

want to know why there is a crime problem in the inner city? Do you want to know why schools are bad in the inner city? Start with illegitimacy.

I'd like to tell you a story I read in a book by James Robeson, *My Father's Face*. In the first chapter, he talks about a federal prison chaplain who decided to increase

morale. He went to one of the major greeting card companies and said: "Look, Mother's Day is coming up. Why don't you, as an act of goodwill and PR for you, give us 500 free Mother's Day cards?"

The company thought that was a good idea, and it was extremely successful. Every single inmate filled out a Mother's Day card

and sent it to good old Mom.

Father's Day rolled around. The chaplain thought he would duplicate his success. He went back to the card company and got 500 Father's Day cards. Not a single inmate, not one, wanted to send one to his father. Are there any questions about the extent of the problem? ■

## The American Anti-Statist Tradition

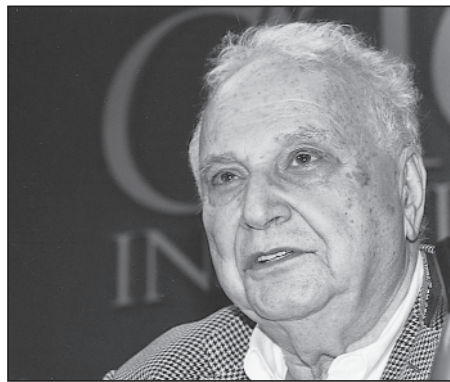
**O**n the afternoon of September 13, participants gathered for another Book Forum. Seymour Martin Lipset, the Hazel Professor of Public Policy at George Mason University and coauthor of *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States*, and Aaron L. Friedberg, professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton University and author of *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America's Anti-Statism and Its Cold War Grand Strategy*, discussed "American exceptionalism." Excerpts from their remarks follow.

**Seymour Martin Lipset:** The term "American exceptionalism" was coined by Alexis de Tocqueville in his justly celebrated *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville talked about America's being exceptional, by which he meant "different," qualitatively different in all kinds of ways from Europe, particularly France.

When I talk about "American exceptionalism," I sometimes get objections or criticisms from two sources. On the one hand, some conservatives say that there's a lot of socialism here—government ownership, control, taxes. On the other hand, socialists don't like the notion that somehow socialism couldn't have developed in the United States and won't develop here in the future.

The major obstacle to the possibility of socialism or statism is the fact that this is an anti-statist country. It is a country that is suspicious of the state. Anti-statism goes back to the American Revolution, which was a revolution against a strong state. The Declaration of Independence is a libertarian document. The man who wrote it, Thomas Jefferson, once said that that government governs best which governs least.

Well, this tradition of the United States that flows from its politics was reinforced by its religious tradition and institutions, because there again America has a unique pattern. Christianity in this country is quite different from Christianity in any other country. Tocqueville was struck by the strength of religion in the United States. He said religion was much stronger here



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than in Europe, and it was and is. And in America religion was always anti-statist.

The American religions—the Methodists, the Baptists, the Quakers, and others—in Britain were referred to as the nonconformists, or the dissenters. They were nonconforming with or dissenting from the Church of England, the state church, and they were persecuted by the state, and hence they were very much against the state. So the American religious tradition has been an anti-statist tradition, whereas the religious tradition in Europe, and even to a considerable degree in Canada, has been a state-related, a state-supporting religious tradition.

So, you have these factors—the religious tradition, the political history and values, and the political institutions—that all sustain what I call the libertarian orientation of the United States. You know, on the political side we have checks and balances. We talk about gridlock in this country because one party has the presidency and another party the Congress, but this is precisely what the Founders would have liked. Basically, you can say they didn't want an efficient government. They wanted a government that was gridlocked. They may not have thought it through in party terms, but they wanted the sectors, the politicians, the political forces to check each other, to make it difficult.

Socialism and socialist parties developed in other countries where statism was legitimate, where both the conservatives and the left were statist. In the United States, statism was illegitimate, or at least not part of the dominant culture, and hence the socialists were terribly disadvantaged.

One of the forces that was involved in founding socialist parties and still supports them in other countries has been the trade union movement. Some of the socialist parties, like the British Labour Party and others, were founded by the trade unions. Well, in this country, the dominant trade union movement, the American Federation of Labor, opposed the socialists. It and the radical Industrial Workers of the World were anti-statist. There were a lot of socialists in the labor movement, but they never were able to get majority control.

If it weren't for the collapse of communism, the big political story of the last decade or two would have been the end of social-

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ism in Europe. Socialist parties still exist in Europe, they govern, and they still try to represent the less-privileged parts of the population, but their goal is no longer some kind of utopian planned, or socialist, society; they all favor the market.

**Aaron L. Friedberg:** Professor Lipset and I ask rather different questions, but I think in the end give very similar answers. The question I would pose is, Why isn't America a garrison state? Why, especially in the earliest and the most intense years of the Cold War, didn't the United States become an armed camp, in which all authority was ultimately concentrated at the top and all societal efforts and societal resources were directed toward the production of military power and preparation for total war?

Those are not entirely idle or purely speculative questions. If you look back at the period, say, from roughly 1945 to the late 1950s or 1960, it's clear that there really were, I think particularly in the early years of this period, very real possibilities for movement toward a garrison state. The onset of the Cold War had real effects on the size and the role of government in American life. But those effects turned out to be comparatively modest. Why?

The answer is American anti-statism. Strong, deeply rooted, characteristically American suspicion of and resistance to excessive concentrations of governmental power exerted a restraining, countervailing influence and helped to see the United States safely through the Cold War.

How do states create military power? They extract societal resources, principally money and manpower, and direct them toward activities that are intended to enhance immediate and long-term military capabilities: the manufacture of arms, the production of materiel essential to making arms and fighting wars, and the conduct of what is believed to be strategically significant scientific research.

Now, for most of its history, down through the middle of the 20th century, the United States did not have a permanent, highly developed institutional capacity for performing those power-creating functions.

Indeed, it didn't have much of a central state at all. And this was not, as Professor Lipset has indicated, an accident. It was, rather, at least in part, a product of deliberate design. I would suggest that this design has to be understood in the particular fortunate geopolitical context in which the United States found itself.

Creating military power involves extensive intrusions and interventions by the state into society and the economy. And the Founders were intent on limiting the capacity of government to impose precisely those kinds of burdens on citizens. They



**Aaron Friedberg: "Why, in the earliest and most intense years of the Cold War, didn't the United States become an armed camp, in which all societal resources were directed toward the production of military power?"**

did this by constructing certain kinds of governmental institutions, institutions in which authority and decisionmaking power were widely dispersed, and also by promulgating a particular ideology, a set of beliefs in the virtue of equality, liberty, individualism, constitutionalism, and democracy.

The situation after the end of WWII appeared markedly different from that which had existed after previous wars. America's European allies were seriously weakened and so there was no buffer, as there had been in 1914 or 1939, to absorb the first rush of an enemy's aggression and give the United States time, in effect, to build itself a more powerful state.

Moreover, technological change—long-range aircraft, ballistic missiles, atomic weapons, and so on—made things seem even worse. The continental United States itself was now, or would be soon, directly vulnerable to attack. And these political

and technological changes appeared to increase the need for large permanent standing military forces and for the establishment and maintenance of substantial and possibly permanent power-creating mechanisms to support those forces.

I think that the history of the early Cold War period can best be understood as involving a collision between these new externally induced pressures for expansion and an opposing set of anti-statist forces. So, what was the result of this collision?

There is, I think, a prevailing answer to that question, at least in much of the scholarly literature, and it would be something like this: By 1945 anti-statist influences were substantially diminished if not entirely eliminated. The onset of the Cold War led quickly to a national security state or a garrison state, a big powerful permanent central state apparatus with extensive power-creating capabilities.

This view is not entirely false. Certainly, the American state was bigger and stronger, by any measure, in the 1950s than it was in the 1930s. But I think this view also mischaracterizes the outcome of the early postwar period, in large part because it overlooks what might have happened and also because it understates the persistence and power of American anti-statist influences, especially in the first critical early decade of the Cold War.

In 1945, although admittedly much had changed, the basic American political institutions and values remained the same. Moreover, there was a postwar, post-New Deal counter-reaction against the successive expansions in the size and power of the federal government. The expansion of the American state associated with the onset of the Cold War was therefore much more tightly constrained than it might otherwise have been.

A final thought: In retrospect, the Cold War may appear as one in perhaps a 300-year series of contests between increasingly liberal, increasingly democratic states and a succession of monarchical, autocratic, authoritarian, ultimately totalitarian, rivals. And perhaps, if we're lucky, future historians will look back on 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall, as the end of this process of competition and political evolution. ■