



Republicans and Democrats; Mirror Images

Although I remain something of a talk radio junkie, it has been some time since I recognized that the “conservatism” of the air waves is really nothing of the kind. That is, much to my disappointment, it isn’t “conservatism” that “conservative” talk radio tends to promote but neoconservatism, or at least Republican Party politics (which is for all practical purposes the same thing). Still, I continue to listen to talk radio regularly, and just as regularly find it instructive.



For the latest pearls, I have nationally syndicated host [Mike Gallagher](#) to thank. Gallagher expressed incredulity over the response of some “on the left” to the recent killing of Navy Seals in Afghanistan.

The Afghan war, being a decade old, is the longest war that America has ever waged. In spite of this, [our military suffered more casualties in a single day](#) this past weekend than it has suffered on any given day since this war began. Not surprisingly, these facts are being taken by an ever growing number of Americans as further confirmation of their skepticism toward this Middle Eastern adventure. Our mission in Afghanistan, they reason, if it ever had any coherence at all, has lost intelligibility: it is time to either radically revisit our objectives or, at long last, to bring the troops home.

Gallagher couldn’t disagree more with this stance. This latest “tragedy,” he claimed, only shows that we aren’t combating our enemies intensely enough. Several of his callers concurred with his assessment. The problem, they say, is that our fighting men are constrained. If only we let them do what they are trained to do — destroy the enemy — we will be able to win this thing.

As anyone who listens to “conservative” talk radio and/or watches Fox News knows all too well, Gallagher’s position on this issue was anything but atypical: it represents the conventional neoconservative, GOP wisdom. The more thought we pay to it, the more obvious it becomes that in spite of all of the bi-partisan rhetoric about the “fundamental” differences that are supposed to exist between them, the Republican and Democratic parties are remarkably similar. In fact, it isn’t *much* of an exaggeration to conclude that they are mirror images of one another.

It is, however, *somewhat* of an exaggeration to judge them as such, for neither party possesses nearly as much animus for the pet policies of the other that common hype would suggest. In short, contrary to what they would have their respective constituents believe, Democrats no more want to “gut” our national defense than Republicans want to eliminate, or even considerably ameliorate, the Welfare State. Still, for present purposes, I will focus primarily on that *rhetoric* of our parties that reflects the differences *in emphasis* between our parties.

Domestically speaking, Republicans claim to oppose “Big Government” on the grounds that it undermines freedom. At the same time, Democrats support their call for an ever expansive government



Written by [Jack Kerwick, Ph.D.](#) on August 12, 2011

at home precisely because of the greater freedom that it supposedly permits the individual, specifically the individual of “the middle class.” Of course it is correct that Democrats pay much lip service to the ideal of Equality as well, but it is crucial for the real enemies of the left to recognize that, theoretically at least, there is no more conflict within leftist thought between Equality and Freedom than there is conflict within the rightist’s vision between the two. In principle, at any rate, when domestic policies are at stake, Republicans conceive of freedom and equality in *procedural* or *formal* terms. Conversely, Democrats think of them *substantively*. What this means is that Democrats’ redistributive schemes serve Americans generally inasmuch as they promote Equality while simultaneously promoting Freedom as well, for there is no Freedom as long as people lack sufficient resources to implement their plans.

Republicans scoff at this reasoning — when, that is, the context on which it centers is American society. However, matters are quite otherwise when focus shifts onto non-Western lands, particularly those in the Middle East.

When this occurs, Republicans actually reason in much the same way as do Democrats when the latter attempts to justify its socialistic economic prescriptions for the homeland. For instance, when President Obama, succinctly summarizing the Democrats’ vision, infamously told “Joe the Plumber” that it was his intention to “spread the wealth around,” Republicans rightly realized that he was not so subtly revealing his plans for confiscating the fruits of the labor of “the haves” in order to pass them along to “the have nots.” But the Global Democracy mission upon which Republicans have embarked their country is no less a confiscatory or redistributive scheme than that of which the American Welfare State consists: the blood and treasure of “the privileged” — i.e. Americans — is radically redistributed to “the disadvantaged” — “oppressed” Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and elsewhere.

What’s more, all of this is done in the name of the Mother of all egalitarian battle cries — “Human Rights” — and the same substantive conception of Freedom that animates Democrat leftists. If Freedom is “power,” as [John Dewey](#) and legions of other leftists have always insisted, then the fact that it is only through this massive redistribution of resources from Americans to Middle Eastern Muslims that the latter can enjoy the Freedom that Republicans want for them to have proves that it is indeed a substantive condition — not just a system of procedural arrangements — that is in question here.

So, judging, once more, just from *the rhetoric* (as opposed to the actual *practice*) of the two parties, it seems that for Democrats, the ideals of Freedom and Equality, and the “social engineering” required for their realization, are moral imperatives in America and the West, but efforts to implement them abroad are morally impermissible by virtue of being “imperialistic.” Conversely, according to Republicans, the left’s substantive notions of Freedom and Equality are a function of socialism and, then, immoral — *but only when applied to America*; when it comes to non-democratic nations, “the social engineering” that their implementation demands is a moral imperative.

The Republican and Democratic Parties are indeed mirror images of one another.



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