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## Strong Families are the Key to Building Back Better

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In most cases, it's best to disregard what Alex Nowrasteh (pronunciation unknown) tweets or writes. Every now and then, however, the CATO vice president of economic and social policy turns heads by unconsciously tweeting something on the nose.

“‘Traditional’ families were strong for economic reasons: There was ~nowhere else to go, so members had to conform or likely die. Capitalism and free labor markets destroyed this, to the benefit of liberalism, individualism, and economic progress,” Nowrasteh tweeted with a photo of a page of Peter J. Richerson and Lesley Newson’s “A Story of Us.”

Nowrasteh’s tweet was quickly mocked by conservatives—he’s a bit late to this party. “Here’s a little secret—If the choice for civilization is families or capitalism, one of two things will happen: 1) all the capitalist societies will die off 2) societies will choose to not be capitalist,” one [reply from](#) American Moment President Saurabh Sharma read.

Further revelations from Nowrasteh in a quote [tweet](#) of the original: “US culture is built on abandoning one's family/tribe to move to the market for opportunity. Immigration from abroad & migration domestically. On many metrics, the US is possibly the worst or near-worst society for families. Sad, but true.”

Such a realization ought to make anyone, even Nowrasteh, reevaluate the relationship between man and capital. The introspection was short lived. The following day, Nowrasteh was retweeting his own tweets in support of Vivek Ramaswamy's desire for unlimited "high-skilled" immigration.

Indeed, what Nowrasteh originally tweeted is sad but true: we sacrificed our children and our families on the altar of liberalism, both cultural and economic. But I'd like to focus on the first part of the original tweet for a second: Nowrasteh says "'Traditional' families were strong for economic reasons." Surely, better material conditions aren't harmful to families—a common talking point among conservatives is that most families wish they had one more child, and pro-family policies can help make those families' dream a reality. But might I suggest it also works the other way around? That economies are strong for family reasons?

Families create order and competency. That much is abundantly obvious in the social realm. Children in a home with two parents are more likely to be highly educated, healthier, and develop strong friendships and less likely to get divorced, have children out of wedlock, or be incarcerated. It's not just parents: Having siblings is also correlated to higher emotional intelligence, higher academic performance, and fewer mental health problems.

Sometimes this analysis delves into the realm of economics: growing up in a household with both parents and siblings is positively correlated with higher levels of employment, income, and negatively correlated with poverty. Rarely, however, do we talk about the impact strong families, and the order and competency they create, have on the economy more broadly. Admittedly, that'd be something very difficult to measure (it's much easier to look at individual outcomes), but I think it's safe to say a man that is his household's only source of income is going to work as if his life and the lives of his wife and children depend on it. He goes about his work with the order and competency needed by the head of a household. He is steady, as is what he builds—and what he builds actually works. Was this the driver of the strength of the mid-twentieth century American economy? I think so.

Have you wondered lately why we can't build things like we used to, and when we do manage to build things, they never work like they should? Maybe it's because a family man is no longer the one building it.