

ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IN HUMAN RIGHTS

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Gentlemen, let me first tell you of my interest and experience in the area of democratic development in the world and perhaps give you some insight into where I am coming from, to use the current American expression.

Between 1962 and 1964 I lived in a small town in Ethiopia as a Peace Corps volunteer involved in both teaching and community development. In 1967 and 1968 I again worked for the Peace Corps, this time in the West Indies but with a far less intimate relationship with the people of those countries. This Third World cross-cultural experience has, I believe, enabled me to gain some insight into the dynamics of the non-Western societies. It has also helped to define my concerns as an elected representative. My long-term interest in the Congress is in the field of international trade and finance, and it is my hope that in time I will be able to develop an expertise in this field which I will be able to offer to my colleagues.

Trade and financial assistance programs by definition involve both the giving and the getting, as each participant in the trade seeks to further their own ends. In some cases those ends are purely economic, such as the trade of German-made Volkswagens to the United States or American computers to South America. Sometimes the ends are humanitarian, such as assistance to countries following national disasters. Very often, however, the ends are political. They are political both in pursuit of the individual country's goals and furtherance of the socio-political system to which that country subscribes. This political ingredient is more real than apparent. There are many Third World leaders who are convinced that all financial assistance and trade is political. Indeed there are those who think that all economic and humanitarian relationships are merely political relationships disguised.

Rightly or wrongly this perception is critical to our discussion today. I am convinced that in the dealings between North and South, between the developed and less developed worlds, there exists a mind set of skepticism at best and the outright hostility at worst on the part of the recipient countries. Specifically, bilateral financial assistance (and even trade) is more often resented than appreciated; thus the call for a New Economic Order that was and is before the United Nations and was the focal point of the Sri Lanka Conference of Non-Allied nations this past summer.

The countries where we hope to encourage democratic development are the very countries where overt attempts to encourage anything may well be counter productive. Where in your experience has the advice of the rich and comfortable been well received by the poor and hungry?

So where does all this leave us? It seemed to me when I was in Ethiopia that the United States never really understood how the average Ethiopian viewed both the world in general and the Western World in particular. For example, it seemed to me that we were still of the John Foster Dulles mentality that viewed the Third World as important only in a grand struggle between a free world and a Communist block. Thus we believe that in the case of Ethiopia, or Indonesia or India, for example, neutrality in the struggle was immoral. Viewed from a Third World culture perspective, this, of course, is nonsense. Even worse, it is insulting. The value of a nation to its people has very little to do with the super-power conception of the struggle of ideologies.

If one were to approach any Ethiopian in the town of Wolliso on market day and ask him what democratic development meant to him, the question would be met with well-deserved puzzlement. The fact is that most Third World countries do not have a democratic tradition, and there are very few John Lockes or Rousseaus or Magna Cartas in the Third World legacy. Indeed the historic tradition in most Third World countries is based on social institutions that are mostly authoritarian, such as tribes, religious institutions, and the extended family. Thus, I believe it is more appropriate to talk about freedom and human rights, which I believe should be universal objectives no matter what ideologies may obtain.

In the post World War II era we have had thousands of instances of bilateral and multilateral relationships between countries. What have we learned? We know, for example, that the economic boycott of Cuba for the U.S. had a counter-productive effect. Rather than isolating and weakening Fidel Castro, we strengthened him by providing a Yankee hobgoblin. We have the examples of massive economic and military aid to Latin America, and I know of no one who will suggest that democratic institutions are in the ascendancy on that continent. We have had the examples of American and European involvement in raw materials with several African countries, and our relations with those countries today are hardly comforting.

One need only review the post World War II era to appreciate that the gap between policies intended and policies realized is enormous. Well then, perhaps one should conclude that we should throw up our hands in dismay and retreat to isolationism. Not at all! I strongly favor bilateral and multilateral trade between East and West and between North and South. And I also believe strongly in financial assistance programs, whether they be bilateral or involve the multilateral financial banks and funds. Trade and assistance should not have democratic development as its sole objective, nor should such democratic development be the criterion for participation in that trade and assistance. However, it should recognize that an economically advancing nation is far more likely to have the infrastructure necessary to fully appreciate and construct an atmosphere conducive to freedom and human rights. The trade and assistance should have as its objective an interdependence that binds us all, but ironically, can do so only if those ties have no strings attached.

Search your memories for examples where development meant democracy. Greece and Turkey during the Marshall Plan, Japan and Germany in the same era. Yes. Let us think of more recent examples -- examples involving the non-aligned. Who has developed, who currently has nuclear capability -- certainly a test of development -- India, Taiwan, Brazil, Pakistan, Argentina, Korea, Mexico. Where is the uniform democratic development? The answer is obvious.

I suggest that the realities dictate that we adjust our sights. Development does not by definition bring about democracy. Nor can a pluralistic world provide an atmosphere where development can be tied to movement toward a specific ideology. If we don't help, there are others who will.

Our focus then should be two-fold. First, even if development only occasionally results in democracy, it remains nonetheless a precondition. Name the undeveloped countries that have democratic institutions. The list is hardly extensive.

Second, our goal should be the advancement of human rights. This is not the same as the promotion of democratic institutions. One can be under non-democratic governments and still enjoy a kind of personal freedom that world society would deem acceptable. And it is this pursuit of human rights that can and should concern us.

The advancement of human rights can be achieved by altered policies of an existing government -- unlike the coming of democracy which often requires the demise of existing governments. Thus the pressure to reform is viewed as generally different from the pressure to change institutions. The threat to the rulers is not to their power per se but rather to the way they exercise that power. The latter I submit is more realistic and less likely to trigger the skepticism and hostility that I alluded to earlier.

A Third World head of state may be persuaded to abandon repression and the deprivation of human rights in return for the establishment of trade relationships. He will never, by contrast, be persuaded to make such a choice if the cost is his relinquishment of office in favor of free elections.

(And I might add that the hope that withholding trade and aid in hopes of a change of government is, as with Cuba, an ideological illusion.)

What human rights are we concerned with? For Americans, I would submit, they are threefold. First, racial equality. The American experience in racial matters is mixed -- from a history of the slave trade through the horrors of the civil war, and finally

to the Martin Luther King era of struggle. We are now a nation committed by statute, to the simple phrase of the Declaration of Independence -- all men are created equal. Our trade and aid should reflect that commitment. Thus we should not trade in Rhodesian chrome since it implies an acceptance of minority and racial rule, and a refutation of racial equality.

Second, religious freedom. We are, as a people, committed to international freedom of religious expression. Consequently, America has stood for the existence and survival of the State of Israel, the rights of Soviet Jewry to emigrate, and the opposition to American participation in any boycott of firms that deal with Israel. This commitment extends to other instances of religious persecution.

Thirdly and obviously, we are committed to the physical security of the individual -- or to put it another way, we oppose the use of personal violence such as torture, jailings, beatings, and the wanton killing of citizens. As a consequence, we should express our outrage, for example, over the physical brutalities of the current regime of Chile, by more than simple laments. This commitment extends as well to the assurance of the basic need for food and shelter.

So let us place human rights at the center of our criteria for aid and trade, and let's see where that leaves us.

Bilateral Foreign Assistance - Foreign assistance by the United States on a bilateral basis has reflected the strategic worth of the recipient country to the United States and our perception of its devotion to our "cause". Thus aid in Africa goes to a Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, to Liberia, to Nigeria because they are "friends", and without reference to their degree of respect for human rights. In Latin America Chile is the most obvious example. The historic criteria -- stable, political leanings, strategic. Fine, but let us now put respect for human rights at the top of the agenda and do so openly, publicly, and resolutely.

Multilateral Assistance - The international development banks should also be involved. Although there is variance of Western influence between the World Bank and the African Development Bank, for example, the criteria need not vary. The historic criteria -- need, political leanings, economic viability. I would substitute human rights for political leanings and add the criteria of impact on the populace, i.e. more agrarian self-help projects and fewer "showcase" steel mills.

East-West Trade - The Jackson-Vanik amendment has had a controversial history but it has served to highlight a deprived human right, namely the right to emigrate. We have paid an economic price for that amendment, but then that merely reflects the injection of human rights as operational criteria along with economic gain, strategic importance, and relative ideology.

North-South Trade - This is clearly the single most crucial matter before the world community next to nuclear holocaust. It has two parts. First, the respect for human rights in trade instead of the previous criteria. So the criteria of Bilateral Foreign Assistance would apply here as well. The second part, however, is more complex. It involves coming to grips with the legitimate demands of the Third and Fourth Worlds for a better standard of living -- a better life embraced by a standard of living where basic human rights include food, shelter, good health and a decent education. Or put another way, of what value is freedom of speech to one without food, or freedom of religion to one without shelter from the elements?

The "haves" of the Western world will find that their life-style and their standard of living will survive only if the "havenots" experience a sense of catching up, a sense of sharing in the world's resources. This reality is just beginning to catch hold, and our concern for our long-term human rights can best be realized by assisting their present-term human rights.

Conclusion

My conclusions then, are as follows:

1. Trade and financial assistance are mechanisms which have long been used to achieve perceived ends.
2. Those ends have very often been political with regard to competing ideologies and social systems.
3. The success of trade and assistance based on these criteria in achieving our objectives has been questionable at best.
4. Human rights should be substituted as a primary criteria for assistance in economic development.

Hopefully, we can then proceed toward a world where human rights are encouraged, where the gap between rich and poor has narrowed -- and then, we just might witness the achievement of the objective we had put aside -- democratic development.