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New Interpretations in
**AMERICAN
FOREIGN POLICY**

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Publication Number 2

E CENTER FOR TEACHERS OF HISTORY
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Washington 3, D. C.

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 57-13053

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NEW INTERPRETATIONS IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

By Alexander DeConde

THE SCOPE OF THIS PAMPHLET

Historians agree that it takes a long time for new interpretations in American history to reach and find acceptance by the general public, by the college and secondary school textbooks, and by the teachers of history and social science in the secondary schools. Some historians have estimated it takes about twenty years, so this pamphlet will review and explain some of the changes in the writing and teaching of the history of American foreign policy in the past twenty years. It will also review, summarize, and explain some of the new interpretations that have appeared in the literature of American diplomatic history in those years.

THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY HAS BEEN ESSENTIALLY FACTUAL

The historians and others who have written on the history of American foreign policy in the past twenty years have generally been more factual and less theoretical than many who have written on other fields of American history. No historian of American foreign policy has produced a sweeping interpretation comparable to Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis and its influence on American development or any theory comparable to Alfred Thayer Mahan's on the influence of sea power on history. American diplomatic historians have not advanced new large interpretations that have upset accepted views. So we may conclude that broad theories or theses in the past two decades have not greatly influenced the writing or teaching of American diplomatic history.

Yet in the past twenty years as a new generation studied its past, there has been considerable change in the writing and teaching of American diplomatic history. That change has come primarily in emphasis, in the importance given to some factors over others, and in new developments that were formerly outside the traditional

boundaries of diplomatic history. The new interpretations that the changes have brought have been "new" only in that they have modified or added to earlier interpretations.

New materials or new relationships in old materials have sometimes revealed errors in past interpretations but they have not changed the basic story of American foreign policy. Even previously unused documents, when opened to the historian, have not in recent years altered the main outlines of the story as the reliable histories have told it. Even the publication of the controversial Yalta Papers has not upset the generally accepted interpretations of the diplomacy of the Second World War.

One reason why broad interpretation has changed so little in the history of American foreign policy is the approach the diplomatic historian has used. He has been less willing to theorize than has the student of international relations and the political scientist who use the same materials. The diplomatic historian has usually restricted himself to cautious partial interpretations and has advanced them as provisional hypotheses. Most of his interpretations have not been concerned with overall perspective. They have been restricted and limited to special circumstances and have been more controversial than they have been "new."

THE SOURCES OF CHANGING INTERPRETATIONS

Yet there have been enough changes in interpretations of American diplomatic history to give new understanding and enlarged perspective in explaining America's foreign policies. Time alone has changed some conventional views. Time also has given the historian of foreign policy new perspective on certain complex foreign policy issues. So has the fact that fashions in writing, teaching, and interpreting America's past have changed. These things, while they have produced no radical change in the basic understanding and interpreting of America's past, have in certain instances brought fresh viewpoints to diplomatic history.

Justifiable criticism has also forced changes in the writing and teaching of American diplomatic history. Some critics have pointed out that historians of foreign policy too often have stayed close to the surface of events by presenting mere digests of official correspondence in some connected form without adequately explain-

ing underlying economic and social forces, motives and basic assumptions. They have said that the historian of foreign policy has been too much absorbed in small details and too much concerned with the accuracy of what took place; he has not tried often enough to explain why foreign policy developed as it did. The diplomatic historian, critics have said, has been unwilling to interpret far enough beyond his documents to explain how foreign policy came to be what it was.

What the history of American foreign policy needs, those critics stressed, are judicious and scholarly syntheses. Diplomatic historians too often explain diplomatic incidents as though they were the most important factors in the international situation. Only rarely have they attempted to convert their findings into broad, clear interpretations of the political process as it worked in international affairs. But trained historians have been wary, and understandably so, of hasty generalization and broad interpretation in a field so complex as that of American foreign policy. Most of them, at the same time, have also realized that mere description was not enough and that they should reduce facts to order and relate them to a larger whole. That is what meaningful interpretation is; and that is how the reader and student may obtain a more penetrating insight into foreign policy than they can from a mere summary of raw facts.

The better diplomatic historian presents his facts and conclusions in such a way as to show clearly what his generalizations mean. He examines his assumptions and interprets his findings so that they will test existing interpretations and theories and raise new questions. Sometimes those findings will produce new interpretations.

THE ENLARGED AREA OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Along with their critics American diplomatic historians have recognized that foreign policy, especially in the twentieth century, is not restricted to the relations between the foreign offices of governments. In recent years the history of American foreign policy has covered a wider field than ever before. The line between domestic and foreign affairs has blurred.

The American government, for one thing, has engaged in activ-

ities that until recently belonged to private citizens and private organizations. It has discussed problems with foreign governments that ranged from tariffs on bicycles to the immigration and feeding of political refugees. Those who write and those who teach the history of American foreign policy have had to try to explain how those problems influenced foreign policy. To do that they often have had to go outside the traditional demarcations of diplomatic history. They have had to venture into such fields as economics, public administration, and social institutions.

Since the United States in the twentieth century has assumed enlarged world-wide responsibilities the historian of American foreign policy has had to know more about international politics than he has in the past. In recent years, in fact, American diplomatic history when dealing with the period since the First World War has been at times hardly distinguishable or separate from international relations. The political scientist and the student of international relations, in turn, have moved closer to the diplomatic historian. The better political scientists are those who have studied and understand the history of American institutions. The better students of international relations realize also that they cannot understand American foreign policy if they study only current events. They know that they must understand the ideas, habits, and institutions that have helped to form the international attitudes of the American people.

All this has led to an increasing emphasis on an international interpretation of America's foreign policy and to less stress on a nationalist interpretation. Since American diplomatic historians have not generally been noted for highly nationalistic interpretations, this has not been a radical transition. Few historians of American foreign policy now interpret America's diplomatic relations within the narrow boundaries of our national history.

The history of American foreign policy, even more than the history of other special areas of America's development, has been enriched and influenced by the growing trend to interpret the American past within the whole context of Western civilization. Special historical theories, often carried over from other disciplines such as philosophy, political science, sociology, psychology, and economics, have influenced the enlarged scope of the history of American foreign policy.

PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICAL PRESSURES

Students of American foreign policy in the past two decades have also been increasingly concerned with the impact of public opinion, of domestic politics, and of pressure groups on foreign policy developments. They have had to evaluate the elements of mass opinion which in recent years have increasingly helped to form policy at home and abroad. They have had to try to measure deflections in foreign policy caused by particular interest and pressure groups, and they have had to be aware of over-simplified issues raised by politicians or forced on statesmen by the electorate.

These are large impersonal factors that the historian cannot weigh if he studies only government documents. So in trying to measure the extent of deflection caused by gusts of popular sentiment or by the more constant pressure of interested groups he has had to estimate what meaning they had in the making of foreign policy. Even if the diplomatic historian were content merely to record events he could not do so when dealing with these almost immeasurable influences. He has to construct interpretations, even if they are limited and tentative.

THE ROLE OF IDEAS AND OF IDEOLOGIES

Since government documents in matters of mass opinion have limitations, the historian of foreign policy has had to supplement his documents with other sources. He has had to deal with ideas and ideologies, with the power of racial, social, and religious prejudices, and with the media of mass communications that now influence foreign policy. The press, radio, and television are now more and more interested in foreign policy, and they help to mold mass opinion. Since the newspapers and their columnists are increasingly interested in foreign policy developments, they have in recent years given wide news coverage to foreign affairs. The columnists have interpreted foreign policy as it was made. So have popular writers whose books on diplomacy have reached the public in ever larger numbers. The diplomatic historian has to take all these things into account and to try to measure their influence on foreign policy.

The recent rise of American intellectual history in the universities has also had a fertilizing effect on the study of diplomatic

history and of America's role in international politics. The diplomatic historian has shown a new concern for ideas in foreign policy. He now wants to know what Americans thought about their foreign policy almost as much as he wants to know about foreign policy itself. Foreign policy conflicts when viewed in the context of the emotional and intellectual traditions they expressed, he knows, appear better rounded and in clearer perspective.

More than in the past the historian of foreign policy has had to be concerned and familiar with the significance of economic factors in international relations. He has had to attempt to measure their effect on foreign policy; and with even more difficulty, he has had to decide if and when they were decisive. The better diplomatic historian has accepted economic ideas and theories, along with other ideas, as being important in the conduct of diplomacy. He has had to be familiar with the theories of Karl Marx, of the geopoliticians, and of the military thinkers, such as the theory of Giulio Douhet on the use of air power for offensive operations, since at times their ideas have shaped foreign policy decisions and actions.

THE NEW ROLE OF MILITARY POWER AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

In the past two decades the historian of foreign policy has had to take into account more than in the past the influence of military power on foreign policy and international politics. In the past American diplomatic historians have often ignored military power even though it has always been an essential ingredient in world politics. If historians do not consider American military power, especially when dealing with the events of the twentieth century, they cannot explain and interpret the workings of foreign policy, even though they might follow the development of diplomacy carefully and accurately through its proper historical institutions. Now diplomatic historians must also explore, as political scientists are doing, the great issues raised by the impact of nuclear weapons on foreign policy and on international affairs in general.

THE INCREASED EMPHASIS ON POWER

The student of American foreign policy has always been aware of the large role that all forms of physical power have played in

international politics. But in recent years he has tried increasingly to answer the question, did the United States in its foreign policy act solely in terms of power or in terms of other considerations, such as ethical principles? Power has always been a fundamental element in American foreign policy. The diplomatic historian has never disregarded it, but he has not generally considered it as the only source of action. Recent interpretations have placed it in a perspective of "right" and "wrong" policy. Sometimes he has been unable to disentangle it from those considerations.

PERSONALITY, THE INDIVIDUAL, AND CHANCE

The diplomatic historian should bring out clearly the factors of personality and chance in American foreign policy and in the foreign policies of other countries. This is a difficult problem to analyze and interpret. It is one of the largest problems with which he has to deal. The influence of the individual as contrasted with the influence of the mass is almost impossible to measure, particularly if investigation is limited to the usual diplomatic documents. Yet, the historian knows that the role of the individual in foreign policy is often decisive.

Certainly, the world would be different and so would America if Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler had never lived. Certainly, America would be a different America if Woodrow Wilson or Franklin D. Roosevelt had not been at the head of the nation when they were. Do individuals situated in commanding posts largely determine the foreign policy of a nation? Or are blind forces, perhaps great tides of human feeling that spring from the people, the determining factors? Whatever the answer one thing is clear: The historian of foreign policy cannot explain the relations between nations without giving a large place to both personality and chance. And that requires interpretation.

THE CAUSES OF CONTROVERSY

One form of interpretation that has never been lacking in the history of American foreign policy is that dealing with underlying causes and motivation. While almost all historians have disagreed most often and most vehemently on cause and motivation the disagreements of American historians over recent foreign policy on

these points have been particularly bitter. One reason for this is that historical objectivity is a "noble dream" that seldom becomes real. So there will always be changing interpretations and those interpretations will often be subjective and controversial. Another reason for controversy is that recent American foreign policy has been a matter of almost universal concern. It has touched the lives of more Americans than at any time in the past. Diplomatic historians in their writings, therefore, could hardly avoid hot disagreement.

That disagreement has touched the basic philosophies of history and the very nature of history itself. It has shown to many that the facts do not speak for themselves. In one way or another the historian interprets them. In the sciences and in other disciplines experts have also disagreed and do disagree on fundamental interpretations. But they have seldom disagreed with the rancor and for reaching public effect with which American historians of foreign policy have disagreed in recent years. The disagreements on interpretation of the diplomatic historians have reached the public and have influenced public and political reaction to foreign policy.

PRESENT SCHOLARSHIP: INTERPRETATION AND THE SOURCES

Since the history of American foreign policy in recent years has widened in scope, taking into consideration diverse internal developments as well as enlarged questions of international politics, it has become one of the more complex special fields of American historical scholarship. Sweeping interpretations, therefore, have become more difficult for the diplomatic historian to make. Such interpretations, if they are to have lasting value, should take the complex past and explain it clearly as a unit, as Charles Darwin's theory, for example, explained evolution. No historian of American foreign policy has attempted to advance a truly large interpretation.

Instead, most diplomatic historians have been concerned with the new vastness and richness of their sources. Those sources, multiplied by America's increasing intercourse with other nations, have practically overwhelmed them. Yet, they insist that the better diplomatic historian will write his history in depth and from a first-hand knowledge of the sources. So they have marked off their work into

smaller and smaller areas of investigation. The result is that the diplomatic historians and the graduate schools have continued to produce the traditional monographs based on an intimate knowledge of a limited and usable number of sources.

So detailed and so lacking in connection to the main currents of American development have many of the monographs been that few could be used meaningfully by the high school student of average intelligence. Until the past several decades, in fact, not even the average college undergraduate read many of those monographs in his history courses. In many universities the work in American diplomatic history was restricted to the graduate level. The broad interest in that history is relatively recent. Today, however, many universities and colleges offer undergraduate courses in the history of American foreign policy.

That widespread interest in the history of American foreign policy, which has now spread to the high schools, points to the need for more interpretation and for more simplified syntheses in the writing and teaching of American diplomatic history. Yet probably no historian can write on the history of American foreign policy in the traditional manner from the sources and scattered archives and still produce a book with broad perspective. One lifetime is too short.

The limited monographs and the heavily documented articles in the professional magazines, therefore, continue to form the backbone of scholarship in the history of American foreign policy. They contain the latest thinking, the new information, and the significant, if limited, interpretations. So the better teacher will want to know the monographic literature and from it usually make his own broad interpretations.

THE TEXTBOOKS

Before discussing some of the specific new interpretations and partial interpretations taken from recent monographic and general literature on the history of American foreign policy we should take note of the textbooks on American diplomatic history used currently in the colleges and universities. Depending on the date of the latest complete revision, they contain the major new interpretations taken from the more specialized sources.

Samuel F. Bemis, *A Diplomatic History of the United States* is a book of careful scholarship written from "a multi-archival approach." The author believes that American diplomatic history must come from the archives and sources of all the governments with whom the United States has relations. This book represents the enlarged international approach to American diplomatic history. Professor Bemis's objective was "to give perspective and interpretation to the whole diplomatic history and foreign policy of the United States." The book first appeared in 1936 and is now in its fourth edition, published in 1955.

In 1940 Thomas A. Bailey published *A Diplomatic History of the American People*. Since then the book has gone through five editions, the last published in 1955, to become the most widely read text in American diplomatic history. The title reflects the book's theme, which is the influence of public opinion, or of the people, on foreign policy. Professor Bailey believes that diplomatic affairs cannot be conducted in a vacuum "isolated from political, economic, and social developments." So he placed the history of American foreign policy in a broad setting and at the same time stressed personalities. The book reflects the trend of placing diplomatic history in a larger context, is scholarly, and is unusually readable. It is also valuable for its extensive bibliography covering the latest literature in the field. Many titles include concise explanations of the newest interpretations.

Another departure from the traditional pattern of diplomatic history is Richard W. Van Alstyne's *American Diplomacy in Action*. It was published in 1944, and in a second edition in 1947. In 1952 Professor Van Alstyne supplemented it with *American Crisis Diplomacy: The Quest for Collective Security, 1918-1952*. In his text he has put aside the chronological approach and has interpreted American diplomatic history as a series of related instances or cases. He has applied, in effect, the case study method of the lawyer to the study of American foreign policy. His approach reflects the force of outside influences on the study of American diplomatic history.

L. Ethan Ellis in *A Short History of American Diplomacy*, published in 1951, also departed from the usual chronological treatment. He interpreted the history of American foreign policy under a broad topical arrangement that concentrated on major issues and

developments. He made his interpretation a "working tool for understanding the main forces which shape American foreign policy and the chief avenues which that policy has followed."

A few years later, in 1955, Julius W. Pratt published *A History of United States Foreign Policy*. This book follows the traditional chronological pattern and interprets the history of American foreign policy as an integrated story with explanations of principles woven into the narrative. The author takes a broad view of diplomatic history. He takes into account the enlarged importance of military power, "an indispensable instrument in the prosecution of foreign policy." And he reflects the latest interpretations on the aims of foreign policy by giving attention to such concepts as "ideals and self-interest."

THE COLONIAL AND REVOLUTIONARY PERIODS

Max Savelle has written a number of articles tracing the beginnings of American diplomatic history in the colonial period. In "The American Balance of Power and European Diplomacy, 1713-78" (See Richard B. Morris, ed., *The Era of the American Revolution* [1939], pp. 140-169), he re-emphasizes the theme that France aided the United States and conceived the Alliance of 1778 in self-interest. France, he shows, supported the American Revolution to create a balance of power in the Western hemisphere as well as in Europe.

Felix Gilbert in "The English Background of American Isolationism in the Eighteenth Century" (*The William and Mary Quarterly*, I, Third Series [April, 1944], 138-160), interprets the beginnings of American isolationism as stemming from England. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, and others, he says, brought isolationist sentiments and ideas to America. In his pamphlet *Common Sense* Thomas Paine recommended political isolation from Europe. Gilbert believes Paine's ideas influenced George Washington's Farewell Address, Federalist foreign policy, and Thomas Jefferson's isolationist foreign policy.

Gerald Stourzh in *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy* (1954) has written one of the few books that combine the history of ideas with foreign policy. He has concentrated on motives underlying political action and has analyzed "Franklin's ap-

proach to foreign policy by probing into his actions as well as into his expression of opinion concerning international politics." He interprets Franklin's ideas on foreign policy in terms of power politics and enlightened self-interest. Franklin's concept of foreign policy, according to Stourzh's interpretation, was "based on his all-powerful desire of living space for a rapidly increasing people." Although at times difficult to follow, this book brings something of a fresh approach to the study of the history of American foreign policy.

A great deal has been written about Washington's Farewell Address but two recent interpretations deserve attention. Albert K. Weinberg in "Washington's 'Great Rule' in Its Historical Evolution" (see Eric F. Goldman, ed., *Historiography and Urbanization: Essays in American History in Honor of W. Stull Holt* [1941], 109-138), questions the basic assumption that Washington's advice has determined American policy toward political connections or alliances. Professor Weinberg believes that "the great rule was created not in the Farewell Address alone but in all subsequent American history as well." It was, he said, "the joint product of Washington and the American people."

Alexander DeConde in "Washington's Farewell, the French Alliance, and the Election of 1796" (see *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLIII [March, 1957], 641-658), offers an interpretation that questions the traditional view of Washington's Farewell Address as a wise, timeless, and unbiased warning to the nation. Although the Address was expressed in phrases of timeless application, its objectives, he says, were "practical, immediate, and partisan." They bore directly on the presidential election of 1796, on the French alliance of 1778, and on the status of Franco-American relations in general.

ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS IN THE EARLY NATIONAL PERIOD

When in 1940 Alfred L. Burt published *The United States, Great Britain, and British North America: From the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace After the War of 1812*, he challenged a number of existing interpretations in our early relations with Great Britain. His interpretation of the diplomacy leading to the Jay Treaty of 1794 differs from that of Samuel F. Bemis in his *Jay's*

Treaty (1923). Professor Burt argues that the United States could not have wrung concessions from Great Britain in her war with France even if John Jay had threatened to bring the United States into the Armed Neutrality of the Northern European nations and had not been undercut by Alexander Hamilton, who told the British the United States would not join the Armed Neutrality.

Professor Burt also rejects the traditional American view that Great Britain continued to hold the Northwest posts after 1783, in violation of the peace treaty, because she wanted to continue her monopoly of the fur trade. That interpretation, he says, is based on "national suspicion and prejudice." According to his interpretation the British held on to the posts indefinitely primarily because they had blundered in neglecting the welfare of the Indians in the peace treaty of 1783 and because of "American weakness." After the peace Great Britain tried to rectify the "blunder" by protecting the Indians against the Americans and in so doing retained the posts.

When dealing with the causes of the War of 1812 Professor Burt again rejects accepted interpretations. He argues in particular against the thesis of Julius W. Pratt, expressed in his *Expansionists of 1812* (1925), that without the ambitions of aggressive Westerners and their grievances against Great Britain there would have been no war. He re-emphasizes, instead, the older interpretations of the war as one for free trade and sailors' rights. "The impressment issue," he concludes, "was the rock that wrecked the last hope of peace."

In his interpretation of the war causes Professor Burt has revised a revision; he has illustrated how historical interpretations sometimes work in cycles, and how interpretation in history is always linked to the subjective appraisal of the historian himself. This can be seen in Warren H. Goodman, "The Origins of the War of 1812: A Survey of Changing Interpretations" (see *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXVIII[September, 1941], 171-186). The author has reviewed the literature on the causes of the War of 1812 and he also believes that the maritime factors deserve more consideration in interpreting the causes of the war than the Pratt thesis gives them.

Another recent interpretation in this early period of Anglo-

American relations is that of Bradford Perkins in *The First Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1795–1805* (1955). His view is that capable diplomacy, particularly on the part of England, made possible the first rapprochement with England after the American Revolution. Events after 1805, which destroyed the accord, he blames on inept English and American diplomacy. With qualification, he attributes most of the fault to the Jeffersonian Republicans who later led the nation into the War of 1812.

Charles P. Stacey in "The Myth of the Unguarded Frontier, 1815–1871" (see *The American Historical Review*, LVI [October, 1950], 1–18), corrects earlier interpretations of the significance of the Rush-Bagot Agreement of 1817. He shows that the "undefended border" between the United States and Canada dates from the Washington Treaty of 1871, not from the agreement of 1817 which was limited to naval disarmament on the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain. His evidence shows that the idea of the "unfortified frontier" is founded on legend. The earlier interpretation is summarized by Edgar W. McInnis in *The Unguarded Frontier: A History of American-Canadian Relations* (1942), p. 146.

THE ERA OF MONROE

Recent studies have placed the treaty of February 22, 1819 with Spain in a larger context than did past interpretations. Scholars no longer refer to it merely as the Florida treaty; they recognize that it was much broader and that it solved other boundary problems in North America. Since the treaty brought the United States to the Pacific Ocean, through Spain's surrender of her claims to Oregon, Professor Samuel F. Bemis has called it the "Transcontinental Treaty." His earlier writings placed the treaty in its larger setting, but he has brought his findings together in *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (1949). Philip C. Brooks in *Diplomacy and the Borderlands: The Adams-Onis Treaty of 1819* (1939) also placed the treaty in its broader context.

In 1936 Edward H. Tatum, Jr., in *The United States and Europe, 1815–1823: A Study in the Background of the Monroe Doctrine*, challenged the accepted interpretation that the Monroe Doctrine was aimed primarily against the Holy Alliance and France and Russia. According to his interpretation the menace of the Holy Al-

liance was an English invention and the Monroe Doctrine was directed against England and her designs on Cuba. Other historians of the Monroe Doctrine have not generally accepted this interpretation.

Dexter Perkins in *A History of the Monroe Doctrine* (1955), a summary of his earlier researches, re-emphasizes the traditional interpretation. So does Arthur P. Whitaker, with some modification, in *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (1941). Gale W. McGee in "The Monroe Doctrine—A Stopgap Measure" (see *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXVIII [September, 1951], 233-250), interprets the Monroe Doctrine as a temporary expedient, "a stopgap measure," designed to hold off European designs on the Americas while the United States negotiated with England over a joint declaration.

EXPANSION TO THE PACIFIC

Frederick Merk in *Albert Gallatin and the Oregon Problem: A Study in Anglo-American Diplomacy* (1950) throws new light on the non-colonization principle of the Monroe Doctrine. His thesis is that in the negotiations of 1826-27 with Great Britain over the Oregon country the United States followed a "containment policy." That policy expanded the non-colonization principle so as to check English and other European settlements in North America. "It was made," the author said, "the announced program of the United States in the Pacific Northwest."

Norman A. Graebner in *Empire on the Pacific: A Study of American Continental Expansion* (1955) concludes that previous interpretations have overrated American settlement and "manifest destiny" as determining elements in American expansion into Oregon and California. His thesis is that mercantile interests in the Pacific area "determined the course of empire," and that it was "through clearly conceived policies relentlessly pursued that the United States achieved its empire on the Pacific."

In another study of Anglo-American diplomacy in the Western hemisphere, "British Diplomacy and the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, 1850-1860" (see *The Journal of Modern History*, XI [June, 1939], 149-183), Richard W. Van Alstyne has interpreted the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty as "a permanent alliance" with England designed

to effect a common settlement in central America. "It made the United States," he said, "an American power, equal in every respect to the only other first-class American power, Great Britain."

EXPANSION AND THE "NEW MANIFEST DESTINY"

Anatole G. Mazour in "The Prelude to Russia's Departure from America" (see *The Pacific Historical Review*, X [September, 1941], 311-319), dismisses the old thesis that Russia sold Alaska without knowing of its wealth "as sheer nonsense." He points out that the Tsarist government knew of the gold there but it sold Alaska anyway because it felt it might lose the province, because it was involved in other problems in Europe, and because it wanted to cultivate American friendship as a balance against England.

Albert T. Volwiler in "Harrison, Blaine, and American Foreign Policy, 1889, 1893" (see *American Philosophical Society Proceedings*, LXXIX [1938], 637-648) advanced the thesis that the new imperialism began in the Benjamin Harrison administration. Julius W. Pratt in *Expansionists of 1898* (1936) studied the "New Manifest Destiny" and analyzed the economic factors in it. He asked what was the "great cause" for the Spanish-American War? He refuted the idea that the United States fought for markets and fields for investment. His interpretation is that American business had consistently opposed action that would lead to war with Spain and had endorsed expansion only after the war began.

William E. Leuchtenburg in "Progressivism and Imperialism: The Progressive Movement and American Foreign Policy, 1898-1916" (see *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXIX [December, 1952], 483-504), attempts to bridge the gulf between domestic and foreign affairs. His thesis is that Progressivism, contrary to past interpretations, did not oppose the new imperialism, but instead generally supported it.

In *America's Colonial Experiment* (1950) Julius W. Pratt analyzes American imperialism and concludes that on the whole it was benevolent. The United States, he says, embraced colonialism for political and strategic reasons; economic motives were less important.

Centering his study on the ideas and actions of one man, Howard K. Beale in *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World*

Power (1956) probes into the ideological background of American imperialism and into the motives of American statesmen. And he does more. He tries to answer some of the large questions that have always puzzled historians. He asks, for example, what caused the United States in the twentieth century to take the road it did in foreign policy? Were the decisions of individual men responsible or were blind forces decisive? His thesis is that "a few men in powerful positions were able to plunge the nation into an imperialist career that it never explicitly decided to follow." The taking of the Philippines, he writes, "was important history made not by economic forces or democratic decisions but through the grasping of chance authority by a man with daring and a program." This book reflects the enlarged scope of American diplomatic history. It uses ideas and places American foreign policy in a setting of world politics.

FAR EASTERN RELATIONS

A. Whitney Griswold in *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States* (1938) interprets American policy in Asia as having antagonized other powers without having achieved anything for the United States. After examining the Open Door Policy he concludes that Secretary of State John Hay had not secured international support for the Open Door principles, but "had merely oriented American policy toward a more active participation in Far Eastern politics in support of those principles."

In *God, Mammon, and the Japanese: Dr. Horace N. Allen and Korean-American Relations, 1884-1905* (1944) Fred H. Harrington weaves religious and economic factors into a diplomatic study. He analyzes the commercial and diplomatic side of missionary work in the Far East.

Charles S. Campbell, Jr. in *Special Business Interests and the Open Door Policy* (1951) has studied the role of business interests in foreign policy in the Far East. He advances the thesis that American business interests played a decisive part in bringing about the Open Door Policy of John Hay.

Paul A. Varg in *Open Door Diplomat: The Life of W. W. Rockhill* (1952) has also examined the Open Door Policy and points out that it was not Alfred E. Hippisley but William W. Rockhill who

attempted to connect that policy with the preservation of the Chinese Empire. Professor Varg attempts to revise the earlier interpretation that the Open Door notes were concerned solely with equality of commercial opportunity. He says Rockhill wanted to preserve China's integrity and independence as a necessary condition to an Open Door.

In *The United States and China, 1906-1913: A Study of Finance and Diplomacy* (1955) Charles Vevier has also concentrated on economics in foreign policy, especially on the thinking and ambitions of the American financiers and diplomats who took an active part in shaping the policy of dollar diplomacy in China and Manchuria. Like Griswold, he is critical of President William H. Taft's China policy and of his shopkeeper or dollar diplomacy.

Three books that deal with related parts of President Woodrow Wilson's policy in the Far East are *Woodrow Wilson and the Far East: The Diplomacy of the Shantung Question* (1952) by Russell H. Fifield; *Woodrow Wilson's China Policy, 1913-1917* (1952) by Tien-yi Li; and *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy, 1913-1921* (1957) by Roy W. Curry. Professor Fifield devotes most of his attention to the Shantung question, particularly to its diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Through the Shantung question he explains other diplomatic problems because he considers it "within the frame of reference of world politics." He treats Wilson's diplomacy favorably, saying Wilson "retreated from his position in the Shantung controversy because he wanted to insure Japanese membership in the League of Nations." This study is an example of how the student of international relations has become also a student of American foreign policy.

Professor Tien-yi Li is critical of Wilson's policy in China up to 1917. He says Wilson's "policy of maintaining China's integrity was largely a failure." In the long run China suffered from Wilson's policy, he believes, because the president followed ethical rather than practical considerations. Covering a broader period, Professor Curry treats Wilson more favorably. He says Wilson, who "initiated little in the way of Far Eastern policy," followed methods that fitted traditional American policy in the Far East. "There was never any master strategy," Curry concludes, "beyond support for the historic policies pursued in relation to the area."

Betty M. Unterberger in *America's Siberian Expedition, 1918-1920: A Study of National Policy* (1956) explains that Wilson's "basic and unpublicized" reason for intervention in Siberia "was to restrain Japan from imperialistic adventures and to preserve the open door in Siberia and North Manchuria." The United States, she believes, prevented Japan from going into Russia alone and with a free hand. "The positive results of the intervention," she concludes, "were due largely to American participation."

In a study of later Far Eastern policy, *The China Tangle: The American Effort in China from Pearl Harbor to the Marshall Mission* (1953), Herbert Feis is also critical of American policy in Asia. In dealing with the American effort to bring China into a more effective role in the second World War he feels that American officials misjudged the Chinese Communists. His thesis is that the spirit of the times, ignorance of the Communists, Russian diplomacy, distrust of Chinese Nationalists, and blunders, produced the failure of American foreign policy in China.

LATIN AMERICAN POLICY

Samuel F. Bemis in *The Latin American Policy of the United States: An Historical Interpretation* (1943) has challenged many accepted ideas about our Latin American policy. His interpretation is a highly nationalistic defense of that policy. According to his thesis our Latin American policy was determined primarily by considerations of the "Continental Republic," first in North America and then in the Western Hemisphere.

In *Herbert Hoover's Latin-American Policy* (1951) Alexander DeConde advances the interpretation that the Good Neighbor policy had its beginnings in the administration of Herbert Hoover. His view is that President Franklin D. Roosevelt later adopted, expanded, and in many ways made that policy his own.

THE UNITED STATES AND RUSSIA

Thomas A. Bailey in *America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Times to Our Day* (1950) shows that the United States and Russia did not share a long unbroken friendship running from the beginning of American independence through

the nineteenth century. According to his interpretation the basis of whatever friendship existed was mutual hostility to England.

In his study, *American-Russian Relations, 1781-1947* (1952), William A. Williams interprets America's difficulties with Russia in a different light. He views them as stemming from hostile and even aggressive American policies toward Russia.

George F. Kennan in *Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920*, Volume I, *Russia Leaves the War* (1956) differs with those "who were inclined to assign exclusively to the United States government the blame for an unhappy state of relations between the two governments." He stresses the hatred of Soviet leaders for Western capitalism and denies that the United States rejected the friendship they offered and "thus needlessly estranged them in the early days of their power, when they desperately needed sympathy and support." One goal in the Soviet leaders' flirting with the United States, he points out, was to forestall Japan's intervention in Siberia.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

As they have done with other wars American historians in studying the First World War have produced a controversial literature. Most of their controversial interpretations centered on why the United States intervened. Although the literature is large and the interpretations vary in detail and scope two schools of thought are clear. One school analyzed the road to war and concluded that the United States was justified and did the right thing in going to war. The other school studied intervention and said it was a mistake. This was the "revisionist" school. Richard W. Leopold in "The Problems of American Intervention, 1917: An Historical Retrospect" (See *World Politics*, II [April, 1950], 404-425), has surveyed that literature in detail.

Since 1936 few new interpretations, as Professor Leopold has pointed out, have appeared that challenge or change the earlier interpretations. Two important books dealing with intervention in the First World War that did appear since 1936 advanced "revisionist" interpretations. The first was *Neutrality for the United States* (1937) by Edwin M. Borchard and William P. Lage. The authors advance an interpretation of American intervention that is highly critical of President Woodrow Wilson. It holds Wilson

and his advisers largely responsible for involving the nation in the war because they blundered in not adhering strictly to the recognized rules of neutrality in dealing with Germany and Great Britain.

Charles C. Tansill in *America Goes to War* (1938) also felt that American entrance into the war was a mistake. He attributed American intervention to multiple causes. Yet, he was so sure that American intervention was wrong that he believed a German victory would have been a lesser evil.

After the Second World War broke out two journalists, undoubtedly influenced by contemporary international politics, stressed a new interpretation as to why the United States went to war in 1917. Forrest Davis in *The Atlantic System: The Story of Anglo-American Control of the Seas* (1941) and Walter Lippmann in *U. S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (1943) said the United States went to war in 1917 to protect its own security. Armin Rappaport in *The British Press and Wilsonian Neutrality* (1951) stresses the traditional interpretation that Germany's use of the submarine drove the United States to war but he links intervention to national interest. He concludes that "only when the national interests of the United States were threatened by the submarine did America go to war."

The latest study of the diplomacy of the First World War is that of Samuel R. Spencer, *Decision for War, 1917: The Laconia Sinking and the Zimmermann Telegram as Key Factors in the Public Reaction Against Germany* (1953). The author shows how events of February and March 1917 increased anti-German sentiment in the United States. He rejects the revisionist arguments and his thesis is a defense of American entry into the war.

Thomas A. Bailey in *Wilson and the Peacemakers* (1947) reflects a general trend of assigning more responsibility to Wilson personally for failures in foreign policy than did earlier writers. He rejects, for example, the conventional interpretation that Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and "bitter-end" Senators were entirely responsible for the failure of the Treaty of Versailles in the Senate. He lays most of the blame for the failure on Wilson. Arthur S. Link in *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910-1917* (1954) is also critical of Wilson's diplomacy, particularly of his "missionary

diplomacy" in Mexico. As to war with Germany, he stresses the conventional interpretation that the submarine brought on the war; but, he says, the final decision for war or peace came from Wilson himself.

Edward H. Buehrig in *Woodrow Wilson and the Balance of Power* (1955) attempts to refute the generally accepted view that Wilson's idealism dominated foreign policy and hence conditioned American policy in the First World War. The United States intervened, he says, because it shrank from the prospect of Germany supplanting British power which contributed to American security. Concern over Germany's violation of American maritime rights, he concludes, was not therefore the reason for America's war against Germany. He stresses that Wilson had "an appreciation of the balance of power view."

THE HARDING-COOLIDGE ERA

In *Peace in Their Time: The Origins of the Kellogg-Briand Pact* (1952) Robert H. Ferrell praises American diplomats and is critical of public opinion. "Public ignorance," he believes, "created a serious problem in the conduct of American diplomacy" in the 1920's. Well-intentioned diplomats, he says, were handicapped because they "had to cope with a public opinion whose only virtue often was that it was public and opinionated."

J. Chalmers Vinson in *The Parchment Peace: The United States Senate and the Washington Conference, 1921-1922* (1955) reflects one of the new approaches to the study of American foreign policy by analyzing the role of the Senate in shaping foreign policy. His interpretation is critical of the Senate's role. He points out that the Senate hailed the Washington treaties as a contribution to peace. Yet in approving them it would not allow the United States to assume obligations for maintaining peace. It, like the American people, had faith in a "new diplomacy of trust."

ISOLATIONISM

Historians and others have shown a continuing interest in isolationism. Many of the books discussed in this pamphlet include sections dealing with it, but few historians have focused their full attention on isolationism itself. The result is that although the

literature on the subject is large there is no general study of isolationism. Among the special studies of it five are noteworthy for their special interpretations.

J. Fred Rippy in *America and the Strife of Europe* (1938) outlines relations with Europe boldly and subjects American foreign policy, particularly isolation, to critical analysis. He deals with broad subjects: isolation, the pacifist movement, expansion, and others. Along with other scholars he believes that the strife and troubles of Europe largely made possible isolation and the success of American foreign policy since independence. While his thesis is not new his broad interpretation of ideas and movements in American foreign policy is unique.

Another historian who also subjects isolation to careful analysis is Albert K. Weinberg. In "The Historical Meaning of the American Doctrine of Isolation" (See *The American Political Science Review*, XXXIV [June, 1940], 539-547), he discusses isolation as a basis for foreign policy, as an idea, and as an ideology. According to his interpretation isolation "is a theory about a theory of American foreign policy."

Ray Allen Billington in "The Origins of Middle Western Isolationism" (See *Political Science Quarterly*, LX [March, 1945], 44-64), advances a provocative sectional and ethnic interpretation of isolationism in the twentieth century. He suggests that isolationist sentiment in the Midwest stemmed largely from the inherited customs and prejudices of German and Scandinavian immigrants and their offspring. Their "prejudices and attitudes, bolstered by the sense of security which stemmed from the section's geographic position and economic self-sufficiency," he writes, "help to explain Middle Western isolationism."

Samuel Lubell is not a diplomatic historian and in his book, *The Future of American Politics* (1952) he is concerned mainly with domestic politics. Yet, he too advances a thesis on isolationism; he argues more strongly than does Billington that the "hard core" of isolationism is "ethnic and emotional," and that it is centered in the Midwest. "What really binds the former isolationists is not a common view on foreign policy for the future," he writes, "but a shared remembrance of opposition to American intervention in the last war." It has, he says, the appeal of "political revenge." His

thesis is that the two factors primarily responsible for isolation are "the existence of pro-German and anti-British ethnic prejudices" and "the exploiting of these prejudices by an opposition political party."

In *The New Isolationism: A Study in Politics and Foreign Policy Since 1950* (1956) Norman A. Graebner concentrates on the effects on American diplomacy of certain internal political forces. He believes that the new isolationists of the 1950's were "the true heirs" of the old isolationist tradition. His thesis is that the new isolationism "reflected the deepest traditions of suspicion, distrust, and withdrawal from the world, as well as the deep conviction that an isolated America could live securely without allies, overseas commitments, or military preparedness even at mid-century."

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Like the First World War the Second generated a large controversial literature on the causes of America's participation and on the motives of the statesmen who led the nation into the war. Soon after, the war memoirs of many of the major statesmen, biographies, and studies of the foreign policy of the period, appeared. Those books, while differing in detail, emphasis, and in interpretation, showed a sharp division on the causes of America's going to war and on the motives of American statesmen.

On one side were those who either defended the foreign policy of President Franklin D. Roosevelt or supported the thesis that the United States had gone to war to protect its own security. They argued that Roosevelt had no desire to lead the country to war. While admitting some deviousness on Roosevelt's part they excuse it because they feel that short-sighted isolationist opposition to his policies blocked forthright measures essential to protect the nation's security. They advance what most historians would call the "conventional" interpretation of the foreign policy of the period.

On the other side are those who challenge the conventional assumptions and attack Roosevelt's foreign policy. They charge Roosevelt and his advisers with leading the country to war while professing to work for peace. Their theory is that the nation went to war unnecessarily. Some of them say that in fighting fascism the

United States overlooked a greater menace, communism. These writers and historians represent the new "revisionist" school of diplomatic historians.

Among the prominent books representing the "conventional" interpretation is Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (1948). While this is a memoir it is also a history and presents the authors' interpretation of controversial foreign policy decisions. Walter Millis, a revisionist of the First World War school, in *This is Pearl!: The United States and Japan—1941* (1947), this time is on the other side. He says "the record offers no support for the view that the Roosevelt administration plotted to invite a Pacific War or even wished for one." Herbert Feis in *The Road to Pearl Harbor: The Coming of the War between the United States and Japan* (1950) covers more ground than did Millis, in the manner of the traditional diplomatic historian, and comes out with a similar interpretation.

Robert E. Sherwood, one of Roosevelt's speech writers, also presents the "conventional" interpretation of the diplomacy of the war in his *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (1948). Basil Rauch in *Roosevelt, From Munich to Pearl Harbor: A Study in the Creation of a Foreign Policy* (1950) not only warmly defends Roosevelt's foreign policy but he also attempts to revise the revisionists. His thesis is that Roosevelt after Munich in 1938 turned American foreign policy from "isolationism" to "internationalism" for America's security. Donald F. Drummond in *The Passing of American Neutrality, 1937-1941* (1955) covers the same ground but he writes neither from the revisionist position nor from the uncritical position of Rauch. Yet his conclusion follows the conventional interpretation. He believes "the American government followed a clear set of objectives with persistence and skill from the fall of France to the attack on Pearl Harbor."

In an effort to allay the bitterness of the new revisionist agitation the Council on Foreign Relations sponsored a detailed study of American foreign policy in the crisis leading to war. This project resulted in the two detailed books by William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *The Challenge to Isolation, 1937-1940* (1952) and *The Undeclared War, 1940-1941* (1953). The authors deny that

Roosevelt plotted to involve the country in war. They hold that Roosevelt actually lagged behind public opinion in moving toward war, and that he formulated his foreign policy to avoid war.

The Langer volumes did not succeed in allaying the revisionist bitterness. Instead they appeared to increase it. Revisionists said that Langer and Gleason, because of previous official connections with the government and because they said little that was critical of government officials, were merely "court historians" and that they had written a "whitewash" of Roosevelt's foreign policy.

The first prominent historian to take up the revisionist cause was Charles A. Beard. In his two books, *American Foreign Policy in the Making, 1932-1940* (1946) and *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941* (1948), he vigorously attacks Roosevelt and his foreign policy. His thesis is that Roosevelt maneuvered the country into war while appearing to want peace. George E. Morgenthern in *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War* (1947) advances the same thesis.

Other revisionists like John T. Flynn in *The Roosevelt Myth* (1948) and Frederic R. Sanborn in *Design for War: A Study of Secret Power Politics* (1951) have accused Roosevelt of plotting war to insure his re-election and to hide his failures in domestic affairs. Charles C. Tansill, a revisionist historian of the First World War, wrote another detailed history of the diplomacy of the Second War. In his *Back Door to War: The Roosevelt Foreign Policy, 1933-1941* (1952) he advances the thesis that Roosevelt and his advisers deliberately conspired to lead the nation into a war that was none of its concern. Harry Elmer Barnes, another pre-war revisionist, has edited a volume, *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: A Critical Examination of the Foreign Policy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Its Aftermath* (1953), in which he brings together the considered views of prominent revisionists in essays on the diplomacy of the Second World War.

Two books that are not strictly in the revisionist school but which are highly critical of Roosevelt's wartime diplomacy are Hanson W. Baldwin's *Great Mistakes of the War* (1950) and Richard N. Current's *Secretary Stimson: A Study in Statecraft* (1954). Baldwin's thesis is that Roosevelt's foreign and war policies and decisions made postwar problems more difficult than they

would have been anyway. He calls the "unconditional surrender" policy "the biggest political mistake of the war." Professor Current is highly critical of Secretary Henry L. Stimson's ideas and actions in foreign policy. His thesis is that "a whole blundering generation of American statesmen" led the nation into a war that might have been avoided.

SOME BROAD INTERPRETATIONS

Richard H. Heindel in *The American Impact on Great Britain, 1898-1914: A Study of the United States in World History* (1940) does not follow the traditional pattern of diplomatic history in dealing with the relations between two countries. He has tried to show how one nation gets ideas about the other. He has tried also to trace the movement of men and ideas from the United States to England and to show their influence on life and thought.

Thomas A. Bailey in *The Man in the Street: The Impact of American Public Opinion on Foreign Policy* (1949) takes a broad view of public opinion. He has written a pioneer work analyzing the influence of public opinion on foreign policy. According to his interpretation public opinion is the most powerful force in American foreign policy, but it is also ignorant and fickle.

In 1951 two books appeared that touched off an academic debate on whether American foreign policy should be moralistic or realistic. George F. Kennan's interpretation in *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950* in his own words, is this: "I see the most serious fault of our past policy formulation to lie in something that I might call the legalistic-moralistic approach to international problems. This approach runs like a red skein through our foreign policy of the last fifty years." Hans J. Morgenthau's *In Defense of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy* (1951) advances a similar thesis. He says that American foreign policy since the days of the Founding Fathers has been too moralistic and utopian. Only in the period following the Second World War, he believes, have Americans become realistic and again measured their foreign policies by the yardstick of power and "the national interest."

Thomas I. Cook and Malcolm Moos in *Power Through Purpose: The Realism of Idealism as a Basis for Foreign Policy* (1954) take

exception to the views of Kennan and Morgenthau. Their thesis is that American foreign policy must be based on ethical principles of "universal validity." They are opposed to "the extremes of utopian worldism and realistic nationalism."

Frank Tannenbaum in *The American Tradition in Foreign Policy* (1955) also refutes the Kennan-Morgenthau thesis, attacking those who would adopt the doctrine of the balance of power as the basis of American foreign policy. He says that doctrine "runs counter to the very essence of the American tradition." He advances the thesis that belief in ideals has always been the American philosophy of international relations.

Another book that deals with realism, idealism, and power politics is *Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations: The Great Transformation of the Twentieth Century* (1953), written by Robert E. Osgood. The author's thesis is that ideals and self-interest are interdependent and that they should strike a balance in international relations. Since he stresses ideas and the ideological background of foreign policy, he too brings something of a fresh approach to the study of American diplomatic history.

Dexter Perkins is probably the only American diplomatic historian in recent years who has advanced a theory covering the whole history of American foreign policy. In *The American Approach to Foreign Policy* (1952) he says there is a rhythm to the history of American foreign policy which "may have a connection with the movements of the business cycle." He calls this "A Cyclical Theory of American Foreign Policy." Throughout the book he deals with ideas, trends, and interpretations of American foreign policy. The book comprises a series of essays that offer Professor Perkins's interpretations of what have been the most important forces shaping American foreign policy.

IN CONCLUSION

From the literature and trends discussed in this pamphlet we can see that historians have begun an adjustment to America's enlarged role in world affairs. That enlarged role has stimulated the history of American foreign policy probably more than it has other special fields of American history. It has widened and enriched the whole scope of the history of American foreign policy. In-

fluenced by world affairs and by new developments in other disciplines American diplomatic history in the past twenty years has changed considerably from what it was in the past, and each new interpretation reflects that change. If the teacher of American history, whether in the high school or in the college, is to explain to his students the role of America in the world he should know something of the new ideas and interpretations in the literature of the history of American foreign policy. This pamphlet is merely a partial guide; the literature itself is the best source.

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