

THE PERILS OF REFORM INTERVENTION

Ernest W. Lefever

There is accumulating evidence that President Nixon appreciates more fully than his immediate predecessors the moral and political limits of American power and influence in the larger world, primarily because he understands the vital distinction between national security and political reform. He knows that the U. S. Government's mandate abroad is far more limited than it is at home.

It was in his speech in Rumania in August, 1969 that Mr. Nixon most clearly distinguished the proper domains of domestic and foreign policy: "We seek normal relations with all countries, regardless of their domestic systems. We stand ready to reciprocate the efforts of any country that seeks normal relations with us." He added: "We know mankind cannot build a just and lasting peace until all nations recognize and respect the sovereignty and rights of other nations." Noting the political, social, and economic differences between Rumania and the United States, he said each state wants "to preserve its national institutions" and each "seeks peaceful solutions to international disagreements." The Rumanian statement marks a refreshing return to first principles in international politics which have often been overlooked or breached since 1945. The postwar realization of America's great power evoked in some quarters a crusading insistence that it be used to "transform other societies." This crusading zeal, a recurring theme in the American drama, was in part a response to Russia's effort to export the blessings of communism.

The Rumanian formula was anticipated by the Guam doctrine enunciated a month earlier. Summarizing this doctrine in his State of the Union message, the President said: "The nations in each part of the world should assume the primary responsibility for their own well-being," and "*they themselves should determine the terms of that well-being*" (emphasis added). He also insisted the United States would remain "faithful to our treaty commitments" and discharge our security obligations. Internal development is the responsibility of each state and international security is the responsibility of all states, especially the great powers.

Dr. Lefever, a regular contributor to these pages, has recently been made a member of the editorial board of *World Affairs*.

It might appear that Mr. Nixon is simply refurbishing the arrogance-of-power theme advanced by Walter Lippmann, Senator Fulbright, Kenneth Galbraith, and others, but this is not the case. The difference between the President and the liberal revisionists is significant and has important moral and political implications. All too frequently the critics insist that the United States draw back from its "entangling alliances" (the only kind there are), withdraw from certain security commitments, and reduce its military power. Some of them go so far as to suggest that we have no external security-peace-keeping role at all.

At the same time many revisionists urge the President to pursue an active interventionist policy designed to reshape the internal politics of certain states. Ironically, the targets of the reform interventionists are usually friendly or allied states with a peaceful and non-expansionist foreign policy. This strange combination of security-isolation and reform-intervention turns foreign policy on its head. These isolation-interventionists downgrade or even deprecate America's morally inescapable security and peace-keeping role while they insist that the U.S. Government employ unusual and sometimes coercive means to reshape other governments. This inverted view of U. S. responsibility runs counter to Article 2, paragraph 7 of the U. N. Charter which prohibits intervention "in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state," unless it is an aggressor, or has otherwise breached or is about to breach the peace.

Along with a dozen other Senators and a score of Congressmen, Mr. Fulbright has contributed to the persistent confusion between security and reform the President is seeking to correct. Two years ago Senator Fulbright said we should throw out Premier Ky if he failed to do our bidding and install a more pliant premier in his place. Our bidding which Mr. Ky was not doing well enough or fast enough apparently referred to specific domestic reforms desired by Mr. Fulbright and others who wanted U. S. security assistance to be used as a weapon to remodel the internal institutions of a besieged ally. In effect, Mr. Fulbright advised the President to force reform in South Vietnam by threatening to overthrow its government or hold back military assistance. If this is

not coercion and arrogance, the words have lost their meaning. In response Premier Ky rightly called Mr. Fulbright an "imperialist."

Bizarre examples of this isolationist-interventionist hybrid are found among the most strident voices of the "peace" movement which frequently deprecate America's peacekeeping role and simultaneously insist on punishing or reforming regimes whose domestic policies they do not like. "Our task," says the newsletter of Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam (January 26, 1970), "is to join those who are angry and who hate the corporate power" of the United States in a crusade to liberate "black and brown and yellow men in every corner of the world." (I sometimes wonder if Dr. John C. Bennett, a co-chairman of Clergy Concerned, is aware of the considerable volume of arrogant nonsense that is published under his name.) Since this call to arms (both figurative and literal) is virtually indistinguishable from the revolutionary imperialism of Peking, Moscow, Hanoi, and Havana, it is not surprising that the American men of "peace" find themselves making common cause with the self-avowed apostles of revolutionary violence and enemies of Western democratic institutions. Frustration and guilt make strange bedfellows. Fortunately few of these "Vietnam pacifists" go as far as burning the American flag and hoisting the flag of a bloody and expansionist regime in its place.

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Two years ago a more subdued call to reformist intervention crept almost unnoticed into the law of the land—Title IX of the Foreign Assistance Act adopted by the Congress in 1967. This controversial nugget has been lightheartedly referred to as "America's version of the Communist Manifesto." Title IX says that all AID development programs in every country "shall use the intellectual resources" of that country "to encourage the development of indigenous institutions that meet" its "particular requirements for sustained economic and social progress" and "shall support civic education and training skills required for effective participation in government and political processes essential to self-government." What business does the U. S. Government have in "civic" (read political) education within the sovereign territory of another state? Who determines what kind of "civic education" and what kind of new "indigenous institutions" will best lead to "self-government"? And why do we insist on making such political activity a prerequisite for giving economic aid? "We will help you build a hydroelectric dam if you let us stimulate political activity among your peasants designed to

overthrow your regime." This is the way it must sound to some regimes whose political base is not very broad.

It is not for us, says Mr. Nixon, to dictate, control, or manipulate the "national institutions" of any other state. On the contrary, the people of each country alone "should determine the terms" of their political life and welfare. The President and the great majority of the American people—silent and otherwise—reject the ideology and self-righteousness of the reform interventionists, the do-good imperialists, who want to impose their virtue on others with the help of the U. S. Government and with little regard for U. S. security interests.

Most of us reject the "illusion of American omnipotence," the illusion that democratic disciplines are transferable, and the pretension that God or history has ordained us as his chosen vehicle for remaking the world, or any small patches of it, in our own image.

One of the more unpleasant aspects of reform imperialists is their highly selective view of which governments deserve their attention. Unlike Don Quixote, the reformers do not necessarily tackle the nearest or most plausible windmill. Little, far-off Rhodesia is a case in point. Our hostile posture toward Rhodesia expressed in our affirmative U. N. vote supporting economic sanctions was, to quote Dean Acheson, bought by President Johnson "in an absent-minded moment from a smart salesman." It is ill-conceived on three counts. *First*, the sanctions are not accomplishing the intended objective of overthrowing the government and are, in fact, having the opposite effect. *Second*, a friendly, peace-loving country, Rhodesia, is threatening no other state, though the U. N. resolution invoking sanctions implies that it is a threat to the peace. To be sure its legal status is contested, but the real issue is its internal policy. For this reason, the Security Council conveniently overlooks the fact that several states most loudly supporting sanctions, notably Zambia and Tanzania, not only have threatened the peace, but have actually breached it by illegally sending armed men across the border to subvert or overthrow the Rhodesian government. If the Security Council is interested in keeping the peace, as opposed to intervention in domestic affairs, should it not censure Zambia and Tanzania for supporting insurgency rather than penalizing the victim of that insurgency? *Finally*, our Rhodesia sanctions policy has little or nothing positive to contribute to international peace and security and we are now dependent upon the Soviet Union for valuable chrome ore we previously purchased at a lower price from Rhodesia.

If we are interested in human rights, which we are, and if we want to coerce other governments into respecting them, why pick on Rhodesia where the fundamental rights of all citizens, white and black, are more fully protected than in many other countries, including a number of black-ruled African states? How many central African countries enjoy the rule of law, an independent judiciary, an accountable administration, and a strong opposition press—all of which prevail in a large measure in Rhodesia? How many black states have anything approximating a meaningful franchise, as meaningful as the limited franchise in Rhodesia which is based primarily on education and property?

Considering the trauma of instant independence, many of the new African states have done well. It is not appropriate to impose Western democratic standards upon them. I am not critical of the black states, but I am critical of a selective morality, a double standard that calls for coercive measures against a fundamentally humane white regime, but does not condemn massive tribal slaughter, cruel dictatorship, and other forms of inhumanity when practiced by black leaders. Blacks and whites should be judged by the same standards. A racist morality is a contradiction in terms.

A NATO ally and a friendly Latin American country have also been the targets of the American reformers who rarely have anything critical to say about Moscow, Peking, and Havana. To help topple the regimes in Greece and Brazil, which do not accord with the preferences of the critics, the President is urged to adopt a stern and hostile stance and even to withhold promised economic or military assistance. Who are we to tell the Greeks or the Brazilians, or the Israelis or Egyptians for that matter, what kind of government they should have? Where is our cherished doctrine of self-determination?

U. S. foreign policy should not be concerned about the reform of other governments whose regimes may be obnoxious to us at the moment. We should be concerned about the obnoxious foreign policies of regimes otherwise compatible with our political preferences. We can and should get along with a Fascist or Communist state which is not expansionist, has good relations with its neighbors, and does not permit its territory to become a launching pad for hostile missiles. We should be distressed by the external policy of a "democratic" state which insists on upsetting the balance of power, violating the territorial integrity of its neighbors, or otherwise making a nuisance of itself.

Our military aid to Israel or the U. A. R., for example, should not be influenced by whether one is

more democratic than the other or whether one can exert more political pressure in the United States than the other. These should be largely irrelevant considerations. Our policy toward these two key Middle Eastern states should be determined by our interests in the security and peace of that area, and military aid should be given or withheld accordingly. We should seek to discourage expansion and induce a respect by all parties for the territorial integrity of their neighbors. Mr. Nixon put it well on January 30: "We are neither pro-Arab," nor "pro-Israel. We are pro-peace." According to the Guam doctrine we would not intervene militarily in the Middle East unless our vital interests were at stake.

The primary objective of U. S. foreign policy is and should remain the defense of American interests, including the territorial integrity of our country and that of our allies and the development of an international order that safeguards the legitimate interests of all states, large and small. To base our policy on our national interests is politically wise and morally sound as long as we define those interests in terms that respect the rights and interests of others. Since we seek a world that is safe for diversity and peaceful change, the two principal objectives of U. S. external policy are security and peace.

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If the highest purpose of foreign policy is security and peace, the highest purpose of domestic policy is justice. In the pursuit of this purpose a superpower like the United States has an inescapable influence on the internal development of the countries upon which its power impinges, hopefully in the right direction. We Americans covet for all peoples the majestic and hard-won blessings of liberty and equality of opportunity that we enjoy.

But we cannot enlist the might of the United States to impose democratic institutions, much less a sense of justice and respect for human rights, on other peoples without violating their fundamental rights and our basic Western heritage. We must resist the temptation to export our virtues. The disciplines of democracy and fair play are not easy to come by and they cannot be grafted onto an alien culture. Through a long and painful organic process a people can slowly overcome tribal and ethnic arrogance and develop respect for other members of their larger political community aided by our example, a part of which is our acknowledged failure to live up fully to our own precepts.

In our relations with friendly states, their economic and political development can be a legitimate concern to us as long as the resources and prestige we

commit to these secondary ends reinforce the primary security goal of our foreign policy, and as long as we employ non-coercive means that respect the integrity of the state in question. These limits on our behavior suggest an important distinction between development and reform. We are on surer ground morally and politically when we quietly provide human and material resources essential to development without insisting on fundamental political reform. We can rightfully encourage development by extending helpful economic and military assistance. But we would be wrong to pressure, threaten, or manipulate in order to achieve basic reforms within the government to which we are diplomatically accredited, unless that government was about to launch an attack on a neighbor or otherwise breach the peace.

Our attempt to stimulate or ignite basic political reform—by short-range tact or long-range “civic” education—is morally arrogant and politically unwise. Such efforts often backfire and play into the hands of the enemies of democracy and freedom.

Such coercion-induced and uninvited reform efforts, however noble in intent, are almost as overbearing as those of the totalitarian revolutionaries of the Left or Right. Externally guided democracy is little better than unguided dictatorship or camouflaged chaos. Each political community must find its own justice and, if necessary, make its own revolution. This says something about justifiable and unjustifiable activities of American Peace Corps volunteers. As Secretary of State Rogers put it on January 15: “We can be less intrusive and less domineering” and “can speak with a less strident voice.”

Americans concerned with the misuse of our power abroad can be grateful that Mr. Nixon is returning to the political sense and moral wisdom of Emerich de Vattel: “No sovereign state may inquire into the manner in which a sovereign” of another state rules, “nor set itself up as a judge of his conduct, nor force him to make and change in his administration . . . no foreign state is called on to mend his conduct and to force him to follow a wiser or juster course.”

POLITICAL THEORY AND CLERICAL RADICALISM

Robert A. Monson

When viewed within the perspective of a possibly new American foreign policy, two sets of dramatic and apparently unrelated current events display a clear relationship. On the one hand are particular influences upon the thought of the radical left in America and elsewhere, notably the neo-Marxist ideas of men like Herbert Marcuse and the Third World revolution ideas of men like Frantz Fanon. On the other hand there are recurring references to differences in the way clerical defections are taking place in the United States and Europe. An interesting framework for unifying these apparently unrelated phenomena suggests itself from the broader perspective of traditional Western political theory.

Robert Monson teaches political science at the University of Arkansas.

Western varieties of institutionalized Christianity and Marxism have traditionally addressed themselves to finding a public solution to the problem of attaining human happiness. In the ancient world a public solution to that problem was relatively unquestioned until the demise of the Greek city-state and the appearance of the so-called philosophies of conduct or withdrawal. Relatively unquestioned, the solution also remained equally unrealized. But since classical Greek political theory regarded man as naturally social and political, it followed logically that the solution to the problem of human happiness had to be a public solution. The Greeks and Romans typically had no way of separating their religious experience from their public, social, educational, or political experience.

Not surprisingly, then, the problem of human hap-