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But the real reason Berman's analogy does not hold up is that where yesterday's progressive insisted that the struggle for freedom and equality was a two-front war — "if freedom and equality are not vouchsafed" for "the peoples of color" at home, A. Philip Randolph wrote in 1942, "the war for democracy will not be won" abroad — Berman and his allies hope to find in Iraq precisely what they cannot find in the United States. Trotskyists of defeat, they export revolution not in order to save it but in order to evade it.

Liberals and leftists panning for political gold in the wreckage of downtown Baghdad — or New York — is not a pretty sight, which has led some critics to chalk up these scenes to illicit motives. But the infatuation with political fear and imperial deliverance from evil cannot be explained away as mere opportunism. It has a long history in modern politics, arising whenever reform comes up against reaction, whenever movements for progress lose their bearings and buoyancy. At such moments of doubt, nothing can seem as real as fear itself, nothing more tempting than to make evil — and the fear it arouses — the basis of all politics.

It was Alexis deTocqueville, I think, who first noticed this tendency. In one of his lesser-known writings on the French Revolution, deTocqueville noted the inevitable deceleration and disillusionment that consume failed movements of reform. After every great defeat comes a great despair. Comrade accuses comrade of treachery or cowardice, soldiers denounce generals for marching them toward folly and everyone is soon seized by what deTocqueville described as the "contempt" that broken revolutionaries "acquire for the very convictions and passions" that moved them in the first place. Forced to abandon the cause for which they gave up so much, failed rebels "turn against themselves and consider their hopes as having been childish — their enthusiasm and, above all, their devotion absurd."

Since the 1960s, liberals and leftists have been beaten at the polls and routed in the streets. Equality no longer propels political argument, and freedom — that other sometime watchword of the left — is today the private property of the right. Unable to reconcile themselves to their loss, liberals and leftists are now seized by the contempt and embarrassment deTocqueville described. Berman cringes over the "androidal" complexion of '60s sectarians, with their "short haircuts and flabby muscles," their "flat tones" of Marxism so "oddly remote from American English." Others wince at the left's lack of patriotic fervor and national identification, its hostility to all things American.

Lacking confidence in the traditional truths of God and king and the revolutionary truths of reason and rights, deTocqueville hopes that his contemporaries might find succor in the idea of fear, which could activate and ground a commitment to liberal ideals. He wrote, "Fear must be put to work on behalf of liberty." And so he dedicated himself to a career of liberal pursuits whose only success would be a scheme of mild improvement in Algeria — and leadership in the counterrevolution in 1848.

So it has been with today's liberals: However much they may argue for domestic reform, it is liberalism's conquering thrusts abroad — and assaults on the left at home — that earn their warmest applause. Again, other factors explain this turn to empire and fear, including the appalling violations of human rights throughout the world and the left's failure to respond adequately to those violations. But given this vision's periodic appearance at moments like ours — one could also cite the case of cold war intellectuals offering their own politics of fear after the

setbacks of the late 1940s — it would seem that the appeal of fear has much to do with defeat and disillusionment as it does with the stated concerns of its advocates.

If Oscar Wilde is right — that you can't reason a man out of a position he has not reasoned himself into — it is not likely that the liberals of fear will be persuaded anytime soon to give up their faith. (Indeed, proving that nothing succeeds like failure, Peter Beinart, editor of *The New Republic*, has taken the Democrats' defeat last November as the signal for a renewed commitment to the liberalism of fear.) Responding to political forces beyond their control, they won't cede their beliefs until a vigorous movement marches past them. The question for the rest of us is: What should that movement stand for?

For some on the left, liberalism is a bankrupt project, hopelessly compromised by its alliance with capital and indulgence of empire. These critics see liberalism as a weak tea — too suspicious of social movements, too soft on capitalism. They long for a stronger brew: if not Marxism, then some notion of radical democracy.

No dispassionate observer of American liberalism would dispute these charges, and some liberals happily plead guilty to them. But what critics and defenders of liberalism overlook is how often liberalism has inspired the most radical of transformations. The war against slavery, the fight for industrial democracy, the struggle for women's rights, civil rights and sexual freedom — each of these battles was waged in the name of liberty and equality, twin pillars of the liberal ideal.

Hoping to emancipate men and women from all manner of domination America's greatest social movements have sought to extend liberalism's promise to every sphere of social and political life: the family, the workplace, sexuality and so on. Liberalism's earliest armies marched against the personal — and physically coercive — rule of kings and lords. Its later militants have made war on the equally personal and physical rule of husbands and fathers, slave owners and overseers, bosses and supervisors. That idea — of freedom from external control, of personal volition, of saying no to those who rule and ruin us — is as radical today as it was in the time of John Locke.

Even America's most left-wing voices have found in liberalism a useful vocabulary to advance their claims. Big Bill Haywood defended the general strike as a potent form of electoral democracy: It "prevents the capitalists from disenfranchising the worker, it gives the vote to women, it re-enfranchises the black man and places the ballot in the hands of every boy and girl employed in a shop." Malcolm X did not favor the bullet over the ballot; he insisted "it's got to be the ballot or the bullet," that America had better live up to its ideals lest it face a more violent uprising. Stokely Carmichael defined black power as "the coming

together of black people to elect representatives and to force those representatives to speak to their needs," which is a fairly good gloss on liberal pluralism. And we would do well to recall that the Black Panther Party repeatedly invoked the Constitution in its 10-point program. Most recently Katha Pollitt has argued that if America took seriously the liberal commitment to equal opportunity, everyone would have "safe housing...healthy diets, doctors, fresh air...well-stocked libraries open all week" — Sweden itself.

There is perhaps no better measure of how radical and disruptive liberalism truly is than the ferocity of American elites' resistance to it. It took more than a half-million lives to eliminate slavery. American workers suffered more strike-related violence than workers in Western Europe — just to get an 8-hour day, freedom of association and a weekend. And imagine how many feet would have to march — and heads would have to roll — to secure the equal opportunity Pollitt envisions.

Liberalism's radical critics are not wrong about its failings and compromises. Nor would they be wrong to point out that the defenders of America's old regimes have used liberal language to fend off challenges to their power. Slaveholders invoked the rights of private property, employers prized the freedom of contract, and big business still warns against big government. But these are not liberalism's only or finest statements. If we are to recover its throatier voices and political momentum, we would do well to recall those moments when it marched as the party of movement rather than when it swilled as the party of order.

Of course, liberal hawks might argue that this history of liberal activism perfectly expresses their purpose in the Middle East. Indeed, Hitchens has mustered Thomas Paine and the American Revolution for his war against Islamofascism, arguing that America is once again fighting for "the cause of all mankind." Beyond pointing out the evident hypocrisy — and wild implausibility — of a government reneging on the most basic liberal commitments at home while trumpeting its final triumph abroad, what's a progressive to say to this? If we object to the marriage of human rights and American military power, what do we propose instead?

Again, American history provides an instructive answer. In the past, America's most radical liberals looked to the rest of the world not as a *tabula rosa* for imperial reform but as a rebuke to illiberalism at home or a goad to domestic transformation. "Go where you may," Frederick Douglass declared in 1852, "search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the old world, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival."

In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. reminded Americans that "the nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jet-like speed toward gaining political independence but we still creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter." Even mainstream leaders of the National Organization for Women argued in 1966 that the American feminist movement was not a beacon to the world but "part of a worldwide revolution of human rights now taking place within and beyond our national borders."

America under the Patriot Act is obviously not America under slavery, and the anticolonial movements that inspired MLK and feminists in the 1960s have not fared well. Yet this history reminds us that American liberalism, at its best, has always been internationalist, but its internationalism has meant taking instruction and provocation from abroad rather than flying freedom across the water.

Liberalism's past also reminds us of another, more sobering fact. During the second half of the 20th century, progressives were able to look abroad for inspiration because there was something for them to look for. They could believe in international democracy because there were actual movements fighting for it — not under the kitschy banner of American empire or through staged photo-ops of toppling statues but for real. If we on the left have a hard time today summoning the same belief, it is because at the very moments those activists were heralding liberation movements elsewhere, the United States was doing everything it could — successfully, we now know — to destroy them.

It is true that there are democratic movements today — in Latin America, the Middle East and Central Asia—that deserve and receive progressives' support. But there is always the risk of the U.S. government hijacking them with arms or handouts. And though liberal hawks like to cite the post-World War 2 occupation of Germany and Japan as models for current or future U.S. interventions, we should remember that the New Dealers who led those occupations were far more liberal than the occupiers of today and — until something fundamental changes in the United States — tomorrow. Foreign assistance or interventions are not likely to generate democracy abroad if the powers doing the assisting or intervening are so resolutely antidemocratic at home.

So if we find ourselves at a loss when challenged by liberal hawks — who are right, after all, to press us on how to promote democracy in Iraq, human rights in Sudan, and so on — it is best, I think, to admit defeat. We don't know, because we lost the great battles of the 20th century: not just for social democracy and anti-imperialism but for social democracy and anti-imperialism with a human face. Having admitted defeat, perhaps we can begin to figure out a better answer.

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