

Laure Pallez

*A Seat at the Table: Women, Diplomacy, and Lessons for the World*

One diplomat explained that when moving to a different country, it's the women who pick up the pieces. What is the education system like for the children? What kind of activities and culture will the children be a part of? Mixing in with the local environment and understanding a country's culture are two pieces of advice I heard from French diplomat Laure Pallez for future generations of foreign service officers.

With a quiet disposition, a sharp jawline, and a quick pep in her step Pallez moves swiftly around the French Embassy in Washington. With her perceptive eyes, she has the innate ability to see the room and know who's in it. When she focuses her attention on you, everyone fades into the background while her gaze awakens your attention. Her seriousness and thoughtfulness exude from her delicate force.

Pallez spent 12 years working and living in China before her post to Washington as a Deputy Economic Counselor. Her career spans from finance, marketing, client management, credit analyst, chief business officer, politics, and now a diplomat. She is a third-generation public servant. As she mentioned, "My whole family has always been very involved in public service. That's why I have in my heart to serve my country. It's having the best interest of all people. Ultimately, I can say that I simply believe in the power of human beings."

Her time in Asia created a pivotal turning point in her career. The dichotomy between eastern and western cultures was extreme. She spoke about how the Chinese see the long game in a span of generations. This idea was much different than her French upbringing, which seized enjoyment at the moment.

Being in China shaped her ideas about harmony and a woman's ability to create change in the world. To Pallez, it seemed there were more women in government, business, and finance in China. The Asian Development Bank notes, "[China has one of Asia-Pacific's highest labor force participation rates for women.](#)"\*

Women seemed to have the same upward momentum of opportunities as men. Laure came across the famous saying of Mao Zedong that "women hold up half the sky." This mantra has stayed with her throughout her career.

"It's based on equality between males and females. And you see a lot of that in China, where women have interesting positions within the party or an organization, because they represent "Half the Sky," according to the common thinking."

In a straightforward yet calm way, Pallez shared that she was very impressed by the human and technical qualities of the women surrounding her. "They were never just the wives of someone. In China, women were strong in political careers, strong in technical careers such as scientists, and that inspired me very much."

During a visit from the President of France, Laure negotiated with the government and the

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Chinese about a simple ribbon-cutting ceremony. The French did not want to participate in this small gesture as they thought it was unnecessary in the schedule, however, Pallez understood the cultural nuances of the ribbon-cutting ceremony. It was a formality that the Chinese expected. Through a lens of harmony and negotiation, she got the French President to participate in the ceremony. This one gesture provided the framework and smooth transition of the entire successful visit. She detailed, "It's the ability to understand what the other side wants and compromise on things that are not so important, while always keeping in mind what you want to achieve. Everything is in the details and the ability to understand people."

During her time in China, she received an opportunity to run for politics back in France alongside a close mentor but ultimately decided to take the post in Washington.

With two children, she moved to the U.S. for the post. Although she shared her mind is never clear darting from work to family issues, she believes the power of women is the essence of understanding the long game of generations something she originally learned in China.

She sees her children in the policy world, the economic world, and the future of society. Being a mother and a diplomat focuses on the necessity of creating a better world. "Don't limit yourself, you CAN do it all. And your kids will be happy to see you happy." Moving her career forward, Pallez understands the nuances of creating harmony at breakneck speed.