

Poll On The Cause Of The 9-11 Attack

Please vote in our new poll (in the sidebar on the right). It is just a yes/no question about the cause of the attack on the US on September 11, 2001.

Update on 2006-9-20: So far the poll is *overwhelmingly exonerating* President Bush's invasion of Iraq.

Wed, 09/13/2006 - 15:16 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permalink](#)

Huh?

I'm confused by the poll question.

Is there time-travel involved?

Gil

by [Gil](#) on Wed, 09/13/2006 - 18:27 | [reply](#)

Re: Huh?

Shhhh... :)

by [Editor](#) on Wed, 09/13/2006 - 18:41 | [reply](#)

Aim low.

That way you have a good chance of success. Even though the Iraq war has been a complete disaster at least it didn't *cause* 9/11!

I imagine the editor can sleep well at night knowing that he didn't cause the sinking of the Titanic.

by a reader on Thu, 09/14/2006 - 22:52 | [reply](#)

Re: Aim low.

The servants of Allah are not bound by your infidel notions of causality.

by [Kevin](#) on Thu, 09/14/2006 - 22:59 | [reply](#)

And surely the most likely re

And surely the most likely reason why anyone would vote 'yes' is that they thought the question was about the *first* gulf war.

by a reader on Sun, 09/17/2006 - 11:56 | [reply](#)

Unlikely

The one thing those people are unlikely to overlook is the letter "W".

Gil

by [Gil](#) on Mon, 09/18/2006 - 01:43 | [reply](#)

Complete disaster?

To the author of 'Aim low' who said "the Iraq war has been a complete disaster":

Please remember that one man's tyrant is another man's freedom fighter.

Although Saddam was a freedom fighter to you, he was a mass-murdering, warmongering tyrant in some people's opinion, and therefore, to them, the war has not been a complete disaster at all.

Those people's opinions are just as good as yours, and you should acknowledge their validity, not go making sweeping comments implying that your truth is the only one.

by a reader on Mon, 09/18/2006 - 02:12 | [reply](#)

re: Complete disaster?

Silly me, I was thinking of the \$4000 and counting per household it is costing me. I guess I don't have the god-like vision of you and your friend George to see that I am better off without that money to protect myself as I see fit.

You are correct, not everyone sees it as a disaster, in fact, I'm sure Mr. bin laden sees it as a success well beyond his wildest dreams!

by a reader on Tue, 09/19/2006 - 11:17 | [reply](#)

Exonerated?

"So far the poll is overwhelmingly exonerating President Bush's invasion of Iraq."

Um, no. The poll is overwhelmingly showing that most readers can tell one year from another. I wonder how many of those it snagged simply hadn't had their coffee yet.

by [Samuel K Duro](#) on Thu, 09/21/2006 - 06:38 | [reply](#)

Re: Complete disaster?

Silly me, I was thinking of the \$4000 and counting per household it is costing me. I guess I don't have the god-like vision of you and your friend George to see that I am better off without that money to protect myself as I see fit.

You do? Really? Personally I'd rather have an organisation that specialises in defence defend me at least some of the time. Of course, self defence is part of the best strategy for dealing with any threat. With some threats, like muggers, it should probably play a very large role. However, self defence is of limited use against Islamist terrorists and states who sponsor them. If you tried to take out Iran's nuclear facilities on your own you'd almost certainly end up dead very quickly. You need lots of information and either weapons or the economic clout to make economic sanctions against Iran stick. All of this requires a large amount of money and lots of people. The best way to maintain such an organisation is for lots of people who can't provide such defence services to pay people who can: it's called division of labour. Now it would be nice if we currently had a voluntary means to do this, but we don't so we're stuck with doing it through taxation for the immediate future.

You are correct, not everyone sees it as a disaster, in fact, I'm sure Mr. bin Laden sees it as a success well beyond his wildest dreams!

So you think that bin Laden is glad that he lost a **major source** of funding and training facilities?

by [Alan Forrester](#) on Thu, 09/21/2006 - 19:49 | [reply](#)

Re:Re: Complete disaster?

Alan,

Would you come to my house, hold a gun to my head, demand \$4000, and claim you are doing this to protect me?

by a reader on Thu, 09/21/2006 - 22:51 | [reply](#)

Libertarianism

A Reader,

We have tax funded government today. It's unreasonable to use this as an argument specifically against government programs you don't like. All government programs are equally guilty of being tax funded, so you can't use this as an argument about which are better/worse.

There are various exceptions to this, especially when we have a free-market alternative in place. A government grocery store program would be horrible. But we don't have a free market army ready.

-- Elliot Temple

by **Elliot Temple** on Fri, 09/22/2006 - 00:23 | [reply](#)

Not answering the question

The question was simple Elliot. Would Alan coercively take money from me? (and claim he was promoting "freedom") If he does it with enough of his friends (i.e. democracy) does that somehow make it ok? Don't pretend that being some sort of hard nosed "realist" gives you an out.

by a reader on Fri, 09/22/2006 - 11:34 | [reply](#)

Libertarian Coercion

The overwhelming majority of people will not vote for libertarian philosophies and policies. It is morally repugnant to coerce people into following libertarian ideology.

Persuade them. Don't coerce them.

by a reader on Fri, 09/22/2006 - 14:59 | [reply](#)

Libertarian Coercion?

I'm not sure if that last comment was a bad joke, or just stupid.

What kind of coercion was "a reader" referring to?

Gil

by **Gil** on Fri, 09/22/2006 - 17:50 | [reply](#)

Re: Not answering the question

The answer to your question is most likely, No! But if you are suggesting that paying for the defense forces should be done on a completely voluntary basis, you better have a working theory of how that would work. Do you?

-- Cyrus Ferdowsi, <http://libiran.blogspot.com>

by **Liberal Iranian** on Sun, 09/24/2006 - 09:30 | [reply](#)

Why do you want to coerce me?

Would Alan coercively take money from me? (and claim he was promoting "freedom") If he does it with enough of his friends (i.e. democracy) does that somehow make it ok? Don't pretend that being some sort of hard nosed "realist" gives you an out.

If there was a country in which the law allowed for private

voluntarily funded armies I would much prefer to live there. I would not go round to your house, put a gun to your head and demand your money.

In the real world, there is no country where people are allowed to raise private armies. Now, you say that I am wrong to say that the government should use the power it has taken to promote freedom. You say, further, that it is morally equivalent to going round to your house and putting a gun to your head and demanding money from you to defend freedom. Your position is rubbish as I would prefer a situation in which armies were supported by voluntary subscription. Furthermore, in the current situation in which raising private armies is forbidden, your advocacy of non-interventionist foreign policy is entirely morally symmetrical with respect to use of tax monies. How so? Well, you and I both know that if I were to raise a private army to invade Iran, say, tax money would be used to stop me and put me in jail. So by advocating a non-interventionist foreign policy for Western governments you are recommending that my tax money should be used force me to back a policy that I find abhorrent: neutrality toward evil tyrants and the terrorists they sponsor.

by [Alan Forrester](#) on Mon, 09/25/2006 - 19:53 | [reply](#)

Re: Libertarian Coercion

The overwhelming majority of people want to use government taxation to fund the military because they believe it is the most efficient way of providing defense for the nation. More efficiency implies that people have more money and therefore more freedom to do what they want. And more freedom implies less coercion.

If a libertarian proposes using anything other than democratic means to end government taxation (that supports the military), he should be jailed because such a proposal could only be implemented by using violence to contravene majority preferences.

Therefore the only morally defensible and consistent position for a libertarian is to favor gradual democratic change. Since the public thinks it is less coercive because it is more efficient to utilize the government to fund a sufficiently powerful military, essentially noone except a radical libertarian will favor eliminating our publically funded military.

Until libertarians can demonstrate that we can obtain a private army with the strength and power of the United States military, but by spending less money, citizens will continue to favor utilizing government taxation, unless a libertarian is prepared to coerce everyone else by overthrowing the government.

Therefore, libertarians must logically favor utilizing democratic processes, if they do not wish to be coercive.

by a reader on Thu, 09/28/2006 - 02:26 | [reply](#)

Coercion

Alan,

Why do you have to raise a private army? Why don't you just raise enough money from private citizens so the government wouldn't have to tax the rest of us so much? Isn't the real problem that you can't raise enough money privately, therefore you favor using coercion to force the rest of us to pay for the Iraq war?

Since you and others can't raise sufficient funds privately to give to the military, so that no taxes have to be raised, perhaps people don't really favor funding the Iraq war?

by a reader on Thu, 09/28/2006 - 02:40 | [reply](#)

Re: Coersion

A reader wrote:

Since you and others can't raise sufficient funds privately to give to the military, so that no taxes have to be raised, perhaps people don't really favor funding the Iraq war?

First, that sort of army *is* a private army: if the money is raised privately why should it be given to a government army?

Second, Where does the Iraq war come into your argument? How do you know the same statement is not true for any war? Or the city police for that matter? Perhaps the people you are talking about feel they can get a free ride of security on other people's private donations?

-- Cyrus Ferdowsi, <http://libiran.blogspot.com>

by [Liberal Iranian](#) on Thu, 09/28/2006 - 05:12 | [reply](#)

False Dichotomy

An army in which individuals voluntarily contribute money....

"First, that sort of army is a private army: if the money is raised privately why should it be given to a government army?"

Cyrus Ferdowsi

Alan seemed to imply that he had to choose between two evils. He implies that a military, funded by taxation, is wrong because people are forced to contribute, even if they do not want to. He says he would like to use "subscriptions" to create a private army, but an existing government would then use taxation to stop him. So either way the government is preventing him from doing what he wants. So if he has to pay taxes to the government, he at least wants the money to go to fighting tyrants and not towards keeping him in prison.

I am pointing out that Alan's grim choices are not so limited. If he could raise substantial sums of money (say 40% of the military's budget per year), and promise it to the military in exchange for the

government cutting taxes plus some input into how the military is utilized, he could make progress towards having a military funded by voluntary contributions. In order to raise that much money, contributor's opinions about the role of the military would surely need to be taken into account.

Alan may not be able to have a private army, right now, but if he could raise nearly half the money needed to run a military in a year and exchange it for lower taxes, he could make substantial progress towards privatizing the military.

"Perhaps the people you are talking about feel they can get a free ride of security on other people's private donations?"

Yup. You got it. The real reason Alan is not participating in a process right now that would lead towards privatizing the military is that it wouldn't work. He can't raise that much money for a military because of the "free ride(r)" problem.

by a reader on Thu, 09/28/2006 - 23:44 | [reply](#)

Re: False Dichotomy

promise it to the military in exchange for the government cutting taxes plus some input into how the military is utilized

In a democracy, that's called attempted bribery. And so, yes, Alan would go to jail yet again.

A government can't sell its defense policy to a private corporation! ("What about Halliburton?!". Yeah, yeah, very funny.)

by a reader on Fri, 09/29/2006 - 00:28 | [reply](#)

Re: False Dichotomy

'Attempted bribery'. Yes, and also, under that scheme the contributors would not get their portion of defence taxes back. So they would not be buying defence, only a 'say' in a policy that they already agree with! Plus they would be indemnifying some of the anti-war people whom the government is forcing to contribute. But why, under Libertarian ethics, should they be under any obligation to indemnify the victims of someone else's crime?

by [Editor](#) on Fri, 09/29/2006 - 00:39 | [reply](#)

Alan Favoring Coercion

"Yes, and also, under that scheme the contributors would not get their portion of defence taxes back."

Yes. The contributors would pay money, get some money back because of lower taxes, but have to cover more of the overall cost of defense than their non-contributing neighbors. That is the

essence of the free rider problem.

If everyone voluntarily contributed their portion of their current defense tax bill, defense costs would be fully covered. Furthermore, this supermajority could vote to eliminate involuntary taxes to pay for defense, once the money was collected.

So the government is not stopping Alan from transitioning our democratic government to a system of private support of the military. The free rider problem is.

Therefore, the reader is asking a very legitimate question. Is Alan willing to hold a gun to a neighbor's head (with help from his "buddies") to extract \$4000 to defend the neighborhood.?

Alan says "no" to this question. But when there are free rider problems, his actions are saying "yes".

by a reader on Fri, 09/29/2006 - 14:06 | [reply](#)

You and What Personal Army?

Actually Haliburton is a very reasonable approach to addressing the dilemma. Private enterprise always has a solution for the right price for any country or any individual or group of individuals who wants to buy defense and offense. Private enterprise is also the essence of all defense purchase and contracting including R&D, weapons systems, and even unmanned drones and "smart systems" of all types which are getting "smarter" and more capable every day. The real question is not if it is feasible privately or publicly. It is being done right now, the lines are becoming blurry between private and public and private defense and even armies (security with the right for hired security forces to bear sophisticated arms and use them to defend extensive property interests) It is inevitable that this approach will be expanded in a free global economy. The real question is will any of us be happy with the private support (call it Halliburton) results?

by a reader on Mon, 10/02/2006 - 16:17 | [reply](#)

The only poll on this questio

The only poll on this question is the one for the next presidency, and judging by your president's current approval rating I would say this is probably overwhelmingly in against the war in Iraq (and by extension as a cause of 9/11).

Where are the WMD dude?

by a reader on Fri, 03/23/2007 - 14:11 | [reply](#)