

makers may be saying that, even in a country so aware of dangers and so keyed up to deal with them, common human flaws exist: that the Israeli army is not a mass of robots but a group of human beings with routine imperfections. Perhaps this argument may be the film's reason for being; still, I wouldn't want to be a Jerusalem resident who depended on this particular unit of women for protection.

The writer-directors Dalia Hager and Vidi Bilu are not, in their own work, members of that unit. Their directing has snap and precision; the flow of their film is just swift enough without hurrying. The two leading actresses, Smadar Sayar and Naama Schendar, are adequate. But competent as all the film-making is, *Close to Home* leaves us with questions—and only some possible answers. ■

suggest that liberals should welcome war; but at a time when a conservative government has failed in war and thrown into doubt its whole view of the world, liberals would do well to remember a tradition that rightfully belongs to them and shows why they can do better in matters of both war and peace.

Paul Starr

War and Liberalism

Why power is not the enemy of freedom.

WAR IS ALWAYS A risky enterprise for the political party or ideological faction that undertakes it.

Like the Vietnam War, the Iraq War has broken the grip on national power of a dominant party that had been confidently reshaping American politics. Democracies want speedy victories, especially if they were promised one; a government that fails in war throws into doubt its whole view of the world. Even a party that leads a nation to victory in a war with overwhelming support may be punished at the polls afterward. Think of the defeat of Winston Churchill's Conservatives in 1945 and the reverses suffered by the Democrats after both world wars.

Since Vietnam, though, war has spelled particular trouble for liberals. Torn between competing values, liberals and the Democratic Party have been prone to divisions between hawks and doves and to ambivalence and uncertainty among their cross-pressured leaders. Liberals are dogged by charges from the right that they are unserious about national security; but they also worry that war endangers everything that they value and all that they want to accomplish domestically. The first argument claims that liberalism is unprepared to fight wars, while the second suggests that liberalism

unravels in wartime. Either way, it seems, if war looms, liberalism loses.

It is not just about contemporary liberalism that such arguments have been made. The idea that constitutional government and liberal democracy are unsuited to the rigors of war has a long genealogy, and for a time the historical evidence was at least ambiguous. Classical liberalism had its heyday in the mid-1800s, when the conditions of world politics were relatively benign. Well into the twentieth century it seemed reasonable to suppose that, like a plant that grows only in bright sunshine, liberalism flourishes only in peace. Reflecting on his party's decline after World War I, David Lloyd George, Britain's last Liberal prime minister, wrote in his memoirs that "war has always been fatal to Liberalism."

Lloyd George may have been rationalizing his own failures as a party leader. If wars were generally fatal to liberalism, it could never have survived, given the frequency of war throughout modern history. If liberal governments under liberal leadership were incapable of seeing war through to a successful conclusion, the great struggles of the twentieth century against totalitarianism would have ended in catastrophe, and today we would live in a different world. Liberalism has turned out to be stronger and more effective in war than its adversaries have expected, and it has proved to be more resilient under the pressures of war than liberals themselves have feared. History does not prove that contemporary liberalism will have the same strength and the same resilience, and it certainly does not

'S TATES MAKE WAR, AND WAR makes states," the sociologist Charles Tilly observed. But if war is so decisive in the making of states, why the growing dominance and proliferation of liberal democracies during the past two centuries? Why not states thoroughly devoted to martial values? And why weren't liberal societies transformed into the "garrison states" that many in the mid-twentieth century feared they would become in the age of total war?

At the root of such questions is a misapprehension that liberalism is a source of state weakness because it is centrally concerned with individual liberty. The core principles of liberalism, however, provide not only a theory of freedom, equality, and the public good, but also a discipline of power—the means of creating power as well as controlling it. This discipline has been a singular achievement of constitutional liberalism, dating from late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England and America, and of modern democratic liberalism as it has evolved since roughly the late nineteenth century.

Liberal constitutions impose constraints on the power of any single public official or branch of government as well as the state as a whole. The constraints protect citizens from tyranny, but that is not all they do. They also serve to protect the state itself from capricious, impulsive, or overreaching decisions. By binding those in power, making their behavior more predictable and reliable, and thereby increasing the trust and the confidence of citizens, creditors, and investors, constitutionalism amplifies the long-term power and wealth of a state. Constitutional liberalism imposes a further discipline by dividing power within the state and between state and society, and requiring public disclosure and discussion of state decisions—all of these serving as limits on the ability of officials to pursue their own private interests and enabling the citizens to control their government. Liberalism wagers that a state so constructed can be strong but constrained—strong

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because constrained.

Modern democratic liberalism extends the same logic, both constraining and enlarging the state's power. To make the government accountable to the entire public is a way of both limiting the power of officials and strengthening public responsibility and patriotism. Rights to education and other requirements for human development and security aim to advance equal opportunity and personal dignity and to promote a more creative and productive society. To guarantee those rights, liberals have supported a wider social and economic role for the state, counterbalanced by more robust guarantees of civil liberties and a wider social system of checks and balances anchored in an independent press and pluralistic civil society.

WARS HAVE HISTORICALLY fostered the expansion of state capacities, but without necessarily destroying constitutional government. The immediate effects in well-established liberal democracies have run in seemingly contrary directions. Wars have tended to make societies less liberal but more democratic—that is, they have undermined civil liberties while leading to expanded political rights. Once wars have ended, however, their illiberal effects have typically been reversed, but the democratizing and state-building effects have remained. In short, war has been a catalyst in the transformation of the liberal state, contributing to the features now associated with modern democratic liberalism.

The examples of war's immediate illiberal effects are well known: governmental suspensions of habeas corpus, infringements of free speech, public hysteria against dissenters and suspect minorities. The democratizing effects of war have an equally impressive lineage. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, the need to raise armies and obtain new revenue led kings to concede authority to Parliament; in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America and Europe, the demands of large-scale warfare similarly led governments to concede new rights of citizenship as a way of generating popular loyalty and rewarding sacrifice. In the United States, the expansion of voting rights to African Americans after the Civil War, to women after World War I, and to eighteen-year-olds during the Vietnam War exemplified the pattern. In Europe, too, war led to

expanded rights of citizenship, including social as well as political rights.

These domestic political effects are not inherent in war as such, but seem to depend on the form of warfare and the level of mobilization, especially the "military participation ratio" (the proportion of the population under arms). The higher the ratio, the sociologist Stanislaw Andreski has argued, the more likely war will have a socially leveling impact. Governments in need of popular enlistment and mobilization are especially likely to expand citizenship rights as a means of securing loyalty and commitment. Mutual dependence and personal sacrifice in wartime may also promote social solidarity, especially a sense of obligation to soldiers—hence the repeated enlargements of the franchise during and immediately after wars.

The scale of mobilization in total war may therefore have helped to preserve and to extend democracy. Indeed, it seems scarcely surprising that wars requiring mass conscription and popular participation would break down social hierarchies. The puzzle, rather, is why individual liberty and limits on state power survived the age of total war at all. What is even more surprising is that on the whole, despite bouts of collective anxiety and repression, the liberal democracies grew more liberal as well as more democratic over the course of the twentieth century. Instead of collapsing in the face of crisis, the institutions and ideas of constitutional liberalism shaped and limited policies to meet the challenges of war as well as economic depression. And just when they mattered most, those choices proved successful, reinforcing the commitment to liberal democracy and validating confidence in its principles as a basis of security as well as justice.

THE EXPLANATION FOR THE deepening of liberalism also lies in the particular adversaries and challenges that liberal states faced in the twentieth century. Fascism and communism posed threats to liberal democracy that were simultaneously ideological and strategic. In opposing and fighting totalitarian regimes, the liberal democracies appealed for international as well as domestic support on the basis of ideals of freedom and equality, and in the process were forced to confront such contradictions as racial injustice at home and their own role as colonial powers. The global struggle for

dominance in the twentieth century ended not only with the defeat of the Nazis and Soviets, but also with the discrediting and repudiation of anti-Semitism, racism, colonialism, and other ideologies denying human equality that had long enjoyed respectability in Europe and America.

The domestic side effects of wars, hot and cold, would not have mattered if during the past two centuries authoritarian and militaristic regimes were able to mobilize greater power and defeat liberal democracies. But this has not been the historical record. Since 1816, democracies have won three-fourths of the wars in which they have been involved, according to Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam in *Democracies at War*, the most authoritative study of the subject.

Reiter and Stam's analysis points to two sets of factors that have been critical in enabling democracies to be more successful militarily than autocratic states have been. The first has to do with the decision to go to war. Democracies are far less likely to initiate wars that they end up losing. That is not because democracies are inherently pacific; they often do initiate wars (though during the past two centuries democracies have rarely attacked each other). When democracies have attacked first, they have won 93 percent of the wars, whereas dictatorships that have struck first have lost four out of ten times. (When attacked, democracies have also been more successful, prevailing in 63 percent of the cases, compared with just 34 percent for dictatorships.)

USING HISTORICAL CASES TO back up their analysis, Reiter and Stam suggest that democratic leaders typically refuse to launch a war unless they are virtually certain of victory, because they know that if their nation loses they will surely be driven from office, whereas dictators are more willing to gamble when the odds of victory are lower because they often survive in power even after defeats in war. Moreover, because autocratic regimes make decisions in secret and refuse to tolerate criticism by a free press and opposition parties, dictatorships are more likely than democracies to miscalculate the odds of victory, wax overconfident, and start a war in which they are overmatched. The greater military success of democracies exemplifies how the liberal discipline of power works and why, as Stephen Holmes puts it, consti-

tionally limited power can be more powerful than unlimited power.

The second set of factors has to do with how well states fight once wars have begun. Here Reiter and Stam look at the outcomes of individual battles during the past two centuries, using a database originally created by military historians for other purposes. The key factors in democracies' war-fighting advantage appear to have been greater initiative among the soldiers of democratic armies than among soldiers of autocratic regimes (which Reiter and Stam attribute to differences in political culture) and better military leadership (which they attribute in part to the greater ability of democracies to make merit rather than political loyalty the basis of military promotion). They also cite historical cases in support of the proposition that dictators' armies are quicker to surrender (which may be due to the higher standards of treatment that democracies, at least in the past, have been known to extend to enemy prisoners).

One difficulty with Reiter and Stam's quantitative analysis of wars is that it treats all pairs of warring countries equally. The conflict between Honduras and El Salvador in the Football War of 1969 weighs as much in the statistical results as the conflict between Germany and the United States during World War II. Yet if the latter had turned out to be among the one-fourth of wars lost by democracies, the entire world would now be different. According to Reiter and Stam's analysis, military support from other countries is not a significant factor in explaining why democracies are more likely than dictatorships to win wars that their adversaries have initiated. But even if that is a valid generalization when counting all wars the same, the contrary cases of the two world wars simply matter more to the overall outcome of global politics.

TOTAL WAR COULD HAVE GIVEN totalitarianism an edge. Lacking accountability to voters, internal checks and balances, a free press, and independent power centers in civil society, the fascist and communist regimes had a relatively free hand in conscripting, taxing, and otherwise extracting resources from their societies and therefore seemed to hold advantages in the sheer force they could generate. But by virtue of their political structure, the totalitarian states also sup-

pressed initiative, lagged in critical technological innovations, and lacked means of self-correction. These deficiencies had fateful consequences.

As it turned out, the modern forms of despotism were not a winning national strategy in the twentieth century. As before, governments with constitutionally limited powers proved to be more powerful than governments with unlimited powers. Moreover, by the end of World War II, the liberal democracies had learned that it was imperative for them to build international alliances and institutions to have any chance of stopping aggressive wars and maintaining peace and security. As the power of modern liberal states is based on a democratic partnership at home, so the liberal democracies have come to pursue power through partnership internationally.

The danger of states making war and war making states is a spiral of force, ending in a thoroughly militarized world. But because liberal democracy and liberal internationalism proved an effective strategy for creating power and prevailing in conflict, a different self-reinforcing cycle set in, at least for a time. Liberal democracies fought and won wars, which led to further democratization, which helped to protect individual liberties once the war emergencies ended.

Unfortunately, there is nothing inevitable about this cycle. There is no guarantee that war will continue to lead to democratization, or that democracies will be able to reverse the immediate illiberal consequences of war. If the positive effects of war on political and social equality depend on a high military participation ratio, the connection may have disappeared, at least in the United States. The kind of technological war that America now wages no longer requires mass enlistment or popular mobilization and consequently seems to generate no pressure to expand rights or benefits. Indeed, the ability to wage war without conscription and with so little call for personal sacrifice from the public may reduce the high threshold for starting wars that has been partly responsible for democracies' military success. And if reversing the illiberal effects of war depends on bringing war to a close, what of a global "war on terror," which it will be impossible ever to say has come to an end? In short, whether liberal democracies can maintain their distinctive qualities in the face of war may depend more than ever on their leadership.

ACCORDING TO THE DOMINANT historical pattern, the Iraq War should never have happened. The governments of democracies, Reiter and Stam tell us, rarely initiate unsuccessful wars, in part because if they fail to win—and win quickly—they are predictably punished by the voters. A government that gets itself into this position has either overestimated the odds of military victory in the first place or known the odds were poor but gambled anyway.

The Bush administration's decision to go to war in Iraq was clearly born of overconfidence. American triumphalism had been building ever since the Soviet collapse; a relatively easy victory in Afghanistan after September 11 seemed to confirm that, as the world's only superpower, the United States was in so dominant a position that it needed only the resolve to exploit it. Conservatives were particularly intoxicated with delusions that America could bend the world to its will. The insularity of the president's inner circle, the pliability of the Republican-controlled Congress, and the docility of the press in the run-up to the war all contributed to the administration's ability to ignore conflicting evidence and opinions, its underestimate of the war's complexities and costs, and its failure to prepare and set in motion a coherent plan for the occupation.

Overconfidence in American military power was also crucial to the administration's disregard for sources of long-term democratic advantage in international conflict. Openly dismissive of "old Europe" and international opinion, Donald Rumsfeld and others made it more difficult not just for this administration, but also for future ones to win moral and legal support abroad for American policy. And by repudiating international standards in the treatment of prisoners and approving torture either directly or through rendition to other countries, the administration surrendered another significant asset of democratic countries in defeating their adversaries. The war itself has degraded America's hard assets as well as its soft ones, and weakened its deterrent power.

Just as autocratic regimes are more likely to make mistakes because they make decisions in secret without checks and balances, so the Bush administration's resistance to transparency and its claims of unilateral executive power have been a threat to a vital source of

America's power as well as its liberties. The president's decisions to authorize secret surveillance programs, to hold prisoners without trial, and to resist any role by Congress and the judiciary in national security matters all need to be understood in this light. The case against unaccountable executive power is not simply that it violates the Constitution, but also that unchecked power of any kind is more likely to result in catastrophic blunders, and to undermine the purposes it is supposed to serve.

Though accused of being unpatriotic, the critics who were skeptical of the president's claims about Iraq were, in fact, following the logic of prudence that has historically contributed to democracies' success in war and avoidance of long and costly military disasters. In opposing administration policies that violate the separation of powers, norms of governmental transparency, and international conventions regarding prisoners, liberals are not merely insisting on legal

niceties. These rules serve our long-term interests. A recent article in *The Weekly Standard* refers to Republicans as the "power party" and to Democrats as the "peace party" in American politics today. That may be the way it looks from the right. But after squandering and degrading America's power, conservatives have no claim to be its special guardians.

There is a different way of thinking about power from the one that conservatives in the Bush era have championed, and that way of thinking grows out of the liberal tradition and historical experience. The crucial historical lesson is not that liberal principles and public debate must give way in war for the sake of national defense: constitutionally limited power has proved to be more powerful than unlimited power. Democratic partnerships at home and abroad are critical to the nation's strength. America has risen to its current position partly on the basis of these ideas, and staying true to them would be a victory in itself. ■

and does not know it. Comedy is thus situational rather than characterological; it tells us less about the particular character than about general comic truths.

And, as in Cervantes, although much violence is done to the body, the essential rule of the weightless cartoon applies, in that no one can really be in danger. Thus the rapid, farce-like, overlit simplicity of the happenings in Fielding—people getting into the wrong beds, hurling chamberpots of piss at each other, attacking the wrong people with cudgels and nearly beating them to death. No one is actually in danger of being beaten to death. It is a safe world, because a simple one. Controlling all this crazy busyness is an affable, attractive narrator, who is apt to interrupt the story with comic asides (such as a chapter that is titled "Which some Readers will think too short, and others too long"). Fielding, unlike Richardson, had little impact on the European novel, but he defined a strain of theatricality, and a kind of intricate plotting, which would enormously influence the English novel. You can detect him in Thackeray, Dickens, Meredith, Kingsley Amis.

James Wood

All Rainbow, No Gravity

AGAINST THE DAY
By Thomas Pynchon
(Penguin Press, 1,085 pp., \$35)

BROADLY SPEAKING, THERE are two great currents in the novel: one flows from Richardson and the other from Fielding. Richardson's minute epistolary method slows the novelistic examination of motive and desire to an agonizing lento, in which the individual perspective is everything. Plot expands and expires in *Clarissa*: there is a central, driving question—will Clarissa succumb?—and hardly a subplot of note in 1,300 pages. The labyrinthine belongs not to plot, but goes inward, into the human soul, and is inscribed in the advances and retreats, the feints and parries, the accommodations and resolutions, of the two central characters, Lovelace and Clarissa Harlowe. Richardson's influence on European romanticism was massive: on Diderot, on Pushkin, on Stendhal, on Proust. There is a kind of seriousness about human activity, and especially

about the psychological and moral analysis of pride and abasement, that one sees in books such as *Rameau's Nephew* and *Notes From Underground* and even in *The Portrait of a Lady*, which at least in part derives from Richardson.

As Richardson describes people from inside, so Fielding is the great externalizer. Fielding belongs to the theater. His characters vibrate vividly on the novelistic stage, are seen from the outside, and reveal themselves only in speech. His novels are manic factories of plot: foundlings, lost heirs, faked letters, complex family inheritances. There is a nice, relaxed approach to accumulation; new characters can come aboard and disembark whenever they like. But these characters are relatively simple: doctors always talk like pedantic doctors, lawyers like Jesuitical lawyers, parsons like parsons, and so on. Goodies and baddies are clearly delineated. Even a wonderful comic creation such as Parson Adams, in *Joseph Andrews*, proceeds from one central "Cervantick" trait. He is an innocent abroad, like Don Quixote,

THIS IS DOUBTLESS A ROUGH division, but it has some application to the contemporary postmodern novel. Commentators like to go on about Thomas Pynchon's daunting modernity—the indexical learning, the fierce essays and essays in thermodynamics and polymers and mathematics, the brilliant parodies and pastiches of different novel genres—but fewer point out that in some ways he is a very old-fashioned novelist, one whom Fielding (and Cervantes, for that matter) would instantly recognize. *Mason & Dixon*, written in a flawless pastiche of eighteenth-century prose, was not eccentric, but the logical fruit of Pynchon's aesthetic interests: a busy eighteenth-century novel—itself already, in some ways, a "postmodern" artifact, because a self-conscious one—self-consciously rewritten by a twentieth-century postmodernist.

There is nothing more eighteenth century than Pynchon's love of picaresque plot-accumulation, his mockery of pedantry which is at the same time a love of pedantry, his habit of making his flat characters dance for a moment on stage and then whisking them away, his vaudevillian fondness for silly names, japes, mishaps, disguises, farcical errors,