

Nation of Laws and Lawlessness: America is Policing Itself and the World

By [John Kozy](#)

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The peoples of the world are angry and are getting angrier. Samuel Bowles and Arjun Jayadev, in a [piece](#) published in 2004, claim that about one in four Americans, termed “guard workers,” is employed to keep other people in line. I suspect the number is higher. The war on terror is fought by guard workers, the entire legal system and the entire homeland security apparatus consist of guard workers. Shouldn’t someone be asking why Americans need so much protection?

Some years ago, the Mura Federal Building in Oklahoma City was blown to bits by an irate citizen. Recently, another irate citizen flew his airplane into a building in Austin, TX in which the offices of the IRS were located. The Washington Post [reports](#) that “Attacks on the Internal Revenue Service and its employees ... are common,” and that armed escorts are being provided to IRS employees “at least once a week.” In [Las Vegas](#), a citizen who lost a lawsuit challenging a cut in his Social Security benefits used a shotgun to kill a security guard inside a federal courthouse. A gunman charged into one of the Pentagon’s main entrances and opened fire and authorities are looking into his recent rants against the government as a potential motive. He is reported as having written, “The moral values of individuals and communities are increasingly attacked by a political system where deceit is routine and accepted and the only standard is power.” A suburban Philadelphia woman has been indicted and accused of recruiting jihadist fighters and moving to Europe to try to kill a Swedish cartoonist. Authorities say it shows how the threat of terrorism is evolving. Threats to judges have become so widespread, that according to the AP, “Three quarters of the nation’s 2,200 federal judges have asked for government-paid home security systems.” Federal law enforcement officials are looking into at least two possible [threats](#) directed at members of Congress and their families. In Michigan, nine suspects tied to a Christian militia in the Midwest are [charged](#) with conspiring to kill police officers, then attack a funeral in the hopes of killing more. The people are so angry at Wall Street that Bloomberg [reports](#) that “Goldman [Sachs] people have loaded up on firearms and are now equipped to defend themselves.”

Once beloved worldwide, the U.S. government finds itself [reviled](#) in most countries. According to the [Sunday Herald](#), the Pentagon has admitted that Muslims do not hate our freedoms, but rather, they hate our policies and that it is “equally important to renew European attitudes towards America which have also been severely damaged.”

Americans, unfortunately, believe that they can hire enough guard workers to protect them from all of this anger. Dave Lindorff [writes](#), “The deliberate suicide crash bombing by a domestic terrorist pilot of a small plane into an IRS building in Austin [requires] Congress to

move quickly to tighten up security and control over small planes.” But guarding everything is impossible and how can the guard workers themselves be prevented from eventually getting angry? They are, after all, not the owners of the what’s being guarded.

Why are people so angry? Bowles and Jayadev cite “conflicts between classes, ethnic or racial groups, and political factions,” along with “economic polarization.” Dennis Mangan [writes](#), “Guards are everywhere in a capitalist economy. . . . [They] are a central feature of capitalism. Capitalists depend upon guard labor to protect their commodities, including the goods and premises they own, but especially the labor-power in their employ. Capitalism’s reliance on guard labor deforms the entire productive process, not only wasting labor, but also snuffing out badly needed creativity.” Bowles and Jayadev claim that the “US has over the past several decades developed inequalities usually found only in poor countries with autocratic governments.” And, of course, guards are what keep autocratic governments in power. Yet as Noah Webster said, “power is always indolent and despotic.” It is not relinquished easily.

In Exodus, Chapter 20, God spoke to the Israelites: “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.” But Chapter 32 reveals that within days, “when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” So much for the authority of law givers!

Authoritarians have the misguided notion that they can lay down the law and people will obey. Experience teaches otherwise. Why rulers or legislators would believe that their laws would be any more effective than God’s laws were on the Israelites is a mystery. People obey laws found to be useful and sensible; they need no enforcement. Other laws are routinely broken whenever an opportunity to break them arises. Some laws are so routinely broken that society attaches few consequences to breaking them. Break a traffic law, pay a fine, and nobody cares. No one considers it wrongdoing.

The United States, it is claimed, is a nation of laws, but lawlessness is rampant. According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, the USA also has the highest total documented prison and jail population in the world. In 2008, over 7.3 million people were on probation, in prison, or on parole—one in every 31 adults. Add to this the number of people who have served their sentences and are now free, and the number is huge.

Have you ever thought about the meaning of the phrase, “law enforcement agency,” the phrase used to identify police of various kinds? If you have, you surely realize that it makes no sense. Police do not enforce, that is, make people obey, the law. In fact, police have

nothing to do until the law has been broken. A society of lawful people needs no police, and the more police a society needs, the more lawless it is. Police are not agents of order; they are agents of retribution. And lawlessness in a society is not an indictment of people, it is an indictment of government. A well governed, well ordered society needs no police or guard workers. Given these statistics, the United States must be the most lawless and consequently the most poorly governed nation in the world.

The Western nations that have held power since the seventeenth century are confronted by growing domestic and foreign anger and are attempting to stem its tide by converting more and more resources into guarding the status quo. A host of little Dutch boys has been recruited to put their fingers in the ever growing number of holes in the dyke to keep their nations from being inundated. Yet anger cannot be pacified and affection cannot be aroused by force but only by governing for the sake of people, their own and those in foreign lands. The more a nation needs guards, the more it has failed its people. Wouldn't it be far simpler to merely stop doing the things that generate such levels of anger? Is a status quo that needs so many guards worth guarding?

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