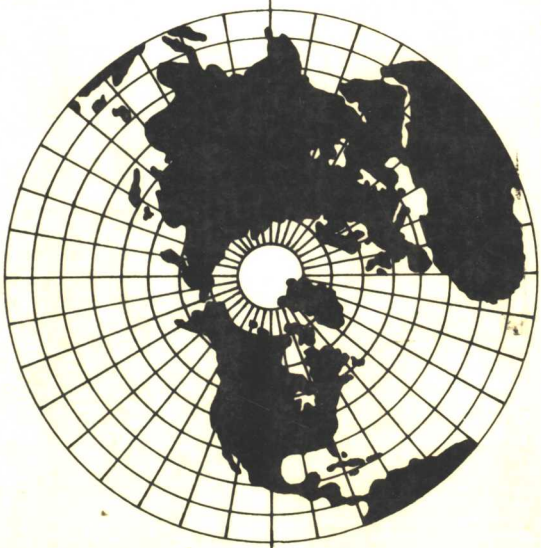
A History of American Foreign Policy

Third Edition

Alexander DeConde



Volume II:

Global Power
(1900 to the present)

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PREFACE

In this book I attempt a coherent introduction to the history of American foreign policy that accurately embodies latest scholarship. I strive for analysis within factual development. Where pertinent I include references to political, economic, social, and cultural developments which influenced the shaping of policy. In brief, I attempt to explain how and why foreign policy developed as it did and arrived where it is. I analyze main forces and ideas that shaped policy and trace their courses. Even though at times analysis may be detailed, emphasis is on broad policy. I have not hesitated to advance interpretations in the light of my own ideas, and I hope I have done so judiciously.

Max Beloff, the British historian, in the conclusion of his book *Foreign Policy and the Democratic Process,* said that "an historian of foreign policy who merely writes down what everyone knows and is agreed upon, and differentiates himself from the ordinary practical man only by the number and complexity of his footnotes, performs quite inadequately the function for which society supports him." Since I agree with those sentiments, explanation for my notes is in order. I use notes primarily to acknowledge sources of most quotations. The supplementary reading lists for each chapter serve as bibliographic guides for those who may wish a fuller exploration of topics discussed.

Like others who have written historical syntheses, I have built on the writings of many scholars. I am pleased, through the notes and bibliography, to acknowledge my debt to some of them. To others whose names do not appear and to those who have helped in this project in more personal ways, I offer gratitude and thanks.

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INTRODUCTION

From the founding of the United States in the years of revolution and through the nineteenth century the main theme in its diplomatic history was expansion. The United States grew from thirteen colonies hugging the Atlantic seaboard to a transcontinental nation and then a global power with colonies across open seas and interests in various parts of the world. The process of expansion began during the American Revolution when patriot forces invaded Canada with the hope of bringing her into the Union then forming. The Treaty of Paris of 1783 brought not only independence acknowledged by England and other powers but also territory beyond the boundaries of the thirteen colonies. It was unconquered land that stretched westward from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River.

In the early years of the Republic Federalist diplomacy, through treaties with England in 1794 and Spain in 1795, freed the northern and southern regions of the trans-Appalachian West from foreign occupation and gained recognition from those powers of the nation's most extensive boundary claims up to that time. After undeclared naval hostilities with France in the Quasi-War, 1797–1800, Federalists made peace in the Treaty of Mortefontaine of 1800 and succeeded in ridding the nation of its first entangling alliance, the Treaty of 1778 with France that had helped make possible independence. Federalist leaders accomplished much without resorting to full-scale war. They left the seat of national power in Washington with the nation well established, internally strong, secure in its frontiers against potential foreign foes, and with its trade and commerce flourishing.

Like Federalists, Jeffersonians were expansionists. They wished to expand the nation's frontiers and enhance its wealth and well-being with trade, industry, and new lands for agricultural use. They achieved these objectives in 1803 with the acquisition of Louisiana from France, an empire that spread from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and

that doubled the national domain. Thomas Jefferson also moved aggressively to support overseas commerce. From 1801 to 1805 the American navy fought in sporadic engagements against the North African state of Tripoli to make the Mediterranean Sea relatively safe for American shipping. Concern for shipping also involved the nation in diplomatic clashes with Great Britain and France, leading Jefferson to use economic sanctions, as in the embargo of 1807–09, to force respect for American commerce.

James Madison continued Jefferson's policies but went beyond economic coercion, bringing the nation in 1812 into its second war against Britain. Invasions of Canada failed and American forces suffered setbacks in most encounters. Fortunately, in the peacemaking in December 1814 American diplomacy extricated the nation from the conflict with no losses of territory.

In addition to Canada, expansionists had long desired the Floridas. Jeffersonians acquired west Florida bit by bit, but coercion, invasion by General Andrew Jackson, and threats by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, marked the diplomacy leading to the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819. That agreement not only brought east Florida into the Union but it also carried American claims to territory across the continent to the Pacific Ocean at the 42nd parallel, or to the northern boundary of the later state of California. Concern for the future of Pacific coast territory as well as the more obvious fear of European reconquest of Spain's rebelling colonies in the Western Hemisphere led to the pronouncement of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, calling on Europe to keep hands off the Americas.

Leaders in Washington did not, however, apply this hands-off doctrine to the United States. Under a vague expansionist concept called manifest destiny, frequently linked with another ambiguous idea termed the American sense of mission, meaning that Americans had a mission or obligation to seize western lands and bring to them democracy and civilization, the United States in 1866 acquired the Oregon territory, running westward from the Rockies to the Pacific Ocean and extending from the 42nd to the 49th parallel. After less than two years of war with Mexico the United States in 1848 forced its southern neighbor to give up Texas, California, New Mexico, and parts of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, and Utah. In 1854 the United States rounded out this acquisition by buying more land, in the Gadsden Purchase, from Mexico to add to Arizona and New Mexico.

The Civil War disrupted this burst of overland expansionism, but the American appetite for more territory and commerce did not die. Secretary of State William Henry Seward desired islands in the Caribbean and footholds in Asia. He succeeded, through alert diplomacy and aggressive political maneuvering, in purchasing Alaska in 1867 from Russia. Following his years in office, other expansionists sought to absorb Canada, take over Santo Domingo, and Cuba, but made no headway. They did, however, bring parts of Samoa and the Hawaiian Islands slowly under American control.

Outright acquisition came in another burst of expansionist fervor, an overseas imperialism called the new manifest destiny.

This imperialism had behind it the power of what had now become the world's greatest industrial country. This power, infused with a sense of cultural and racial superiority, assured the United States overwhelming victories in ten weeks of war with Spain in 1898. As a result of that war the United States acquired the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico, and a protectorate over Cuba. In 1898 it finally completed annexation of Hawaii and in the following year of Samoa. That war also enmeshed the United States in the international politics of Asia, a dominant feature of American foreign relations in the twentieth century.

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I

Britain's Rapprochement and Dollar Diplomacy

With the Open Door policy the United States had become involved in the international rivalries of Europe in Asia. Acting in support of similar principles—the Open Door, the balance of power, and peace—Theodore Roosevelt also intervened in imperial politics in North Africa.

Rivalries in Morocco

The United States had no direct interest in North Africa, particularly in Morocco, a center of European rivalry. American trade there was small and strategic interest negligible. Yet in 1880 the United States had participated in a conference in Madrid dealing with the abuse of extraterritoriality that threatened to extinguish Morocco's independence. At that time Britain and Spain wished to uphold Morocco's integrity whereas France did not. Since Germany was not yet interested in colonies and anxious to divert French attention from Alsace and Lorraine, provinces lost in the Franco-Prussian War, she supported France at the conference. The resulting treaty, therefore, merely defined extraterritorial protection without providing means to correct abuses, and thus allowed France to tighten her grip on Morocco. The United States signed the Madrid treaty precisely because it required no binding commitment.

In the quarter of a century that followed, France and Britain dissolved their colonial rivalry. By agreements reached in 1904 Britain accepted French plans to take over Morocco, and France acquiesced in British control of Egypt. This marked the beginning of an *entente cordiale* designed to withstand the rising might of Germany. In the years after 1880, German

foreign policy changed. Germany, too, competed for African colonies and built a considerable trade in Morocco.

Concerned over Morocco's fate and over the *entente,* Germany decided early in 1905 to oppose the extension of France's power. She insisted on an international conference to decide the future of Morocco. Since the United States had treaty rights there, the German chancellor, Bernhard von Bülow, sought Roosevelt's support for an Open Door in Morocco and a conference. Roosevelt gave a noncommittal answer, but von Bülow interpreted it as meaning that the president had "drawn a parallel between maintaining the Open Door in China and in Morocco."[1]

Taking advantage of Russia's absorption in war with Japan and her inability to aid her French ally, von Bülow decided to test the *entente.* He persuaded a reluctant kaiser, William II, to visit the sultan at Tangier. The kaiser arrived in March and delivered a belligerent speech which in effect told France that Germany intended to take part in any Moroccan settlement. This speech infuriated the French foreign minister, Théophile Delcassé, who was willing to risk war by taking over Morocco anyway. England supported him, but Delcassé's policy created apprehension in Paris. Since France was poorly prepared, the premier, Pierre-Maurice Rouvier, was unwilling to gamble on war without Russian support. The cabinet, therefore, voted unanimously against Delcassé, forcing him to resign in June. To avert war, Rouvier conciliated Germany, but still hoped to avoid a conference. Germany's show of strength, however, humiliated France.

In an effort to seal her triumph, Germany urged Roosevelt to intervene by persuading France and England to agree to a conference. Roosevelt promised his help and asked the Germans to moderate their demands. He asked the French to accept a conference and convinced them that he wanted to prevent war and not to serve the interests of Germany.

The kaiser, meanwhile, promised Roosevelt that in any differences of opinion at the conference between Germany and France, he would support any decision the president considered fair. When Roosevelt told the French of the kaiser's promise, they agreed to the conference which met in January 1906 in Algeciras, a small seaport in southern Spain.

At home, critics attacked the president for joining the Moroccan negotiations. Even Secretary of State Elihu Root believed that American interests in Morocco were insufficient to warrant participation. Nevertheless, Roosevelt went ahead.

At the conference France insisted on making Morocco a protectorate. Germany wanted several powers, including herself, placed in control and ultimately a partition with a share for herself. Although officially neutral, Roosevelt sympathized with the French and told them so. Germany therefore found herself practically alone in her demands. Only Austria-Hungary supported her. Germany had blundered in insisting upon a conference. Instead of driving a wedge between France and England, she had strength-

ened the *entente.* Even the United States seemed to believe that Germany was trying to drive France to war.

When Germany refused to come to terms, Roosevelt offered a compromise that preserved the principle of international control but gave the substance of power in Morocco to France. He persuaded Germany to accept the compromise by recalling the kaiser's promise to him. Although on the surface both countries seemed satisfied with the General Act of Algeciras, signed in April 1906, it proved ultimately to be a diplomatic defeat for Germany. Pleased with his role in the negotiations, Roosevelt was convinced that the conference had prevented a war that had seemed imminent.

In adhering to the Act of Algeciras, Secretary of State Root insisted that the United States had no political interest in Morocco and assumed no obligation to enforce the settlement. Yet when the treaty reached the Senate later in the year, critics again attacked Roosevelt and demanded more reservations. When the Senate finally consented to the treaty in December, it reiterated in a formal reservation that adherence did not mean a departure from traditional nonentanglement policy.

How significant Roosevelt's role was in keeping the peace is not clear. One point, however, is evident: on the theory that a threat to world peace justified American intervention, he had openly broken the tradition of avoiding problems of European politics. He realized, as did some of his contemporaries, that the United States, now a recognized great power, could not entirely avoid the tensions of Europe. His intervention in Morocco foreshadowed a significant shift in American foreign policy toward closer ties with the Anglo-French *entente.*

Yet, Roosevelt's venture into Europe's diplomacy for a while seemed nothing more than a temporary aberration. When Germany and France again appeared on the verge of war in another Moroccan crisis in 1911, President William H. Taft remained aloof.

The Hague Peace Conferences

In the first decade of the twentieth century many Americans believed that the United States had an obligation to help maintain world peace. The government, therefore, evinced an interest in peace projects, disarmament, international organization, and arbitration. Yet, when the tsar of Russia, Nicholas II, called an international conference of twenty-six nations to meet at The Hague in 1899 to discuss disarmament and the prevention of war, the American government did not at first show much interest. It finally yielded to the pressures of a peace movement, emphasizing disarmament and arbitration, that had already gathered considerable strength among the reformers of the period, and sent a delegation to The Hague Peace Conference.

The conference failed to achieve its major objective of disarmament,

but it did adopt conventions and declarations designed to humanize war. Its most noteworthy achievement was a Permanent Court of Arbitration, a panel of slightly over one hundred individuals upon whom nations could call to act as arbitrators. The countries which signed the convention did not pledge themselves to use the court, and none were willing to accept arbitration as a means of settling those disputes that usually led to war. Another point worthy of note was the support American delegates consistently gave to Great Britain.

The United States was particularly reluctant to surrender any control over vital national issues to the court. When the Senate approved various agreements signed at the conference, such as those dealing with the outlawing of inhumane weapons, it insisted again that those commitments could not require the United States to depart from its nonentanglement policy. The Senate attempted to do what was virtually impossible—to draw a line between political and nonpolitical international obligations.

After the First Hague Conference a widespread discussion of international organization gave new hope to the leaders of the peace movement. Some talked of holding periodic peace conferences and others suggested improvements in the Permanent Court of Arbitration. In September 1904, President Roosevelt promised members of a private peace society that he would ask the nations of the world to participate in a second conference at The Hague. The United States appeared ready to take the lead in the movement for world peace, but the Russians wanted to sponsor the conference, so Roosevelt stepped aside. The tsar called the Second Hague Conference which met in 1907. This time, at the insistence of the United States, the conference included representatives from the Latin-American nations, making a total of forty-four participating states.

The second conference, too, failed to achieve either a reduction or limitation of armaments. Secretary of State Root wanted to replace the old ineffective Permanent Court with a true court that would sit in regular session with a small staff of genuine jurists, but the conference would not accept the American proposal. The conference did adopt a number of minor conventions dealing with such matters as restrictions on the right of capture in naval war, which the United States ratified.

Arbitration Treaties

In setting up the Permanent Court of Arbitration the First Hague Conference had reflected a broad international interest in the settlement of disputes through arbitration. A few years after the conference, in 1904, Secretary of State John Hay negotiated ten bilateral arbitration treaties that obligated the United States in advance to arbitrate through The Hague Court certain kinds of disputes not settled by diplomacy. Even though the

treaties were broad and would not deal with disputes that actually brought on wars, the Senate would not approve them without drastic change.

Jealously guarding its prerogative in foreign relations the Senate insisted that it had to approve every special agreement defining the questions at issue in each arbitration. In other words, it regarded each arbitration agreement as a treaty and would not surrender the power of defining the arbitration to the president, as called for in the original Hay treaties. Since Hay believed that the Senate amendments made the treaties meaningless and the president agreed with him, Roosevelt withdrew the treaties from the Senate. Since we already have the power to make special arbitration treaties, Roosevelt said, to pass "those amended treaties does not in the smallest degree facilitate settlements by arbitration, to make them would in no way further the cause of international peace."[2]

Hay's successor, Elihu Root, took a different view of the Senate's position. He believed that weak arbitration treaties were better than none and converted Roosevelt to his thinking. In the year following the Second Hague Conference, Root negotiated twenty-four bilateral treaties with the leading nations of the world except Germany. All treaties were similar to Hay's except that the special agreement defining the scope of each arbitration needed the approval by the usual two-thirds vote of the Senate. Most of the pacts had a limit of five years, and most were renewed at the end of the five years.

Critics pointed out that the Root treaties were so narrow in scope that they could contribute little to settling significant international disputes. Yet, the Senate would not go beyond the Root formula.

William H. Taft believed in the peace movement. In the interests of peace he wanted to go beyond the Root treaties. "I do not see," he said, "why questions of honor may not be submitted to a tribunal supposed to be composed of men of honor who understand questions of national honor."[3] He instructed Secretary of State Philander C. Knox, therefore, to negotiate general arbitration treaties with Britain and France that included even questions of "national honor" as subjects for arbitration. Those two treaties, signed in August 1911, and designed to serve as models, said all "justiciable" questions—meaning in Taft's view infringements of legal rights under the principles of international law—not settled by diplomacy should go to The Hague Court or some other suitable tribunal. In any dispute a joint high commission would decide whether or not a question at issue was "justiciable" and whether it could be submitted for arbitration.

The advocates of peace organized a nation-wide campaign to win Senate approval, and Taft himself appealed directly to the people. As jealous as ever of any infringement of its treaty power, the Senate amended the treaties, reserving to itself the right to determine whether or not an issue was "justiciable." Since Taft would not ask Britain and France to accept the

crippling amendments that excluded virtually every issue of importance from arbitration, he did not ratify the treaties. He recalled a few years later that the Senate "had truncated them and amended them in such a way that their own father could not recognize them."[4]

The "Cooling Off" Treaties

Despite defeat of the Taft treaties, friends of peace gained renewed hope when Woodrow Wilson became President—hope that international disputes might be settled without resort to war. Both Wilson and his secretary of state, William Jennings Bryan, approached the problem with evangelical zeal. Although the idea was not original with him, Bryan had long advocated the use of joint commissions to determine disputed facts in international controversies. When he accepted the secretaryship, one of his conditions was that the president must give him a free hand to negotiate treaties for the maintenance of peace.

Soon after taking office, Bryan began negotiating a series of conciliation pacts entitled "Treaties for the Advancement of Peace," but popularly called "cooling off" treaties. They supplemented the Root treaties by committing signatory nations to submit all disputes not capable of settlement through diplomacy, even those touching questions of "national honor," to permanent international commissions for investigation. During the period of investigation, usually one year, neither party would begin hostilities. The disputants could either accept or reject the commission's recommendation. The basic idea behind the pacts was that of delay in time of acute tension.

Bryan's first "cooling off" treaty, with El Salvador, was signed in August 1913. By October of the following year he had concluded twenty-nine others, among them treaties with Britain, France, and Italy. Germany refused to negotiate a treaty. Since the recommendations of the investigating commissions were not binding and the pacts committed the United States to little more than a period of delay, the Senate approved most of them. Cynics condemned the treaties as unrealistic, but Bryan considered them the outstanding achievement of his long career.

Anglo-American Rapprochement

During the era of this peace movement the new Anglo-American *rapprochement* grew stronger. There were, nonetheless, a number of lesser conflicts that Britain and the United States had to resolve before they could cement their new friendship. One of these arose out of the Boer War.

When war broke out in October 1899 between Britain and the Boer republics of South Africa, the British found themselves widely disliked. The peoples and governments of Europe appeared solidly pro-Boer. The at-