

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

CM-1
Power, Persuasion, and Influence

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Dear Dick:

You would be surprised at the impact upon a heretofore desk-bound Senate aide of a few days' exposure to the Pacific Northwest and Hawaii!

Mildred and I started our trip to Asia, and elsewhere, with a few days in our pre-nuptial environment of Portland, Oregon, and in Hawaii. Twenty-five years (give or take five) of near abstention from an environment one has known so well induced a bit of introspection. It was obvious that something had changed - the nation, the state, or the individual; probably all three.

Bearing in mind my hope this year to acquire a capsulized, non-American view of United States foreign policies, the Pacific Northwest and Hawaii seemed like good starting points. While I would not describe these areas as "foreign," it took only a few days for me to realize what all Senators have long known - that United States foreign policy as viewed from the hinterlands isn't quite the same as when it is viewed from Washington, D.C. I am not yet prepared to propose extending the Fulbright program to exchanges between Washington and its borderlands (with apologies to the Ferdinand Kuhns). It is rather surprising, however, that even with our mass media and our representative form of government, the emotional distance between Washington and Honolulu is in some respects nearly as great as that between Washington and Paris.

For one thing, a good many Americans in the West seem to feel that foreign policy is something devised by a group of experts in Washington - usually referred to as "they." In this view, "they" (the experts) aren't much concerned with what grass-roots America thinks. Furthermore, what the grassroots may think doesn't make much difference because the experts in Washington have the "facts."

These views came as somewhat of a shock to a Senate aide on leave who, for weeks prior to his departure from Washington, kept a close count on Senatorial mail trying to discover

what Americans were thinking about the test ban treaty, and who got most of his "facts" (or found them confirmed) by reading the New York Times and sundry other publications favored with competent, experienced reporters whose tours of overseas duty frequently have more continuity than those of their diplomatic colleagues.

Nevertheless, let there be no mistake. It was as easy in the West to obtain views on the wheat deal, Madame Nhu, the test ban treaty, and foreign aid, as to place a bet on next week's football classic.

A common question put to any Washington denizen abroad in the West is: "What is our foreign policy?" This question, of course, is often asked in Washington as well, and during the next year I have no doubt it will be asked with increasing vigor and frequency. Unfortunately there never will be a wholly satisfactory answer. The best I could do was to define foreign policy as the sum total of our national effort to try to influence people and nations not under our control to conduct themselves in such a way as - at a minimum - not to damage our way of life and - preferably - to promote it.

What baffles Washington, and its domestic borderlands even more, is not so much definition of the kind of world we want, but how to influence people and nations beyond our control. Much as I am appalled by the utterances of Madame Nhu, she seems to understand the limits of our power more than some of her critics.

As one moves away from Washington, however, there seems to be less appreciation of the limits on our ability to influence others. Indeed, the further an individual is removed from the position of prime responsibility for the conduct of foreign affairs, the easier it is to forget or ignore the fact that, in the words of C. B. Marshall, our writ does not run to foreign nations. We can recommend, we can advise, we can stop foreign aid, and we can bluster; but we cannot command, unless we are ready to use the Marines.

In the West where the writ of the United States has always been most compelling and significant in domestic matters, it is harder to appreciate the factors that limit our influence abroad, and therefore much easier to see events in blacks and whites, than in grays that often characterize Washington policy papers. Moreover, the visitor in the West becomes quickly conscious of the extremes of domestic influence on the conduct of foreign policy. He is exposed to such extremes as: "So what?" if the Soviets are building the Aswan Dam; or "why don't we disarm unilaterally and set an example?"

At the risk of oversimplification (and as a consequence of foreign policy introspection induced by these few days in the West), I suggest that in Washington and in the nation at large, there are two schools of thought on the best way to influence other nations - the best way to conduct our foreign relations. There is the "power" school, and the "persuasion" school; the "hawks" and the "doves"; the hard, tough, total victory school; and the soft, patient, let's-be-reasonable school. These domestic forces (almost visceral in many Americans) affect our national efforts to influence other nations.

The "hard" approach to the conduct of foreign relations tends to operate on the theory that international communism will never change of itself and must be defeated; the "softies" tend to believe that communism is torn by irreconcilable internal differences and that in time the growing affluence of the Soviet Union will promote tractability. One extreme would use foreign aid as a weapon to buy friends and influence votes in the United Nations; the other extreme believes that foreign aid is an instrument for economic and political growth and the United States should not be impatient for results measurable by friendship and willingness to join defensive alliances. The hard-liner tends to think that the Washington bureaucracy stifles imagination and zeal; the soft-liner counsels patience and perseverance for a long struggle. The hard-liner is impatient with neutrals; the soft-liner accepts neutrality as a tolerable, perhaps inevitable, concomitant of new nationhood.

I suppose most readers of this letter will put themselves into a third category - somewhere between the extremes - or at least capable of rational shiftings. If for no other reason, it may be argued that strict adherence to either the "power" approach or the "persuasion" approach has its dangers. Power tends not only to corrupt, but it tends to generate its own opposition. And reason (and persuasion) is largely a matter of introspection. What may seem reasonable to an American, for example that the Soviet Union should concentrate on its internal problems rather than on expansion of its nuclear capacity, may not seem reasonable to a dedicated communist.

The shoe pinches when the policy decisions are to be made. There is no half-way position on many issues, such as whether to sell wheat to the Russians, or to deny a visa to Madame Nhu, or to provide super-sonic aircraft to India.

Take the relatively simple case of the creation of the East-West Center in Hawaii, which we visited briefly. This institution, authorized by Congress in 1960 with less than lukewarm approval by the State Department and the Bureau of the Budget, was designed to help develop understanding between the Pacific-Asian countries and the United States. Up to the present time about \$25 million

has been invested in the project and some 600 Asian and American students are now enrolled at the Center.

There was no half-way position that could have been taken between establishing the East-West Center, and the expenditure of an equivalent amount of money for promoting educational exchanges with existing institutions in Hawaii and on the Mainland. It was one or the other, or neither. The fact that Congress created the Center was, perhaps unconsciously, a decision to take a hard line in promoting understanding with Asian countries by establishing a unique institution to promote special understanding with a particular part of the world.

Now that the Center is in operation, it is bothered by policy differences between the hard-sell, practical, aggressive, Hawaiian-experienced school, and the soft-sell, academic theorists from the Mainland. (I use these words without reflection on the ability or integrity of either group.) The promoter for the hard-sell argues that Washington doesn't appreciate the special qualifications of a dozen able Hawaiians with zeal and experience who could be helpful at the Center as well as in Washington or in Asia. There is not a single United States Ambassador from Hawaii. Washington doesn't realize that the best American entrée to Asia is the phrase: "I'm from Hawaii."

In contrast, the soft-sell academician remarks: "Hawaiians are parochial. If you don't do things their way, you're wrong." (Incidentally, Michener's Hawaii, which is viewed in Hawaii as an attack on the Establishment, is conspicuously not generally on display at bookstores and newstands otherwise replete with Hawaiian literature. My copy was dug from a box kept out of sight behind the counter.)

Although the United States is now committed by statute to creation of the Center to help develop understanding between the United States and Asia, the hard-line, soft-line dichotomy that threads its way through much of our effort to influence other nations has its impact on the operating policies of an institution located within the United States. Whether political and economic democracy can be taught or must be lived is a question a good many Americans have not answered for themselves.

Earlier in this letter I suggested that foreign policy is the sum total of our national effort to influence nations not under our control to conduct themselves in such a way as not to damage our way of life. Some of my readers must have shuddered at the use of such an ambiguous phrase, or been disturbed at any suggestion that our "way of life" was exportable. It seems to me, however, that the concept has at least two exportable ideas.

First is the political idea - the effort to promote creation of governments responsive to the majority demands (needs) of

educated citizens, freely expressed. This is a most difficult, long-term process. It should not be construed as involving the export of the American brand of democracy to environments not ready for, or susceptible of, operating such a sophisticated governmental machine.

The second exportable idea is economic - the idea that individual initiative coupled with its appropriate reward is the greatest stimulant any nation can have for economic development. This export is economic democracy - the creation of an environment in which each individual has the right to develop his own capacities and to be rewarded, or penalized, depending upon his success or failure.

Development in the United States was not based on government planning of the kind we now require as a condition precedent to much of our aid. The stimulus for our growth came from the drive of individual men and women to better their economic position. Government planning and stimulus, necessary as it may be in some developing states, is no substitute for the drive which comes from the individual who by his own efforts and imagination creates wealth, reserving a fair share for himself and for new uses under his guidance. The role of government is to serve as a catalyst or lubricant for the endeavors of individuals, not to substitute government fiat for individual initiative.

I believe most Americans would agree that these are legitimate objectives for our foreign policies. But whether in fact we can influence other nations and peoples to view these objectives as compatible with their own, and desirable in their own right, depends not only on the clarity of our own policies, but on the way we go about the job, and whether we properly blend power and persuasion to promote these objectives.

Ambassador Allison, now retired and living in Hawaii, put the question of technique clearly when he recounted a recent conversation with an American-educated Thai official. Not once in all his experience had an American official said to him: "We wish to do so and so. How can this be done with the least embarrassment or difficulty for you?" Instead, the usual approach was, "If such and such is not done, we will have to report to your superiors that we are not getting cooperation," or "Congress will make us withdraw the money." Ambassador Allison remarked: "This is not the way to win friends and influence people. The local official has to live with his people and his government and his way of doing things may not be our way, but with good will and flexibility it should be possible to work matters out, perhaps not perfectly, but good enough. Our officials might well remember that the perfect is often the enemy of the good."

Whether the American people speaking out of their diversity and through the instrumentality of their government have meshed power with persuasion and are projecting a clear image of their society capable of influencing nations and peoples beyond their control is a question I hope to explore in the months ahead.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carl Marcy". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Carl Marcy

Received New York October 28, 1963