

## U.S Diplomatic History in Brief – a Foreign Service Perspective

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*Note: This text is adapted from a one-hour lecture given to classes of newly-hired Foreign Service Officers in 2005/2006 during their first week of training at the Foreign Service Institute. Mr. Zetkolic is a Senior Foreign Service Officer who was then serving as Executive Director of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.*

### **Introduction**

Welcome to the Foreign Service family! Like any family it has a history, a long history. Your predecessors have been busy. They have had a front row seat as world events have unfolded. Indeed, many of your predecessors have made quite a bit of history themselves.

This is a basic introduction to U.S. diplomatic history, during which I'll also present some sidebars describing how the Foreign Service as an institution has developed and how the hard work of American diplomats is woven into the broader tapestry of American history. For those of you who have studied international relations or diplomatic history, you'll hear some familiar themes. Some of these themes echo across more than two centuries. There is the enduring struggle between so-called realists and idealists. Or the debate between isolationists and those supporting international engagement that has split generations: Jefferson versus Madison, Lodge versus Wilson, Helms versus Albright.

For those of you who have not studied IR or diplomatic history, these will be new concepts. Indeed, many of you are as new to these topics as you are new to the diplomatic corps. Some surveys of recent A-100 classes show that anywhere from one-third to one-half of you may not have engaged in any rigorous study of international relations before starting this new career. But you need to know the basics. Why? I'll give you two reasons.

First, context: Knowing where you fit in the scheme of our history is beneficial to you personally. If you were in the military -- let's say if you were at West Point preparing to be an Army officer instead of at FSI studying to be a diplomat -- you would get several semesters' worth of military history. After that you would feel that you were part of -- as Army officers call it -- "the long gray line." Maybe in the Foreign Service we should call it "the long gray flannel line." But the more you know about how you and your daily work fit into a broader context, the greater will be your individual job satisfaction and your esprit d'corps. Even on those bad days, when you've had a tough stint on the visa line or you've written yet another numbing Congressionally-mandated report or escorted yet another clueless visitor from Washington, you'll understand why you're doing what you're doing. And you'll know how you fit into American diplomacy and where you are in the flow of American history.

Second, fireproofing: When you're posted abroad, I guarantee that some of your foreign colleagues will know more than you about American history, and they'll know more than you about international relations theory and the structures of international affairs. For example, if they have studied at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna or at ENA in Paris, or for that matter if

they have studied to become members of the foreign service of most countries, they will have studied American history – and lots of it. And you? You don't want to get hosed by your foreign counterparts.

A quick personal vignette: Early in my second overseas posting, I was standing at a reception in Munich in the old Bavarian royal chambers. It was during the Reagan Administration so the Europeans were all fidgety about America's strong profile. The topic of the day was short-range nuclear missiles in Central Europe. Nearby, a Swedish colleague was pontificating about his country's more sensible approach, and he went on to say, "Oh, well, you know, we are historically a peaceful and cautious people, and we're nervous when big powers intrude into the affairs of other countries." I looked at him and said, "Hey wait a minute! Your king sat on that throne, right over there, when his troops marched all the way down to the Alps during the Thirty Years War." Well, he looked at me, winced, and said, "I really hate it when foreigners know our history." Touché.

I hope that those of you who are new to diplomatic history won't rely on this lecture alone to give you what you need to know about the topic. This is just a brief overview and a springboard into the subject, as is [www.usdiplomacy.org](http://www.usdiplomacy.org). Many resources are available to you. For instance, if you're interested in the individual experiences of officers who have served in your prospective posts, you should go to the Library of Congress website to see ADST's many interviews with diplomats who have preceded you. For broader background, the State Department Historian's office has some basic materials online. Now to our overview:

### **Colonial American Diplomacy**

By late in the colonial period, different colonial leaders and legislatures sent agents and business representatives to London and some other capitals on behalf of individual colonies. Pennsylvania sent our favorite and most famous diplomat, Ben Franklin, to London. He gained valuable experience in the art of diplomacy, and his treatment there cemented his view that he had become a new breed, an American. He was also hired by other colonies that recognized the utility of having a representative in place in London rather than communicating to the royal court and Parliament through the King's governors. But the King did not agree with this approach. Colonial representatives were redirected to their respective governors.

### **Revolutionary Diplomacy**

With the establishment of the Continental Congress and especially after the Declaration of Independence, our diplomatic efforts shifted very quickly from respectful submissions of grievances and polite requests to His Majesty the King to fevered efforts aimed at our very survival. The Continental Congress established a "Committee of Secret Correspondence" to exercise control over foreign affairs. Despite its really cool name, the Committee functioned as well as any committee during a time of crisis, which is to say not very well at all.

During this period, we were blessed with several diplomatic stars, the first I mentioned already: Franklin, who served in Paris from 1776 to 1778. French aristocrats and intellectuals embraced Franklin as the personification of the New World Enlightenment. The French king, however,

kept him at arm's length. France saw Franklin as the potentially helpful representative of a rebellious British colony that could vex and weaken France's rival England. But at the same time, France did not want to associate itself too closely with Franklin's mission; it didn't want to be drawn into premature war with England. So, as a result, France provided covert assistance to the United States in the form of often useful intelligence information and, increasingly, weapons. After the Battle of Saratoga, things changed, and France eventually did recognize the United States and offer its navy to serve the American cause.

Franklin's experience in Paris offers an instructive example about how to negotiate from a standpoint of weakness or, in poker terms, how to win with a losing hand. Basically, Franklin hoodwinked the French with his diplomacy. He knew that his legation was a den of spies. So he invited a British representative to what he called a secret meeting. The fact of the meeting was quickly found out, although the actual words exchanged (which were inconsequential) were not, thus giving the French the impression that Franklin might be cutting a deal with the British to end the war, which would not be to the advantage of France. This encouraged the French to increase military and other support to the U.S. and to recognize the United States earlier than they otherwise would have.

Those of you who are heading out to your first post may want to remember how Thomas Jefferson referred to old Ben. When Jefferson was sent to Paris to take over the American mission, the Comte d'Veignes, the French Foreign Minister, asked him, "It is you who will replace Dr. Franklin?" And Jefferson, always the gracious Virginia gentleman, replied, "No one can replace him, sir. I am only his successor." You might want to keep that line in mind when you're introduced on your first day on the job.

A less heralded but equally important representative during the Revolutionary period was John Adams, who while posted in Paris took the initiative to travel to Holland. While Franklin was negotiating French recognition and getting good intelligence and arms, it was Adams who was in Holland getting the cash to pay for the fight. He extracted from the Dutch a series of loans that kept the Revolution financially alive. Interestingly, he did this with little or no guidance from the Continental Congress. He realized while in Paris that the need existed, knew that the Dutch were the best and most likely source of cash, traveled to Holland, and cut the deal. Today, you'd call this forward-leaning approach "transformational diplomacy."

### **Survival of the New Republic**

The Treaty of Paris ended the Revolutionary War in 1781. The Continental Congress then established the Department of Foreign Affairs. While aptly named, the Department was rather weak. The Secretary's role was not very clearly defined. This is probably why we don't have any statues around FSI of Robert Livingston or John Jay. They were our first Secretaries of Foreign Affairs.

In 1789, the new Constitution divided authority over foreign affairs between the executive and the legislature. Enabling legislation called for "an act to provide for the safekeeping of the acts, records and seal of the United States and for other purposes." With this, the Department of State

was created. Thomas Jefferson was our first Secretary of State. His staff numbered eight, including the janitor.

But what were the “other purposes” referred to in the Constitution, and why is there no mention of foreign affairs? The initial responsibilities of the Department of State were both foreign and domestic -- basically everything that was not covered by the War and Treasury departments. The State Department ran the Census. It controlled the Mint. (Wouldn't it be nice if we could still print money?) It maintained the Great Seal of the Republic. In fact, this is one of the few domestic responsibilities it keeps to this day, along with certain archival responsibilities. For example, here's a trivia question: To whom did President Nixon address and send his letter of resignation? The answer is: Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Over time, of course, the State Department shed virtually all of its domestic responsibilities, but its name remained unchanged -- a source of confusion for generations.

Now a little sidebar about the early Foreign Service -- actually for the whole period 1789 to 1895. For more than a century the diplomatic and consular services remained essentially separate. The State Department was run by political appointees at the top and long-serving civil servants, who were called “clerks.” Very few of these Washington-based officials ever served abroad. An act in 1856 resulted in the partial professionalization of the consular service, but the spoils system generally remained in place. As an interesting historical note, it took disastrous battlefield losses during the Civil War, when horrific mistakes were made and many lives were lost, to end the practice in the U.S. Army of inexperienced but wealthy men purchasing commissions as officers – usually with higher rank depending on the amount given. Of course, while this practice ended in the military, it lingers in the diplomatic service.

U.S. diplomacy during this early period had two complementary goals. The first was to defend the very existence of the United States, and the second was to negotiate its expansion. I say “complementary” because the consensus in the United States at that time was that the Nation needed to grow in order to live.

During this initial period of weakness, we usually could not afford our principles. We were still a rather poor country. There were times when we couldn't stand up for what we believed in. And, as always, there were times when, for domestic political reasons, our foreign policy did not coincide with our stated philosophy. I'll give you an example of each.

First, the Barbary pirates. This was our first interaction with the Muslim world. Merchant ships were being taken in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic. American sailors were being sold into slavery or ransomed for gold. So what did we do? Did we send in the troops? We didn't have many troops at that point, and our navy was rather small. So we negotiated arrangements whereby we paid off the pirates, just as the cynical Europeans had done before us. Interestingly, in 1786, two future U.S. presidents, Jefferson and Adams, met in London with the Ambassador of Tripoli, whose name was Sidi Hadji Abdul Rhaman Ajar. Mr. Jefferson asked the ambassador to explain why his people were so hostile to the U.S., a peaceful country that had never done them any harm and that only sought mutually profitable commerce. The Ambassador gave a remarkably frank answer, which Adams -- always the good notetaker -- took down verbatim. According to the ambassador, this animosity, “was founded on the laws of the Prophet, that it

was written in their Koran, that all nations who should not have acknowledged their authority were sinners, and that it was their right and duty to make war upon them wherever they could be found, and to make slaves of all they could take as prisoners, and that every Mosselman"-- as we then called Muslims -- "who should be slain in battle was sure to go directly to paradise." That was 230 years ago. I told you up front that some of these themes would echo through the centuries.

Second, Haiti: Another foreign policy choice faced by the early Republic was the slave revolt in Haiti. This rebellion was the dramatic and logical extension of, first, the American Revolution and, second, the French Revolution, with each successive revolt challenging established authority more and more. How did we respond? Did we recognize the new Haitian government? We should have as a matter of democratic principles, and also out of sheer gratitude, because the rebellion in Haiti had helped to create American empire. At the time, Napoleon had bold plans for America. He wanted to use New Orleans as a base to extend his empire into the Louisiana territory and beyond. However, the Haiti rebellion emptied his coffers and he was desperate for cash. James Monroe was sent to Paris with \$10 million for the purchase of the city of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast extending to Florida. And he did a brave and wonderful thing. He chose to exceed his authority. For \$15 million he bought all of the Louisiana Territory. Oh, and did we ever recognize Haiti? Not until the Lincoln Administration, when the views of Southern slaveholders carried little weight in Washington.

Moving on, we get to the War of 1812. I think most of you know the reasons: impressment of sailors, the lure of possible territorial expansion into Canada, problems with fisheries. But there was a decidedly mixed reaction, in general, to the problems we were having with the British, and very mixed enthusiasm for the war. Secretary of State Monroe sent a letter to his Chargé d'Affaires in London and described the administration's attitude: "At the moment of the declaration of war, the president regretted the necessity which produced it, looked to its termination, and provided for it." One of the great advantages of a very quick war mainly fought at sea was the quick and amiable peace negotiated with the U.K., the Treaty of Ghent, which laid the foundation for what has become known as "the special relationship" between the United States and the United Kingdom. After a century of active diplomacy and the gradual convergence of our respective national interests, Britain became our closest ally. You will soon see the results of this symbiotic relationship on the ground. Planning an evacuation? The Brits are treated the same as Americans. Sharing intel? Don't bother, the Brits already have it. We work as one.

The largest land battle of the War of 1812 actually took place after the war was over. Word traveled slowly in those days. But the battle of New Orleans was a great public relations boon for the United States. It showed everybody in the neighborhood that we were a force to be reckoned with throughout the Americas. Our military victories in the War of 1812 provided the practical foundation for the philosophical construct of the Monroe Doctrine.

## **Manifest Destiny**

Our diplomacy up to the Civil War was all about territorial and commercial expansion.

One of my favorite presidents of all time -- because of his laser focus on his core priorities -- was James K. Polk. He had one very simple and publicly-stated reason to lead the United States: he wanted to expand American territory into Mexico as far as possible and also out to the Pacific. He first engaged in some perfunctory and lackluster negotiations and then he got down to the business of conquest. After a border incident was arranged, he went in heavy and grabbed what was then about one-third of Mexico's recognized territory. The Polk Administration also set what would eventually become our northwest border with Canada. In EER terms, he "met or exceeded all his goals and objectives." And he did this in one term -- leaving office having done all that he wanted to do.

One funny and instructive aspect of Mexican diplomacy: we had a mechanism for relatively effective war-making, but we had no real lines of communication to negotiate a peace. So the war limped along near its end without any successful diplomatic conclusion. Who negotiated the peace? At one point, a correspondent from the tabloid *New York Sun*, who was accompanied by the former underage mistress of Aaron Burr, was traveling with the U.S. Army, ostensibly in a journalistic capacity, when he began negotiating a settlement. For a while he even had something of an imprimatur from certain leaders in Washington. But, finally, it was realized that he was negotiating more for himself than for the U.S., and a professional was sent to do the job: Nicholas Trist, who was the first clerk of the Department of State -- what you'd call Under Secretary these days. The only problem was that Trist and the military commander, General Winfield Scott, were from different political parties, one Democrat and one Whig, and they didn't talk to each other for the first three weeks they were traveling together. In the end, they had enough shared experiences and enough shared meals and alcohol (Trist had arrived with a hefty supply of liquid refreshments) that they worked things out. Here we see several lessons learned: Beware of free agents practicing diplomacy without a license. Have a plan to end a war before you start it, or at least have open lines of communication with your adversary. Rely on professionals. Ensure that diplomats and their military counterparts know and respect each other. Gosh, that's a lot of important lessons from a war that most American history teachers pretty much skip over.

Diplomatic initiatives and military action went hand in hand as America engaged in commercial and territorial expansion. Look to the Pacific Rim. Commodore Perry's gunboat diplomacy "opened" Japan with two missions in 1854 and 1855. One of the first U.S. Government survey reports of Japan said, "We shall carry to Europe their teas and their silks; the results are so vast as to dazzle even sober calculation." In China, an even bigger potential prize, we wanted to build railroads and sell our manufactured goods, especially textiles. China was seen as such a huge market that one of our consuls in Guangzhou (then called Canton) sent in a fascinating dispatch. He said, "If we can convince the Chinaman to wear his shirt but one inch longer, we can keep the mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, spinning feverishly into eternity."

### **Civil War Diplomacy: Strangling the Confederacy**

Our diplomatic goal during the Civil War was simplicity itself. Secretary of State Seward put it in a nutshell. Even before the war began, he said, "The most important duty of the diplomatic representatives of the United States in Europe will be to counteract by all proper means the efforts of the agents of the projected Confederacy." In a struggle of national survival, the

definition of “proper means” was flexible. Our diplomats abroad had to prevent the sale of war materiel to the South, avoid any diplomatic recognition by the European countries of the Confederacy, keep Europe out of the war, and ease any irritations caused by the U.S. blockade of Southern ports. Fortunately for the North, the South’s dream of “King Cotton” didn’t come to pass because Egypt had enjoyed several years of bumper cotton crops. European textile mills didn’t need Confederate cotton as much as the South had hoped.

One of my great heroes in diplomatic history is Charles Francis Adams, our representative at the Court of St. James throughout the Civil War and the grandson of John Adams and the son of John Quincy Adams, who had served as President and Secretary of State. Adams had the right pedigree, and the right skill set, to do what he had to do, both proper *and* improper, to defend the Union diplomatically. He engaged Pinkerton agents as well as more nefarious characters. He planted editorials and newspaper articles. He spread disinformation. He fought in courts of law to keep ships built in England from being delivered to those who would use them as blockade runners or worse. When necessary he supported the use of sabotage. One of his biographers said, “None of our generals, not Grant himself, did us better or more trying service than he in his forlorn outpost of London.” Well, I wouldn’t call London forlorn, but I know he worked hard.

## **Rising Empire**

After the Civil War, the absence of any external challenges, a growing population and unleashed economic might led to vast territorial and commercial expansion. Thanks to the Protestant work ethic, capitalist endeavor assumed almost religious authority. Ambition was sanctified, business was virtuous, and success was blessed by God. Warren Zimmerman, our last Ambassador to the old Yugoslavia and a former Assistant Secretary of State, described this era in a great book I recommend, *First Triumph*, which focuses on the small group of men who helped build our Empire.

The naval strategist Alfred Mahan was an earlier incarnation of George Kennan, something of a misfit, but a brilliant academic/bureaucrat whose writings resulted in a fundamental paradigm shift of American policy. Mahan wrote: “I am, frankly, an imperialist, in the sense that I believe that no nation, certainly no great nation, should maintain the policy of isolation which fitted our earlier history; above all, should not on that outlived premise refuse to intervene in events obviously thrust upon its conscience by Providence.” His goal was somewhat limited for his time: little dots on the world map rather than large swaths of territory; these dots were coaling stations where our commercial and naval ships could refuel. But, of course, those little dots needed buffer zones around them, didn’t they?

Others engaged in this process: Henry Cabot Lodge, the rather bigoted but also very smart Senator. And John Hay, our Secretary of State. Hay was a really complex character. He had a very self-effacing demeanor, which he could afford because he was wealthy. If you’re lobbying for an assignment, here’s a good line he used in a letter to President McKinley about the ambassadorship in London: “There has been so much talk about my being sent to England that I presume you may have given some consideration to the matter. I do not think that it is altogether selfishness and vanity which has brought me to think that, perhaps, you might do worse than to select me.” You might want to be a little more direct. And it wouldn’t hurt if you had Hay’s

money. For example, when McKinley was inaugurated he was wearing a gold ring that Hay had given him, in which was embedded a strand of George Washington's hair.

Foremost among the Empire builders was, of course, Teddy Roosevelt, our hyper-energetic, Rough Rider President, former Assistant Secretary of the Navy. He knew how to get things done and simply refused to let obstacles get in his way. An example: He wanted to send our capital ships -- the "Great White Fleet"-- on a round-the-world tour to showcase America's strength. Congress responded that it simply didn't have enough money in the budget for such an extravagance; it had perhaps only half of what was needed. So Roosevelt sent the fleet halfway around the world, then went back to Congress, and asked, "Do you want them back?" With his combination of audacity, energy, arrogance, generosity, and paternalism, Roosevelt personified his era.

Remember the *Maine*! Sunk in Havana harbor. Victim of Spanish perfidy. Decades later, technical surveys commissioned by Admiral Hyman Rickover authoritatively showed that the *Maine* blew up on its own. There was no sabotage. But it didn't matter at the time, did it? As a result of our war with Spain, we took Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Also at this time we gained control of Guam, Samoa, and we extended our control of Panama.

During this period, the U.S. concluded its slow-motion conquest of Hawaii. The coup d'état against Queen Liliuokalani was a nineteenth century example of a successful public-private partnership. Why did we do it? Our muscular approach was typified by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which reported: "The issue in Hawaii is not between native monarchy and the Republic. The issue is whether, in that inevitable struggle, Asia or America shall have the vantage ground of the naval key and commercial crossroads of the Pacific." President McKinley, who was more direct in his language, said, "We need Hawaii as much, and a good deal more, than we did California. It is manifest destiny."

## **World War I - America Returns To Europe**

Why did the United State become enmeshed in European conflicts?

The best description of the causes of World War I remains Barbara Tuchman's classic study, *The Guns of August*. It describes the alliance structures that were so precariously balanced for decades and how this balance tilted toward war with a few gunshots in Sarajevo. This air of inevitability was captured by the British poet W.H. Auden when he wrote, "In the nightmare of the dark/all the dogs of Europe bark/and the living nations wait/each sequestered in its hate." But while hostilities were inevitable in Europe, America's involvement in the war was not. At first, the question was: Can America avoid entanglement Europe's battles? But very quickly the question became, how long can we keep from being sucked in?

Some might say that if the war had come a decade or so earlier, the U.S. might have been spared. The century-long process of Anglo-American rapprochement wasn't really completed, certainly not in the hearts and minds of the American people, until late in the Roosevelt Administration or even into Taft's presidency. But by 1914 our special relationship with Britain had been cemented, and our warm feelings for England were accompanied by our horror for German

crimes on the high seas. As was the case in the War of 1812, the key issue was the rights of neutral shipping. When the *Lusitania* was sunk in 1915 we almost joined the Allies. By 1917, our entry became inevitable

A Foreign Service sidebar: A tremendous technical development occurred at this time that revolutionized diplomacy and, indirectly, our personnel system: telegraphy. For the first time, diplomats posted at embassies and consulates were no longer independent actors with general guidelines who were expected to use their judgment until receiving instructions whenever the clipper ship delivered bags of dispatches. For veteran practitioners in Washington and abroad this new sense of immediacy was stunning. Telegraphy also created a new avenue into the Foreign Service. Code clerks and cipher clerks were brought in, many of whom then moved into diplomatic positions. And a new jargon, “telegraphese,” was created. This is a kind of language that I hope you don’t encounter too much, but some old codgers in the Foreign Service will still write cables in telegraphese -- a way of writing in very compact phrases harkening back to the days when the State Department paid for telegram transmission by the word. This is why we end up with shorthand phrases in the cable record like: “Poloff demarched reftel Defmin Tuesday,” which translated means, “The Embassy’s political officer met the Defense Minister on Tuesday and presented the demarche as ordered in the telegram referred to above.” It’s very hard lingo to read. It has the additional advantage of making your work more opaque and mysterious to the uninitiated. One of the greatest examples of telegraphese was the cable sent from the head of our legation in St. Petersburg when the Czar of Russia and his family were killed in Yekaterinburg. The cable reported: “Emperor dead.” That’s that. A more detailed report was later shipped out by diplomatic pouch.

During this period, a disconcerting and continuing trend began. Presidents began bypassing both the State Department and Congress in foreign policy. Special envoys were sent out -- first Edward House for Wilson, as later Harry Hopkins for FDR, Kissinger for Nixon, etc. Such channels of communication had the advantage of being direct, but they did not help build consensus within the government when it was often necessary. Example: Wilson had no significant consultation with Congress before he announced his Fourteen Points. Is it any wonder that the League of Nations was shot down in the Senate?

### **“Independent Internationalism”**

Some observers might say that not much happened internationally in the interwar years. In fact, it was a very active time globally for the United States. But not in diplomacy. Wilson’s League of Nations fiasco was the result of isolationism, but we were isolationist only in so far as we sought to isolate ourselves from war. We were still very engaged in the world – and increasingly so. The Open Door policy, which sought commercial, non-military stabilization of the world through economic and commercial contacts, was embraced by all. This policy enjoyed bipartisan, across-the-board support. It was aptly described by President Wilson as “independent internationalism.” After the horror of World War I, we shunned entangling alliances, but we enthusiastically pushed for international commercial expansion.

A Foreign Service sidebar: Thanks to the reform trend of the Progressives in the late 1800’s and into the new century, the Foreign Service became increasingly professional. The Rogers Act of

1924 created the modern Foreign Service. It integrated the diplomatic and consular corps. It created the Foreign Service Exam and the ten ranks in the Foreign Service that exist to this day.

American Presidents in the interwar years did not exactly stride the world stage. Quite the contrary, in fact. Some examples: Harding, when he was interviewed by a British journalist, waved off foreign policy questions, saying, "I don't know anything about this Europe stuff." Coolidge was even more reticent. (He was described as someone, "who looks much like a wooden cigar store Indian but more tired somehow.") In his autobiography, which was as thick as he was thin, there is not a single mention of foreign policy. And Hoover, who had seen the results of war when leading reconstruction work in Europe, said "healthy trade relations are the route to peace."

In this period, if you were interested in making your mark in global affairs, you would not have joined the Foreign Service, which was described as a "pretty good club" but was not seen as a place for energetic go-getters. You would have worked for Goodyear in the Dutch East Indies, or for Swift and Armor in South America. You would have been lining up tin concessions in Bolivia or cutting deals in Chile for copper. You'd be exploring for oil deposits in Latin American and elsewhere.

For the period 1925 to 1929, if you were to combine the industrial production of the United States, Japan, and all of Europe, the U.S. would have controlled half of that amount. The general trends of the period were commercial expansion, military skittishness, and an emphasis on pronouncements of principle rather than practical engagement. The result was sometimes silly. The Kellogg-Briand Pact, for example, outlawed war, but had no enforcement mechanism. Then there was the Manchurian Crisis, when Japan moved into what later would be called Manchuguo. Secretary of State Stimson gave several speeches in which he said the U.S. would simply refuse to recognize the situation, as if this would somehow help the situation.

## **World War II and World Power**

Officially, the United States remained neutral during the initial conflicts of World War II: in Asia, when the Japanese began to create their "Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere," or when Germany sought its "Lebensraum." But this was neutrality with a twist. When Poland was invaded in 1939, President Roosevelt proclaimed, "This nation will remain a neutral nation, but I cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thought as well." Our basic policy was to hope that we could avoid war while we simultaneously provided as much aid as possible to those who were at war with the Axis. Yes, this was contradictory, but it was necessary given domestic American sentiment and prudent given the understanding that the United Kingdom and its beleaguered allies were fighting Democracy's fight against totalitarianism.

Examples: Our trade with "Canada," then a British Dominion, rose dramatically. All of a sudden Canada seemed to need a lot more steel and other manufactured goods than it ever did before. The U.S. Navy eventually escorted American and Allied transports all the way to the mid-Atlantic, where they were then picked up by the British. The lend-lease deal traded British bases for American destroyers; it faced some stiff resistance in Congress, but Roosevelt's floor managers pushed it through after artfully numbering the act "HR 1776." One little known fact:

Four thousand U.S. Marines were sent to Iceland for what was called “hemispheric defense” without any legal basis whatsoever.

Who conducted American diplomacy before and during the war? The answer is: most definitely not Cordell Hull, our longest-serving Secretary of State (1933-1945). Mr. Hull is remembered best for two things: setting policy on trade tariffs and getting out of the way when the White House wanted to make policy. Harry Hopkins, Sumner Wells and other special agents were FDR’s real policy-makers at that time. As Hull himself put it, “If the President wishes to speak to me, all he has to do is pick up that telephone of his, and I’ll come running. But it’s not for me to bother the president.” The State Department was very much out of the loop for much of the diplomacy of World War II. For example, at the Tehran Conference, which decided much of the structure of postwar Germany, no State Department representative was present, only military officers from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This trend has since continued, with growing influence of the military in foreign policy decision-making.

The two main areas of focus of wartime diplomacy were, first, the future borders in Europe, that is, eventual spheres of influence, and second, the opening up of the second front. Stalin called the first “algebra” and the second “practical arithmetic.” Eighteen major wartime conferences took place. The USSR participated in only about one-third of these. The United States was in the driver’s seat. Our time was becoming what *TIME*’s Henry Luce’s called the “American Century.” In the decade after the war, 1945 to 1955, the U.S. controlled one half of the Planet Earth’s industrial production.

## **The Cold War**

Cold War historiography is a very crowded place. Lots of people have written books about how the East-West conflict came about. It’s really one of these chicken-and-the-egg questions. The core reason for the Cold War is simple: the lack of trust between East and West. But to what extent was this lack of trust justified? You’d have to clear off a few shelves in your library if you wanted to get all the different perspectives: revisionists, anti-revisionists, nationalists, etc. Historians like Gar Alperovitz will tell you that the only reason that Truman dropped the atomic bomb on Japan was to impress Stalin. Some of the first really balanced approaches to the topic appeared in the late 70s. One was Daniel Yergin’s *A Shattered Peace*. The newest book, John Lewis Gaddis’ *The Cold War: A New History*, is just that. It relies on newly-opened Soviet archives for a broader view.

The gold standard of contemporary analysis of Soviet behavior was George Kennan’s “X” article. It was published in *Foreign Affairs* as “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” an article based on what we have come to call the “Long Telegram.” Remember telegraphese? Well, Kennan sat down in Moscow and wrote an eight-part telegram with all the modifiers and articles and dependent clauses included. He analyzed the sources of the Soviets’ aggressive behavior and judged that they could not be trusted. He recommended a policy of containment, a paradigm we followed for nearly half a century.

Our Cold War Secretaries of State were strong: Burns, Marshall, Acheson, Dulles, Rusk. And they followed, in a very mechanistic way, Kennan’s containment policy, which said that the U.S.

must meet Soviet challenges quickly and unequivocally. The Cold War was a zero-sum game that resulted in a neo-mercantilistic foreign policy whereby what was good for one side was bad for the other side and vice versa. This later led to a view and policy enunciated by Jeane Kirkpatrick that while fascist dictatorships can evolve, communist dictatorships cannot. This is why we got into bed with the Pinochets, the Diems, the Greek Colonels, and various tinpot dictators on four continents. Kirkpatrick was not proven until 1989-91, when communist states did, in fact, evolve toward democracy.

A Foreign Service sidebar: While we had strong Secretaries of State during the Cold War, this was not necessarily the best of times for the Foreign Service. Bureaucratic evolution did occur. The Foreign Service Act of 1946 overhauled the Foreign Service and created the Foreign Service Institute, which wandered around the DC area for decades before settling into its comfy digs in Arlington. The Wriston Report led to the merging of many Foreign Service and Civil Service positions. But this was also the McCarthy era, and the Department's leadership simply did not watch the back of Foreign Service officers. People like John Stewart Service and the "China hands" were hung out to dry for telling the truth.

The Cold War was a time of building alliances to counter the communist threat. Regional associations included NATO, SEATO, CENTRO, and ANZUS. We conducted numerous proxy wars, big and little, some of them largely forgotten, and we sent troops to various areas of tension. We had Korea, various Berlin crises, Cuba, Vietnam, Grenada, Nicaragua. Not just troops were involved. Foreign Service Officers were often on the front lines. In Southeast Asia, the CORDS program sent State and AID personnel into the countryside, where they were expected to win the hearts and minds of the people. This program was the model for today's Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan and Iraq, where State and AID officers live and work in a "Fort Apache" environment together with their military colleagues.

The Foreign Service, like America, was changing. If I were standing here in front of an orientation class of, say, forty years ago, my audience would look very different. Until the 1970s, female officers who married were expected to leave the Service. There was no legal or regulatory justification for this; it was just an accepted part of the culture. Wives of officers were expected to provide uncompensated services at posts, usually at community activities or representational events. In fact, annual efficiency reports included a paragraph to be written on the officer's wife – often by the wife of the American ambassador. Grudgingly, and usually as the result of lawsuits or the threat of lawsuits, the Foreign Service became more representative of American society. We actively began to recruit women and minorities in various ways, first by changing the exam and then through targeted recruiting. Our current legal structure is the Foreign Service Act of 1980, which set new rules about the length of time you can serve in Washington or stay abroad, established your areas of specialization ("cones"), and mandated an up-or-out system in which you must continue to be promoted or be asked to leave.

### **Diplomacy in a Unipolar World**

The geopolitical changes that occurred between 1989 and 1991 were breathtaking. Nobody predicted the fall of the Berlin Wall. Nobody predicted that *glasnost* and *perestroika* would result in the breakup of the Soviet Union. No one predicted the split of Czechoslovakia (but then

no one really cared). And while everyone foresaw the self-destruction of Yugoslavia, nobody wanted anything to do with it. As James Baker said after he helped President Bush shepherd the U.S. through this challenging period of instability in Europe, when it came to Yugoslavia, “We don’t have a dog in this fight.”

The first Gulf War marked the first major post-World War II event in which the Soviet Union was on the sidelines; and in the run-up to this war we saw the first creation of a “coalition of the willing,” an ad hoc grouping of countries with immediate common interests, not an institutionalized pact based on existing alliance structures.

The Treaty of Paris institutionalized the Helsinki process by creating the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The OSCE was built on the basic understanding that democracies generally don’t go to war with each other, so fostering democracy is a good way to prevent future conflicts. “Preventive diplomacy” was born.

Eras are usually defined after they’ve occurred, so we still don’t have a name for our current period that fits better than “the Post-Cold War Era.” In the ten years between the fall of Communism in 1991 and the terrorist attacks of 2001, no fundamental reevaluation of American foreign policy took place. The public, as well as some practitioners, seemed to miss the clarity of the Cold War, when wins and losses could be tallied with greater certainty. American leadership in, first, the successful diplomatic efforts to end the war in Bosnia and, soon thereafter, in the NATO air campaign to top Milosevic’s genocide in Kosovo, were grudgingly accepted as the duty of the world’s “last superpower.” *Noblesse oblige*.

During this period, the general trend continued of foreign policy decision-making power shifting toward the White House and the Pentagon. A series of Secretaries of State – Christopher, Albright, Powell – took a back seat to the NSC, the Pentagon, and/or the Office of the Vice President.

The current Bush Administration began with indications that it was more than comfortable going it alone in the world: its unwillingness to sign the Kyoto Accords on global warming, its willingness to challenge the ABM treaty with a reinvigorated Strategic Defense Initiative. Some observers characterized this approach as “hegemonic isolationism” – ignoring a world that is unwilling to share America’s views. This message has been reinforced since 9/11: if we can’t find allies, we will take unilateral action. This is why our diplomats abroad find themselves defending our extraordinary rendition policy or seeking Article 98 exceptions to the Rome Treaty on the International Criminal Court. As President Bush emphasized in his second inaugural address, a singular characteristic of our current foreign policy is to make others more like us. The mechanism for implementing this change, and a tool you will use as diplomats abroad or foreign policy managers in Washington, is “transformational diplomacy.” This is an evolving concept. Read the text of Secretary Rice’s Georgetown speech for a basic introduction to its underpinnings.

As Foreign Service Officers, you should be attracted to the concept of “transformation.” Every survey and every battery of personality tests given new FSOs makes one thing clear: However diverse our backgrounds, we have one thing in common: We like change. Why else choose a

career and lifestyle that challenges us with a new job, a new country, a new environment, a new set of friends and colleagues every few years?

In this vein, I will leave you with a rather long but captivating quote.

It comes from one of the godfathers of the Foreign Service, George Kennan. His memoirs are really fun. You may think of him as a gray eminence, drafting his “Long Telegram” in Moscow or writing his tomes in Princeton. But once upon a time he was a Junior Officer, too, just like you – a bit unsure of himself, untested by life and the world of diplomacy. Early in his book he describes a transformative event at his first post in Geneva.

“For anyone so callow, so unformed, so restless, so lacking in knowledge of himself and the world, there could have been no professional framework better than that of the Foreign Service. Its protective paternalism and sober training, more rigorous than now in the discipline of official style and deportment, served to steady down a young man, by no means ready as yet for complete personal independence. Most helpful of all was the new sense of responsibility. Within weeks of entering into my first tour of duty abroad, I discovered that in this new role as representative, however lowly, of a government, rather than just myself, the more painful personal idiosyncrasies and neuroses tended to leave me, at least in the office. I welcomed with surprised relief the opportunity to assume a new personality behind which the old, introverted one could retire, be relieved of some of its helplessness and often get some measure of perspective on itself. The moment of discovery, if I remember correctly, was an official reception at the Hotel Beau-Rivage in Geneva as a new Vice Consul, attired in a resplendent cutaway that was *de rigueur* in those days. I was obliged to share with the other officers of the Consulate General the duties of host. There on that summer day, with the orchestra playing on the terrace and the great lake shimmering beyond, with new guests constantly appearing and requiring to be greeted and welcomed, I suddenly became aware that I had a reputable and appointed place in the proceedings. I was now responsible for the well-being of others. For this reason, I was something more than my usual self. Under this welcome mask, I felt a hitherto unknown strength, a strength that was never entirely to fail me, through a long Foreign Service career.”

So, good luck with your own transformation! I hope that you, like Kennan, will find a home in the Service and that you’ll also have the courage to challenge paradigms and to speak truth to power.

Have fun and stay safe!