Privatization and the Private Psychology of Social Security

Editor

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Abstract. This article describes a crucial psychological nexus that mitigates against governmental attempts to privatize social security programs.

Throughout history many political entities--from empire to country to terrorist group--have effected variants of social security programs for various proportions of those entities' members. In fact, a broad definition of "political entities" would include military organizations, companies, and labor unions as well. The publicly reinforced premise of these programs is that there would be a source of financial and/or material support for some entity members (members of a society). The support would be available sometimes before and during, but almost always after, the so-called "best years" of members' lives--after the zenith of work productivity, earning power, or physical zest and as the encroachment of impending death looms.

Society's members construct private psychologies concerning social security programs--sometimes congruent with their public discourses, sometimes incompatible. The nexus of these psychologies is that there's a sure thing--at least as sure as a thing can be--to somewhat help with the material challenges of daily living. Depending on one's material situation and self-perception of this situation, the help may be unnecessary, necessary, sufficient, or even grossly inadequate. But it's there. And that's what social security is all about.