

Robust debates on neoconservatism, corporations vs. the market, and more

Online Magazine Cato Unbound Features Leading Scholars

This spring the Pew Research Center released its eighth annual report on the state of American journalism. “In some ways, new media and old, slowly and sometimes grudgingly, are coming to resemble each other,” the study says. The traditional platforms of the Fourth Estate are changing, and last year, online news consumption outstripped print media for the first time in terms of both advertising revenue and readership. The tipping point has arrived. The trend line is clear. And the Cato Institute, it seems, has been ahead of the curve.

Since 2005 Cato Unbound has given readers access to a state-of-the-art virtual trading floor in the intellectual marketplace. A unique online magazine, it reflects an appreciation of the way ideas are exchanged in the digital age. Every month one of the world’s leading thinkers presents an essay on a topical issue. A panel of distinguished experts responds, each offering his case before challenging and refining the arguments in an ongoing conversation. Readers are then encouraged to join the dialogue by offering their own thoughts through websites, blogs, and letters to the editor. These contributions are pulled together into an easily accessible forum, creating a media product that is virtually distinct within the digital realm.

Yet Cato Unbound is also designed to avoid the pitfalls of its platform. For starters, the site revolves around the value of debate. All too often, the sheer availability of personalized news today allows readers to give in to confirmation bias—to seek out only the information that reinforces their existing beliefs. The internet, by any measure, caters to the obstinate. At Cato Unbound, however, contributors are forced to confront their critics, and the tendency to selectively ignore the opposition is mitigated.

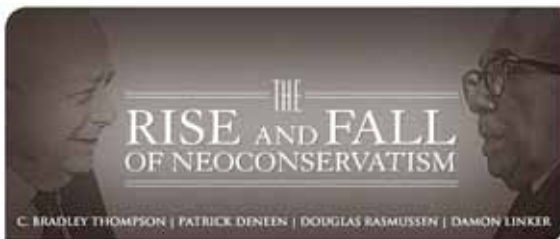
The site also hinges on the importance of perspective. The current news climate is subject to certain kinds of pressure: readers increasingly look for minute-by-minute updates. Many sites therefore suffer from a lack of depth by becoming preoccupied

with instantaneous delivery. Cato Unbound is different. “We try to step back, take a deep breath, and focus on the larger picture,” Jason Kuznicki, the site’s editor, explains.

In the latest issue, “Targeted Killing and the Rule of Law,” the editors ask whether the executive branch can lawfully kill. Lead essayist Ryan Alford, assistant professor at the Ave Maria School of Law, argues that it cannot. In fact, the “presidential death warrant” is so repugnant to our constitutional tradition, he says, that the Founders didn’t even think it necessary to make an explicit statement about the practice. At the time of the Revolution, British kings hadn’t enjoyed such a power for centuries, and it was thought to be the very antithesis of the rule of law. The distinguished panel of legal and historical experts responding to Alford includes John C. Dehn of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Gregory McNeal of Pepperdine University, and Carlton Larson of the University of California at Davis.

Other past issues have included

- “The Digital Surveillance State”: After September 11, the growth of the surveillance state was perhaps inevitable. In his lead essay, though, lawyer and columnist Glenn Greenwald argues that it has spiraled out of control. Respondents include law professor John Eastman, Heritage visiting fellow Paul Rosenzweig, and Cato research fellow Julian Sanchez.
- “When Corporations Hate Markets”: The idea that corporations and markets are synonymous is a grave misconception. In his lead essay, philosopher Roderick Long examines the often tangled relationship between business and government. Respon-



Since 2005 Cato Unbound has tackled a variety of issues, from the policy implications of population, to the state of neoconservatism, to the high cost of free parking.

dents include political analyst Matthew Yglesias, economist Steven Horwitz, and economist Dean Baker.

These monthly conversations have received attention from publications like the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *The Economist*. The site has featured a lineup of prominent contributors, including James M. Buchanan, the Nobel laureate and founder of the public choice school of political economy; Richard H. Thaler, professor of economics and behavioral science at the University of Chicago; James R. Flynn, a pioneer in the study of IQ; Clay Shirky, the renowned social media theorist; and Jorge Castañeda, former foreign minister of Mexico. Over the years, this forum has shown a depth of exchange and an accessible format that few other outlets offer.

An idea can be bound between covers, bound by convention, or bound for the dustbin of history. The ideas of Cato Unbound, we hope, are none of the above. ■