

War, and the Rights of Humankind

“‘Common security’ meant for Paine not just tranquillity within any single nation-state but also peace among all nation-states and their citizens. He argued that the best antidote to **war** is the formation of an international confederation of nationally independent and peacefully interacting civil societies that keeps an eye on the international system of nation-states, taming their bellicose urges. Paine was certain that democratic republican states, guided by civil societies held together by reciprocal interests and mutual affection, would make for a new global order freed from the curse of **war**. **War**, the keystone of despotism, would collapse, for the simple reason that citizens living in democratic republics would have no reason to go to **war**. Paine explained that when the rulers of a state act as if they own the state and its subjects, it is the simplest thing in the world to declare **war** on other states. By contrast, when citizens themselves have to decide whether **war** is to be declared, and then have to pay for it personally with their money and their lives, it is only natural—given their cosmopolitanism, their natural cooperativeness and sociability—that they will think twice and recoil from **war**, opting instead for the ‘cordial unison’ of civilized societies and representative government.”

~John Keane, Tom Paine: A Political Life