

Principled Governance or Politics as Usual?

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Unificationists live in a contemporary culture that champions democracy and instills the idea that politics is about influencing government to provide things or benefits that we desire. Like others in society, Unificationists generally support political parties and special interest lobbies designed to pressure lawmakers into delivering goods and services they believe in.



Politics is War by Other Means

However, “politics” in this sense is the application of “fallen nature” and not of Unificationism. In *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz described politics as “war by other means.” He meant that people engage in politics to manipulate the government in their fight for control over resources and power, or to gain another benefit for themselves at the expense of society. In this war by other means, people often use the rhetoric of justice and goodness and advocate rectifying the perceived social problem using everyone’s tax dollars. This political behavior is divisive and socially destructive. To the extent Unificationists engage in politics as a form of war, they are at odds with principled governance.

Unificationism is about principles. The main text is the *Divine Principle*, whose primary hypothesis is that principles underlie the entire created order, and that knowledge of and application of these principles is essential for living a life of happiness. This idea of collective happiness is not unique in political theory. Aristotle began his *Politics* by stating that the end of politics is human happiness. James Madison, in “Federalist 62,” reaffirmed that the object of

government is the happiness of the people. Indeed, Buddha, Confucius, and the founders of the world's great civilizations sought to explain how people should live and societies be organized in order to be happy.

Principled Governance is the administration of a society to achieve common ends

Any system, whether it is a social institution, the human body, a mechanical machine, an entire social system, or the universe, is governed by principles. When the principles that maintain a system cease to operate, the system breaks down and disintegrates. The *design* of any system requires knowledge of the purpose for which the system is being created, and the principles necessary for the system to fulfill that purpose.

Governance of a dynamic system after it has been created requires operation according to its design principles. For example, we call a speed control on an automobile engine a “governor” because it maintains the operation of the engine within limits that enable it to run, without quitting if it runs too slow, or blowing up if it runs too fast.

The American Founders created a constitutional framework that served as a governor, in which American self-rule would be restrained and only laws that served the well-being of the entire society would get passed. There were to be legislative processes and checks and balances that prevented individual and group (factional) cooptation of government for personal or group gain. And, through the Senate, states could provide a check on democratic fads that undermined the government. However, from the day the Constitution was ratified, U.S. citizens and groups have sought to escape the bounds of these constitutional limits in order to gain advantages for themselves or social sub-groups. In *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness, Version 4.0*, I outlined five core principles in the founding philosophy. I also explained how the system has been subverted and infected with viruses, much like computers get infected, so that special interests have been increasingly able to use government for their own benefit. I also recommended some key changes that could be made to restore the U.S. system to principled governance based on five core principles:

1. Security
2. Subsidiarity
3. Checks and balances, dispersion of power
4. Transparency
5. Voluntary affiliation (the right to secede)

Administration vs. Legislation

Once a principled system of government is established, it needs very little new legislation. It only needs new laws to adapt to new and changed social conditions, and these laws should reflect principles learned through collective experience and not the selfish desires of special interests.

For example, when the U.S. Constitution was ratified, the United States had no national or international corporations. Nearly all businesses were privately owned by families. There were no laws to govern the behavior of such institutions. When large corporations developed, their freedom to operate extended into areas that harmed citizens. Through the lobbying efforts of railroads and other large industries, laws were passed that gave them subsidies and protections at the expense of citizens, rather than laws that extended core principles of governance to the regulation of corporations. This faulty process of law creation has been repeated in many areas, causing an increased load on the system and burden on the citizens.

The entire history of U.S. governance has been one in which legal “worms” and “viruses” have been written to redistribute power and wealth to special interests, and to hijack the entire system to be redirected to their service rather than the service of the happiness of the citizens and the common good.

The Housing Bubble: An Example of a Worm

Home mortgages are a social subsystem in the economic sector. If I sell my house at market price for cash, that is a simple market transaction. However, if the buyer goes to the bank and gets a loan, and the bank pays me cash and the buyer pays the bank over time, a new economic micro-system has been established. This micro-system, the home loan, has developed sound principles of operation over centuries of lending experience, and these principles are readily known. The diagram below explains this system in a cybernetic diagram:



A cybernetic view of a stable mortgage lending system

A loan will not be given to the borrower unconditionally. Over time, lenders have learned not to issue loans unless the following criteria are met, such as:

- A down payment of 20% that guarantees minimum equity to cover a sale in the case of a default.
- A monthly payment not to exceed 28% of borrowers after tax income that provides some assurance of ability to pay.
- A credit history that shows the borrower has consistently paid on other loans he has taken.
- An evaluation of any other loans the borrower has outstanding to ensure he is not overextended.

A loan based on these principles tends to create both happy homeowners and happy banks.

The 2008 mortgage bubble and an unprincipled act of government

The mortgage bubble that burst by 2008 was made possible, in part, by a government intervention that ignored these basic principles of lending. This intervention was instigated by political lobbies — from construction companies, banks, and advocates for unqualified borrowers — that sought to pass laws in which the government could guarantee home loans to unqualified borrowers. This “guarantee” acted like overriding the governor on a car and holding the pedal to the floor.



Legal guarantee holds lending throttle wide open

The immediate impact of the legislation was increased lending to unqualified buyers that increased demand for housing artificially, drove up the prices of homes, and stimulated housing development. This was followed by massive numbers of foreclosures on the unqualified borrowers, the inability of the government to cover the massive losses, a crash of real estate prices, and the “walking away” of qualified borrowers from homes with mortgages higher than the value of the house they lived in.

The housing bubble is an example of legislation through politics rather than based on principle. This legislation could pass both because checks and balances established by the Founding Fathers to check the creation of such legislation had been circumvented, and special interest groups in the private sector were able to hijack the system for their own benefit through unprincipled legislation. Weak legislators caved into politics and did not act on principle. The result was that honest, hard-working citizens suffered because of the unprincipled behavior of special interests and the complicit government.

Conclusion

One of the most important tasks of government reform today is the creation of systems of governance based on real-world principles, and the expungement of laws passed that serve the interests of lobbyists, politicians, or agency heads at the expense of the common good. Governments, like machines, are human creations. They can be designed to perform their job well, like a finely-crafted Swiss watch, when they are based on sound principles of governance. However, when laws are created by politics and not principle, we find society fractured and dysfunctional, engaged in “war by other means,” not unlike the tribal rivalries to control post-colonial states.

I wrote my book to encourage citizens to study, learn, teach, and implement core principles of sound governance in our society. Many Unificationists, along with other citizens, simply accept the political system they inherited and fight on sides in divisive political wars rather than working to implement principles of unselfish governance that can serve the survival of the social system and the happiness of its citizens. This is the task of applied Unificationism in the governmental sphere.

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