

Anthony Comegna ([00:21](#)):

Since the mid 1950s the world has exhibited many different unprecedented qualities. More wealth and people than ever before, more deep and important cross cultural exchange, dramatically less violence per capita and an unending train of technological marvels which improve our lives in previously unimaginable ways. In international relations and politics though, one fundamental and terrifying fact has trumped all others.

Anthony Comegna ([00:54](#)):

A small handful of powerful national leaders hold the rest of the planet hostage with the capacity to destroy the human species if they so choose. Hydrogen bombs and the modern state's capacity to wheel them in misguided and necessarily catastrophic warfare is the greatest threat we have ever faced. In this week, fresh off his *Speak for a Sandwich*, Professor Chris Coyne joins us to sort out this most important of all subjects, war and peace.

Anthony Comegna ([01:29](#)):

All right, so now before we dig into the specifics of the possible challenges that I have for you from the lecture that you just gave, the *Speak for a Sandwich* lecture, on peace, I wonder if you could just give us the very basics of what peace is, why it's a desirable thing. Because, as we've known, a lot of different people in schools of thought totally disagree with that.

Chris Coyne ([01:56](#)):

Sure. So the idea of peace is, at its core, the idea of tranquility, harmony, harmony between people. So social harmony. And linked to that, the absent absence of any kind of systematic conflict or, more importantly, violence. Now there can be individual, we all have conflict on a daily basis, but most of us have ways of dealing with it to resolve in a way that allows us to continue to live peacefully. And so that's what peace is, at its core. Why it's important. I think it's important for two reasons. The first is that peace allows people to live their lives. And that's important purely from the individual standpoint of kind of getting the most out of life, living a flourishing life. You can pursue those things you want to pursue, you can experiment, you can associate with who you want to associate with or avoid certain associations with people, as you so choose. And so peace allows for individual development and flourishing.

Chris Coyne ([03:03](#)):

And then when we move beyond the individual to interactions between people and the results of that, it leads to prosperity as well. It leads to development as people are able to take advantage of the gains of peaceful interaction. And that's things like experimentation, innovation, increases in the extent of the market for trading and exchanging and so on. And of course, in addition, to all the wonderful benefits we get through human relationships. They don't have to be economic relationships, peaceful relationships with other people. And so, as a whole, peace is a prerequisite for living a flourishing life, both individually and in terms of prosperity.

Anthony Comegna ([03:48](#)):

Now what do you say to the schools of thought out there, I don't want to jump immediately to, "Well, but Hitler said," but there is sort of a weird rise right now among groups, like people in the alt-right of Italian fascist thinkers, like Julius Evola and you can go back to Teddy Roosevelt, right here in the grand

old USA. His ideas about manliness and strife and conflict building character are kind of bizarre because he doesn't seem to have that kind of reverence for peace. He does talk a good game like Americans at the time wanted to hear, but when he's running for president in 1912 and stuff, he's having these dreams about a war with Germany just to keep our spirits up and make us manly. The new generation needs the kind of manliness that he won by killing Spaniards in Cuba and stuff.

Anthony Comegna ([04:43](#)):

What do you make of that point of view that actually peace isn't valuable, it's conflict. It's this sort of evolutionary battle of the strong that ultimately produces the strongest, the best?

Chris Coyne ([04:55](#)):

Right. And so this view ultimately holds that conflict is at the core, as you put it, of human society. And it's the extent we have peace, it's the result of conflict and that its maintenance requires conflict. I think I would highlight the following. Emphasizing the importance of peace, as I do, as a fundamental characteristic of a free and prosperous society, a liberal society, doesn't ignore or have an overly romantic view of human beings. So what I mean by that is, I'm fully aware that conflict is ubiquitous. Anytime people interact with each other, they're going to have conflicts. Even the people that otherwise get along extremely well, a person, their significant other, they have conflicts all the time. The question is, can we have mechanisms and rules to peacefully resolve those disputes? And to my way of thinking, that framing, that is that piece is at the core of things, not conflict, is fundamentally more conducive to individual development and societal development.

Chris Coyne ([06:10](#)):

The reason being that when you hold up conflict as the kind of primary value and driver of society, really what you're saying is that violence is at the core of human society. And, of course, then when the state gets involved, which are several of the people you just highlighted in your question, this violence is going to be scaled up. It's going to be magnified greatly. And very quickly, when you think through the logistics of that, you realize that this has nothing at all to do with human flourishing, but is instead a recipe for sure-fire destruction and death and squalor. Killing people, killing trading partners, killing innovation, experimentation, killing the ability of people to flourish individually and so on. And so when I hear people talk about this, it's usually politicians. And the first thought that crosses my mind is that it's very useful political rhetoric.

Chris Coyne ([07:17](#)):

One of the great ways that the political elite secure and maintain support, is through creating fear about external enemies and by perpetuating the very idea that the world is one of conflict. That there are forces out there that, around every corner, are trying to get us. Not just get you, but really get you, kill you. And without turning over power to the state, to the state apparatus, that this will happen. And so to my way of thinking, this gets the story wrong, and it gets wrong the ability and creativity of individuals to recognize the benefits of peace and to figure out various arrangements and solutions to both establish and maintain peaceful relationships over time.

Anthony Comegna ([08:04](#)):

As I understand it, that's exactly what Herbert Spencer said, back in the day, about Darwinian evolution. That we're special because we have the ability to basically put down tooth and claw and do things differently. And the fact that the people still don't seem to recognize that and, like you were saying in

your lecture, the default presupposition is always, go to the state, go to the state to get it done. That kind of like 10,000 year long history of profound lack of creativity in solving problems is pretty troubling.

Chris Coyne ([08:37](#)):

There's the lack of creativity, but associated with that and the other reason I don't like the conflict-first model of humankind, is that engaging in creativity and finding solutions to various problems, it is a attribute or a skill that can be developed, that can be practiced and exercised. And when you default rely on the state as the solution to problems, it allows that muscle, if you will, to wither away, to weaken, because it's not being exercised. And so a lot of times people say things like, "Well, of course the state has to do it. They've always done it." Well, maybe people haven't been given the chance. I don't know what people will do. But if the state's so great and people can either create or constrain the state, it seems to me that they also can create a constrain other various mechanisms to create peace as well.

Anthony Comegna ([09:36](#)):

Now maybe this isn't properly a challenge, because I imagine you have a pretty stock response ready to go. But you mentioned the state, the state, the state, repeatedly. I'm sure you'd agree that that's an abstraction, right? The state is really just a bunch of people doing stuff. It is essentially private actors who have shrouded themselves in sort of a public mythos, you know? And that gives legitimacy or a cover, a magical touch, to whatever it is that they're doing. But it is essentially just people.

Anthony Comegna ([10:10](#)):

So I'm an atheist but I was raised Catholic, and I think there is still some kind of truth to original sin. Like we are all horrible little worms and we do awful things and we're subject to that like slide and decline into evil. And I'm not so sure that the abstract state is the problem so much as it's a more fundamental problem of personal ethics. But I worry that libertarians or classical liberals don't necessarily give so much credence to that point of view because they're so focused on the state, the state, the state as the target of their own hatred. Justifiably.

Chris Coyne ([10:54](#)):

Well, that's a wonderful point that you raised and so let me just say a few things which I think are relating. So certainly when we talk about the state, we're talking about an abstract, a homogenous entity that is acting. And I think that's a useful shorthand. But of course, then when we go to actually understand the world and how it operates, we want to unpack that. We want to unpack that box that we're calling the state and we want to focus on the various institutions and organizations that constitute the state, the individuals in those institutions, and, more specifically from the perspective of political economy, the epistemic or knowledge aspects and incentives created by those institutions.

Chris Coyne ([11:38](#)):

And I think that's an important point. It's a point that James Buchanan raised about the study of public finance, that we can't talk about the state absent some kind of understanding of how the state operates and what it entails. But we have an apparatus to do that. And so the way I think about it, following Buchanan, and I'm coming at it from a political economy perspective here, I'm not saying it's the only way to think about it, is that analytically we can think about the same agent type so we can make assumptions about people, and then place them in different alternative institutional arrangements and see how they'll behave.

Chris Coyne ([12:16](#)):

So let's move from that to something a little more concrete related to what you were saying. Let's assume that that people are terrible, inherently terrible. Let's just assume that's our operating assumption. Okay, so let's place them in different institutional environments. One is that they walk around in the state of nature and they interact with people and sometimes it's violent, sometimes it's peaceful, varies. Sometimes they're able to come up with cooperative solutions, other times they're not. Or we can think about the state apparatus. What's the state? Well, we'll just follow the normal kind of standard definition of a monopoly on force. All right? So there's an apparatus that is viewed as having legitimacy with ultimate say over a geographic region, backstopped by force or threat thereof. What happens when you move those same individuals, again given our assumption, from the realm of the state of nature, which admittedly is going to have some undesirable outcomes, and place them in a state apparatus?

Chris Coyne ([13:19](#)):

And that's the problem. People typically say we identify a problem in the world. There's violence, there's a lack of order, there's threats, so there's bad people out there. So what do we need to do? We'll create a state apparatus and that state apparatus will protect us. But we need to unpack that and we need to say wait a second. Maybe that is that the right, only the good people, will be selected into government, but that's places an onus on the proponent of that position to identify the appropriate selection mechanisms. Or they might say bad people might get selected so we need constitutional constraints. That places onus on the proponent of the constitutional solution to offer a actual argument for, not just writing down ideal constitutional rules, but how they'll be enforced, how they'll be enforced when you have some, perhaps, good people, but a high likelihood of some really bad people since that's our operating assumption, in positions of power.

Chris Coyne ([14:19](#)):

And do you really think that when you give a group of people, oftentimes bad people, and there's arguments for that, for why bad people rise to positions of power, this goes to Hayek's argument about why the worst get on top, and you give them awesome centralized power. Do you really think they're going to follow constitutional rules? If not, then the constitutional solution's a weak one. So then this leaves us in a position where we have these comparative institutions, again recognizing that bad people are going to do bad things, and so, to my way of thinking, what we want to do is to minimize the potential for bad people to do harm.

Chris Coyne ([14:55](#)):

And they can do a lot of harm. And so one way of doing that is to disperse power, is to not allow for centralized power. And looking to the state apparatus, that is all the things that constitute the military, the national security state, as the solution to problems of peace and order, runs that risk. It means that you are putting a severe and significant amount of power in the hands of a small group of people with the belief that only benevolent people are going to exercise that power, either directly or through checks and balances. And I don't find that convincing. Other people do, but I personally don't. Not based on first principles, but based on a mix of political economy analysis, of how governments operate and the incentives people face, as well as the empirical record of what states have done throughout human history, which is usually a rape, pillage and plunder.

Anthony Comegna ([15:54](#)):

Now, you mentioned two things in your lecture earlier that I'd like to connect here and tie it together a bit better. Nuclear weapons and class analysis.

Chris Coyne ([16:06](#)):

Again, if you think this is too strong and rhetoric, pick your pet area. Whether it's education, healthcare, whatever your pet policy area is. The DMV. Let's say you hate going to the DMV, right? You say it's a long line, or Amtrak or the Metro right here in D.C. Man, they're really bad at running the Metro. All right. Now imagine scaling up the Metro and giving it nuclear weapons. It's the same industrial organization. It's the same structure. It's just magnified on a greater scale. Under what set of conditions do the same problems that plague ordinary politics domestically go away when we scale it up internationally? If anything, we should expect those same issues to be much greater. And we have good arguments for that. Finally, powering class analysis. You say, "Wait a second, that sounds like Marx, what are we doing here?" Well, Marx gets too much credit for this. We got to take it back. Take the power back.

Chris Coyne ([16:58](#)):

There's Albert Jay Nock, there's Franz Oppenheimer, the state. Then you say, "Well wait, they're after Marx." Well, wait a second, what about the French liberals? So we're talking late 1700s into the 1800s, right? Charles Comte, Charles Dunoyer. What were these folks pointing out? That there's certainly power in class structures in society. Here's the way that they thought about it. There is what a Albert Jay Nock talked about is the distinction between political power and social power. Political power constitutes all that in the realm of violence, force or the threat thereof. Social power entails voluntary cooperation between consenting individuals. These things are at odds with one another. That is when the political apparatus seizes additional political power, that is going to come at the expense of the social power that is possessed by individuals.

Anthony Comegna ([17:59](#)):

Your comment right there made me start thinking that, really, the small handful of world leaders out there that control nuclear codes and can give the authority to order a nuclear attack, they're essentially the most powerful and concentrated class that has ever existed in human history. More than the priests and pharaohs of ancient Egypt or something, or the emperor or son of heaven in ancient China. Like this is the kind of power that's really, truly unimaginable. Can destroy the whole species several times over and seriously endanger all life on earth, or most of it at least. I guess tardigrades would survive, lucky them.

Anthony Comegna ([18:45](#)):

But it's really confusing to me, given that we libertarians or classical liberals, for hundreds and hundreds of years, as you said earlier, before the Marxists, had a very coherent, cogent, powerful class analysis that we seem to have just dropped in the 20th century probably because of battles against communism and socialism and other ideas that smack of the left, that use class.

Anthony Comegna ([19:13](#)):

How do you use class analysis in your work here? And how do you think it relates to the modern war making capacity of the state?

Chris Coyne ([19:27](#)):

Sure. So as you mentioned, class analysis is usually associated with Marxists. But I think that is giving up an important set of tools that are in our analytical toolbox. And by our, I mean classical liberal thinkers and scholars. And the way I think about classes is very much in line with the French liberals from the late 1700s into the 1800s. And then of course a Franz Oppenheimer in his book, *The State*, and then Albert Jay Nock in *Our Enemy, The State*. And, of course, Oppenheimer made this distinction between the political and the economic means of earning a wealth or operating in society. The economic means, the voluntary means, the political means or the coercive means or use of force.

Chris Coyne ([20:21](#)):

The way Nock put it was to differentiate between what he called political power and social power. Political power is the realm of force and coercion. Social power is the realm of voluntary interaction and association. The concern for these thinkers was that, as the political apparatus gain more power, that is as political power increased, it meant that social power was being eroded, given up. And so the risk being, of course, that as more and more are subsumed by the coercive apparatus of the state, it crowds out and erodes and ultimately destroys the voluntary cooperative nature of humankind.

Chris Coyne ([21:11](#)):

And so I think that's a powerful analytical tool. I think it's a powerful analytical tool for thinking about a variety of issues. I think it's an analytical tool for thinking about, certainly, economic issues. And so when we think about things like political privilege or political capitalism or what people often call crony capitalism, really what they're getting at is the political means versus the economic means and how the use of the political apparatus crowds out voluntary economic interactions and, of course, the welfare consequences of that. When a communist [inaudible 00:21:44] talks about things like rent seeking, rent extraction, regulatory capture, this is all kind of stuff they're getting at. When we talk about things like public private partnerships and how that can erode the various desirable consequences of private actors in private markets, that's we're talking about.

Chris Coyne ([22:04](#)):

Okay, so how does that apply to war making? In a variety of ways. I think we can use that analytical structure as part of a broader analysis to think about all aspects of war making. And so think about the supply of letting, we have the state providing security. Well, right away we've given the state power, which means it's taken away from individuals. And of course, that's the very rhetoric that's used. You need to give up some of your freedom and liberty in order for us to make you safe. You have to allow us to do certain things in the name of safety. All right, well we've given up social power for political power. But then, of course, you have to actually do stuff. So what does it require when the government or the state does things?

Chris Coyne ([22:44](#)):

Well, of course, you need to produce things. Well, where are they going to get things from? Well, they have to rearrange resources in society. Some of those they extract directly through taxation, others they bid away from alternative uses. And so you get these partnerships, these entanglements, between the state, between government actors, the national security state, and the private sector, and it bids those resources away from other private uses and you get national security outputs that presumably, or purportedly, are meant to protect us. And now what does this do? Well, to my way of thinking, just like our analysis of cronyism in any other market points out that these kinds of arrangements between the state apparatus and private firms undermine the dynamism of markets, so too does it in the military

sector. You know the military sector is peak cronyism. It is a corporate, fascist, economic system. There's private ownership over the means of production, so the government doesn't nationalize the means of production, but it partners with industry in order to meet national goals or to meet outputs that are necessary to meet national goals.

Chris Coyne ([23:58](#)):

That is fundamentally at odds with the market system the way that most classical liberals talk about it. Certainly the desirable features of it. Then you talk about the other apparatus that constitutes the national security state. You have an array of bureaucracies, many of them secretive, who have significant amounts of power. Power not just to control resource flows, but to surveil people, to control people, to access people's personal information in the name of providing security. That's all political power at the cost of social power. Then of course, you have outputs. And what are our outputs? Well, those are all the various activities undertaken by the national security state. And again, what are those things do? Well, both domestically and internationally, they tend to expand political power and reduce social power. What do I mean by that? Well think about America, America's an interesting empire.

Chris Coyne ([24:48](#)):

It's not like an old school empire where you have colonies. But you have the satellite setups that constitute bases, an entire network of bases. The accounting on this varies anywhere from 400 to 800 bases, depending who you talk to. And so in terms of real estate holdings, the US military sector has a significant portfolio of real estate around the globe. Foreign aid, various covert operations to manipulate and overthrow governments in other countries. And you realize pretty quickly that the military apparatus is sucking away power from individuals both domestically and internationally in the name of creating order, and it does so by subsuming more power for itself. So then we come to something like nuclear weapons.

Chris Coyne ([25:35](#)):

And so nuclear weapons are, as you pointed out, one of the greatest threats to mankind in the name of protecting mankind. Fortunately they haven't been used a lot, but they have been used. But there's the risk that they'll be used. And people say they could never be used, no one would ever do that. Or they only be used under the most important circumstances. And if you actually read the history of these things, you realize very quickly that they're extremely dangerous. There's several good books on this, but the most recent is by Daniel Ellsberg. It's called *The Doomsday Machine*. In addition to *The Pentagon Papers*, Ellsberg stole thousands, he didn't steal them, he copied them. I guess the government considers it stealing them, to the extent you think that's the property of the public since they deserve to know what their government's doing. That's why I corrected myself when I said that, and that's my frame of thinking.

Chris Coyne ([26:25](#)):

In any case, these documents got destroyed, he talks about this in the introduction in the book, before he could release them. And *The Doomsday Machine* is an attempt to go through this. And one of the things he documents is people think about things like the political football that follows the president around, and how few people have access to these things. And he points out there's a lot of people who have access to these things and the command and control structure is highly distorted and imperfect and there's lots of dysfunctions in it. Basic things like communication between the chain of command,

that some pilot would have the ability to launch a nuclear strike and couldn't wait for the communication to get from the mainland.

Chris Coyne ([27:01](#)):

Then there's just human error. You have numerous cases throughout American history where there were near nuclear accidents, not due to war time, just due to human error. People making mistakes, like repair mistakes in nuclear facilities or planes dropping nuclear bombs. I think it's in one of the Carolinas. And you just take into account human error, there's the real possibility that, at some point, these weapons could be used, either by accident or purposefully, and would have devastating effects. And as Ellsberg points out, it's not just the immediate devastation, but it's the longterm devastation due to the nuclear winter, which is that you would have effects on the atmosphere that would prevent sun from shining down that would affect things like agriculture and other various aspects of life that would be devastating. That would be devastating on the most vulnerable people around the world, but also on people that are relatively wealthy now but require these things. And it would destroy life and really have a devastating effect. A.

Chris Coyne ([28:05](#)):

And this is, as you correctly pointed out, perhaps the best example, or case to hold up of purely institutionalized power and what happens when a relatively small number of people hold that power and invest resources in developing the tools of war. You know, a lot of people look at nuclear, the development of this and other kinds of war innovations, they point out these great civilian spillover effects. They'll say things like the internet and GPS, all these great things came out of this that make us better off. Well, maybe. Of course that that assumes those things wouldn't have emerged in some form absent that. But what about the devastation, both actual and potential, that was also developed by redirecting human creativity and ingenuity from developing things that make people better off to developing ways to destroy, maim and kill human civilization?

Chris Coyne ([29:08](#)):

And to my way of thinking, that's a very dangerous course of events. And again, one that only happens on that scale because of a centralized state apparatus which has the resources and the desire to develop ways to destroy human life. And so that leads me to be highly skeptical of the ability of this apparatus to be a net force for good in the world and one that makes me highly skeptical of claims to the opposite.

Anthony Comegna ([29:38](#)):

You have me ready to storm the barricades here. Cause Scott Horton for example, is always saying there's no more important issue in the world than peace between the US and Russia, peace between India and Pakistan, peace between the US and China. There's absolutely no more important question. But part of what I worry about too is that, a colleague said to me downstairs before your talk, but nuclear weapons have prevented a lot of war. They've promoted a lot of international stability and helped reduce violence, but they keep these regimes permanently enshrined in place, and they can keep doing and doing and doing bad and committing us to protecting them and shielding them because we cannot let those catastrophic weapons fall into the wrong hands, as though they aren't already.

Chris Coyne ([30:25](#)):

Yeah. That, that's exactly right. The whole idea of order in the world, as if it is something that is the object of choice, that is if it's something that there's a few levers that well intentioned people in the

American government or or some international organization or whatever government you want to insert, can somehow pull and exercise, in some kind of neat and clean manner, in order to strike a balance, strikes me as patently absurd.

Chris Coyne ([30:50](#)):

I mean, think about it. When economists talk about the economy, there is no economy of course, there's people that interact. One of the things we push back against is the idea that the economy is like a bathtub or a motor where it's like the economy is getting too hot so you just cool it off by pulling this lever or heat it up by this lever, or you fix it like it's an engine that needs construction. The reason we push back against that is because we've realized that the economy is not some physical entity that is this homogenous thing that can be neatly compartmentalized and defined, but rather a series of overlapping complex systems that emerge out of the interactions of hundreds of millions of dispersed individuals, in a way that generates order when we step back and look. Meaning I can look at this cup of coffee and say, "It's amazing, this cup of coffee got here and I didn't essentially plan it. Let's study how that happened." And then we can say that's orderly but without anyone centrally planning.

Chris Coyne ([31:51](#)):

Now let's take that same logic and think about the international world and move beyond purely economic matters into social matters and so on. I think the same logic holds. I don't think there's such a thing as a order, liberal or otherwise, that is the result of human creation and designed for the world. I think there are certain outcomes that exist because political decision makers in extremely powerful countries made those decisions at one point in time, and those things have consequences and now there's a certain arrangement, as you point out, that perpetuates and persists, both because of those past decisions but also current positions and policies that prop them up.

Chris Coyne ([32:35](#)):

But why is that a default position of a good thing? It's certainly good for the people that get to control the levers, that get to choose who gets to be in charge. But why is that desirable? When we look around the world and look at the various authoritarian regimes that are propped up because the US and other governments, supposed that governments that are committed to liberal Western values, have installed them or covertly helped them rise to power, and then remain in power either through direct or indirect US intervention. That is direct or indirect military intervention, foreign aid or some combination thereof.

Chris Coyne ([33:12](#)):

We have to ask ourselves why that's a good thing. Why do we want to prop up illiberalism if our goal is liberalism? To my way of thinking, we want those regimes, number one, to, as you pointed out, to be peaceful towards us. And agitating them, whether it is directly prodding them through both economic or military warfare or threat thereof or by having weapons that threaten them, seems to me to be at odds with that. But also by preventing the people that live within those societies for agitating for their own change. Because one of the things that people rarely ask in the American policy space in, Washington, D.C. is, what do other people want? Why is it that the preferences of a small group of elite in Washington, D.C. somehow serve for what the world should look like?

Chris Coyne ([34:05](#)):

You know, this was very stark and it's bipartisan. President Obama said it, President Bush said it, about Iraq and Afghanistan. When things went wrong in numerous places they said things like, "Well, we gave

them a chance to be free and they've rejected it." I mean, think about the arrogance of this. We, the enlightened ones, gave them a gift. We bestowed a gift upon them, the chance to be free, and they rejected it. As if it's a kid on Christmas that you're handing a gift to you and they throw it back in your face. Perhaps, but here's another alternative. These folks want nothing of what you're offering and what you perhaps perceive as how the world should look, they want no part of it. Or at least not the way you envision it.

Chris Coyne ([34:47](#)):

And so, to my way of thinking, for folks who are truly concerned with individual freedom, with liberalism, both domestically and internationally, it would be good to look long and hard in the mirror and say, "What is the mindset that is required when you intervene in other countries? What is the implicit or explicit mindset?" One characteristic of that mental schema is that you think your preferences are superior to the preferences of other people. That is, you don't like how the world looks, but you have a better way that it should look and that you think that's how it should look. And on top of that, then you think you can marshal the resources through the state apparatus which, as I mentioned, is a massive entanglement of cronyism, to bring that end about.

Chris Coyne ([35:33](#)):

That's a tall order with a set of heroic assumptions, given what we know about how the state apparatus operates. And so, again, this is what leads me to be skeptical of these claims. I think there's other more nefarious forces often at work, where people want to perpetuate their political power or the power of their cronies, at the expense of individuals, both domestically but, more importantly, individually. And I say more importantly because these are the lives we are intervening upon. By we I mean the government that supposedly represents us and acts on our behalf and to protect us. And so, from that perspective, again, I'm led to the conclusion of something I mentioned during the talk of, we should apply the precautionary principle to the operations of the state when it comes to matters of foreign affairs. Meaning that we should be highly skeptical that it can actually accomplish its stated ends.

Anthony Comegna ([36:36](#)):

Professor Chris Coyne is an economist here at George Mason. He is the co editor of both the *Review of Austrian Economics* and the *Independent Review*, as well as book review editor for *Public Choice*. If you like what you heard today, be sure to check out his book with fellow economists, Abigail Hall Blanco, *Tyranny Comes Home, The Domestic Fate Of US Militarism*.