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The Intellectual and Foreign Affairs: The Experience of Walter Lippmann

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Introduction

Walter Lippmann was similar to others such as Plato and Aristotle, More and Machiavelli, who were not only interested in interpreting the world, but also wanted to help change it.

As such, Lippmann chose to combine the role of philosopher and journalist. He believed philosophy could provide "the context of his day-to-day observations on men and events."¹ Journalism, for him, was a way of applying his philosophy and, hopefully, exercising a measure of influence on human affairs.

Lippmann was also personally suited for the role of "philosopher-journalist." He concluded from his early, brief experiences in politics that he was unsuited for its details. He was, basically, a man of ideas and not action.

Throughout his career Lippman remained committed to the role he chose to play. He was motivated by the belief, reflected in his views on foreign affairs, that "reason" could be made to prevail in the conduct of relations among nations. To him, it was an area too often afflicted in the past by bad judgment and irrationality, or ruled even by the unbridled passions of war.

*The Relationship Between Philosophy and Foreign Policy **

As a philosopher-journalist with a profound interest in foreign affairs, it follows that a relationship would develop between Lippmann's philosophical position and his views on foreign affairs. For the most part, this was true. Yet even though the relationship was usually evident, it was not always made explicit.

To begin with, Lippmann himself was not always explicit in explaining the relationship. He usually developed his philosophical position

* In this section I am particularly indebted to the pioneering work of Anwar Syed, *Walter Lippmann's Philosophy of International Politics*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963); and to the excellent analysis developed by Charles Wellborn, *Twentieth Century Pilgrimage: Walter Lippmann and the Public Philosophy*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969).

¹ Quoted in: Clinton Rossiter and James Lare, *The Essential Lippmann*, (New York: Random House, 1963), xii.

systematically and comprehensively in book form. His commentary on foreign affairs, however, mainly expressed in his newspaper columns, rarely referred to his philosophical position. Therefore, it is not always clear to the observer as to how and why Lippmann reached certain of his foreign policy conclusions.

Also, Lippmann's philosophical position was seldom fixed or permanent. While some concerns remained constant, many of his ideas and beliefs represented what he had learned and not what he had always known.² As a result, there is an occasional "time lag" between the exposition of his philosophical position and its impact upon his views on foreign policy. The reverse is also true.

Despite these, and other difficulties, the relationship between Lippmann's philosophical position and his views on foreign affairs was usually observable. This was true, for example, early in his career when his philosophical view of man's inner drives or impulses, the "irrational" in man, was clearly translated into his foreign policy analyses.

At that time, Lippmann believed these inner drives must be understood as they made themselves manifest. He also thought it the task of political leadership to understand these needs and to find, borrowing a phrase from William James, "moral equivalents" for them. Leaders should not offer taboos nor cater to whims but, rather, frankly recognize human desires and with a "disciplined intelligence" establish "civilized outlets."

As a result, a key strategy suggested by Lippman was that of "reconstruction." In *A Preface to Politics* (1914), he suggested that government "reconstruct right relationships" between man and his environment. In *Drift and Mastery* (1914), he offered similar advice.

When World War I broke out, he believed socially acceptable "equivalents" for the "uncivilized" outlets of war could be provided. To accomplish this, those in power had to "reconstruct right relationships" between man and his environment; they must make an effort to make men's lives less "cheap and brutal."

Lippmann initially believed the weak spots of the world (the Balkans, Asia and Africa), where life was "cheap and brutal," were also rich and consequently "invited competition and exploitation." To check these drives of competition and exploitation, Lippmann suggested that international commissions be established to deal with specific trouble spots (*The Stakes of Diplomacy*, 1915).

Lippmann contended there were three great forces at work in the world in 1919, reaction, revolution, and reconstruction. He was critical

² Lippmann, *U. S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic*, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1943), viii.

of reactionaries and revolutionaries because, among other things, they either put "paradise" behind or before them. "Reconstruction," which defined the purpose of his foreign policy commentary in *The Political Scene; An Essay on the Victory of 1918* (1919), also largely expressed his philosophical position.

In the 1920's, as a result of certain issues raised by the War, Lippmann began examining the role of public opinion in a democracy (*Public Opinion*, 1922; *The Phantom Public*, 1925). The bleak conclusions of his studies on public opinion, his attempt to grapple with "the revolution in manners and morals" which was taking place in the 1920's, the persistent memory of the irrationality of the War, contributed to the publication of Lippmann's *A Preface to Morals* (1929).

Instead of the idealistic and optimistic "express yourself" approach of the pre-War years, Lippmann now decided "control" and "restraint" was a more appropriate response. Rather than focusing primarily upon the reconstruction of "right relationships" between man and his environment, Lippmann now believed man "must reconstruct not merely his world, but, first of all, himself." Whereas "reason" previously was considered an instrument to locate "civilized outlets" for man's "impulsive" drives, Lippmann now considered "reason" to also be a method to restrain and control these very same impulses.

The major conclusions Lippmann was reaching philosophically in the 1920's did not manifest themselves in his views on foreign affairs. Generally speaking, his views were largely consistent with administration policies of the period. On occasion, some of the observations and conclusions he reached explicitly within the context of foreign affairs were inconsistent with what he advocated.

With the publication of *An Inquiry Into The Principles Of The Good Society* (1937), one finds an important development in Lippmann's attitude toward "reason." The Depression, the rise of Hitler, the chaos evident in the domestic and international order, led Lippmann to reconsider his position that individual "reason" alone could control and restrain the destructive potential within men. He was growing increasingly skeptical about the ability of "reason" to function effectively without a larger context.

In the 1930's Lippmann was apparently divided within himself regarding the conduct of American foreign relations. Despite the fact that the totalitarians were striking at the major foundations of his philosophical position, as expressed in *The Good Society* (e.g., that men were more than things; that law must prevail; that collectivism leads to global war), Lippmann did not urge active defense of these principles.

The attack on Pearl Harbor compelled Lippmann to deal with his inconsistencies and contradictions. He confessed he had relied on the "opinions and theories and ideologies of the moment" and that this, in itself, was not the most suitable guide with which to make the best judgments. As a consequence, Lippmann asserted his emphasis on "the logic of human behavior" and a "knowledge of history." The choice reflected his increasing attraction to power politics, as well as his search for a larger context within which individual "reason" might be guided.

He was to say (*U. S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic*, 1943), that the "logic of human behavior" in foreign affairs was largely manifested by those who were principally responsible for the shaping of a sound American foreign policy. The Founding Fathers, James Monroe, and Theodore Roosevelt, for example, developed a foreign policy which took into prime consideration America's national interest, power and commitments.

Lippmann also apparently turned to history for guidance in determining America's role in the world, as well as for development of a general scheme of the structure of international society (*U. S. War Aims*, 1944).

His conceptions are largely reminiscent of the 19th century. More specifically, they resemble the world largely shaped by Metternich after the Congress of Vienna in 1815. In both schemes, for example, the relations among the great powers was given primary consideration. Alliances were also considered necessary. There was a "balancer" among the nations of the 19th century (England), a role Lippmann thought perhaps the U. S. could play in the immediate post-war world.

Lippmann adjusted some of these historical ideas to what he perceived to be reality. Lippmann's conceptualization, for example, called for the emergence of orbital systems of "greater communities" which went considerably beyond the nation-states of 1815.

The conclusions Lippmann reached in his reliance on the "logic of human behavior" and a "knowledge of history" enabled him to reach some very sound observations about the conduct of American foreign policy in the post-war world. His prudent understanding of the relation between power and commitments served him well, for example, in his criticism of George F. Kennan's "X-Article" and the "containment" policy.³

There were, on the other hand, certain limitations with respect to the conclusions Lippmann reached, which on occasion made him confused or ambivalent. The five great powers that met in Vienna (Austria, Prus-

³ Kennan himself acknowledged the soundness of Lippmann's analysis. See: George F. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1967), 360.

sia, Russia, England and France), for example, generally agreed on the desirability of a balance among them in order to maintain peace. Yet among the orbits, or "greater communities," there was no such agreement. That, plus the fact that some orbits did not yet exist (e.g., China) left room for the existing orbits to expand and to test each other. This can account, perhaps, for Lippman's ambivalence with respect to the Korean War (he at first praised, and later criticized, the American decision to intervene).

The publication of *The Public Philosophy* (1955) marked another, and the final, systematic treatment by Lippmann of his philosophical position. It was, in a sense, an apology for realism and idealism as well.

Lippman expanded upon the realism of *U. S. Foreign Policy* and *U. S. War Aims*. It will be remembered that his working philosophy became one of applying "the logic of human behavior" and a "knowledge of history" to the present. Now he also talked about "worldly ideals"—"the ideals of freedom, justice, representation, consent, law . . ." as being possible "among mortal and finite, diverse and conflicting men."⁴

Further, Lippmann developed his conception of the world of "essences" where objects are present to the mind; "the transcendent world in which men's souls can be regenerate and at peace."⁵

The realism and idealism evident in *The Public Philosophy* had important implications for his subsequent foreign policy analyses.

Lippman the "realist," for example, continued to subscribe to several of the tenets of "power realism."⁶ He agreed that politics was governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. He defined interest in terms of power. He viewed power, international relations itself, as a process; a state of affairs continuously in flux. He even offered justification for a balance-of-power type system.

Yet Lippman's idealism, also evident in *The Public Philosophy*, would separate him from other power realists, as well as some of the excessive pragmatists who were later instrumental in formulating American policies in Vietnam.

In this regard, Lippmann concerned himself with the motives of policy-makers. He emphasized the needs and aspirations of the Third World as a legitimate and major concern of American policy. He expanded his support for the United Nations. He contended that America needed the

⁴ Lippmann, *The Public Philosophy*, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1955), 142-143.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁶ Aware of the difficulties, semantic and philosophical, that such a term engenders, I nevertheless have chosen to use the criteria originally set forth by Hans J. Morgenthau in his: *Politics Among Nations*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955).

"consultation" of its allies. He also acknowledged that he separated himself from the school of realists who thought that "to be concerned about our legal and moral position" is "unworthy of a proud and tough nation." Accordingly, during the Vietnam era, he restated variations of the same theme; namely, that America should use its power with "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind."

Lippmann's Influence Upon Those Who Ruled

A key reason why Lippmann tried to develop philosophical principles and apply them to the realm of foreign affairs, and that he selected journalism as his chief means, was that he hoped to shape the course of events by influencing those who ruled.

Were those in power listening to Lippmann? Were they receptive to his advice and counsel? The record appears to be mixed.

At 25 Lippman was selected as a contributing founder, and later editor of *The New Republic*. It, and Lippmann, are credited with influencing such powerful individuals as Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, and were leading spokesmen for the Progressive Movement.

Roosevelt described Lippmann as "the most brilliant young man of his age in all the United States."⁷ He granted Lippmann several interviews at his home upon his retirement.

In 1916, Woodrow Wilson wrote his Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, and suggested he "tell Mr. Lippmann that . . . I hope sincerely that as his ideas clarify he will let me have the benefit of them, either directly or in an editorial expression."⁸ Wilson, during that year, granted Lippmann several interviews.

In 1917 Lippmann was selected by Wilson to serve as Secretary to the Inquiry, a secret group established to deal with the problems associated with the anticipated peace. His abilities on the Inquiry were noted by the President. Wilson wrote to Secretary of War Baker that "Lippmann is always not only thoughtful but just and suggestive."⁹ Lippmann also helped write several of the famous "Fourteen Points" which became the covenant of the League of Nations. Following the war, Lippmann went to Paris as a member of the Peace Negotiating Commission.

While Calvin Coolidge was in office, Lippman persuaded him to appoint their friend Dwight Morrow as Ambassador to Mexico. Lippmann knew that Morrow would take him on as an advisor. The experience

⁷ Elting E. Morison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* Vol. VIII, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1951-1954), 872.

⁸ Quoted in: Charles Forcey, *The Crossroads of Liberalism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 256-257.

⁹ Woodrow Wilson to Newton Baker, August 22 and December 14, 1917, copy in Lippmann Collection, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

proved to be one of the most important in Lippmann's career. It has been said that principally through Lippman's diplomatic efforts, war with Mexico was averted.

Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson indicated that he was receptive to Lippmann's analyses. He wrote to a friend: "I wonder if you ever see Lippmann's editorials. Here's one in this morning's papers which is perhaps typical. It seems to me they are always full of interesting ideas."¹⁰ Stimson wrote directly to Lippmann and at one point praised him for his "discriminating journalistic work." He said that the "State Department cabled daily extracts of the editorial opinion of the prominent newspapers, and I regularly found in yours the most accurate and careful analysis of the situation and the most thoughtful views as to policy."¹¹

Lippmann sent a congratulatory note to Franklin Roosevelt when FDR was elected President, but did not always support him. This did not go unnoticed by Roosevelt. FDR complained that Lippmann was "not always consistent" and said that Lippmann ought to "come more into contact with the little fellow all over the country and see less of the big rich brother."¹²

In Joseph M. Jones' *The Fifteen Weeks*, the author discusses the passage of the European Recovery Program and specifically acknowledges Lippmann's assistance.¹³ Yet it seemed Lippmann had his greatest problems with governing circles during the Cold War.

James Forrestal, the first Secretary of Defense, was strongly opposed to Lippmann's views of the Soviet Union. He asked a professor to make a study of them and then sent the critical analysis along to Lippmann.¹⁴ Truman simply did not like Lippmann—and the feeling was mutual. Secretary of State Dean Acheson hardly ever agreed with Lippman. Eisenhower seems to have ignored him.

President John F. Kennedy was receptive to Lippmann's advice and counsel. Lippmann helped Kennedy with his Inaugural Address, and was also asked his opinion regarding Cabinet and other high-level appointments. Upon taking office, Kennedy frequently invited Lippmann to the White House.

Such intimacy was on occasion subject to ridicule. Arthur Krock, for example, upon listening to a Lippmann defense of the President, stormed

¹⁰ Letter from Henry L. Stimson to Albert Klots, April 5, 1930, in Stimson Papers, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹¹ Letter from Henry L. Stimson to Walter Lippmann, May 28, 1930, in Stimson Papers, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹² FDR to Norman Hapsgood, February 24, 1936, Quoted in: Edward L. and Frederick H. Schapsmeier, *Walter Lippmann: Philosopher-Journalist*, (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1969), 79.

¹³ Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1955), 228-229.

¹⁴ Walter Millis, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries*, (New York: Viking Press, 1951), 127-128.

out of a meeting saying: "Well, I may be getting old, and I may be getting senile, but at least I don't fall in love with young boys like Walter Lippmann!"¹⁵

But Lippmann and President Kennedy were not always on good terms. When a Lippmann column criticized Presidential policy, JFK angrily asked his aides why he bothered reading press criticism at all. "Well," he answered himself, "it's still Walter Lippmann."¹⁶

Lippmann was regarded with unusually high esteem during the early years of the Johnson Administration. Nine days after he became President, Johnson spent an hour at Lippman's home.¹⁷ He introduced Lippmann to a gathering of men from industry saying, "I want you to meet Walter Lippmann. He's smarter than all of us."¹⁸ He gave Lippmann the Medal of Freedom Award in 1964. The inscription, which Johnson read, contained the words:

Profound interpreter of his country and the affairs of the world, he has enlarged the horizons of public thinking for more than five decades through the power of measured reason and detached perspective.

According to Hugh Sidey, Johnson used to tell others that "the great Lippman marched by his side," and often boasted: "I had Walter Lippmann over today."¹⁹

Generally speaking, Lippmann seems to have been taken in by Johnson's particular style of flattery and consultation until around 1965 when the Vietnam War began to escalate. Then Lippmann rather bitterly learned that Johnson was saying different things to him than to other people and that he was doing what Lippmann had assumed he would not do,—make the war in Vietnam an American war. The relationship soured quickly.

For his part, Johnson then began to refer to Lippmann as that "political columnist of yesteryear." *The Washington Post* cartoonist Herblock wrote of the Johnson Administration's "War on Walter Lippmann." Said Herblock: "If Lippman were a less modest man, the attention lavished

¹⁵ Found in: David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, (New York: Random House, 1972), 26.

¹⁶ Quoted in: *Time*, (December 23, 1974), 57.

¹⁷ William P. Gerberding, *United States Foreign Policy: Perspectives and Analysis*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), 78.

¹⁸ Eric Goldman, *The Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 94.

¹⁹ Hugh Sidey, "The Presidency—The Oval Office vs. the Attic," *Life*, (May 19, 1967), 44B.

on him by his chief of state would be enough to turn his head. And if he and Johnson had lived in the days of Thomas More and Henry VIII, he would have lost his head completely."²⁰

There is the celebrated story of how Johnson met Senator Frank Church of Idaho, a critic of the War, at a gathering and put an arm around Church's shoulder:

"Frank," said Johnson, "that speech yo' made was not one bit helpful."

"I'm sorry, Mr. President, the headlines exaggerated what I said." "The headlines are all AH read, Frank, and they're all the people read."

"But I didn't go any further than Walter Lippmann."

"Well, Frank," he said sorrowfully, "the next time you need money to build a dam in your state, you better go to Mr. Lippmann."²¹

Upon occasion, Johnson's feelings toward Lippmann were couched in humor. He told the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists, for example, "I suppose it could have been worse. After all, I could have been up against a columnist with all of your talent. Thank God, Walter Lippmann never learned to draw."²² When asked what he was going to do after the Nixon inauguration, Johnson replied: "I'm going to the ranch . . . and I am going to sit on the front porch in a rocking chair for about ten minutes. And then I am going to read a little or write a little. And then I am going to put on my hat and go out and find Walter Lippman."²³

Lippmann did not coolly ignore the President's remarks, nor write from his legendary Olympian calm. He said Johnson ruled "like an absolute monarch,"²⁴ and that the "fatal obstacle to peace" in Vietnam is the President's immature "insistence that he has always been right, that he must always be the victor . . ."²⁵ Lippmann told his readers that Rusk's "education stopped in 1944."²⁶ He remarked that Johnson, Rusk

²⁰ Herblock, "The Other War," *The Washington Post*, (May 14, 1967).

²¹ Michael Davie, *LBJ: A Foreign Observer's View*, (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1966), 24.

²² Johnson, "Remarks to Members of the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists, May 18, 1968" *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, (U. S. Government Printing Office, 1970), 260.

²³ *Ibid.*, "The President's News Conference at the National Press Club, January 17, 1969," 696.

²⁴ Quoted in: "Lippman in New Form," *Newsweek*, Volume LXIX, Number 23, (June 5, 1967), 64.

²⁵ Lippmann, "The Election This Year," *Newsweek*, Volume LXXII, Number 8, (August 19, 1968), 17.

²⁶ "A New Leader for the Orchestra," An interview with Walter Lippmann. Found in: *The New Republic*, Volume 157, Number 24, (December 9, 1967), 19.

and McNamara, in their conception of the war, were foolishly using a map of Chicago to find their way in New York.”²⁷

While Lippmann's direct influence upon Johnson and his advisors tended to diminish as the War escalated, his influence upon other decision-makers and opinion-leaders, and the public, tended to increase proportionately.

He was quoted and otherwise referred to by such outspoken war critics as J. William Fulbright, Frank Church and Wayne Morse. Also, Lippmann was believed to influence, and in some cases determine, as David Halberstam noted, “critical Washington's taste buds. Lippmann influenced Reston, and Reston influenced the writing press and the television commentators, who influenced the television reporters.”²⁸

Halberstam also thought that Lippmann planted doubts in the public mind so that when events such as the Tet Offensive occurred, what Lippmann had been saying was more acceptable.²⁹

The Limitations of the Intellectual

There were others among Lippmann's contemporaries who also held a high regard for the role of reason in foreign affairs. Yet they also saw, like Lippmann, that there could be positive resistance to the role of reason on the part of those who ruled.

When George F. Kennan left Washington in 1950, for example, he wondered whether the government had use for the qualities of persons like himself, “for the effort at cool and rational analysis in the unfirm substance of the imponderables.”³⁰ Adlai Stevenson, at the very end of his life, was similarly uncertain and even more discouraged.³¹

Lippmann shared the experience of Kennan and Stevenson. Upon retirement he described the era as a “minor Dark Age.”³² His colleague and friend James Reston said that Lippmann “was disappointed in the end.”³³

Yet what was it, exactly, that made the end so difficult for Lippmann? Why were those in power not always listening? Why were they, at times, unreceptive to his advice and counsel? Could, indeed, all the blame be placed upon those who ruled?

²⁷ Lippmann, “The Misconceived War,” *Newsweek*, Volume LXVII, Number 23, (June 6, 1966), 19.

²⁸ Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, 26.

²⁹ Interview with David Halberstam, October 16, 1973.

³⁰ Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, 499.

³¹ Eric Sevareid, “The Final Troubled Hours of Adlai Stevenson,” *Look*, Volume 29, Number 24, (November 30, 1965), 81-86.

³² Quoted in: Ronald Steel, “The Trouble We're In: An Interview With Walter Lippmann,” *The New Republic*, Volume 165, Number 20, (November 13, 1971), 23.

³³ Reston, “His Thoughts and Writings are Very Much Alive Today,” *New York Times*, (December 15, 1974), 66.

Part of the problem lay in the role Lippmann chose to play. Although his expectations remained high, intellectually he harbored few illusions about it. There were, he knew, some basic limitations in applying reason to the practical world.

For one thing, he said that our "rational ideas in politics are still large, thin, generalities, much too abstract and unrefined for practical guidance . . ." ³⁴ For another, his experience taught him that "when there is panic in the air, with one crisis tripping over the heels of another, actual dangers mixed with imaginary scares, there is no chance at all for the constructive use of reason, and any order soon seems preferable to any disorder." ³⁵

Lippmann also viewed the evolution of reason on political subjects still in its formative stages. The advancement of knowledge in this area, he believed, preceded at a much slower rate than that in which political action is taken. As a consequence, he said, there was "a tendency for one situation to change into another, before the first is clearly understood, and so to make much political criticism hindsight and little else." ³⁶

For these, and other reasons, it was possible for important differences to occur between theorists who shared similar assumptions, as well as between theorists and practitioners who differed in their functional roles.

Lippmann and Acheson, as an example of the former, theoretically considered themselves "power realists." Yet there was little they agreed upon in the domain of foreign policy. During the Vietnam War, observed Philip Geyelin, both Lippmann and Acheson urged Johnson to "lead more lustily, take more chances, employ his power to enforce his will," yet rarely did they have "the same course of action in mind." ³⁷

Not only are differences apt to occur among those who share similar assumptions, important differences could also arise between theorists and practitioners. In large measure, this is due to their functional role, as well as their personal interpretation and use of that role.

The functional role of the intellectuals tends to make them more detached and intellectually abstract in their thinking. The daily pressures and petty details, the endless meetings and conversations are not usually part of their routine. It was noted by Lippmann that in "the empire of reason, the choices are wide, because there is no compulsion of events or of self-interest." ³⁸

³⁴ Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1922), 414-415.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 414.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 415.

³⁷ Philip Geyelin, *Lyndon B. Johnson and the World*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), 133.

³⁸ Lippmann, "The Scholar in a Troubled World," *The Atlantic Monthly*, Volume 150, Number 2, (August 1932), 152.

The politician, on the other hand, is an activist; involved and often submerged in the affairs of the world. Here, Lippmann knew, the choices were narrow because "prejudice has become set"³⁹ and events move swiftly.

Thus, in the "empire of reason," Lippmann could and often was judicious and dispassionate. Practitioners such as Johnson, on the other hand, because of function and personality, viewed reason not only as a means of arriving at sound judgments but also—and at times primarily—as a subjective instrument for manipulation. Whereas Lippmann was occasionally utopian in his insistence upon rational behavior among men and nations,⁹ Johnson was often Machiavellian in his motivation and behavior.

It was Johnson's experience as a politician, and his stance toward that experience, which probably led him to the "conclusion that his press relations could be solved by the art of seduction."⁴⁰ As a consequence, Johnson saw Lippmann as someone who had to be won over by flattery and a particular style of consultation. He believed if he had Lippmann's support he would most likely have the support of the nation's liberals and academics. Johnson was to tell Doris Kearnes: "The Washington Press are . . . like a bunch of sheep in their own profession and they will always follow the bellwether sheep, the leaders of their profession, Lippmann and Reston. As long as those two stayed with me, I was okay. But once they left me . . . everyone else left me as well."⁴¹

It is unclear, particularly in the case of Lyndon Johnson, if he was ever truly interested in Lippmann's opinion. "Lippmann's a great man," Johnson once said, "because he agrees with me."⁴²

Apart from the limitations inherent in applying reason to the practical world, and the differences resulting from the functional roles, and personal style, of the theorist and practitioner, the receptivity of those in power also depended upon their perception of Walter Lippmann as a competent analyst. Could he be counted upon to interpret clearly, and to prescribe fairly and accurately?

The evidence seems to indicate that Lippmann was not always able to rise above his own socialization process, which occasionally intruded itself upon his judgments of reality.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹ Although Lippmann "knew" that there were differences between the world of the theorist, and the world of the practitioner, at times he did not appear to "understand," or accept, his own logic.

⁴⁰ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak. *Lyndon B. Johnson: The Exercise of Power*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1967), 411.

⁴¹ Kearnes, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 313-314.

⁴² Geyelin, *Lyndon B. Johnson and the World*, 133.

Early in his career, for example, Lippmann reflected the orientation of the Fabian Socialists and their preoccupation with domestic reform. On the one hand, this accounted for Lippmann's lack of interest and knowledge on foreign affairs until the outbreak of World War I.⁴³ On the other, it accounts for Lippmann's heavily economic interpretation of the origins of the war (*The Stakes of Diplomacy*, 1915).

Lippmann also developed an early identification with the British. Throughout his career he maintained, for example, that Anglo-American cooperation was vital to American security. He referred to it as one of the "inner principles of foreign policy."⁴⁴

Yet Lippmann's identification with the British affected, and otherwise influenced, some of his perceptions. He largely ignored, for instance, certain aspects of British colonial policy which were "uncivil." He failed to appreciate, for a time, the force of the mass movements which shook the colonial world after World War II. He also mistakenly continued to believe Britain was a major power after the Second World War. In many ways, the role he thought America could play in the postwar world (e.g., that of a balancer), was patterned after the 19th century British experience.

Lippmann's early training with representatives of the intellectual elite, and his association with the political elite, helped shape and sustain his belief that it was the masses who possessed a minimum of knowledge and rationality. This view, though not without empirical support, was a preoccupation with Lippmann.

The result was that he seems to have exaggerated it. Also, he was not as critical of the elites as he was of the masses. Indeed, even though he criticized Acheson and Paul Nitze, and later Rostow, Bundy and Rusk, he continued to express a greater faith in the elites than his own testimony warranted.

Such faith led him to initially accept, in the case of Vietnam, Administration rationales concerning the depth of America's commitment and official interpretations of day-to-day events. It was only in the latter part of the Johnson Administration that he saw how much policy-makers, elites with a similar background, had misled him. It was a principle reason for his "disappointment" at the end.

Not only was Lippmann incapable of consistently rising above his socialization process, at times he readily accepted conventional wisdom and went with the general drift of orthodox opinion, or accepted modified versions of the *status quo*.

⁴³ Lippmann makes mention of this in *U. S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic*, ix and x.

⁴⁴ Lippmann, "The Bedrock of Policy," *Today and Tomorrow*, (September 5, 1940).

As indicated earlier, he generally accepted the orthodoxies of the inter-war years. During the Cold War he was generally only a moderate critic of America's policies. He had argued vigorously against "containment," for example, but when trouble broke out in Greece and Turkey in 1946-1947, he offered a modified version of it. He consistently supported NATO which, to some, had become a prime instrument of containment. He was also inclined to accept, for a time, conventional wisdom regarding the nature and extent of the American commitment in Vietnam.

The evidence also indicates that orientations Lippmann acquired in a philosophic sense were not always consistent with what he advocated in a practical, political sense. These inconsistencies do not appear to be the result of a "time lag" between the development of his philosophical views and their application in the domain of foreign affairs.

During the 1920's and 1930's for example, Lippmann appealed to "international law," and the "moral conscience" or "moral force" of world opinion. Yet this was not consistent with the rather dismal views he was developing at the time with respect to the capacity of the individual citizen having an accurate "picture of the world." Also, even though he continued to believe that the public's influence in foreign affairs was far greater than its ability (*The Public Philosophy*), during the Vietnam War Lippmann tried to rally the masses and again made a plea for "world opinion," and "international conscience."

Conclusion

Walter Lippmann's life and work is a prime example of the attempt to put into practice a basic assumption of formal education which is firmly rooted in the traditions of the West. Namely, that the lessons of philosophy and history can be discovered, conveyed to others, and have a significant influence upon human affairs.

Lippmann was perhaps a test case of the role of the intellectual in guiding human affairs, in helping his country make wise decisions. He not only tried to interpret the world, he tried to change it. Although not always successful, he nevertheless was, as James Reston said of him, "the greatest journalist of our age."