The New Politics of Religion in the United States

The Sleeping Giant Has Awakened

Slavoj Žižek

Postface by

John D. Caputo

Introduction by

Jeffrey W. Robbins and Neal Magee

Edited by
Mary-Jane Rubenstein
Muddled Concept
Politics and Religion at the Heart of Freedom

Let Freedom Ring
citizens had come under attack. But the leap from “our fellow citizens,” through the indeterminate middle ground of “our way of life,” to “our very freedom” goes unexplained in this speech. How exactly is it that “freedom came under attack” when planes flew into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon? The only clarification offered in this particular address is that “America was targeted for attack because we’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world.” What one is left to deduce is that freedom here stands metonymically for the nation itself: America was attacked, and America is freedom, so freedom is under attack. One can assume from this point on that, insofar as “America” and “freedom” have been established from the outset as functionally coextensive, any response to the events of September 11 on the part of the United States will be phrased as an expression of freedom itself.

This explains how, with very little clarification, the President has been able to refer to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as efforts both to defend and to spread liberty. Granted, the American military is waging this war, but only as an instrument of freedom itself. Conversely, the true adversary is not the leaders, armies, or citizens of any particular nation, but the terror that institutionalizes them. “Freedom and fear are at war,” Bush told the nation in the same speech that accused the terrorists of “hating freedom.” Consolidating the opposition between freedom and terror, Bush has assured the public that “this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty.” “The terrorists will not stop the march of freedom.” “Hope and liberty” are “the great alternatives to terror.” By means of a few rhetorical sleights of hand, then, a terrorist attack on New York and Washington comes to launch and justify a cosmic battle between the forces of freedom and the forces of terror, with the former providing a convenient cover for any action on the part of the United States military.

So, is President Bush’s idea of freedom merely an empty signifier? This is certainly a tempting conclusion: the President’s constant conflation and unclarified repetition of the words “freedom” and “liberty” could well lead one to believe they are nothing more than conceptual Trojan horses, ready to be filled with all manner of ideological foot soldiers. In this essay, however, I hope to demonstrate that “freedom” not only has a specific meaning for Bush; it has two meanings. Piecing together the scattered characteristics of “freedom” in Bush’s public addresses, one witnesses the emergence of two incompatible meanings, intertwined with one another. On the one hand, the President’s notion of “freedom” is fully reducible to particular political criteria. On the other hand, however, this freedom exceeds all criteria, to such an extent that it is lifted out of the category of the political entirely, and into the category of the religious. There is, in other words, a contradiction within Bush’s understanding of freedom, which performs a simultaneous assertion and effacement of the political. Although this slipperiness has been deployed to justify recent American foreign policy—whitewashing political and economic aims in “religion,” “faith,” or “the design of nature”—I maintain that if Bush’s own double logic is fully fleshed out, it gives way, surprisingly, to a notion of freedom that fundamentally undermines the self-assertion of the American Empire.

Conditioning Freedom

As unevenly sketched throughout George Bush’s public speeches, freedom on one hand is measured by certain conditions. These include “the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women, private property, equal justice, religious tolerance,” access to global markets, freedom of speech, political pluralism, labor unions, independent media, privatized economies, and above all, popular sovereignty ensured by a representative government. Presumably, American citizens of even the most diverse political persuasions would count most of these as instances of freedom. What signals Bush’s own political bent, however, is that for Bush each of these criteria relies upon the singular integrity of the autonomous individual. This is evident above all in the tautological linchpin of Bush’s second inaugural address: “Self-government relies, in the end, on the government of the self.”

By hinging freedom on the individual and one’s unimpeded pursuits, Bush is able to set forth the “ownership society” as the model of fully realized liberty. Under this system, all social ills from poverty to shiftlessness will be solved by each person’s active participation in the market. Once everybody has a mortgage and everybody is an entrepreneur, each citizen will achieve “economic independence,” and the rest will take care of itself. Once in a rare while, Bush gives a nod to interpersonal relationships, saying for example that “our nation relies on men and women who look after a neighbor and surround the lost with love.” But looking after a neighbor hardly addresses the systematic economic injustices of the “ownership society,” and loving the lost cannot stand in for the social services that have been cut for the sake of tax breaks and low interest rates.
The importance of conditional freedom

In the Middle East, the goal of establishing a "freedom first" policy, which aims to create a "freedom first" culture, has been a major priority. This has been achieved through various strategies, including the promotion of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the establishment of democratic institutions. However, the implementation of these policies has been met with challenges, such as the rise of extremist groups and the impact of external influences.

One of the key strategies has been the establishment of democratic institutions, which have been gradually introduced in many countries. These institutions have been supported by international organizations, such as the United Nations, which have provided technical assistance and capacity-building programs.

In addition to the political changes, there has been a significant improvement in the education sector, with the introduction of new curricula and the promotion of critical thinking skills. This has helped to foster a culture of openness and tolerance, which has been supported by the media and civil society organizations.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain, particularly in the areas of security and economic development. The need for continued support and cooperation from the international community is essential for the successful implementation of these strategies.

Therefore, it is crucial that we continue to support the efforts of those working towards freedom and democracy in the Middle East. This requires a long-term commitment, with a focus on the development of sustainable and inclusive solutions that address the root causes of conflict and promote reconciliation and peace.
The rights to freedom of religion, speech, and association are fundamental to a free and democratic society. These rights are not just about protecting religious beliefs or the right to express oneself freely; they are essential for ensuring that individuals can influence the direction of their lives and affairs. Freedom of religion, for instance, allows individuals to choose their own beliefs and to pursue them without fear of persecution. Freedom of speech enables individuals to express their thoughts and ideas, challenge the status quo, and hold those in power accountable. These freedoms are not just rights, but also responsibilities. They require that individuals respect the same freedoms for others and use them in a way that promotes the common good.

The protection of these freedoms is crucial for a thriving democracy. They are the foundation upon which other rights and liberties are built. Without freedom of religion, one cannot practice their faith in peace. Without freedom of speech, one cannot participate in the democratic process, challenge government policies, or hold elected officials accountable. Without freedom of association, one cannot form organizations that advocate for causes they believe in, or engage in peaceful protests.

The United States has a long history of protecting these freedoms. The First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of religion, speech, and press. These freedoms have been vigorously defended in court cases and legal challenges throughout our history. The Supreme Court has interpreted these freedoms to ensure that they are applied in a way that is consistent with the principles of liberty and equality that underlie the American system of government.

However, these freedoms are not absolute. They are subject to certain limitations, such as the need to protect national security or public order. Nevertheless, these limitations must be narrowly construed and justified by a compelling government interest. The government cannot simply assert a need for security or order to justify restrictions on these freedoms. It must show that the restrictions are necessary and proportionate to the concern at hand.

In conclusion, the freedoms of religion, speech, and association are essential to a free and democratic society. They are not just privileges to be enjoyed, but responsibilities to be exercised with care and respect. By upholding these freedoms, we can ensure that our society remains open, vibrant, and free.
human, more communities to be respected rather than being demoralized.

There are more freedoms to express, more people to be concerned about freedoms. This is a clear reflection of the condition that the freedom is no longer a luxury for a few but a necessity for all. Freedom is the right of every individual to express their views and opinions. This includes the freedom to think, to express, and to associate with others. Freedom is not just the right to express oneself, but also the right to be heard and understood.

On the one hand, freedom is the freedom to express oneself, but on the other hand, freedom is the freedom to be heard and understood. This is the essence of freedom, where every individual has the right to express their views and opinions, and the right to be heard and understood. This is the true meaning of freedom, where everyone has the right to be free and express themselves.

Freedom is not just the right to express oneself, but also the right to be heard and understood. This is the essence of freedom, where every individual has the right to express their views and opinions, and the right to be heard and understood. This is the true meaning of freedom, where everyone has the right to be free and express themselves.
History, once the bond (underpinning Hackett, 1992), 195-6, 659. Also acr. de To-...

Notes

What should be self-evident? Freedom is not free; it is not free...and counter-intuitive and counter LIVES. But then we might as well admit

EXPANDING FREEDOM. Here we can distill from Corgo Bush’s “Expanding Freedom” in...
The Sleeping Giant Has awakened

By 

Gary T. Frank

The race to the White House is on, and it is shaping up to be a battle for the soul of the Democratic Party. The candidates are vying for the support of the base, but the stakes are much higher than just winning the nomination. The party needs to not only win the nomination but also win the general election, and that means appealing to a broader range of voters.

The Democratic Party has been struggling to regain its footing after the loss of the presidency and the Congress in 2016. The party has been divided on issues such as health care, immigration, and climate change, and it has struggled to articulate a clear message to the American people.

However, with the rise of Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, the Democratic Party is beginning to find its voice. Sanders and Warren have brought issues of economic inequality and social justice to the forefront of the debate, and they have energized Democratic voters.

The challenge for the Democratic Party is to find a balance between appealing to the base and reaching out to moderate voters. The party needs to win the nomination, but it also needs to win in the general election.

The Democratic Party has a chance to do both, but it will take a strong message, a clear vision, and a strong leader to make it happen. The race to the White House is just beginning, and the Democratic Party has an opportunity to rise to the occasion and rise to the occasion and rise to the occasion.
45 Bush, 102.
44 Bush, 102.
43 Bush, 102.
37 Bush, "We Will Not Fail Freeman Center Unless Steps to Help Iraq Achieve Democracy,
36 Bush, 102.
33 Bush, 102.
31 Bush, President's Address to the Nation," September 11, 2006. With emphasis.
18 "Bush," 102.
16 "Bush," 102.