



Defense

18 May 2020

“Freedom isn't free.”

“The best offense is a good defense.”

I hold these two truths to be self-evident when it comes to defense: individual, societal, corporate, national.

Everyone loves a good offense today. No more so than in American football. Tens of millions are being spent on the quarterback, the messiah who will bring us to the Promised Land. More, too, is being spent on the prolific receiver with super speed and Velcro hands. Millions and millions are going to the impenetrable offensive line. There is no doubt, this is circus fun to watch but it is not, I believe, the formula for enduring success.

Full disclosure: I am a lifelong Philadelphia Eagles fan and a total homer. However, I cannot claim the legitimacy of true missionary fandom status like those who attend every game, home or away, snow or rain. My DNA will simply not allow me to sit through a three- to four-hour game, and certainly not if one includes the additional hours spent before and after the game, traveling, tailgate prepping and post-game breakdown, standing in lines, etc., etc. I always have to be doing something during a game, fixing a leaky faucet or tackling the bills. I admire the true diehard fan who makes the weekly quest a family tradition, planned around and passed down to later generations. Sadly, that is not me.

That being said, I love the game itself but not for the air-out-out offense but, instead, for the lock-down “D”. Defense, to me, is the name of the game. While risking excommunication in my hometown, I actually embrace the philosophy of a team like the Baltimore Ravens, eternally loyal to a game-plan based on proud and vengeful defense. I believe that in football – as in business, domestic policy as well as international relations - this posture is a logical and sensible approach that encourages impressive and enduring expansion.

Continuing with the football analogy, a good defense will allow the other team's offense a certain amount of leeway in terms of their ability to expand, but no more. There is a clear line in the sand or on the field - perhaps at the 50-yard line - that one simply cannot cross or crosses at one's peril. When that line is crossed, the defensive line stiffens, the attitude becomes indignant and palpable, the eyes catch fire and assume laser focus. The greater the trespass, the greater and more ferocious the response. And, worst case, should the other team actually reach out end zone, our offense rises up in support of the defense, picks up the guidon which now carries a guide on with a ferocity and determination focused on more than an equal and opposite response but, rather, holy and righteous revenge.

I believe the same should hold true in corporate and national defense. Our backyard should be clearly defined and communicated and our violent response to aggressive incursions, not in our interest, should be understood by all combatants.

In business, if a competitor begins to encroach upon what we consider our fairly-earned market share or proprietary products, they should know that there will be consequences. This does not mean a company should not be open to competition because, without it, there is no opportunity for instability and, therefore, growth. More appropriately, we need to seize the reality of this transgression, grow from it, become stronger, more innovative and compete to win, on an even playing field. Otherwise we will fail.

As a country, the philosophy and dedication to this philosophy must be the same – or even greater as the consequences are more dire. Rather than points on the scoreboard, we very possibly might be looking at human lives.

Once again, clear boundaries must be set and communicated - along with defined and inevitable consequences. Our posture must be defensive but backed up by an aggressive offense. The lines defining what we consider our half of the field are not necessarily the territorial waters beyond our borders. We have allies and other Americans representing us who exist and live outside our borders. They must be included in our defensive plan. We will take offense when others hostile to us invade our space. We will respond, and not simply in kind, but with ferocity and audacity such that the consequences will discourage future trespasses. But we will not deploy our offense purely to rack up points on the scoreboard. America is and will be the beacon of individual and collective freedom around the world. That is an enormous responsibility but we accept it and will continue to accept because the alternative is chaos and demagoguery, corruption and the erosion of free will and human rights.

I believe in the flow of things and the paramount necessity for its defense. Briefly, “the flow” is likened to a moving river of harmony and enlightenment that we as individuals and collectives all experience and one time or another – some more than others. Some of us experience it in the upward gaze of our young children some of us at work when a project is running smoothly with no or few obstacles. Some of us, like me, experience it on the highways, the flow of traffic, when I can anticipate the moves of others and know that everyone is moving in accordance with the plan (I know it more by the lack of it than the presence of, when someone is out there disturbing the flow by driving under his or her own rules).

The right to be in the flow belongs inherently to everyone and should be defended by everyone and by everyone equally. In America, we equate the flow with the American dream, that God given right to be successful and happy. Most of us understand how unique this entitlement is to Americans. Those who come here from other countries and societies understand and are baffled by our indifference to its value. But this flow must be defended just as if it were on the football field. We cannot take it for granted or the other team will take it.

America has been in the flow for a long time. The flow has encompassed our economy, our defense of individual freedoms, our pioneering and innovative spirit, our business acumen and individual achievement.

Today, America is drifting outside the flow. This slow yet constant decay has been happening for decades as we have convinced ourselves that our position in the world and the universe – American exceptionalism – is a trophy on our shelf with no date, endless.

Our leaders, and governments, human rights, industry, science, the press must refamiliarize themselves with the flow and their responsibility for it. The flow and the responsibilities that comes with it are precious indeed and should never be taken for granted. And they must be defended with every fiber in our being.

Let's get started.