SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

May 17, 2017

NOTE FOR THE SECRETARY

FROM: S/P -- Brian Hook SUBJECT: (U) Balancing Interests and Values

(U) Your remarks to State Department employees on May 3 revived the debate over how far to emphasize human rights, democracy promotion, and liberal values in American foreign policy. This longstanding debate has been principally fought by two foreign policy schools.

The liberal/idealist/Wilsonian view is that other countries, including US allies, should be pressed to adopt democratic reforms and human rights practices in accordance with American preferences.

The "realist" view is that America's allies should be supported rather than badgered, for both practical and principled reasons, and that while the United States should certainly stand as moral example, our diplomacy with other countries should focus primarily on their foreign policy behavior rather than on their domestic practices as such.

Both views are deeply rooted in the US experience, both are authentically American, and as you implied in your remarks, their relative urgency tends to wax and wane over time depending on events overseas.

Beginning in the 1940s, as the US adopted a wide range of new allies during and after World War Two, the tendency of Presidents Roosevelt and Truman was to bolster US allies, while nudging them in the direction of liberal reform.

President Eisenhower's instinct was very much to bolster US allies against the risks of domestic radicalism, worldwide. He placed even greater emphasis on bolstering than did Harry Truman.

The Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy team also prioritized supporting rather than badgering. Kissinger still remains a credible and articulate advocate for this point of view.

President Carter upended Cold War policies by criticizing and even undermining governments, especially in cases such as Nicaragua and Iran. The results were unfortunate for American interests, as for the citizens of those countries. Carter's badgering of American allies

unintentionally strengthened anti-American radicals in both Iran and Nicaragua. As Jeanne Kirkpatrick wrote in 1979 criticizing Carter's foreign policy, "Hurried efforts to force complex and unfamiliar political practices on societies lacking the requisite political culture, tradition, and social structures not only fail to produce the desired outcomes; if they are undertaken at a time when the traditional regime is under attack, they actually facilitate the job of the insurgents."

Kirkpatrick also made this important observation that equally applies for today: "The speed with which armies collapse, bureaucracies abdicate, and social structures dissolve once the autocrat is removed frequently surprises American policymakers and journalists accustomed to public institutions based on universalistic norms rather than particularistic relations."

President Reagan endorsed Kirkpatrick's views. As he stated at the 1980 Republican convention, "The basis of a free and principled foreign policy is one that takes the world as it is, and seeks to change it by leadership and example; not by harangue, harassment or wishful thinking." Or again, from Reagan's 1981 inaugural address, with reference to US allies: "We will not use our friendship to impose on their sovereignty, for our own sovereignty is not for sale."

During Reagan's second term, his administration began to move in the direction of more pointed pressure for liberalization with regard to allies such as Chile, South Korea, and the Philippines. But these efforts bore fruit in part because viable democratic and pro-American forces existed in each country -- and the US continued to provide vital reassurance. Reagan's first instinct was always to back allies against adversaries, even in controversial cases, including through his second term. South Africa would be an excellent example. The approach used there was called "constructive engagement," and in the long run it worked.

Recovering a Balanced Foreign Policy

In their own way, all three post-Cold War presidents -- Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama -- worked on relatively optimistic assumptions regarding the possibilities for positive social change overseas, as nudged forward by American power and diplomacy. No doubt this optimism was well-intentioned. But in the wake of Iraq and Afghanistan, slow economic recovery, the rise of China, and the failed Arab Spring, there is understandably less optimism today that the world can be easily democratized or reshaped simply by expressing American liberal values, or by badgering American allies. At least that is the position President Trump ran and won on, and -- if properly implemented -- this is very much in the realist tradition of US diplomacy, a mainstream and historically grounded tradition just as American as any other.

In the case of US allies such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Philippines, the Administration is fully justified in emphasizing good relations for a variety of important reasons, including

counter-terrorism, and in honestly facing up to the difficult tradeoffs with regard to human rights. It is not as though human rights practices will be improved if anti-American radicals take power in those countries. Moreover, this would be a severe blow to our vital interests. We saw what a disaster Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood turned out to be in power. After eight years of Obama, the US is right to bolster US allies rather than badger or abandon them.

One useful guideline for a realistic and successful foreign policy is that allies should be treated differently -- and better -- than adversaries. Otherwise, we end up with more adversaries, and fewer allies. The classic dilemma of balancing ideals and interests is with regard to America's *allies*. In relation to our competitors, there is far less of a dilemma. We do not look to bolster America's adversaries overseas; we look to pressure, compete with, and outmaneuver them. For this reason, we should consider human rights as an important issue in regard to US relations with China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran. And this is not only because of moral concern for practices inside those countries. It is also because pressing those regimes on human rights is one way to impose costs, apply counter-pressure, and regain the initiative from them strategically.