

V I E W P O I N T

Josef Joffe

An Open Letter to Condoleezza Rice

What it will take to win hearts and minds outside the U.S.

DEAR MADAME SECRETARY: CONGRATULATIONS FROM A European admirer, and good luck. This is the job, after all, that defeated Colin Powell, a would-be multilateralist who lost critical battles with the Pentagon and Vice President. But if you want to redeem America (and your boss) in the eyes of the world, you'll have to find a way to restore American leadership. Fortunately, you have the skills and circumstances to pull it off.

As President Bush savors his triumph, the history books beckon. And you can help him take a page from Ronald Reagan, who in his second term forsook the mean streets of the cold war for the high road of history-making diplomacy. Reagan's reward was breathtaking. He brought down the Soviet empire without a shot being fired. Here are some ideas on how to reunite America's strength with trust and respect.

Let's start with the easy stuff. Perhaps 50% of the trouble with American foreign policy during the first term was due to "Rumsfeldism," the penchant for gratuitously riling allies and rivals with contempt or indifference. Like individuals, governments hate to be dissed; treat them with respect, and they will not reflexively refuse what you want them to do. The French have a phrase for it: It's the tone that makes the music. Those of us who know you are confident that you can carry an American tune without offending the ears of those whose help you need across the board, from dollar stability to a happy outcome in the greater Middle East. The next time something like the Kyoto Protocol comes around, don't just dismiss European concerns with a haughty gesture. Instead, argue the American case and try to search for common ground, which Powell did not. And argue your case at the Cabinet table instead of deferring to keepers of the flame like Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld. Failing that, try one-on-one in the Oval Office.

Some are already carping that you lack the experience for running a sluggish bureaucracy like the State Department. Here at Stanford University, where you served as provost before going to Washington, they don't think so. Even your critics speak your name with respect as they recall the dispatch and efficiency you demonstrated in dealing with a proud faculty. Somebody who could handle the barons of academe can also handle State and

the Pentagon. Finally, you have the ear of a President who trusts and respects you. That's an asset Powell never had.

Now to the tough stuff. You were raised in the realist tradition of statecraft, but scorn for its tenets was the greatest sin of the President's first term. The failure came in two parts. One was the treacherous belief in the limitless fungibility of military power—as if it were the one supercurrency that could buy everything else: political clout, hearts and minds, democracy. In Iraq, we have learned that the power to knock a man down doesn't teach him how to be a good democrat. The second was the tragic (or almost criminal) indifference to the deadliest problem in the affairs of nations: the gap between means and ends. Your Administration's ends were driven by cosmic ambitions: bring democracy to Iraq, wipe out Islamic terrorism, remake the Middle East. All of this

with 130,000 troops who were to stay no longer than 18 months?

Vast ambitions cannot be financed out of petty cash. And while clarity of vision and purpose informed the Administration's goals, it was blind when it came to calculating costs and consequences. No nation in history has ever squandered so much respect and trust, hence so much political capital, in so short a time.

Yet your personal political capital, Madame Secretary, is intact. The new National Security Adviser, Stephen Hadley,

is not a rival, but your trusted former deputy. Your mission is obvious. Though Bush doesn't easily change his mind, remind him how Reagan made it into the history books. Explain that firmness of purpose degenerates into obstinacy unless errors are recognized, admitted and repaired. As a student of statecraft (you wrote the definitive book on the diplomacy of German reunification), gently remind the President how brilliantly his father harnessed a global coalition in the first Iraq war. In 1991, the means dwarfed the end, and not the other way round, leaving the U.S. with a margin of maneuver it does not enjoy today.

Urge Bush to return to the grandest tradition of American global leadership. The proper maxim is to cajole rather than confront, argue rather than annoy, persuade rather than provoke. Point out that none of America's key interests can be achieved without allies of weight. There is no going it alone when it comes to Iranian and North Korean nukes, Islamic terror or peace in the Middle East. Above all, be true to your realist faith, whose first

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commandment insists: Thy grasp shalt not exceed thy reach.

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BROOKS KRAFT—CORBIS

TALL ORDER: Rice must persuade Bush to include rather than alienate allies