed PLO defenses. In southern camps like Rashidieh and Tyre, fedayeen resisted fiercely but were outgunned. Israel captured vast PLO arms caches, including tanks and artillery, thereby attempting to liquidate the "state within a state".

Civilian casualties were necessarily high given the dense urban environments in which these battles were conducted. Estimates at the time suggested 10,000–20,000 Lebanese and Palestinians died, many in bombings of densely populated areas. The siege of Beirut, from June to August 1982, involved relentless shelling and the cutting off water and electricity, leading to thousands more deaths.

Sharon's strategy included allying with Christian militias, particularly the Phalange, to avoid urban combat in Beirut. This alliance was rooted in shared anti-PLO sentiments. Israel also clashed with Syrian forces, destroying 82–86 Syrian aircraft in the Bekaa air battles and advancing against Syrian troops.

By mid-June 1982, Israel controlled southern Lebanon and besieged West Beirut, where 6,000–9,000 PLO fighters were trapped. Internationally, the invasion drew condemnation. So US policy under President Reagan initially supported Israel, but grew concerned as the civilian death toll mounted into the tens of thousands. At length, President Reagan even halted F-16 deliveries and pushed hard on Israel for a ceasefire.

The ensuing UN resolutions demanded Israeli withdrawal, but the latter ignored them as usual. At length, as amplified below, the PLO evacuation to Tunisia was completed in August 1982 under multinational supervision.

In that narrow sense, the Israeli invasion achieved its short-term goal. However, it failed in any reasonable longer-term sense: There was no peace treaty with Lebanon and the

widespread death and destruction spurred Hezbollah's rise among Shias resentful of the Israeli occupation.

Moreover, the war deepened Lebanon's divisions, setting up the conditions for even more traumatic violence thereafter. We are referring to the massacres by the Christian Phalange at the Sabra and Shatila refugees camps, which occurred on September 16–18, 1982. These travesties were among the darkest chapters of the Lebanon War, perpetrated by Christian Phalange militiamen with Israeli complicity.

These events involved the killing of 1,500–3,500 civilians (mostly Palestinians and Lebanese Shias) and were ostensibly what prompted the deployment of multinational forces, including U.S. Marines, to stabilize Beirut. Again, however, in all the deliberations at the NSC there was never any showing that essentially pulling Israel's irons out of the fire of international condemnation had any bearing whatsoever on the America's Homeland security from sea-to-shinning-sea.

In any event, following the PLO's evacuation, Israel occupied West Beirut on September 15, violating agreements with both the US and Lebanese government. This move came after the assassination of President-elect Bashir Gemayel on September 14 by a Syrian agent – a further reminder of why the US should not have been involved in this regional hornets nest.

President Gemayel was the hereditary Christian Phalange leader and Israeli ally. His death enraged Phalangists, who blamed Palestinians despite no direct PLO link.

So Sharon authorized Phalange entry into Sabra neighborhood and Shatila camp to “mop up” remaining PLO fighters, estimated at 200. Israeli forces surrounded the area, illuminated it with flares, and prevented escapes. Phalangists then entered on September 16, unleashing a 36–48 hour rampage of rape, mutilation, and murder. Victims included women, children, and elderly; bodies were bulldozed into mass graves.

The massacres purportedly avenged Gemayel's death and earlier Phalange losses. But they were genocidal in intent and effect, targeting Palestinians as a group. Israeli officials knew of the killings by evening of the first day but delayed intervention until several days later. A subsequent Israeli investigation Commission later found Sharon indirectly responsible, recommending his removal.

Needless to say, global outrage ensued, followed by UN condemnation and the return of the peacekeeping forces which had been withdrawn weeks earlier. The massacres highlighted the war's brutality and provided the reason for international peacekeepers to protect Palestinians and stabilize Lebanon.

As it had transpired, the US manned peacekeeping force had been deployed to oversee PLO evacuation to Tunisia and other North African countries. Negotiated by the State Department, the August 1982 agreement required the aforementioned PLO withdrawal from Beirut under MNF supervision to prevent further bloodshed.

From August 21 to September 1, 1982 upwards of 14,400 PLO fighters and officials had been evacuated by sea and land to Tunisia, Yemen, Sudan, and Syria. Arafat departed for Greece, then Tunisia, marking the end of PLO's Lebanese “state within a state.”

The MNF, which included 800 U.S. Marines from the 32nd Marine Amphibious Unit, had landed August 25 to secure the port and ensure safe passage. With its mission complete by September 10, the MNF withdrew, but Gemayel's assassination and subsequent massacres prompted re-deployment on September 29.

Now, the goal shifted to stabilizing Beirut, supporting the Lebanese government, and training the army. Again, how that enhanced the homeland security of America by one iota

was never stated.

Nevertheless, diverse Lebanese groups opposing Israel's continued occupation of southern Lebanon, which bred resistance from diverse groups: Druze, Shias, Sunnis, and leftover Palestinians – all of which united against foreign presence despite internal rifts.

The Druze led by Walid Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) controlled the Chouf Mountains. Initially neutral, they clashed with Israelis and Christians post-1982, viewing occupation as a threat to Lebanon's autonomy. In 1983, Druze forces defeated Phalangists in the Chouf and took control of the region, displacing 250,000 Christians.

Shias, Lebanon's largest sect by the 1980s, initially welcomed Israelis for ousting PLO but turned hostile due to prolonged occupation and abuses. Amal, led by Nabih Berri, represented moderate Shias, fighting PLO remnants and Israelis.

But radical Shia factions broke away from Am and formed Hezbollah in 1982, and backed by Iran began conducting suicide bombings and guerrilla attacks. Sunnis in Sidon and Tripoli opposed occupation, aligning with the leftist coalition.

These groups' resistance prolonged the conflict, drawing in the MNF as increasingly perceived to be pro-Israel. In any event, as indicated above the MNF and US Marines returned in late September 1982 to protect civilians post-massacre and support Gemayel's government.

By 1983, 1,200 Marines guarded Beirut airport, part of a 5,000-strong force. The mission shifted from evacuation to peacekeeping amid the civil war factions. However, the MNF lost neutrality by supporting the Lebanese Army against Druze and Shia militias, using naval gunfire. This made them targets for Iranian-backed groups.

At this very juncture, however, Washington tilted toward Iraq in the Iran-Iraq to prevent Iranian victory. After Iran's 1979 Revolution and hostage crisis, President Reagan removed Iraq from terrorism list in 1982, providing intelligence, credits (\$2.5 billion by 1983), and dual-use tech. Fearing Iranian export of revolution, U.S. shared satellite imagery and allowed arms sales to Iraq.

At the end of the day, elements of the the imperiled government in Tehran orchestrated the October 23, 1983, bombing via Hezbollah precursor Islamic Jihad.

And yet and yet. Those marines should never have been there because their ever changing mission was always in service to Empire, never to the benefit of America's Homeland security.

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