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# DIPLOMATIC HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

FRED W. WELLBORN

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By

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## Preface

For a century and a half, with occasional ~~deviations~~, the United States adhered to a policy of nonentanglement with European affairs. Until the first world war this ~~rule~~ of conduct served Americans well, thanks in large part to their geographic isolation, the naval might of Great Britain and, after 1897, her friendship. Indeed as late as the 1930's a majority still clung to outmoded isolation—reflected in a succession of neutrality laws—although factors indicative of change were long in evidence. The outcome of World War II left no freedom of choice. No longer was Great Britain the dominant European power. Instead, a Russian colossus, soon joined by Communist China, presented a constant threat to the survival of the free world. In President Washington's day, Europe was a month's distance from American shores; by 1960 the travel time of devastating nuclear missiles from Russia to any part of the United States was less than half an hour.

From necessity a comparable change has occurred in the traditional foreign policies and diplomatic practices of the United States. Thus the fullest cooperation has been given to the United Nations; security treaties have been fashioned with more than forty nations; secretaries of State have shuttled between foreign capitals in attempts to resolve recurring threats to world peace; and even the President has made global good-will missions, interspersed with summit conferences. Unfortunately the slow and sometimes clumsy workings of the democratic processes of government find the free world at a great disadvantage in the conduct of diplomacy. Because public opinion is still a mighty force in America it is imperative that it should be determined by informed citizens. In consequence, as never before, an acquaintance with the history of America's role in world affairs presents a challenge to their intelligence and judgment. Perhaps the essential facts, supported by a measure of interpretation, may be found in this short volume.

F.W.W.

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## *Chapter 1*

# The Conduct and Aims of Diplomacy

By constitutional provision and precedent, the control and direction of foreign relations has been standardized in most respects from the early national period. A strong President, one who may justify any action he considers wise, if not forbidden by Constitution or statute, may, it is true, overturn long-established practices. The Congress to a lesser degree may assert itself, and sometimes does. For example, it may refuse a presidential request or, by resolution or investigation, force administrative compliance with its wishes. Nevertheless, the President is pre-eminent in the formulation and direction of foreign policy.

### **The President and Congress**

One example of conflict over prerogatives becomes evident if the President creates a situation which makes war inevitable, or perchance directs a "police" action which becomes genuine war. A famous example is the Korean War. Much more frequent is the presidential by-passing of the Senate through the medium of executive agreements. Both Roosevelts were outstanding in this respect. Such agreements, to be sure, are directly binding only upon the administration making them, but they may be of such character as to establish long-lasting obligations for good or evil. In the popular

mind, the secret agreements at Yalta (1945) best illustrate the dangers in this exercise of presidential power.

## The Roles of President and Congress in Foreign Relations

<u>President</u>	<u>Senate</u>	<u>House of Representatives</u>
Appoints Secretary of State and high-ranking diplomats.	Confirms appointments.	Appropriates salaries, etc., with Senate concurrence.
Makes treaties (through State Department) and <i>ratifies</i> (or rejects) them after Senate confirmation.	Confirms by $\frac{2}{3}$ of those voting. (Quorum must be present.) May also amend.	May "kill" a treaty by refusing appropriations, if such are called for.
As Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy he may take a course of action which produces war.	Declares war.	Declares war. (Joint action with Senate.)
Makes executive agreements. Recognizes new governments.	Adopts resolutions.	Adopts resolutions.
Receives ambassadors (or refuses to do so).	Conducts investigations.	Conducts investigations.
Severs diplomatic relations.		

## Department of State and the Foreign Service

As director of foreign relations the President has the services of the Department of State and the Foreign Service, headed by the Secretary who may range in stature from powerful formulator of policy to glorified office boy. Traditionally, communications and negotiations with foreign governments have been channeled through the State Department. However, at times, especially in more recent years, the President has chosen the direct approach. Franklin Roosevelt's many personal conferences with Winston Churchill and Dwight Eisenhower's exchanges with Nikita Khrushchev are familiar examples.

The personnel of the State Department numbered six in the first year of Washington's Presidency. By 1950 it had increased a thousandfold (a commentary on the increasing complexity of world affairs) and its operational expenses even



more so. But the total annual expenditure for this agency, dedicated primarily to the preservation of honorable world peace, approximates an average day's cost of World War II.

The various diplomatic representatives who are sent abroad constitute the Foreign Service. They range downward in rank from ambassador to charge d'affaires and other personnel of embassies and legations. Since 1924 consular agents have been a branch of the Foreign Service.

### **The Foreign Service as a Career**

The outstanding quality of American diplomats sent abroad during the early national period is self-evident by their performance, yet even then a common complaint was the inadequacy of salaries and attendant ills. After the Civil War these drawbacks were augmented by the hazards of politics. Unfortunately, democratic America was motivated from the beginning by an excess of frugality and a disposition not to ape the expensive amenities of European capitals. In recent decades this provincial attitude, which meant automatic exclusion of able men lacking an independent income, has been measurably improved. Indeed, since 1924, a young American may confidently contemplate a career in the foreign service through a rigorous process of selection, ultimately attaining the highest ranks.

### **The Factor of Military Force in Diplomacy**

Military strength as an important instrument of national peacetime policy was hardly recognized by the American public prior to World War II. President Washington, understandably, clearly appreciated the relationship and made recommendations to Congress accordingly. But that body, being more responsive to the public will, long favored a "position of strength" only when war was thrust upon the nation. In consequence, American rights were violated frequently, sometimes to such a degree that war was the final choice, as in 1812 and 1917.

Because of the geographical isolation of the United States and the public attitude toward militarism, it is understandable that anything more than a skeleton army for use against Indians was long considered superfluous short of actual war.

Conscription for military service, even in time of hostilities, was first undertaken during the Civil War; the first in peacetime was in September, 1940, when World War II was pressing close to the United States.

By 1900 "big navy" advocates were vocal and influential. The writings of Captain (later Admiral) Alfred T. Mahan on the *Influence of Sea Power upon History* was winning converts. His most apt pupil was Theodore Roosevelt, sometimes honored as the father of the modern United States Navy. But despite a measure of national pride in a respectable navy, it took the tragic results of World War II to convince the American public that military strength is indispensable for the successful conduct of foreign relations.

### **The Chief Goal of Diplomacy**

In the history of international relations the paramount objective of every nation usually has been the creation and maintenance of adequate safeguards for continued existence. The attainment of this goal has been sought by various means such as armed forces, fortified boundaries, alliances, economic pressures, and propaganda. The United States has not been an exception. The early years of the new republic were often beset with dangers. Thereafter the hazards of survival seldom appeared grave until the ability to wage atomic warfare ceased to be an American monopoly.

### **Forces Determining American Policies**

Many conditions or factors have contributed to American security, and in turn have helped shape long-standing policies directed toward the attainment of that objective. The more outstanding of these should be indicated.

1. Hemispheric isolation. The United States, on becoming independent, was one month's distance from Europe, and six from Asia. Such wide separation from Old World ambitions and rivalries assured relative freedom from involvement or attack. But the conquest of distance gradually reduced the travel time until by mid-twentieth century the broad Atlantic had shrunk to a matter of hours, with the dread prospect that guided missiles might further reduce this old bulwark of defense to complete impotence.

2. Public opinion. American citizens have always exerted a tremendous influence in determining foreign policies and action. On many occasions an aroused public has forced decisions upon a reluctant President. Familiar examples are the wars with England (1812) and with Spain (1898). Conceding an occasional grave mistake, Americans remain convinced that the good greatly overbalances the bad in such democratic processes. They believe, too, that the dangerous potentials in Russo-American relations after World War II hardly could have existed had the Russian people enjoyed the same freedom.

3. Opportunity for territorial expansion. In her vigorous growth, young America pushed westward into vast and thinly populated areas where man's resistance was relatively slight—Indians, declining Spain, and Mexico. Expansion to the Pacific was accomplished therefore with little real opposition.

4. European troubles. On several occasions during the earlier national period, Old-World rivalries and hatreds set the stage for American diplomatic victories. The first in this category paved the way to independence. Mighty Louisiana fell to the United States primarily because Napoleon decided we should have it; Florida, because Spain was fearful.

## Foreign Policies

Changing times and conditions produce new policies. Many are adhered to for relatively short periods of time, but some have been sufficiently long-lived to suggest permanence. A few deserve special mention.

1. Nonentanglement with Europe. Although the United States attained independence with French help, Americans soon became fearful of involvement in Europe's quarrels, not excepting those of France. In consequence, beginning with Washington, the conviction that the United States and Europe should each refrain from meddling in the affairs of the other became a fixed policy. That the United States was drawn into European wars in 1812 and 1917 changed only briefly, if at all, America's determination to stay on her side of the Atlantic. Isolationism was still popular in the decade immediately preceding World War II.

2. Freedom of the seas. The United States as an ambitious young nation with a fast-growing merchant marine, deter-

mined from the beginning to remain neutral in Europe's wars, stubbornly stood for the "rights" of neutrals, i.e., freedom on the high seas from the usual high-handed practices of belligerents. It was primarily in defense of these rights that the War of 1812 was fought.

When the United States was caught in her own Civil War, the doctrine temporarily went into eclipse. It suffered greatly during World War I, and in effect was scuttled by American neutrality laws during the 1930's. The price for nonentanglement ran high.

3. The *pacific settlement of disputes*. Beginning with Washington's administration, at a time when arbitration was definitely to America's advantage in dealing with mighty Britain, the United States has maintained an enviable record of settling problems by peaceful methods, marred to be sure by a few notable lapses. Failure to join the First World Court, following World War I, is an outstanding example.

4. Cooperation with the republics of this hemisphere, or *Pan-Americanism*. Until 1900, Latin-American relations with the United States were for the most part friendly, the War with Mexico (1846-48) being the striking exception. But after the turn of the century a succession of events and circumstances produced in Latin-America so much suspicion and distrust for the "colossus of the north," that reasonably cordial relations were restored only after long and patient effort beginning in President Hoover's administration.

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## *Chapter 2*

### **Colonial Foundations**

In a technical sense diplomatic history of the United States begins with the American Revolution. Actually, North American colonies for a century had been of such importance in European rivalries and conflicts that a history of early American diplomacy must necessarily take into account the role of these pawns on the chessboard of European diplomacy. Moreover, the experience of England's colonies provides a key to the foreign policy of the United States after attaining independence.

#### **Mercantilism**

The discovery of the New World was a direct result of the appearance of national states shortly before 1500. Soon thereafter mercantilism became a fixed theory and practice in the economics of international politics, each competitor for substance and power striving for a favorable balance of trade, preferably in the form of precious metals. Gold not only promoted economic growth, it could mean armies and navies with which to humble rivals and further empire building.

#### **Colonies in the Mercantile System**

Colonies, as the source of desirable raw materials and a market for home products, fitted neatly into mercantilism, for they could relieve the mother country from dependence upon her rivals. The "sugar islands" of the West Indies are a striking illustration in point, not only for their prized products such as sugar, tobacco, and indigo, but for the military conflicts waged for their possession. In these wars navies neces-

sarily played the leading role. It was not by accident that England was ultimately victorious, taking what she wished. As an insular kingdom secure if her navy could control the English Channel but with growing dependence upon the outside world for ships, timbers, and naval stores, she turned to colonies as a reliable source of supply. The result was naval power and the greatest colonial empire in history.

In order to avoid sharing British colonies with rivals, Parliament as early as 1650 began the imposition of commercial restrictions. These intermittent Navigation Acts, occasionally modified, lasted to the American Revolution. Although enforcement was usually lax, they were clearly designed for the primary benefit of the mother country, hence gave colonists grounds for grievance which in turn eventually helped produce armed resistance and finally independence.

### Colonies as European Pawns

Spain. England was slow in founding permanent colonies in America. Spain dominated such activities for a century after Columbus' discovery and monopolized colonial commerce. But England under the Tudors (1485-1603) made rapid growth in population, economic strength, and national spirit, meanwhile antagonizing Spain in various ways and to such a degree (for example, the buccaneering attacks on Spanish treasure ships by Elizabethan sea dogs) that war resulted in 1588. In that year Englishmen defeated the Spanish Armada. It was an event of great significance in the history of naval warfare and of empire. Peace was made in 1604. Three years later the first permanent English colony in North America was founded at Jamestown. Thereafter for a century and a half Spain contested for the control of the continent, being humbled repeatedly by the British. Nevertheless, Spain retained territory in what is now the United States for forty years after the American Revolution. During those formative years of the republic American diplomacy was measurably affected by contacts with the Spanish.

The Netherlands. By 1650 Dutch sailing ships were cutting heavily into England's colonial commerce. Parliament struck back with a Navigation Act (1651) which helped produce the first of three wars with the Dutch within twenty-five years. In the outcome Holland's naval pretensions were

crushed and her territory in North America (New Netherland, renamed New York) was lost to England.

Like France and Spain, Holland eventually was drawn into the wars of the American Revolution. For several years thereafter Dutch friendliness was a factor in sustaining the young republic.

France. Greatest of England's rivals for empire was France. These two started on even terms in North America: Jamestown, 1607; Quebec, 1608. In time the contest became essentially one in which homemakers with the rights and liberties of Englishmen competed with fur traders under the parental regime of France. By 1750 increasing activities and fingers of settlement were threatening a clash on the upper Ohio. Meanwhile English and French colonists had fought repeatedly when the mother countries were at war.

### Second Hundred Years' War, 1688-1815

This series of wars first involved England against France in 1689, and ended in 1815 with the final defeat of Napoleon. Whatever the diverse European causes and alignments might have been in this long struggle, the central and dominating objective of the two great enemies, England and France, was colonial empire and naval supremacy. Midway in the struggle France was driven from North America, but she remained a powerful factor in American diplomacy for another half century.

<u>In America</u>		<u>In Europe</u>	
King William's War	1689-1697	War of League of Augsburg (War of English Succession)	1688-1697
Queen Anne's War	1702-1713	War of Spanish Succession	1701-1713
King George's War	1744-1748	War of Austrian Succession	1740-1748
French and Indian War	1754-1763	Seven Years' War	1756-1763
American Revolution	1775-1783	Wars of the American Revolution	1778-1783
Naval War with France	1798-1800	War of French Revolution	1792-1802
War of 1812	1812-1814	Napoleonic Wars	1803-1815

The first war in this series, King William's War, began

when William of Orange of the Dutch Republic, in danger of being engulfed as France pushed toward her "natural" boundary of the Rhine, accepted the English throne (1689) in order to have British resources at his command. The ensuing struggle ended in a stalemate. Shortly thereafter a new one, Queen Anne's War, began when a family union of French and Spanish thrones (1701) upset the balance of power. By the Peace of Utrecht, 1713, both France and Spain were humbled. France ceded Newfoundland, Acadia (renamed Nova Scotia by the British), and the Hudson Bay Country to England. Spain ceded Gibraltar to England and in addition granted, by the Assiento, commercial concessions in Spanish America together with a thirty-year monopoly of the Spanish colonial slave trade.

Ensuing British commercial tactics in the Caribbean so antagonized the Spanish that war resulted in 1739, The War of Jenkin's Ear, merging the following year into the War of the Austrian Succession. In due time France and England were again the great antagonists, and again colonists in America joined. Mutual restoration of conquests marked the peace.

The French and Indian War (1754-63). This great and decisive war began in America when Virginians contested with the French for control of the Forks of the Ohio, where Pittsburgh now stands. Excepting the Iroquois, Indians fought on the side of the French, intensifying the bitterness of the struggle. The Peace of Paris (1763) terminated the seven years' conflict in Europe. France, decisively beaten, was relegated to second-rate status with her ally Spain, and both accepted the terms England offered. Once again the map of America was remade. France lost every foot of territory on the mainland, retaining only a few islands, St. Pierre and Miquelon, near Newfoundland (necessary for her fishing activities) and a handful in the West Indies. To England she ceded Canada and all Louisiana eastward of the Mississippi excepting the Isle of Orleans (area in which New Orleans was the principal settlement). The Isle of Orleans, together with all Louisiana west of the Mississippi, was transferred to Spain. (France later regained this territory, selling it to the United States in 1803.) Spain ceded Florida to England in order to recover Cuba. (In 1783 England receded Florida to Spain. The United States acquired it in 1819.)



Canada or islands, which? During the peace negotiations British ministers long debated whether to keep Canada or the French sugar islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. The advice of Benjamin Franklin, then colonial agent in London, was sought. He favored Canada. England kept Canada, and by so doing removed the French menace to her Thirteen Colonies and with it such future dependence as they might have had for British protection. Twelve years later they took up arms in what became a war for independence.

### Problems of Empire

Although Great Britain emerged from the Seven Years' War mistress of the seas and the world's greatest colonial power, she found more problems had been created than solved. During the war His Majesty's "loving subjects" in America had not supported Britain's cause as Englishmen deemed right and proper. In fact they had supplied French forces in Canada with much of the beef and flour necessary to stay in the fight. Even sporting Englishmen thought this going a bit too far. King George III, his ministers, and Parliament were agreed that the old way of dealing with the colonies must be stiffened in order to (1) discipline the colonists mildly, (2) give them needed protection from Indians, and (3) induce them to bear a portion of their expense to the royal treasury. In trying to carry out this program of action, England clashed head-on with American nationalism which was the outgrowth of many years of enjoyment of the rights and liberties of Englishmen in America and of a common experience in fighting the French.

Indian relations. The Indian problem called for immediate action. Most tribes had fought as allies of the French. When French forces were beaten in America, Indians of the Ohio Country staged a desperate, concerted uprising against the British known as Pontiac's Rebellion (1763). British response was (1) the decision to maintain armed forces in the colonies, and (2) the Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763 forbidding white settlement beyond the mountains. Both were keenly resented by Americans who did not appreciate Britain's efforts to separate incompatible white and red men pending a workable solution for their conflicting interests, nor relish protection which they considered both unnecessary