**Survival**

When one thinks of force one might think of Isaac Newton’s second law of motion or one might think of the mystical force manipulated by George Lucas’s Jedi. But when historians use the term force, they are referring to a force as insubstantial as that of the Star Wars universe, but analogous to Newton’s second law of motion. Historians refer to a force that moves history, the law or laws that dictate the movement of history. There is active debate among historians as to what the substance of this force is. Candidates for this substance include nature, thoughts, and human constructs such as culture and politics as well as human needs. The primary force that gives history motion is the human desire to survive another day and the secondary forces that direct historical motion are the human desires to be and to remain free.

Humans possess an innate mechanism for survival: the flight or fight response. This mechanism is an essential part of being human. Forced to by famine, war, and other life conditions, there have existed individuals who gave up their freedom voluntarily and entrusted their survival to another human. It is only when the alternative to not surviving another day seems worse does one contemplate ending or attempt to end their life. Within that alternative situation usually the individual is not free to do as they desire. Yet, the desire to survive is the primary force since as along as the means to survive another day are perceived by an individual, that individual will endure even the most inhumane restrictions on their freedom. For example: the capture of Geronimo and the subsequent deportation of the last remaining defiant Apaches to reservations, the Trail of Tears endured by the Cherokees, the victims of the West African slave trade, and “Little Russians [Ukrainians], Cossaks, whom Russian policy, in time, forced into serfdom” (Nikitenko, 1). These are just a few examples of countless inhumane restrictions placed upon ethnic minorities throughout history, yet each of these people groups have surviving members today. The freedoms of these ethnic groups are restricted by the laws of the societies in which they live and by any respective unwritten cultural policies within those societies. The desire to survive another day drove Geronimo’s warpath. The American government that hunted the Apaches desired the survival of the society it created and the survival of its individuals; the free Apaches at that time were a threat to that goal. Ukrainians settled in Russian controlled lands because the area provided a higher chance for survival. The Russians invited the Ukrainians to settle these lands to reduce the threat of the Crimean Tatars, therefore, increasing the probability of survival for the Russians. All major events throughout history, not just oppressive ones, are motivated primarily by the desire to increase ones probability of survival. The common non-conscripted man in an army or rebellious unit chose to align himself with that particular group because out of all available options doing so raised his chance of survival.

Survival of self, family, society, and then humanity are the prime motivators of each individual and the primary motivator of history itself. Leaders of societies throughout history amassed wealth, power, and territory to most importantly secure their individual survival from both external and internal threats as well as to secure the survival of their society. As long as individual members of each society have a means of survival and the absence of daily oppression, rebellion is far from the member’s thoughts and allegiance to the ruling authority is granted without prolonged consideration. When individual members of humanity feel that the survival of their society is threatened they may take drastic and sometimes inane measures to ensure its survival. One of these measures is terrorism. The terrorist views the survival of their society as threatened and terrorism is “a way of showing that someone deeply disagreed with something” (Ouředník, 12). The assassin of Archduke Franz Ferdinand viewed the Austrian as a threat to the survival of his society. Separate or secret societies may and do exist within larger societies. These types of societies are defined more often by a common set of ideas, beliefs, and/or values rather than a geographical location or a common ancestry. Such is the case with most terrorist groups including the Ku Klux Klan. As with the larger more visible societies, members of these societies will fight for the survival of their society if threatened. In the majority of instances individuals are just motivated by survival of self, family, and society, but if a threat existed to the entirety of humanity such individuals would, though some reluctantly, ban together to fight that threat. If a majority of the populace of Terra was convinced global warming had reached a level that threaten the survival of life, this threat would be combatted to ensure the survival of humanity.

Humanity’s greatest struggle besides survival is that to be free and if already free to maintain that freedom. The struggle for survival of the West African slave traders would later cause the struggle for freedom of the very slaves that bought their survival. To maintain the lifestyle of the free Apache people was a secondary goal of the Apache warpath. Sadly, obtaining and maintaining ones freedom occasionally is not without payment. Blood spilled in battle and monetary payment, tribute, are the most common prices paid to attain and maintain freedom. The one paying the price may eke out payment for their family members or their society as well as paying for themselves. Aleksandr Nikitenko relates the importance of freedom in this passage: “If the count demands payment for their release, I will not stop at any price to buy their freedom, no matter what I shall have to do to raise the money” (Nikitenko, 205). Aleksandr secured his own release and later secures the release of his mother and brother. As is the case with any oppressed individual, the Russian serf after taking measures to ensure their day to day survival, could then focus on the facts of their oppression and think upon ways to remove their oppression. Many of the over 200 nations in existence were established as independent nations apart from a previously existing oppressive ruling authority. Fascism and Communism and the time of their inception seemed to be systems that would free people from the oppressive rule of Industrialization. Like the Luddites, the followers of these ways of thought hoped to free themselves from the oppressive effects of Industrialization. Just as a dominant desire of a child with an authoritarian parent is to be free, so is the desire to be free a dominant force in the movement of history.

Although the desire to obtain and maintain ones freedom is a strong force that guides the movement of history, the role it plays in moving along history is secondary to that of the human desire to survive another day. Survival and freedom for one’s self, family, and society are worth fighting to safeguard. Past societies have fought for these desires. Present societies are fighting for these desires. Real and perceived threats cause strife between individuals and groups, who are willing and compelled to fight for these desires. Economic gain and power are simply tools used to obtain and maintain ones survival and freedom. An individual’s wealth and power could also be the source of a real or perceived threat to another individual’s survival and freedom. An enlightened, civil humanity will move towards an egalitarian society with universal suffrage.