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Liberalism and Foreign Policy

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David Clinton: *Tocqueville, Lieber, and Bagehot: Liberalism Confronts the World.* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Pp. ix,159. $55.00.)

This reconsideration of three rather different mid-nineteenth century liberals introduces a less familiar international dimension of their work while evoking the signature themes of each. Although Tocqueville, Lieber, and Bagehot all espoused the principles of limited government, civil liberty, the rule of law, and decentralization, each spun his liberalism from independent elements and none could be described as a democrat. Tocqueville's critique of individualism sprang from his republican concern for civic virtue. Lieber's organic view of the state reconciled his intense nationalism with a commitment to free trade, civil liberty, and self-government. Bagehot's support for a politics of rational discussion was anchored in "an abiding skepticism that a mass electorate was capable of such discussion" (p. 13). The opening chapter sketches their lives and their milieus. It is for the continuing value of their example that they appear to have been chosen: "in the field of international politics at least, all three have a claim to our attention, not only for their merit . . . but also for their representativeness" (p. 3). Together they mirror the range of prospects that spans the liberal horizon.

Each of the three middle chapters is a careful analysis and synthesis of the characteristic themes to which each man devoted his attention. The second chapter is framed as a dialogue between two Tocquevilles. The younger Tocqueville's maiden speech in the Chamber of Deputies in 1839 urged an aggressive policy in the eastern Mediterranean, denouncing as absurd and cowardly his colleagues' infatuation with domestic improvements. A decade later, an older Tocqueville, now Foreign Minister of the short-lived Second Republic, counseled a policy of peace for the sake of French honor and in the interest of humanity.

It is fitting that Tocqueville's change of mind should be examined against the backdrop of the "great democratic revolution" that so long engaged him. This "democratic juggernaut" was obliterating differences of all kinds, sweeping everything before it, threatening to submerge institutions and nations into a featureless generality. Yet he regarded this irresistible equality to be "consistent with religious traditions, which 'usually consider man in himself'" (p. 21). To ward off its more servile strains Tocqueville sought to fortify liberty and virtue with patriotism. Free institutions must be kept tangible and accessible in order to persuade people to make the sacrifices necessary to preserve them. Otherwise "the decay of liberal democratic institutions would transform their citizens into subjects" (p. 23).

Civic virtue is the fixed star in Tocqueville's firmament. States must be able "to take what Tocqueville called 'heroic' actions" to show themselves "worthy of the loyalty and sacrifices of their citizens" (p. 25). Further, "the international system would be best served if the pressure for egalitarianism could be channeled into a shared code of conduct" (p. 28). Since the supreme duty of the state is to advance the civic virtue of its citizens, domestic policy must be primary. In short: "foreign policy was to be conducted so as to improve the prospects for liberty within one's own country, and as circumstances changed so did the policy . . . most conducive to the preservation of liberty in an egalitarian age" (pp. 40-41).

The writings of Francis Lieber similarly resonate with a dialogue between the universal and the particular. For Lieber human life itself ripples in the

confluence of individuality and sociality. He dismissed as unhistorical the prevalent social contract theory, affirming that society is organic and primordial while at the same time acknowledging man's deep need to be recognized as a separate moral being: " 'To be drowned in undefined generality makes him restless, unhappy'" (p. 46). Given a fluidity that requires ceaseless negotiation, Lieber endorsed a political form he called "hamarchy," describing it as a decentralized state "'in which a thousand distinct parts have their independent action, yet are by the general organism united into one whole, into one living system'" (p. 47). He believed the "National Polity" of modern times strikes the right balance through its protection of private property and individual rights. Lieber, who styled himself a "publicist," was in many ways a political visionary. He held that human nature itself is best reckoned in its maturity, in the fullness of civilization. It is the progressive amplitude of the modern state that secures civil liberty, self-government, and the "society of nations." The hegemony of a single state or empire is anachronistic. "'The leading nations draw the chariot of civilization abreast, as the ancient steeds drew the car of victory'" (p. 61). Lieber took Grotius as his conscious model, but in extolling "'the great cause of intercommunion and intercommunication'" (p. 56) that operates at every level of humanity, Lieber's ideas recall Althusius and his idea of symbiotic association. "The 'all-pervading'—indeed, the 'divine'—'law of interdependence applie[s] 'to nations as much as individuals'" (p. 56).

Lieber long campaigned for international copyright protections and free trade, advocated the use of law professors as international arbiters, and drafted a Civil War code of military conduct that helped shape subsequent international conventions. While at times he wrote as if he valued national unity above all else, the great body of his work testifies to the importance of uncoerced consent and the decentralization of government. "Lieber worried that concentrated international power would be destructive of individual liberty, which depended on the sheltering institutions of individual states" (p. 60). When Gustave Moynier sent him a proposal to create a permanent international court with binding authority, Lieber rejected it, saying it "'savour[ed] of Universal empire'" (p. 74). "It was precisely because Lieber saw international society as a moral order that he believed that any supranational compulsion had no place in it" (p. 58).

As a journalist, Bagehot dealt less with the principles than the practices of international relations. His mistrust of professed good intentions and his skepticism toward the intense excitements aroused by foreign policy issues led him to oppose foreign adventures. Normally allied by sympathy with Gladstone, Bagehot's anticolonial attitude, especially regarding the interminable Eastern question, kept him out of step with nearly all segments of British opinion. "'Daring and resolve are not after all the greatest qualities of statesmanship,' was his constant reminder. 'The caution and temporizing inertia of true thoughtfulness is a constituent of statesmanship of still greater value'" (p. 104).

All three paid tribute to England as liberty's native land. Lieber's Anglophilia would have struck a chord with Bagehot, "who thought that England, 'a country governed mainly by labour and by speech,' came closer than any other to the model of government by discussion" (p. 79). Napoleon III, by contrast, was for each of them the very model of a modern despot. The despotisms of this century past might not have surprised Lieber, who noticed the brilliance and facility with which advances in knowledge and commerce sustained Napoleon's tyranny. Bagehot found much to praise in the French

empire but rejected imperialism because "it is not a *teaching government*" (p. 81) and does not show the people why its policies are good. "Only a free government could confidently undertake bold measures, because it was an informed government" (p. 79).

The concluding chapter is a meditation on the legacy of liberalism and what liberals might prescribe today. By accepting the nation-state as the proper vehicle for reconciling order and liberty, the three likely would have discouraged any attempt to shift loyalties to a global community "because it would be impossible to sustain the civic virtues in such a setting" (p. 107). Two of them, Tocqueville and Bagehot, also represent the two poles of a continuing foreign policy debate over whether liberalism is to be the active champion of liberty or the more passive example of liberty. Although the Cold War may have suppressed the influence of liberalism, the debate "over the proper course for the United States, the preeminent liberal power "(p. 120) has been subsequently renewed. The extrovert or interventionist strain of liberalism exhibits a "generous desire to reform the world;" its introvert or non-interventionist rival reflects an "open-minded reluctance to impose one's will on others" (p. 114).

Here Lieber is permitted the last word. "A pre-liberal concept, honor, [Lieber] would say, can resolve the contest over the direction in which liberalism truly points the foreign policy of a great power" (p. 121). Honor is exemplified in such old-fashioned qualities as "dignity, self-respect, consideration for others, high-mindedness, candor coupled with courtesy. . . . Lieber's advocacy of codes of conduct freely accepted by states solely for their inherent justice, and not due to any external coercion, follows from this conception" (p. 121).

This engaging little book fills a gap in the scholarly treatment of nineteenth-century liberal thought while demonstrating its value in illuminating the competing values that bedevil policy makers today. Tocqueville remains very much within the mainstream of academic discourse and Bagehot's *The English Constitution* is a recognized classic. But what about Lieber? When Tocqueville returned to France from his journey to America, he brought back with him the first seven volumes of Lieber's *Encyclopaedia Americana*. To what purpose, one might ask? This book makes a case for giving Lieber his due. The works of Tocqueville and Bagehot have been collected. Why not those of Francis Lieber?

—Steven Alan Samson

THE TIMES THEY WERE A-CHANGING

Jeremi Suri: *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003. pp. viii, 355. $$).

This book offers a bold new interpretation of détente. Suri explains this period in international relations as a reaction by the leaders of the big powers to the "global revolution" of the 1960s. The book is grand in scope, offering an international history of countries in the 1960s from China to the United States. Suri strongly contributes to those who want to shift the field of diplomatic history from a narrow focus on the foreign policy archives of states to a more

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