

The Biggest Threat to American Liberty

“Overgrown military establishments, which under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty.”

By [Jacob G. Hornberger](#)

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George Washington pointed out, “Overgrown military establishments, which under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to Republican Liberty.”

Wise words by the father of our country, but ones, unfortunately, rejected by modern-day Americans, who love and idolize the enormously overgrown military establishment that now characterizes our federal governmental system.

Eastern Europeans are getting a gander at America’s overgrown military establishment. Yesterday, the New York Times [reported](#) that a huge contingent of US military forces is winding its way through Eastern Europe as some sort of good-will tour and also to serve as a message to Russia that the United States is ready to go to war to protect Eastern Europe from Russia’s aggressive designs.

Never mind that it is America’s overgrown military establishment that gave rise to Russia’s so-called aggressive designs. Ever since the end of the Cold War, NATO has been absorbing Eastern European countries with the ultimate aim of absorbing Ukraine, which would enable the US military to place bases and missiles on Russia’s borders.

There was never a possibility that Russia was going to let that happen, any more than the US national-security establishment would permit North Korea to place military bases and missiles on Mexico’s side of the Rio Grande. In the eyes of those who believe that America’s overgrown military establishment can do no wrong, that makes Russia the aggressor in the crisis.

But let’s face it: These people are ingenious at producing crises and then playing the innocent. The fact is that NATO should have been dissolved at the end of the Cold War. It wasn’t dissolved for one big reason: in order to produce endless crises with Russia so that Americans would feel the need to keep their overgrown, Cold War-era, military establishment in existence.

Moreover, under what authority is America’s overgrown military establishment telling Eastern Europeans that the United States will come to their defense in a war against Russia? I thought that under the US Constitution it is the responsibility of Congress to decide when America goes to war. The US military march through Eastern Europe is just another sign of how the national-security branch of the federal government — the most powerful branch — calls its own shots when it comes to foreign policy.

Moreover, it's a sign of the times when America's overgrown military establishment is our country's good-will ambassador. It used to be that the American private sector served that purpose. Not so anymore. Now, it's US generals and other military personnel who serve that purpose, as they parade through Eastern Europe showing off their tanks and other military equipment, just like the Soviets did in their May Day parades.

Meanwhile, America's overgrown military establishment is also engaged in a massive military exercise called [Operation Jade Helm](#), only this one isn't in some foreign country but instead right here at home. With more than 1200 participants, including Army Special Forces, Navy Seals, and Marine Special Operations, this large-scale military operation is slated to launch in around 20 cities in the American Southwest.

Perhaps it would be wise to review America's founding principles regarding overgrown military establishments and the threat they pose to the liberty of the citizenry, in addition, that is, to the sentiments against overgrown military establishments expressed by America's first president, George Washington:

James Madison: "A standing military force, with an overgrown Executive will not long be safe companions to liberty. The means of defence agst. foreign danger, have been always the instruments of tyranny at home. Among the Romans it was a standing maxim to excite a war, whenever a revolt was apprehended. Throughout all Europe, the armies kept up under the pretext of defending, have enslaved the people."

Patrick Henry: "A standing army we shall have, also, to execute the execrable commands of tyranny; and how are you to punish them? Will you order them to be punished? Who shall obey these orders? Will your mace-bearer be a match for a disciplined regiment?"

Henry St. George Tucker in Blackstone's 1768 Commentaries on the Laws of England: "Wherever standing armies are kept up, and when the right of the people to keep and bear arms is, under any color or pretext whatsoever, prohibited, liberty, if not already annihilated, is on the brink of destruction."

Commonwealth of Virginia in 1788: "... that standing armies in time of peace are dangerous to liberty, and therefore ought to be avoided, as far as the circumstances and protection of the community will admit; and that in all cases the military should be under strict subordination to and governed by the civil power."

Pennsylvania Convention: "... as standing armies in time of peace are dangerous to liberty, they ought not to be kept up; and that the military shall be kept under strict subordination to and be governed by the civil power."

US State Department website: "Wrenching memories of the Old World lingered in the 13 original English colonies along the eastern seaboard of North America, giving rise to deep opposition to the maintenance of a standing army in time of peace. All too often the standing armies of Europe were regarded as, at best, a rationale for imposing high taxes, and, at worst, a means to control the civilian population and extort its wealth."

Finally, let's wrap up this piece with the warning that President Eisenhower issued in his 1961 Farewell Address regarding America's new, Cold War-era, overgrown military establishment:

This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. . . . Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. . . . In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted.

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