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Responsible Cooperation in Foreign Policy Bi-Partisanship Redefined

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RESPONSIBLE COOPERATION IN FOREIGN POLICY

- BIPARTISANSHIP REDEFINED -

On February 20th President Eisenhower spoke over the airways on the Middle Eastern situation. Earlier that same day the President had met at the White House with Congressional leaders of both parties. As a matter of fact the suggestion that he speak to the nation had come from Senator Richard Russell of Georgia during the meeting.

The President's speech was addressed primarily to the question of Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Gulf of Aqaba. In the process, however, he set forth in clear terms the problems facing us in the Middle East. It was also possible to discern in his remarks for the first time the dim outlines of the Administration's policy for meeting these problems.

A few days later, Secretary of State Dulles requested that Congressional leaders confer with him at his home on the Middle Eastern situation. The conference was held on the eve of a major session of the United Nations General Assembly where a move to impose sanctions on Israel was anticipated.
Both of these meetings were hailed in the press as examples of effective bipartisanship which in fact they were. They were followed by the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and the Gulf of Aqaba, an objective of the Administration's policy. This withdrawal, however, was accomplished without United Nations sanctions being imposed, a course to which Congressional sentiment was clearly opposed.

It is impossible to trace the precise impact of the two meetings on the subsequent events. That they had considerable influence, however, seems clear. What the meetings served to do was to clarify the situation in the Middle East for Congressional leaders. This was done, moreover, before not after an irrevocable course had been set by the Administration. Hence the possibility of partisan reaction in Congress was reduced.

Conversely, the meetings clarified for the President and the Secretary of State the dimensions of acceptable policy in dealing with the immediate crisis in the Middle East. By assembling the Congressional leaders, the President and the Secretary of State had availed themselves of the advice of a group of men not only attuned to attitudes in both parties but also to popular sentiment in various regions of the country.

Take, for example, the geographic origins of the Democratic leaders who attended the February 20th meeting with the President. The Democratic Party in Congress is sometimes thought of as the special preserve of the South or even more specifically of the State of Texas. This is a tribute to the majority leader of the Senate, Lyndon Johnson and to Sam Rayburn, the Speaker of the House. Both men were in fact
in attendance at the White House meeting and the South was also represented in the person of Senator Russell, But Senator Theodore F. Green of Rhode Island was also present as was Senator William Fulbright of Arkansas and myself, as Whip, from Montana. From the House came majority leader John McCormack of Massachusetts and the Whip, Carl Albert of Oklahoma and Congressman Tom Gordon of Illinois, as well as Speaker Rayburn.

When the Republicans in attendance are added to this group, a picture of geographic representation at the meeting with the President emerges which covers every sector of the nation. It also embraces virtually all shades of opinion in both parties in Congress.

Policy made by the President and the Secretary of State against a background of this kind is almost certain to carry a greater measure of public and Congressional support than policy made without it. The policy may not be as sensational in its impact abroad as a dramatic unilateral action by the President, reinforced by the flamboyant techniques of modern public relations. It is likely to be, however, a more profound, more reassuring and enduring policy. That in essence is the most that can be expected of bipartisanship. If it gives to foreign policy the deep and stable roots of wide public and party acceptance, bipartisanship has given a great deal.

Unfortunately, this vital function of bipartisanship has been obscured by misuse of the word in recent years. Bipartisanship has been
invoked repeatedly as though it were some kind of litany which if repeated often enough would insure popularity for unpopular policies. It has often been wielded as a club to silence responsible criticism of foreign policy. It has been applied as a catalyst in efforts by the Executive Branch to urge measures of foreign policy through Congress. Misuse of bipartisanship in these ways often tends in time to stimulate precisely the opposite reactions.

Bipartisanship is not a magical formula capable of producing national unanimity where there are deep divisions. Nor is it a convenient cloak under which to conceal these divisions from foreign eyes.

Americans differ on foreign issues no less than on domestic issues. Bipartisanship cannot exorcise these differences. Properly understood and used, however, it can help to minimize them. It can act to produce the widest possible area of accommodation among sectional and party viewpoints in support of essential action abroad.

The need for that accommodation is very great in a world which has closed in rapidly on the nation during the past two decades. With the jets and missiles overhead and the echoes of nuclear bomb tests in various parts of the world, we have little choice as a nation but to stand together in foreign policy if we are to stand at all. If the warning of the weapons of mass destruction is lost on us, a defense budget of about $40 billion a year and foreign aid of over $50 billion in the past
decade should serve to remind us that we are deeply involved in a highly volatile world. We will either play our part as carefully and as unitedly as we can or there may be no world left in which to play.

In domestic affairs, leadership from the majority party and a "responsible opposition" from the minority is normally sufficient to keep the country on a reasonably level keel. In foreign affairs, however, this political mechanism is no longer sufficient for effective national action. It is not enough that foreign policy be led by the majority and opposed by the minority, even if the opposition is responsible. The problems which confront us in our relations with other nations are too immense for this formula. Whenever there is partisan division on foreign problems as there was in the case of China policy several years ago the country suffers thereby even though one of the parties may gain a temporary advantage.

The fact is that foreign relations are of transcendent importance to all of us, to democrats and republicans alike and ought to be treated as such. If they are to be conducted in a fashion which safeguards the nation we must have more than majority leadership and minority opposition. We must have the greatest possible common support for such action, from both parties and from all sections of the country.

The formula for invoking this type of support is not to be found in leadership by one party coupled with opposition from the other.
Rather it lies in a positive approach, in an approach of responsible cooperation. This involves not only bipartisanship, but what might be termed tripartisanship. What is needed is active cooperation between both parties and also active cooperation between the Executive Branch and the Congress, notably the Senate, to construct and maintain a more effective foreign policy. The need for the latter type of cooperation is generally overlooked. Not infrequently, however, differences between the two branches of the government are a more significant factor than differences between the two parties in Congress.

As in bipartisanship, the President must be the key figure in the development of tripartisanship. He must supply the leadership and he must be prepared to assume ultimate responsibility for foreign relations.

The President's decisive position derives in part from the fact that he is the only elected figure in the government with what is, in effect, a national constituency. Hence, he alone can speak as the representative of the entire American people.

The President's key position also stems from his implied Constitutional powers to conduct the foreign relations of the United States. I stress the word "implied", for the erroneous impression has long existed that the President's power to conduct foreign relations is explicit and total in the Constitution.
Finally, the President's key position in tripartisanship rests on the fact that he wields the Executive power of the nation. He alone has the resources in personnel and information necessary to the conduct of our relations with other nations. Congress does not have access to the innumerable sources of intelligence required in the formation of day-to-day policies. Congress has neither Ambassadors nor other agents overseas essential to the carrying out of policy. Finally, Congress cannot command the armed forces in support of that policy should it become necessary.

Notwithstanding the key role of the President, Congress and especially the Senate also have important functions in foreign policy. In the first place Senators and Representatives are individually responsible to the peoples of their respective states and districts. Taken as a whole each House has a national constituency. These overlap each other and the President's. Collectively, Congressional responsibilities to the people of the United States, in foreign policy as in other matters, parallel that of the President. These responsibilities, however, must be exercised in accordance within Constitutional powers. Congress cannot replace the President in the conduct of foreign relations without fundamental changes in our Constitution. By the same token, however, the President cannot do without Congress in the conduct of these relations.
The most important of the Congressional powers related to foreign affairs of course are those of legislation and especially the appropriation of public funds. Congress provides for the Defense establishment. Congress provides for the Department of State and other agencies concerned with overseas relations. Congress authorizes and appropriates money for foreign aid. Congress declares war and makes peace.

The Senate, in addition to its joint powers with the House also has certain unique function in foreign relations. Two of these are explicit in the Constitution. The Senate confirms the appointment of Ambassadors and other Presidential agents and it consents to the ratification of treaties, the basic instruments of foreign relations.

To the Senate also falls an implied Constitutional power of vast importance. This power, not unlike the President's implied authority to conduct foreign relations, is the obligation to "advise and consent" in foreign relations.

For long periods of time, the Senate's functions in this connection have lain dormant. In recent years, however, the power to advise and consent has been invoked repeatedly and often most vigorously. Sometimes it has operated before policy was established by the President and has served to stimulate its formation. That was the case in the Vandenberg Resolution adopted in 1948. The Resolution prompted the President to enter into negotiations with the Western European nations
with a view to establishing common defense arrangements. Out of this Congressional initiative eventually came the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the elaborate NATO defense structure.

The advice and consent function can also come into play as a corrective when the Executive Branch embarks impetuously on a major course of international action. This use of the Senate's power is illustrated by the treatment of the recent Middle East resolution. In that instance, the President needed and sought Congressional cooperation but he neglected to consult adequately and in advance with the appropriate Congressional leaders. The manner in which his proposal was presented suggested that it had been drawn up hastily and without careful consideration of its many implications. Moreover, the whip of a distorted bipartisanship was wielded and a sense of urgency was engendered which subsequent hearings clearly revealed to be unwarranted.

Congress refused to be stampeded by this misuse of bipartisanship. The Senate gave the measure the most careful consideration and made numerous changes. In the end it adopted a revised and strengthened resolution by a heavy and a non-partisan majority.

If the relationship between the Executive and Legislative branches of the government is one leg on which tripartisanship rests, the others are provided by the two political parties. Each must be willing to place national interest above party advantage and to cooperate responsibly with the other and with the President in the formation and
support of foreign policy. Responsible cooperation does not imply imposed agreement on members of either party when conscience compels disagreement. It does require, however, an extra measure of restraint in dealing with questions of foreign policy. It does require that both parties seek to construct rather than obstruct.

The need for responsible cooperation from the parties is especially acute when as at present one is in control of the Executive Branch and the other is a majority in the Congress. In these circumstances, the President must avoid at all costs seeking advantage for his party on foreign policy measures. If for no other reason, he is dependent upon the party in control of Congress for legislative leadership in dealing with these measures. If his actions suggest partisanship they will inevitably beget partisanship.

Similarly, the majority party in Congress cannot adopt a partisan attitude on foreign relations without endangering the wellbeing of the nation. In the long run, a non-partisan course for the majority party or any party is one of enlightened self-interest. There is no lasting political advantage to be gained from placing party concern above the nation's interests. The people of the nation are capable of assessing responsibility in elections for politically-motivated actions which damage those interests.

The restraints which apply to the majority party apply with equal or greater force to the minority party in Congress. It cannot seek
refuge in its minority status and leave to the majority the sometimes
difficult task of following the President's leadership in foreign policy.
It cannot make political capital out of foreign policy, least of all when
it is in control of the Executive Branch.

The need for responsible cooperation, for "tripartisanship"
in foreign policy is widely recognized both in the Executive Branch and
in the Congress. There is every reason to believe that the President
desires it. The majority and minority leaders of both Houses of Congress
have repeatedly spoken and acted in a fashion well calculated to produce
it.

What is lacking, however, are generally accepted procedures for
bringing about such a policy on a continuing basis. The need is most
acute at two points in the foreign policy process, in the formulation of
policy within the Executive Branch and in its consideration prior to
adoption as a national course of action.

The need in connection with formulation of policy could be met
in part if a principal assistant to the Secretary of State were always to be
designated from the opposite party whenever the latter was in control of
the Senate. This appointment could be supplemented by the addition of
other members of the opposite party of proven competence in foreign
relations to policy-making positions in the Department of State in rough
proportion to the relative strengths of the two parties in the Senate.
The idea is not wholly a new one. Both President Roosevelt and President Truman followed it in part at various times. Recently President Eisenhower appointed the former chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Walter F. George and James P. Richards, the former chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, to posts in the Department of State. What is suggested here, however, is that this informal practice be established on a quasi-formal and continuing basis.

Responsible cooperation is also needed before major courses of foreign policy are set. As noted, the procedure of tripartisan consultation for this purpose exists and has been used twice in recent weeks.

Again, what is lacking is not solely procedure but its acceptance and use as a regular instrumentality in the foreign policy process. Until now, the practice of advance Executive-legislative consultation has been a haphazard one. There is no particular pattern. Presidents and their Secretaries of State have consulted at times with leaders of their own party, the opposition party or both parties. Sometimes they have chosen not to consult at all.

If there is to be effective cooperation in foreign policy, there is a need to formalize the procedure of tripartisan consultation. In the early days of the Republic it was fully expected that the President would seek the advice of the Senate in the conduct of foreign relations. This
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With the guided missiles overhead and the echoes of nuclear bomb tests in various parts of the world, we have little choice as a nation but to stand together in foreign policy if we are to stand at all. If the warning of these weapons of mass destruction is lost on us, a defense budget of about $40 billion a year and foreign aid of over $50 billion in the past decade should serve to remind us that we are deeply involved in a highly volatile world. We will either play our part as carefully and as unitedly as we can or there may be no world left in which to play.

The need to develop a united approach is not a new one but it has grown more intense in recent years. Unfortunately, our capacity to maintain national unity in foreign policy seems to have declined, even as the urgency for it has increased.

During World War II, the imminent danger to all of us served as a catalyst for common action and this war-born unity persisted for a time after the conflict. The nation wanted an end to war and was more than willing to accept the restraints and sacrifices which might make it possible. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Senate in 1945 endorsed our adherence to the United Nations with only two dissenting votes. Nor is it surprising that the Marshall Plan was approved by overwhelming majorities in both Houses of Congress in 1948.
There was more to this national unity during the war and postwar years, however, than common fear of danger or the common desire for peace. There was also concrete action taken within the government to promote unity. During the war, President Roosevelt brought prominent Republicans into the Government to key positions. He appointed two Republicans to his cabinet, Henry L. Stimson as Secretary of War and Frank Knox as Secretary of the Navy. He also recognized the need for close collaboration with Congress. In the preparations for establishing the United Nations, for example, members of the Senate of both parties were consulted frequently by the Roosevelt administration.

Something similar took place after the war, in connection with the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The idea of embarking on a program of aid to the war-ravished lands of Europe was not sprung suddenly on the Congress. The late Senator Arthur Vandenberg, chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations in the Republican controlled 80th Congress, was consulted every step of the way by the Democratic administration. When it came to providing for a common defense for ourselves and Western Europe, it was the Vandenberg Resolution in the Senate which pointed the way to NATO.

Bipartisanship served in these ways as an effective instrument of foreign policy. It enabled President Roosevelt and, for a time, President
Truman to carry on our relations with other nations, secure in the knowledge that they had behind them a very substantial measure of support from both parties. United States policy commanded respect abroad because it was firmly rooted at home.

The cement of bipartisanship began to give way under the pressure of events in the Far East. In rapid succession came the Communist success in China, the inconclusive conflict in Korea and the dispute over General MacArthur. Unfortunately, the Democratic Administration was not very successful either in promoting bipartisanship on these matters or in communicating an understanding of its actions or policies to the people of the United States. This failure provided an opportunity to extremists, long out of power, to pull all the political stops in attacks on foreign policy.

Extremism tended to beget extremism. With the undermining of the will to cooperate, bipartisanship in foreign policy became increasingly an empty word. It was invoked often enough as though it were some kind of litany which if repeated over and over again would insure popularity for unpopular policies. It was used as a club to silence responsible criticism of foreign policy. It was wielded as a whip in efforts by the Executive Branch to urge measures of foreign policy through Congress. Misuse of bipartisanship in these ways tended to stimulate in time precisely the opposite reaction.
Bipartisanship is not a magical formula capable of producing national unanimity where there are deep divisions. Nor is it a convenient cloak under which to conceal these divisions from foreign eyes.

Americans differ on foreign issues no less than on domestic issues. Bipartisanship cannot resolve these differences. Properly understood and used, however, it can help to minimize them. It can act to produce the widest possible area of accommodation among sectional and party viewpoints in support of essential action abroad. And the need for this accommodation is very great in a world which has closed in rapidly on the nation.

In domestic affairs, leadership from the majority party and a "responsible opposition" from the minority is normally sufficient to keep the country on a level keel. In foreign affairs, however, this political mechanism is no longer adequate for effective national action. It is not enough that foreign policy be led by the majority and opposed by the minority, even if the opposition is responsible. The problems which confront us in our relations with other nations are too immense for this formula. When there is partisan division on foreign problems as there was in the case of Far Eastern policy, the country suffers thereby even though one of the parties may gain a temporary advantage.

The fact is that foreign relations are of transcendent importance to all of us, to Democrats and Republicans alike and ought to be treated as
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Notwithstanding the key role of the President, Congress and especially the Senate also have important functions in foreign policy. Senators and Representatives are individually responsible to the peoples of their respective states and districts but taken as a whole each House of Congress has a national constituency. These overlap each other and the President's. Collectively, Congressional responsibilities to the people of the United States, in foreign policy as in other matters, parallel those of the President. These responsibilities, however, must be exercised in accordance with the Constitution. Congress cannot replace the President in the conduct of foreign relations without fundamental changes in our Constitutional system. By the same token, however, the President cannot do without Congress in the conduct of these relations.
The most important of the Congressional powers related to foreign affairs of course are those of legislation and especially the appropriation of public funds. Congress provides for the Defense establishment. Congress provides for the Department of State and other agencies concerned with overseas relations. Congress authorizes and appropriates money for foreign aid. Congress declares war and makes peace.

The Senate, in addition, also has certain unique functions in foreign relations. Two of these are explicit in the Constitution. The Senate confirms the appointment of Ambassadors and other Presidential agents and it consents to the ratification of treaties, the basic instruments of foreign relations.

To the Senate also falls an implied Constitutional power of vast importance. This power, not unlike the President's implied authority to conduct foreign relations, is the obligation to "advise and consent" in foreign relations. For long periods of time, the Senate's functions in this connection have lain dormant. In recent times, however, the power to advise and consent has been invoked repeatedly and often most vigorously. Sometimes it has operated before policy was established by the President and has served to stimulate its formation. That was the case with the - which paved the way for adherence to the United Nations - Fulbright Resolution in 1943 and the Vandenberg Resolution in 1948.
The advice and consent function can also come into play as a corrective as illustrated by the treatment of the so-called Eisenhower Doctrine on the Middle East early this year. In that instance, the President needed Congressional cooperation but he neglected to consult in advance with the appropriate Congressional leaders. The manner in which his proposal was presented moreover suggested that it had been drawn up hastily and without careful consideration of its many implications. In the end the Senate revised and strengthened the resolution before approving it by a heavy and a non-partisan majority.
Since the passage of the resolution, the Eisenhower Administration has shown an increasing awareness of the needs to preserve close working relationships on foreign policy with members of both parties in Congress. The President and the Secretary of State have convened several meetings with party leaders. These consultations have served to clarify aspects of the international situation for Congressional leaders. They have done so, moreover, before not after an irrevocable course was set by the Administration.

Conversely, the meetings have helped to clarify for the Administration the dimensions of acceptable policy. By assembling the Congressional leaders from time to time the President and the Secretary of State have availed themselves of the advice of a group of men not only attuned to attitudes in both parties but also to popular sentiment in various regions of the country.

Take, for example, the geographic origins of the Democratic leaders who attended a February 20th White House meeting on the Middle East question. The Democratic Party in Congress is sometimes thought of as the special preserve of the South or even more specifically of the State of Texas. This is a tribute to the majority leader of the Senate, Lyndon Johnson and to Sam Rayburn, the Speaker of the House. Both men were in fact in attendance at the White House meeting and the South was also represented in the person of Senator Russell, but Senator Theodore F. Green of Rhode Island, Senator William Fulbright of Arkansas were present
from the Foreign Relations Committee as well as Senator Tom Hennings of Missouri as Secretary of Democratic Party and myself, as Whip, from Montana. From the House came majority leader John McCormack of Massachusetts, the Whip, Carl Albert of Oklahoma, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Tom Gordon of Illinois, and Speaker Rayburn.

When the Republicans in attendance are added to this group, a picture of geographic representation emerges which covers every sector of the nation. It also embraces virtually all shades of opinion in both parties in Congress.

Policy made by the President and the Secretary of State against a background of this kind is almost certain to carry a greater measure of public and Congressional support than policy made without it. It is likely to be, moreover, more reassuring to friendly nations abroad.

If the relationship between the Executive and Legislative branches of the government is one leg on which tripartisanship rests, the others are provided by the two political parties. The need for responsible cooperation from the parties is especially acute when as at present one is in control of the Executive Branch and the other is a majority in the Congress. In these circumstances, the President must avoid at all costs seeking advantage for his party on foreign policy measures. If for no other reason, he is dependent
upon the party in control of Congress for legislative leadership.

Similarly, the majority party in Congress cannot adopt a partisan attitude on foreign relations without endangering the wellbeing of the nation. In the long run, a non-partisan course is the course of enlightened self-interest for any party. There is no lasting political return to be gained from placing party advantage above the nation's interests. Sooner or later, the people of the nation will assess responsibility in elections for politically-motivated actions which damage those interests.

The restraints which apply to the majority party apply with equal or greater force to the minority party in Congress. It cannot seek refuge in its minority status and leave to the majority the sometimes difficult task of following the President's leadership in foreign policy. It cannot make political capital out of foreign policy, least of all when it is in control of the Executive Branch.

The need for responsible cooperation, for "tripartisanship" in foreign policy is widely recognized both in the Executive Branch and in the Congress. What is still lacking, however, are generally accepted procedures for bringing about such a policy on a continuing basis. The need is most acute at two points in the foreign policy process, in the formulation of policy within the Executive Branch and in its consideration prior to adoption as a national course of action.
The need in connection with formulation of policy could be met in part if a principal assistant to the Secretary of State were to be designated as a matter of regular practice from the opposite party whenever the latter was in control of the Senate. This appointment could be supplemented by the addition of other members of the opposite party to policy-making positions in the Department of State.

The idea is not wholly a new one. Both President Roosevelt and President Truman followed it in part at various times. Recently President Eisenhower appointed the former chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Walter F. George and James F. Richards, the former chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, to posts in the Department of State. What is suggested here, however, is that this informal practice be established on a quasi-formal and continuing basis.

Responsible cooperation is also needed before major courses of foreign policy are set. As noted, consultation for this purpose has been used from time to time. Again, what is lacking is not a procedure but its acceptance and use as a regular instrumentality in the foreign policy process. Until now, the practice of advance executive-legislative consultation has been a haphazard one. There is no particular pattern. Presidents and their Secretaries of State have consulted at times with leaders of their own party, with the opposition party or with both parties. Sometimes they have chosen not to consult at all.
If there is to be effective cooperation in foreign policy, there is a need to formalize the procedure of tripartisan consultation. In the early days of the Republic it was fully expected that the President would seek the advice of the Senate in the conduct of foreign relations. This ancient constitutional concept should be revived and adjusted to the realities of the present day.

It is of course impossible for the President to consult with the entire Senate. I suggest, however, that as a regular and continuing practice the President might meet with the majority and minority leaders of the Senate as well as the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations and its ranking minority member prior to embarking on any major course of foreign policy. The comparable members of the House of Representatives should be included in these consultations whenever the matter under consideration is likely to involve action by the entire Congress.

However, adequate, procedural devices are not a substitute for the will to cooperate in safeguarding the interests of the people of the United States. Procedures cannot replace the leadership and the ultimate responsibility of the President and the responsibility of each member of Congress. What they can do, however, is to enlarge the area of advance agreement on the course of foreign policy and reduce the partisan factor. They can also mobilize the fullest possible weight of our resources in intelligence and experience for meeting the greatest of our national problems. In short, for what is at best an ambiguous relationship known as bi-partisanship these procedures can help to produce a tripartisanship with a concrete and underlying structure. Unless we move in this direction we will have to face the chaotic prospect that each party as well as the President and the Congress may strike out strictly on its own in foreign policy. This course would be an invitation to national disaster.