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Conservatism and Counterrevolution

Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process
he does not become a monster.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

When John McCain announced Sarah Palin as his running mate during the 2008 presidential campaign, voices in the conservative movement expressed surprise, even shock. It wasn't just that McCain had chosen a political novice, an ingénue and outsider to the ways and means of governance in the lower forty-eight states. It was how he had chosen her: with little to no vetting and a great deal of faith in the superiority of intuition and impulse (his and hers) over reason and reflection. It was, it seemed, a most unconservative decision: impetuous, ill-considered, imprudent.

This was hardly the first time that a standard-bearer of conservatism failed to live up to the self-image of the conservative. In the spring of 2003, several conservatives voiced concern over the audacity of George W. Bush's decision to fight what was essentially a war of choice. They also noted the liberal pedigree of one of the Iraq War's justifications: spreading democracy and human rights. Here was a conservative leader, again it seemed, acting in the most

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