

Thomas A. Bailey

A Diplomatic History
of the American People

Tenth Edition

~~~~~ THOMAS A. BAILEY ~~~~~

*Stanford University*

A Diplomatic History  
*of the*  
American People

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## PREFACE TO THE TENTH EDITION

FORTY YEARS AGO, in December 1939, the first edition of this book was unveiled at the post-Christmas meeting of the American Historical Association in Washington, D.C. The display copy was promptly stolen from the exhibition booth, and this favorable omen indicated that some interest had already been aroused. Subsequent editions, with new chapters and various internal changes, have appeared about every four years. Rather than undergo the eyestrain and expense of resetting each end-chapter bibliography, I managed to add to it "Recent References" and then "New References." By the time we reached the Sixth Edition, I decided that the lengthy end-chapter bibliographies ought to be pruned and consolidated. This was done.

I was jolted by the numerous complaints that my telescoping evoked from instructors, especially those at the more advanced levels. Largely for this reason I decided to extend most of the bulky bibliographical overflow to appendices in subsequent editions, although the space problem has required more selectivity in the present one. This procedure has the additional merit of revealing the general order in which the supplementary literature has evolved.

My approach continues to be generally much more chronological than topical. The narrative is overwhelmingly more factual than interpretive—what actually happened in the creation and implementation of foreign policy, not what might have happened or should have happened. I have embraced no current fads, whether of the Old Left or the New Left. This forbearance has spared me the toil of much rewriting to square with current fashions and moods. Of course, I am always ready to correct demonstrable errors of fact, and this I have continued to do in the present edition by patching the plates occasionally. Someone has said that not even God can change the past; that is why He (She) tolerates historians. As my title indicates, I have continued to stress the power of public opinion in shaping the nation's diplomatic history. Some critics still think I am barking up the wrong tree, but they forget that an aroused public opinion got the United States into the United Nations and out of Vietnam.

I come away from this revision impressed anew with the increasing complexity of modern diplomacy, now that skyjackers, kidnappers, and terrorists have been added to the mix. The horse-and-buggy days of my youth have long since gone, largely because of modern communication and transportation, expanding populations, the demise of colonialism, emerging minorities, revolutionary ideologies, interlocking alliances, and

doomsday nuclear weapons. There are now about 150 countries in the United Nations, including mini-states. As a result, the United States is routinely, even jeeringly, outvoted in the Assembly of the United Nations. Uneasy lie the heads that control the diplomatic machinery.

The prefaces of the previous nine editions contain a recognition of my indebtedness to scores of scholars, most of whom criticized a chapter or so relating to their speciality. Others did much more. I shall always feel deeply grateful to them, and also to the authors of the numerous books and articles upon which I have relied. Some wag has said that plagiarism is stealing from one person; research is stealing from many. For this newest edition I appreciatively acknowledge the helpfulness of the following colleagues at Stanford University: Paul M. Cocks, Peter J. Duignan, David M. Kennedy, Paul B. Ryan, and Wayne S. Vucinich.

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THOMAS A. BAILEY

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## CHAPTER

# I

# Factors, Forces, and Functions

*Since the time when Thomas Jefferson insisted upon a "decent respect to the opinions of mankind," public opinion has controlled foreign policy in all democracies.*

SECRETARY OF STATE HULL, 1936

## TAP-ROOT FOREIGN POLICIES

THE ACID-TONGUED American ambassador in London, George Harvey, was quoted in 1923 as saying that "the national American foreign policy is to have no foreign policy." This sneer has been repeated countless times. What such critics usually mean is that they do not approve of existing policy, or that no ready-made formula exists to deal with an unexpected crisis, such as the sudden seizure of the Suez Canal by Egypt in 1956.

The plain truth is that the United States has always had fundamental foreign policies or objectives, whether farsighted or shortsighted, successful or unsuccessful. A half-dozen or so of them have persisted for well over a century. In some cases these objectives or policies, notably "no-entangling alliances," were pursued with a blind devotion long after the reasons for their existence had passed, and when their continued existence did positive harm. Few, if any, of the great powers can point to such a large body of traditional policy adhered to so tenaciously over so many decades.

In the United States, as in any true democracy, public opinion shapes basic foreign policies. They are not cooked up secretly in the State Department and then sprung overnight on the country. Sprouting from the fertile soil of experience, they represent the needs, interests, and hopes of the people. A partial list of such needs and aspirations would include peace, security, neutrality, justice, freedom, humanitarianism,

territorial elbow room, commercial prosperity, and opportunity for investment and trade abroad. Peace, for example, is not a foreign policy but the *objective* of a foreign policy.

Six of the most important traditional or fundamental foreign policies are:

1. *Isolation*, meaning originally, "We'll keep out of Europe's broils." Actually, it broke down into nonintervention, noninvolvement, and nonentangling alliances. Objectives: peace, neutrality, prosperity, security.

2. *Freedom of the seas*, meaning originally, "Hands off our merchant ships." Objectives: prosperity, neutrality, security.

3. *The Monroe Doctrine*, meaning originally, "Europe, you stay out of America." Objectives: peace, security, freedom, prosperity.

4. *Pan-Americanism*, meaning originally, "Let's get together, we republics of the Western Hemisphere." Objectives: prosperity, peace, security, freedom.

5. *The Open Door*, meaning originally, "A fair field for American businessmen in competition with other foreigners abroad, particularly in China." Objectives: prosperity, peace, justice, security, humanitarianism.

6. *The peaceful settlement of disputes*, meaning originally, "Let's negotiate or arbitrate our differences." Objectives: peace, security, justice.

Not all of these fundamental policies were consistently upheld during the 19th Century, but generally they were. In addition, there have been dozens of secondary or tertiary policies that have existed for shorter periods to cope with specific situations. Among them would be disarmament, imperialism, nonrecognition, commercial reciprocity, expatriation, Dollar Diplomacy, Good Neighborism, and containment. Some of these secondary policies are becoming, or have become, fundamental policies.

Much confusion has arisen because the same policy has often been applied in different ways in different parts of the globe. For example, noninvolvement wore three faces in the 19th Century:

1. *Nonintervention in Europe*—where America was too weak to risk entanglement with the great powers.

2. *Intervention in Latin America*—where the United States, particularly in its Caribbean danger zone, was strong enough to twist the arms of weak Latin neighbors and head off possible European intervention.

3. *Co-operation in the Far East*—where the United States collaborated with the major powers in upholding the Open Door, simply because it did not have the strength there to "go it alone."

Thus national self-interest—the very mainspring of all foreign policy—has caused the nation to become involved in contradictions that are otherwise unexplainable.

### IMPLEMENTING VERSUS TRADITIONAL POLICIES

In the military world, grand strategy must be carried out by detailed tactics; in the diplomatic world, fundamental policy must be carried out by implementing policies. The American people themselves, by expressing their attitudes and desires, decide fundamental policies or objectives. The Executive branch, by framing specific courses of action, provides implementing policies or tactics.

Shortly after World War II, the American people were so deeply alarmed by Soviet aggressions that they overwhelmingly favored a get-tough-with-Russia course. This came to be a fundamental postwar policy. But the people themselves could not devise a specific course of action. This was the responsibility of President Truman, who worked in close collaboration with the State Department, with the leaders of Congress, with military experts, and with other advisers.<sup>1</sup> The net result was the famed Truman Doctrine of 1947, designed to save Greece and Turkey from a Communist take-over.

The American public is like a back-seat driver. It knows in general where it wants to go, and it voices views which in turn lead to fundamental policies or objectives. But the public is not well enough informed to tell the driver—the Executive branch—precisely what roads or turns to take. These must be charted in Washington by implementing policies. And once the specific routes have been chosen, the public should be careful not to joggle the elbow of the driver by ignorant or misguided interference.

If the ordinary American wants to know who shapes fundamental foreign policy, all he has to do is look into a mirror. The story is somewhat different regarding issues of secondary importance. The President and the State Department, with various advisers, are forced to devise policies that they think will square with the basic desires of the electorate. If they fly in the face of popular desires, they run the risk of being thrown out of office at the next election—and this is a risk that few administrations wish to incur.

The classic example is the Spanish-American War of 1898—an unnecessary and trouble-brewing conflict of immense significance. President McKinley did not want war; the State Department did not want war; Big Business did not want war. But the people did—and so violent were their demands that they forced McKinley to give in to them.

<sup>1</sup> The National Security Act of 1947, among other things, set up an important advisory board in the National Security Council, consisting now of the President, the Vice-President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, and several other key civilian advisers concerned with foreign and military affairs.

The sovereign voter is ever at the elbows of the policy-makers in Washington. They will sometimes attempt to educate public opinion to a new course, as Woodrow Wilson belatedly tried to do with the League of Nations. They will sometimes try to deceive it into an awareness of what they regard as its best interests, as Franklin Roosevelt attempted to do on the eve of Pearl Harbor. They will occasionally defy it, as Grover Cleveland did in regard to intervention in Cuba—after he had already served most of his two terms. But they defy public opinion only at their peril.

### FUNDAMENTAL FACTORS

Peculiar conditions in America, some of them unique, have profoundly influenced the thinking of the citizenry regarding foreign policy. The most significant have been:

1. *Geographical position.* Physical separation from Europe and Asia enabled the United States to pursue, notably in the 19th Century, an isolationist course. The two oceans have been referred to as America's greatest "liquid assets." They were of incalculable importance during the adolescent days of the republic, when the United States was too weak to risk involvement in outside affairs, and when it was forced to play for time and let its birth rate fight its battles for it. Physical separation from warlike Europe in the 19th Century also enabled the American people to escape crushing armaments burdens.

2. *Weak neighbors.* During the national period, though not in the colonial period, America enjoyed the boon of weak neighbors, both north and south. It did not have to fear attacks from them; they had to fear attacks from it. The witty Jules Jusserand, French ambassador in Washington from 1902 to 1925, once quipped that America was blessed among the nations. On the north, she had a weak neighbor; on the south, another weak neighbor; on the east, fish; on the west, fish. This enviable situation enabled the United States to avoid burdensome standing armies in the 19th Century, and to escape being used as a makeweight in an American balance of power manipulated by European imperialists.

3. *Room for expansion.* The American colonists were fortunate in securing a beachhead on the eastern fringe of a virgin continent. When the British sought elbow room, they had to expand overseas—and that was "imperialism." When the Americans sought elbow room, they merely moved west—and that was just normal expansionism. When they brushed aside or killed Mexicans and Indians, they felt that they were merely responding to their "Manifest Destiny." They thus acquired rich and thinly inhabited territories without having to fight long and exhausting wars.

4. *"Hyphenated" Americans.* The United States is a nation of immi-

grants or the descendants of immigrants. Most of the older stock has lost its sentimental ties with the Mother Country, but the newer stock has retained ancient loyalties. When wars, revolutions, and persecutions have convulsed the homeland, Irish-hyphen-Americans, German-hyphen-Americans, Polish-hyphen-Americans, Jewish-hyphen-Americans, and others have brought pressure on the Washington government to shape foreign policy in their interests. The result has been that the United States has often not been able to speak to the outside world with the authority of one voice. When King Saud of Saudi Arabia, whose role in the Suez crisis was of vital concern to Washington, was invited to the United States in 1957, New York refused to give him a royal welcome. Mayor Wagner was quoted as saying that this Moslem potentate was anti-Jewish and anti-Catholic—all of which was a crude appeal to the prejudices of the hyphenated voters.

5. *A mercantile and industrial people.* The United States, with its fine harbors and other priceless advantages, was from the earliest days a maritime nation, vitally interested in freedom of the seas. Late in the 19th Century it became a leading industrial and financial power, with a lively concern for the Open Door for American traders and investors abroad. The relative economic self-sufficiency of the United States naturally strengthened its independence of spirit.

6. *A democracy.* The devotion of the American people to the democratic ideal colored the national psychology, and caused the United States to adopt a hostile, chip-on-the-shoulder attitude toward monarchs and dictators. This same state of mind also led to an active sympathy for liberal movements the world over.

7. *Primacy of domestic affairs.* Sheltered behind two billowing oceans and involved in the back-straining task of conquering a continent, the American people in the 19th Century were generally indifferent to foreign affairs. Circumstances were such that mistakes in diplomacy were not too costly, and one result was a poorly paid foreign service. During the first century-and-a-quarter of the nation's existence, there was only one period when foreign affairs vied with domestic affairs for primary attention—and that was during the upheaval of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. The picture changed sharply after 1914, and especially after 1939, when foreign affairs came to rival or eclipse domestic affairs.

8. *Europe's distresses.* During the 19th Century, the great powers of Europe were not in a position to "gang up" on the United States. Deadlocked in wars or in delicately poised balances of power, they seldom had a completely free hand to interfere with America. On critical occasions they were sometimes forced to make important concessions to the United States in order to purchase an advantage in dealing with a European rival. Europe's distresses thus contributed to many of America's

most spectacular diplomatic successes, and the republic unwisely began to rely upon them as a first line of defense.

#### MILITARY POLICY—HANDMAIDEN OF FOREIGN POLICY

The intimate relationship between foreign policy and military policy is only dimly recognized, if at all, by the American people. This was painfully true in the 19th Century.

Americans have been habitually unprepared for all of their major wars. A peace-loving people with nonaggressive tendencies is never ready. Dictators like Hitler and Mussolini are always better prepared; they know when they are going to strike. Chronic American unpreparedness has also flowed from a hatred of taxes, a nonmilitary tradition, a distrust of large standing armies, a heavy dependence on ocean barriers, and an overreliance on Europe's distresses to fight America's battles. Finally, there has been an exaggerated belief that America won all of her wars, including the stalemated War of 1812, without any indirect or direct foreign aid.

In the 19th Century, and even somewhat later, the United States relied upon the navy as its first line of defense. The tiny regular army was to be supplemented by militia and volunteers when emergencies arose. The theory was that the navy would beat the enemy off the American coasts, and one unfortunate result of this concept was the burning of Washington in 1814 by the British invaders. Near the close of the century, thanks to the influential writings of Captain A. T. Mahan, a new concept won acceptance. Instead of beating the enemy off its doorstep, the United States would build enough powerful warships to command adjacent seas. Thus the foe could be met some distance from America's shores—or, better yet, he might be deterred from going to war altogether. If the United States had boasted a considerably larger navy in 1812, and a considerably larger army in 1917, both the British and the Germans probably would have avoided a shooting showdown.

The nation's armed forces exist for two basic purposes: (a) to provide national defense (b) to uphold foreign policy. The size of armaments should be proportioned to the scope of the foreign policies that the nation has enunciated and proposes to uphold. Policy without power is impotent. When the United States had only one coast, it needed only a small navy; when it had acquired global responsibilities, it needed immense forces. The authors of a wise foreign policy, like the authors of a wise financial policy, will not take on commitments that cannot be covered in a pinch. Otherwise both may go bankrupt. One basic shortcoming of American policy in the Far East between 1898 and 1941 was that the United States never amassed sufficient strength to defend its Philippine Islands against a determined Japanese attack.

Adequate armed forces also serve as a deterrent. In 1941 the ill-fated Pacific fleet was stationed at Pearl Harbor, primarily to restrain Japan. Alarmists complained then, and critics charged after the disaster, that the ships would have been safer at San Diego, California. They would have been even safer in the Chesapeake Bay, where their deterrent power would have been virtually nil. In short, armed forces are not supposed to exist in a vacuum, but to support the basic aims of national defense and foreign policy.

### THE EXECUTIVE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The President of the United States, although designated by the Constitution as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, is not specifically authorized to be director-in-chief of foreign affairs. But he is by implication, and his powers in this capacity have become globe-shaking.

The President is empowered to make treaties, "by and with the advice and consent of the Senate." He may also negotiate Executive agreements, although not specifically authorized to do so by the Constitution, such as the destroyer-base deal with Britain in 1940. These understandings do not require the approval of the Senate: they merely pledge the word of the incumbent Executive. His successors may or may not feel bound by such commitments.

The President may also sever diplomatic relations, as Wilson did in 1917, when he gave orders that the German ambassador in Washington be handed his passports. Such a step is normally the prelude to war.

The President may recognize new governments, as Franklin Roosevelt recognized Russia in 1933 after a delay of sixteen years, and as Harry S. Truman recognized Israel *de facto* in 1948 after a delay of eleven minutes. Conversely, the President may hold a diplomatic club over a foreign regime by refusing to recognize it, as Truman and Eisenhower did over Communist China.

The President is empowered by the Constitution to nominate ambassadors and other important foreign envoys, who in turn must receive Senate confirmation. He may also informally appoint special representatives known as executive agents, who do not require Senate confirmation. Several hundred of these shadowy figures, including President Wilson's self-effacing Colonel House, have served in various capacities at various times.

The President may denounce treaties—that is, give formal notice of their termination. Franklin Roosevelt, acting through the State Department in 1939, terminated the Japanese Treaty of 1911, preparatory to clearing the way for a munitions embargo six months later.

The President ordinarily serves as the mouthpiece of the United States in enunciating foreign policy, as Monroe did in 1823 in connection with



the Monroe Doctrine. He may also send direct appeals to the heads of foreign states, as Franklin Roosevelt did when he appealed to Hitler and Mussolini in 1938, in a dramatic effort to avert World War II.

The President is also commander-in-chief of the armed forces, which must go where he orders them. He may provoke a war, as Polk did in 1846, when he sent troops into an area in Texas claimed by Mexico. He may wage a war, as Truman did in 1950, when he ordered the armed forces into Korea. But he cannot formally declare war; only Congress can. Yet Congress sometimes finds itself compelled to rubber-stamp warlike situations created by the Executive, who, over the years, has landed troops more than one hundred times on foreign soil without Congressional authorization.

All these powers are enormous, and they call for wide knowledge and experience. But unfortunately, the President has ordinarily had little or no direct contact with foreign affairs before entering the White House. (See Appendix C). As the head of a great political party, he is primarily concerned with domestic affairs—civil rights, inflation, housing—and only secondarily with foreign affairs. A great banking chain would risk failure if it handed over its management to an ex-lawyer or an ex-general, but the American people will enthusiastically elevate an inexperienced man to their highest office. They are quite willing to entrust their public affairs to rank amateurs whom they would not think of entrusting with their private affairs.

Fortunately, the President has usually revealed executive capacity in other fields, and he can adjust to his new duties fairly well. He can also turn to an unlimited number of experienced advisers. But the disquieting fact remains that the public normally entrusts the handling of diplomatic dynamite to men who are not professional handlers of dynamite.

### THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The principal agency for conducting foreign affairs is the Department of State, with the Secretary of State at its head. Like his chief the President, the Secretary has traditionally been completely innocent of experience in foreign affairs before coming to the headship of the foreign office. (See Appendix D). Sometimes he has received his high post as a reward for outstanding service to the party, as was partly true of Daniel Webster; sometimes the Secretaryship has been a “consolation prize” for men who failed to attain the White House, as was notably true of James G. Blaine and William J. Bryan. But since 1944 there has been less of a tendency to appoint dominant political figures as Secretary of State.

The extent to which the Secretary of State is in the driver's seat usually depends on the temperament of the Chief Executive. Strong Presidents tend to dominate their associates. This was notably true of President