

War Is the Health of the State

In its dealings with the broader world, has the United States been a force for human liberty? Should it be? And if so, how? Christopher Preble, vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, set out to answer those questions in his new book for Libertarianism.org, *Peace, War, and Liberty*. As the author notes in the introduction, it is “a short book about a big topic.”

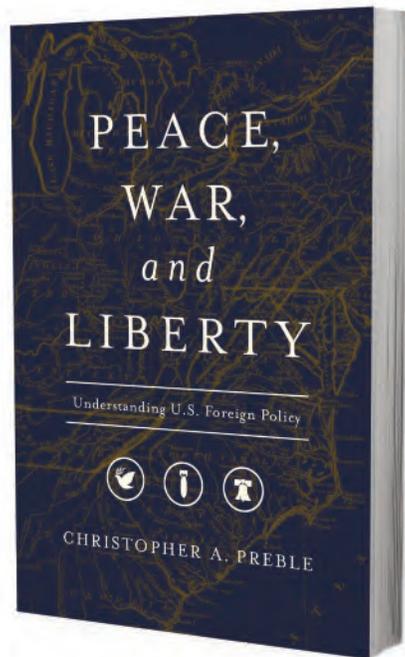
Preble draws upon the famous warnings of the Founding Fathers, who were wary of standing armies and firmly noninterventionist. In addition to opposing war because of its obvious and direct cost in lives and fortunes, libertarians have long called on the deeper

observation that, as writer Randolph Bourne once put it, “war is the health of the state.” In times of war, limits on state power recede and individual rights are subordinated to military goals.

Preble’s guide to U.S. foreign policy traces the history of how this radical frontier republic became a globe-straddling empire, intervening at will and taking on the role of global policeman. Directly addressing those who claim U.S. primacy is a necessary bulwark of liberal values, he notes that this history is filled with more tragic errors than triumphant victories. Not only is American interventionism often ineffective, it can even backfire by causing foreign nations to equate democracy, capitalism, and individual rights with American military hegemony.

Cato often refers to its guiding principles as “individual liberty, limited government, free markets, and peace.” In this accessible and evenhanded commentary, Preble makes clear how the first three of those all depend on the last. With Americans increasingly war-weary after so many years of seemingly endless brushfire wars and regime-change interventions since 9/11, the principles of peace and a more restrained foreign policy are more important than ever. ■

PURCHASE PRINT OR EBOOK COPIES OF *PEACE, WAR, AND LIBERTY* AT CATO.ORG/STORE.



Cato News Notes

CATO SCHOLAR TESTIFIES ON NATIONAL SERVICE

In February, Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties, testified before the



National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service. The commission heard from both advocates and

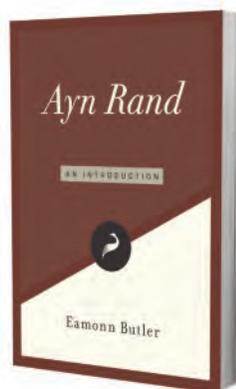
opponents of reinstating military conscription and possible civilian equivalents. Bandow explained why such a mandatory program would be “more likely to breed cynicism than idealism.”

MIKE LEE INTRODUCES JONES ACT REPEAL

Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) introduced a bill in March to repeal the Jones Act, which has been the target of Cato’s Project on Jones Act Reform. The antiquated protectionist law forbids foreign-built, -owned, or -crewed ships from transporting cargo between U.S. ports, thus imposing higher shipping costs and particularly harming Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. Cato hosted a conference on the Jones Act in December, and a debate from that event can be found in the Policy Forum section of the January/February issue of *Policy Report*.

New from Libertarianism.org

Why does Ayn Rand’s work remain so influential? *Ayn Rand: An Introduction* illuminates Rand’s importance and explores the ongoing focus on and debates about her perspectives on knowledge, morality, politics, economics, government, public issues, aesthetics, and literature.



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