

**July 4, 2007**

EDITORIAL

## Looking Outward on the Fourth

This is a working day in the rest of the world, and, for that matter, a working day in the middle of the working week. The Fourth of July, a day that is central to our sense of our own history, will pass uncapitalized around the rest of the globe. It's a local holiday, after all, nevermind how large our idea of local may be.

But the idea of freedom is not local. It is universal. Even in these very difficult times, four years deep into a war that has turned much of the world against this country, when some political leaders seek to arrogate the idea of freedom as their own political preserve, the universal freedom described in the Declaration of Independence remains a fundamental truth.

Our own domestic history has made it clear how deeply acculturated that original idea of freedom really was, but also how difficult it has been, and still is, to win political and economic freedom for every American. The desire for freedom is part of human nature. But what matters as much as the principle of freedom is the practice of it.

Ideas have a way of recommending themselves by the behavior of the men and women who hold them, and this is no less true of nations. The question isn't simply whether we can project our ideal of freedom around the world. The question is whether, by who we are and how we behave, we can make the freedom that animates us compelling to others.

The country looks inward on the Fourth of July — not in introspection, but in an easy, comfortable sense of historical gratification. Yet this is a good day to look outward as well.

It is a day to ask how good a job — from the world's perspective — we are doing living up to the principles enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, whether we have done enough to make those sonorous old rights seem like more than a limited case in a limited argument. The answer is more equivocal than we like to believe. But the ideal is one that must drive us all.

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