



LEFT AND RIGHT DIFFERENCES: HOW BIG SHOULD GOVERNMENT BE?

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One of the most important differences between the Left and the Right is how each regards the role and the size of the government.

The Left believes that the state should be the most powerful force in society. Among many other things, the government should be in control of educating every child; should provide all health care; and should regulate often to the minutest detail how businesses conduct their business – in Germany, for instance, the government legislates the time of day stores have to close. In short, there should ideally be no power that competes with Government. Not parents, not businesses, not private schools, not religious institutions; not even the individual human conscience.

Conservatives, on the other hand, believe the government's role in society should be limited to absolute necessities such as national defense and to being the resource of last resort to help citizens who cannot be helped by family, by community, by private organizations, or by religious and secular charities.

Conservatives understand that as governments grow in size and power, the following will inevitably happen:

1. There will be ever-increasing amounts of corruption. Power and money breed corruption. People in government will sell government influence for personal and political gain. And people outside government will seek to buy influence and favors. In Africa and Latin America, government corruption has been the single biggest factor holding nations back from progressing.
2. Individual liberty will decline. With a few exceptions such as an unrestricted right to abortion, individual liberty is less important to the Left than to the Right. This is neither an opinion nor a criticism. It is simple logic. The more control the government has over people's lives, the less liberty people have.
3. Countries with ever expanding governments will either reduce the size of their government or eventually collapse economically. Every welfare state ultimately becomes a Ponzi Scheme, relying on new payers to pay previous payers; and when it runs out of the new payers, the scheme collapses. All the welfare states of the world, including wealthy European countries, are already experiencing this problem to varying degrees.
4. In order to pay for an ever-expanding government, taxes are constantly increased. But at a given level of taxation, the society's wealth producers will either stop working, work less, hire

fewer people, or move their business out of the state or out of the country.

5. Big government produces big deficits and ever increasing – and ultimately unsustainable – debt. This, too, is only logical. The more money the state hands out, the more money people will demand from the state. No recipient of free money has ever said, “Thank you. I have enough.”

Unless big governments get smaller, they will all eventually collapse under their own weight – with terrible consequences socially as well as economically.

6. The bigger the government, the greater the opportunities for doing great evil. The twentieth century was the most murderous century in recorded history. And who did all this killing? Big governments. Evil individuals without power can do only so much harm. But when evil individuals take control of a big government, the amount of harm they can do is essentially unlimited. The Right fears Big Government. The Left fears Big Business. But Coca-Cola can't break into your house or confiscate your wealth – only Big Government can do that. As irresponsible as any Big Business has ever been, it is only Big Government that can build concentration camps and commit genocide.

7. Big government eats away at the moral character of a nation. People no longer take care of other people. After all, they know the government will do that. That's why Americans give far more of their money and volunteer far more of their time to charity than do Europeans at the same economic level.

Without the belief in an ever-expanding government, there is no Left. Without a belief in limited government, there is no Right.

I'm Dennis Prager.