

# Stop Statism

Statists, whether out of distrust of individuals or faith in the ability of the government, prefer that the State controls people instead of people controlling themselves; they opt for government intervention rather than individual liberty. Statist policies can include regulation of the economy, provision of social goods, and control over personal behaviors. Many political ideologies can be subsumed under the label “Statist” – communism, fascism, authoritarianism, totalitarianism. Even a democracy can become statist if it does not provide for any constitutional safeguards against the majority imposing its will without regard for the individual rights of the minority.

Why we oppose Statism:

**Statism is anti-liberty.** Individuals have property in themselves, also called self-ownership, which entails they should be free to control their bodies, their minds and their lives. The only way to interfere with that freedom is by means of physical force. The job of governments is to defend individual rights by protecting individuals against the initiation of physical force. However, when governments institute statist policies, they initiate force against individuals who are not infringing on the liberty of others and thus violate individual rights. For instance, regulations, tariffs and subsidies for businesses violate the rights of entrepreneurs, who are faced with high entry barriers, and of business owners and consumers, who both are prevented from voluntarily determining the terms of their interactions. Immigration restrictions ([link to ImmiGreat](#)) violate the rights of individuals, since they are prevented from peacefully living and working where they choose to. Bans on smoking and the use of other drugs ([link to Smoking](#)), speed limits and seat belt requirements, and laws preventing the sale of organs violate your rights since you are prevented from making decisions about your own body.

**Statists are anti-progress.** Statists claim their policies are for the common good. For some this claim is just a front to get more power, but for others it is a genuine goal. Nevertheless, even the most well-intentioned, who believe that granting government the power to control individual actions will result in a better outcome, violate rights and cause harm. One need only consider historical fact to disprove this Statist belief. For most of history, people were not free to decide how to live their lives because they lived in servitude to a noble or king. The vast majority of people were wretchedly poor, worked from dusk until dawn six or seven days a week, were prone to encounter devastating diseases, and died in their twenties or thirties. Even the privileged few – the kings, nobles and clergy – had nowhere near the standard of living that the ordinary worker in western countries enjoys today. It was classical liberalism—the ideas of British Enlightenment philosophers, of Adam Smith, John Locke, John Stuart Mill, and the American Founding fathers—that unlocked the true human potential. Classical liberalism set man free from servitude to another and gave him the right and the responsibility to care for his own life. As a result of the emergence and subsequent dominance of liberal democracy and capitalism, in the last two hundred years, the world has seen progress unparalleled in human history: according to renowned economist Angus Maddison, “[w]orld per capita real income has risen twenty times as fast since 1820, than it did in the eight centuries from 1000 to 1820.”

**Statism is anti-growth.** Statists often justify their policies claiming that they want to reduce inequality and poverty. In reality though, Statists achieve neither and often exacerbate both because their policies discourage economic growth, which is particularly detrimental to low income and poor people. For one, politicians and bureaucrats are limited in their knowledge, as is any individual. No matter how smart an elected official, bureaucrat, or committee is, there’s no way they could adequately plan and control the actions of millions of individuals to achieve maximal economic growth. Moreover, Statism encourages rent-seeking and protectionism ([link to rentseeking and perhaps capitalism meme](#)), the activity of groups to seek government enforced advantages and be insulated from the outcomes of free trade ([link to free trade](#)). This harms the consumer, who is forced to pay higher prices due to lack of competition and fund the rent through higher taxes. This Statist action disincentivizes increases in production and job creation, thus depriving low income and poor people of better opportunities to make a living.

**Statism causes conflict.** Though Statists claim to work for the common good, their actions benefit one group at the expense of another. Nazis favored the pure Aryan at the expense of all other nationalities and ethnicities; affirmative action proponents favor blacks, Hispanics and women at the expense of whites and males; socialists and unions favor workers at the expense of business owners; protectionists favor their native industry at the expense of that in other countries; rent-seekers favor their business, organization or cause at the expense of other businesses, organizations, causes and at the expense of consumers; many religious people but especially fundamentalists favor their followers at the expense of those of another religion and at the expense of atheists; and earth liberation environmentalists favor nature at the expense of humans. Hence, Statists create friction and conflict among individuals, groups and nations. The long stretch of peace during the mid-19th century was at least in part the result of limited government and laissez-faire economics in places like Britain and the United States. The free movement of people was widespread; Russia, the only country that required a passport, was considered backwards. The bloody wars and atrocities committed by governments during the 20th century were the consequence of a move toward state intervention to control people's lives, ultimately leading to the emergence of ultra-Statist regimes such as Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Communist Russia and Maoist China, and many other totalitarian experiments including a United States that interned over 110,000 individuals of Japanese descent, drafted many more, and implemented wage and price controls.

