

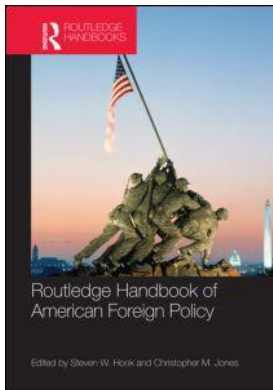
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Diplomatic History

James M. McCormick

During the early months of his administration, President Barack Obama delivered speeches in the Czech Republic, Russia, and Ghana outlining his approach to the conduct of American foreign policy. In part, this effort was to separate his administration from that of George W. Bush, but it was also to outline how he would conduct American diplomacy during his term. Specifically, he called for coordinated actions to restore prosperity, a strengthened NATO alliance to provide security, and a “sustained effort among the American and Russian peoples to identify mutual interests” (Obama 2009a, 2009b). He also declared that the United States would work with the rest of the world as “partners” and that such partnerships would be “grounded in mutual responsibility and mutual respect” (Obama 2009c).

At about the same time, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (2009) further specified this new diplomatic approach. The “new era of engagement,” she said, would be “based on common interests, shared values, and mutual respect” and that America would “advance these interests through partnership, and promote universal values through the power of our example and the empowerment of people.” Further, the United States would build a new “architecture of cooperation” in which it would move “away from a multi-polar world and toward a multi-partner world.” Within this framework, the United States would enhance various mechanisms of global cooperation with allies, regional organizations, and global institutions and would also engage with those with whom it disagrees. In all, Clinton rejected the policy approaches of the past: Neither a “19th century concert-of-power” approach, “a 20th century balance-of-power strategy,” “Cold War containment,” nor “unilateralism” would be the policy of the new administration. Instead, the Obama administration would put its own stamp on American diplomacy through its partnership strategy.

Such statements on setting a new diplomatic course are hardly unique to the Obama administration, but it does raise the question as to whether there is some distinct American diplomatic approach (or style) or whether there have been multiple diplomatic approaches (or styles) over time. In this chapter, we examine that question by surveying American diplomacy over more than two centuries of its history. Our point of departure is to consider the notions of diplomacy and diplomatic style in general. In turn, we discuss the conventional views that have been used to characterize America’s early diplomatic approach and consider several critiques of that view. Next, we analyze how the diplomatic approaches of the United States changed as the United States emerged as a major world power and how those approaches have

evolved to the present. Finally, we consider several different diplomatic tactics that have been used by the United States as important mechanisms to advance its foreign policy goals.

Diplomacy refers to those efforts to resolve differences between states, groups, or individuals through discussion and persuasion, rather than coercion or force.¹ Indeed, persuasion has been described as “the engine of diplomacy” (Powell 2008: 214). Yet, persuasion does not occur in a vacuum and alone will not likely lead to success in foreign policy. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell has argued that “power” also is necessary for success. Instead, “diplomacy ... is persuasion in the shadow of power ... the orchestration of words against the backdrop of deeds in pursuit of policy objectives” (Powell 2008: 214, 216). Additionally, diplomacy works best when others (e.g., states, coalitions, alliances) work with a state to multiply its power capabilities and when the state affords the adversary “an honorable path of retreat” (Powell 2008: 219). In this sense, diplomacy involves persuading others but also seeking accommodation through regular and sustained negotiations, and perhaps ultimately engaging in compromises between the competing parties.

The diplomatic styles of nations differ considerably from one another in the international system. At one end of the spectrum, some states may utilize “warrior diplomacy.”² This style is often an aggressive approach in which one state places demands or make threats against another state as part of its diplomatic tactics. For a state with a considerable amount of power differential with another state, this diplomatic style may be successful. Yet, this approach is necessarily risky since it may stimulate a strong sense of nationalism in the adversary and ultimately produce resistance. At the other end of the spectrum, some states may utilize “shopkeeper diplomacy.” This approach views diplomacy more as a bargaining arrangement between states. Much as a customer and shopkeeper haggle over the costs of items and quality of goods that are for sale, states would engage in bargaining as a way to settle their differences with one another. “The foundation of good diplomacy is the same as the foundation of good business,” as Nicolson (1963: 77) put it. In this sense, both parties would recognize the interests of one another; both would likely have some bargaining leverage; and both would seek to accommodate one another, even as they pursue their own ends. In between these two styles are likely to be most states in that they adopt a mixture of these two styles to fit the immediate situation. In this sense, the diplomatic style of a state is likely to change for states over time and circumstance.

Two important constraints that influence where along this continuum of diplomatic styles from warrior to shopkeeper that a state may fall are the relative power capabilities of a state and the ethical, moral, or ideological principles that guide it. As noted, the relative power of a state can be crucial in its ability to influential a bargaining situation. Two states that are engaged in diplomatic exchanges and possess relatively equal power capabilities would likely move them closer to the “shopkeeper” style of diplomacy. Two states that are unequal in power capabilities may well lead one to engage in more “warrior” style of diplomacy, as suggested above. Similarly, the strength or centrality of ethical, moral, or ideological principles in guiding a state will also affect its diplomatic style. To be sure, all states, by the very nature of their sovereignty, have important principles that guide their conduct. Some states, though, are particularly driven by their ideological views, making it difficult for them to engage in diplomacy, especially since diplomacy is often about compromise among the participants.

Recent additions to the lexicon of “diplomatic style” are the modes or methods of diplomacy.³ These modes range from the use of bilateral diplomacy, the most common mode over time, to the use of multilateral diplomacy, the method increasingly used in today’s globalized world. Both of these two principal modes have several different variants. Bilateral diplomacy may involve the use of nation-to-nation exchanges through embassies, but, in recent decades, states (or groups of states) have also come to include the use of summit diplomacy (e.g., regularized meetings between the leaders of Russia and the United States) or the use of a special envoy to

tackle particular problems with a state or region (e.g., the use of such an envoy by the European Union as its foreign policy representative or the use of such an envoy by the United States for its Afghanistan and Pakistan policy) to conduct bilateral diplomacy. Sometimes, too, states conduct indirect bilateral diplomacy. That is, a state conducts bilateral diplomacy with a third state over issues when two rivals are unable to conduct direct bilateral diplomacy. The Obama administration served this function when talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority broke down. Multilateral diplomacy has long been conducted in established international and regional institutions (e.g., the United Nations Organization or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), but new modes of multilateralism, too, are now commonplace. International conferences may take up some vexing global issue, such as the 2009 UN Copenhagen Summit addressing global climate change, or groups of states may join together to take up a particularly thorny problem, such as the EU 3 (Britain, France, and Germany) or the P5 +1 (Britain, China, France, Russia, the United States, and Germany) seeking to negotiate with Iran over its nuclear intentions. Furthermore, and importantly, non-state actors (e.g., the Catholic Church) can sometimes serve as important intermediaries for states or groups of states seeking a diplomatic solution to an international problem.

Early American Diplomacy

At its founding, the conventional view is that America's diplomacy and its diplomatic style largely rejected the traditional approaches of Europe and instead pursued an isolationist approach to foreign policy. In this sense, the United States adopted neither the shopkeeper nor the warrior approach to diplomacy. Instead, philosophical (or ideological) and pragmatic (or power) considerations seemingly dictated America's initial diplomatic choice of isolationism.

On a philosophical level, the United States adopted this approach to protect the unique set of values and beliefs upon which America was founded. The new nation emphasized liberty and equality in a world at the time where ascription and privilege dominated; it emphasized personal freedom and equality in a world where societal order and inequality dominated; and it emphasized linking domestic values and foreign policy in a world where these two concepts were often separated.⁴ Other elements of "American exceptionalism," or distinctiveness, also supported the belief that the world's "new nation" was also its "first democracy." Furthermore, the United States was, with its emphasis on the individual, in a unique position to improve the lot of ordinary citizens and to be a role model for other states to follow (Hook and Spanier 2010: ch. 1). In this sense, diplomatic entanglement or involvement, and especially with Europe from which its inhabitants had just departed, had the potential to undermine this unique democratic experiment on the North American continent.

On a pragmatic level, an isolationist approach was also appealing as a diplomatic approach. The young nation was separated geographically from Europe, the center of global politics, and thus avoiding the disputes and controversies emanating from that continent seemed eminently wise and reasonable. The new United States was also a weak nation with limited capabilities, a relatively large landmass, limited resources, and a small population. National unity—or more accurately, sectional divisions—remained a key problem. Foreign involvement or foreign conflicts hardly seemed advisable at a time that U.S. leaders were trying to foster national unity. Importantly, too, the North American continent remained largely unexplored and unsettled, making western expansion a top priority. Indeed, the pursuit of "Manifest Destiny" across the American continent would eventually dominate policymakers' attention.

Two important statements, George Washington's Farewell Address in 1796 and the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, solidified this isolationist sentiment in U.S. diplomacy. Yet, both of those declarations also specified the limitation of this noninvolvement in important ways. In his

Farewell Address, Washington set out the general parameters of American diplomacy. First of all, he called for the United States to “observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all.” It also warned that “a passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a variety of evils,” including the possibility of becoming entangled “in the quarrels and wars” of another nation. In addition, Washington was very explicit about limiting America’s ties and involvement with Europe: “Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none or very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics or the ordinary complications and collisions of her friendship or enmities” (“Washington’s Farewell Address” 1786–1797). In all, then, Washington declared that “the great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible.” In this sense, political detachment from other states was Washington’s recommended course, even as he noted that commercial ties should be honored.

The Monroe Doctrine was even more careful in defining the nature of American isolationism. Like Washington, President James Monroe noted that the United States has no intention of interfering in European affairs and expected the Europeans to stay out of the affairs of the Western Hemisphere as well. He also noted that the political systems in Europe and America are different from one another and that the United States would “consider any attempt on their [European powers’] part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.” More significantly, perhaps, Monroe went on to assert that any European involvement in the Western Hemisphere would affect American “rights and interests.”⁵ In this sense, American isolationism from European affairs was reaffirmed, but Monroe expressed clear American *political* interest and involvement over the events in the Western Hemisphere.

The belief in American exceptionalism, particularly its commitment to democracy, had another important impact on the conduct of American diplomacy from the outset of the republic, namely a commitment to moral principle in the conduct of foreign policy. Perhaps Dexter Perkins (1986: 20) put it best: “No one can understand American diplomacy who does not grasp the importance of the democratic motif in its historic evolution.” This commitment to democracy has meant that American diplomacy has not been conducted by political elites, at least in comparison to other countries, that it has been constrained by the public’s views, that it should not be conducted in secret, and that “the state is bound by the same moral code as is the individual.” Put differently, domestic principles or values will be incorporated into the actions of American diplomats. As a result, Perkins contends, “high-sounding declarations and general appeals to international morality will often characterize the utterances of our [American] statesmen and even their private diplomatic notes” (Perkins 1986: 21).

In sum, these commitments to isolationism and to moral principles in American diplomacy largely set the tone and the priorities for American diplomacy throughout much of the nineteenth and early twenties centuries of the republic. For instance, the United States did enter into a large number of “amity and commerce” agreements with other nations from 1778–1899, much as Washington had allowed such economic ties, but, in this same period, it entered into only one alliance (with France) and relatively few “political” ties with other states.⁶ In this sense, Washington’s admonitions (and later, Jefferson’s warning against “entangling alliances”) were largely honored in the conduct of American foreign policy. Indeed, the American commitment to these principles comprised the “Old Testament” of U.S. foreign policy and “dominated the rhetoric and, for the most part, the practice of U.S. diplomacy from 1776 to the 1890s” (McDougall 1997: 4).

Several scholars, however, have advanced alternative interpretations of America's diplomatic approach at the beginning of the nation and beyond. Walter Russell Mead (2001: 7) challenges "the tendency to reduce the American foreign policy tradition to a legacy of moralism and isolationism" and contends that "after a rocky start the young American republic quickly established itself as a force to be reckoned with." The founders built a successful coalition against the British, maneuvered to secure the Louisiana Purchase from the Napoleonic Wars, annexed Florida, secured Texas, and thwarted repeated attempts by Britain and France to assist the Confederacy during the Civil War. A generation later, "the United States became a recognized world power while establishing an unchallenged hegemony in the Western Hemisphere" (Mead 2001: 8). Furthermore, the American presidents from the founding through the Civil War had a wealth of foreign policy experience (as secretaries of state, cabinet or diplomat representative, or military generals) prior to assuming that office.

In this sense, these early presidents had an understanding and interest in foreign policy—much more than we might immediately attribute to them—and such experience stands in contrast to American presidents from World I to the present who have had limited foreign policy experience prior to taking office.⁷ In all, Mead argues, foreign policy and diplomatic activities were crucial to America's evolution, and the United States was hardly divorced from world politics at its beginning—or since. David Hendrickson (2009) agrees that foreign policy was an important and abiding concern of early American administrations. Indeed, one of Hendrickson's principal themes is how foreign policy discourse was constantly utilized to prevent the American continent from becoming a set of competing states, much like Europe, and how foreign policy actions enhanced national unity (also see McMahon, 2010).

Similarly, Hans Morgenthau rejects the notion that the United States was divorced or isolated from international diplomacy. Instead, he contends that the United States acted in the national interest from its beginning and into the twentieth century, though the nation's leaders were not always willing to admit that they were doing so. Realist principles or national interest politics ultimately governed America's early diplomatic activities even if moral principle were sometimes invoked. For Morgenthau (1986: 33), the founders and several of its initial leaders were well aware of the national interest of the United States and acted in accord with those interests. In particular, these leaders recognized that the United States had an interest in preserving America's position in the Western Hemisphere and the need to prevent Europe from intervening there. As a result, the United States "pursued policy aiming at the maintenance of the balance of power in Europe" (Morgenthau 1986: 34), since in this way no European power would be able to have the luxury to interfere in the Western Hemisphere.

During the Federalist period, in particular, Morgenthau (1986: 38) argues that American diplomacy was "realistic" in that the leaders thought and acted "in terms of power." Washington's proclamation of neutrality in the European war against France—and thus his refusal to honor American treaty commitment to France—was less a statement of isolationism and more a statement of recognizing the real national interests of the United States. Similarly, subsequent leaders, such as Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams, may have been "ideological" in their invocation of moral principles to justify their actions, but they, too, acted on the basis of "the ever changing distribution of power" (Morgenthau 1986: 41). John Quincy Adams, the actual author of the Monroe Doctrine, was the epitome of this admixture of moral principles and power consideration. In this sense, the Monroe Doctrine may have secured the isolation of the United States, but it also preserved American dominance in the Western Hemisphere. For Morgenthau, though, this commitment to realism in American diplomacy was not to last. By the end of the nineteenth century, Morgenthau (1986: 43) argues, the "utopian period" of American foreign policy had set in, and American diplomacy was now guided by moral principles both in thought and action—to its detriment in his *realpolitik* view.

Diplomacy in America's Second Century

Although Morgenthau identified the presidency of William McKinley and his expansive foreign policy as the initial manifestation of this new utopian approach, diplomatic historian Robert Ferrell (1959) views the origins somewhat earlier and labels the emergence of this period as “the new manifest destiny” on the part of the United States. That is, if the first half of the 1800s were largely about completing “manifest destiny” within the continental United States, this new manifest destiny was about expanding American interest overseas “to noncontinental possessions in the Caribbean, Pacific, and Far East” (Ferrell 1959: 169). The motivation for this action was rooted in a reaffirmation of American exceptionalism and the benefits that other nations would receive from American success. To Ferrell (1959: 173) the American “mission” in the world changed during the latter part of the nineteenth century: “before the Civil War the usual statement of the doctrine of mission had been that the United States should be a witness, in confident but quiet modesty, for democratic principles; after the war the doctrine of mission changed from witnessing to proselytizing.” In all this new diplomatic approach for the United States not only involved active involvement in global politics but it was driven by the desire to expand American influence beyond the Western Hemisphere. Ferrell (1959: 170) further argues that that expansion “was virtually a carbon copy of the contemporary imperialism of European powers in Africa and Asia.” In this sense, “there was, undeniably an American imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century.”

The Spanish American War of 1898 is the principal illustration of this new manifest destiny, although American actions in the previous two decades (over Samoa, Chile, and the Hawaiian Islands) also reflect this new diplomatic approach. The U.S. declaration of war against Spain was motivated by several factors: the U.S. desire to defend of Cubans who were judged to be ill-treated by the Spanish; the belief that the reforms undertaken by Spain were insufficient to satisfy American demands; the sinking of the *Maine*; and perhaps a personal affront to President McKinley as well.⁸ In this sense, moral indignation and American mission seemed crucial to this action. Yet this war had other important consequences for America's new global diplomacy beyond the freeing of Cubans. In the Treaty of Paris, the United States gained control of the Philippine Islands, Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, and Guam in the western Pacific from Spanish control. At about the same time, too, the United States annexed the Hawaiian Islands and set forth the Open Door policy toward China, including an apparent commitment to prevent “foreign encroachment” on Chinese territory (Ferrell 1959: 185; Kennan 1951: 34). In all, American global involvement and American imperialism were well underway.

This new manifest destiny continued apace in Latin America and Asia for the Roosevelt and Taft administrations, but it was during Woodrow Wilson's presidency that this diplomatic approach took an important turn. To be sure, Wilson authorized American interventions into Latin America during his administration, but he also put a distinctive stamp on American diplomacy with his introduction of what came to be called “Wilsonianism” and later “liberal internationalism.” G. John Ikenberry (2009: 11–13) identified six ideas as constituting the core of Wilson's diplomatic approach. These included the belief that “a peaceful order must be built on a community of democratic states,” that free trade will foster this order, that international law and international organizations “have a modernizing and civilizing effect on states,” that the notion of collective security or “community of power” will enhance a peaceful order, and that the world “was moving in a progressive and modernizing direction.” Importantly, too, the sixth idea was crucial: “the United States was at the vanguard of this movement, and it had special responsibilities to lead, direct, and inspire the world due to its founding ideas, geopolitical position, and enlightened leadership.” Finally, Wilson was concerned that moral values and universal moral principles—beyond those of any individual state—should serve as fundamental guides to foreign policy by the United States and other nations (McCormick 2010: 26–27).

In important ways, Wilson's approach was a considerable distance from American diplomacy during its first century. Wilson called for an active involvement by the United States in global affairs, believed that the internal make-up of states (i.e., the creation of democratic states) was crucial to a peaceful order, rejected the balance-of-power principles that largely governed international politics at the time, and saw a central role for the United States in global affairs. At the same time, his commitment to ethical principles as the guide to foreign policy was consistent with the traditional views of the founders, although how he wanted to promote those views were much closer to the "new manifest destiny" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Wilson's foreign policy actions put into practice this diplomatic approach, albeit with mixed success. Because the Wilson administration had little initial interest in the outbreak of World War I since it represented a traditional European conflict ("we are not concerned" with its origins or goals [Wilson quoted in Kennan 1951: 57]), it kept the United States out of the European war for several years. Yet, when the United States did become involved in that war over the perceived violations of freedom of the seas and the rights of neutrals (after the sinking of the *Lusitania* and *Sussex* and the ominous Zimmermann Telegram to Mexico), Wilson justified his actions on the basis of moral principle and his determination to challenge the current operation of international politics. America's aims, Wilson said, would be "to make the world safe for democracy," and its involvement would be a "war to end all wars."

Indeed, at the end of this conflict, Wilson more fully advanced his diplomatic approach by announcing his Fourteen Points which called for, among other reforms, self-determination of peoples as a way to resolve several issues dealing with territory and nationalism in Europe and the creation of "a general association of nations" to guarantee the "independence and territorial integrity to great and small state alike" (Wilson 1918: 691). In this way, the expansion of democratic states and the development of a collective security organization would transform the international system from an order based upon national interests to one based upon cooperation among democratic states. Although his collective security idea became a reality with the creation of the League of Nations, he was not able to convince the U.S. Senate to approve the Versailles Treaty and join the League. As a result, American diplomacy returned to "normalcy" (or isolationism) under President Warren G. Harding and his successors. It remained in that mode until the Japanese attack upon Pearl Harbor in 1941, despite the efforts by President Franklin Roosevelt to nudge the United States toward involvement in World War II earlier.

In this sense, Wilson's "grand liberal vision of world order" (Ikenberry 2009: 10) was not realized, but his impact on American diplomacy remained. Wilson's emphasis on promoting democracies and a liberal order continued to be an aim of American diplomacy during the Cold War, albeit in a truncated Western form, and this diplomatic goal was accelerated by later administrations with the end of the Cold War. Similarly, Wilson's diplomatic vision of collective security was subsequently realized in the creation of the United Nations in 1945, although the effectiveness of that organization was limited by Cold War politics. Still, the dramatic growth of intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations had begun to knit the global community together. Furthermore, and especially with the end of the Cold War, economic globalization through a number of bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements flourished worldwide, in part reflecting Wilson's views. What remains in dispute in assessing Wilson's approach is whether his highest priority was the promotion of democratic states or the promotion of a "community of states" to realize a more peaceful international order.⁹ Nonetheless, his promotion of liberal internationalism does not remain in doubt.

Over the decades, Wilsonianism has come in for withering critiques by those who saw it as excessive moralism and moral crusading to those who view it as fraught with the danger of "liberal imperialism" or "liberal interventionism" (Smith 2009). Morgenthau (1986: 45–46, 48), for instance, viewed Wilsonianism as "moral principles divorced from reality" and in

particular a failure to promote American national interest. In his judgment, “Wilsonianism asserts that the American national interest is not somewhere in particular, but everywhere, being identical with the interests of mankind itself.” Such a diplomatic approach to foreign policy denies the “moral dignity of the national interest” and substitutes a set of principles that cannot be achieved in a system of sovereign states. Similarly, George Kennan (1951), another political realist in the same vein as Morgenthau, critiqued Wilsonianism for the kind of diplomacy and foreign policy actions it wrought prior to and during World War I. To Kennan, the United States did not recognize the importance of what was occurring on the European continent in 1914 and did not act to preserve the balance of power when it possibly could have. That is, Wilson failed to act quickly enough when war broke out. When the United States finally did intervene, Kennan (1951: 64) argues, it should have avoided “moralistic slogans” to justify its actions and instead used “its full weight ... to achieve the termination of hostilities with a minimum prejudice to the future stability of the Continent.”

More recently, Tony Smith (2009) points to the dangers of embracing Wilsonianism in the current era and the underlying problem of this diplomatic approach more generally. With the emphasis on promoting democracy, Wilson’s approach contained the danger of encouraging the United States to engage in imperialist adventures. In his view, moreover, Wilsonianism served as “the intellectual origins of the call to democratize the world and open its markets that we find in the Bush Doctrine” (Smith 2009: 57). Indeed, this process started with the neoliberals in the Clinton administration who advanced democratic peace theory and argued for the “responsibility to protect” doctrine as opposed to an emphasis on state sovereignty. This action set the stage for the neoconservatives of the Bush administration to justify the invasion of Iraq. In this sense, the logical extension of Wilsonianism can be harmful to American foreign policy.

American Diplomacy Since World War II

With allied success at the end of World War II, American diplomacy was again at a crossroads. Should it revert to its traditional isolationist tendency, or should it remain actively involved in global politics? Global circumstances (the global power vacuum with the defeat or destruction of the European powers), the rise of the Soviet ideological challenge, and the decisions by key American leaders drove the United States to a globalist diplomacy (McCormick 2010: 37–45). On March 12, 1947, President Harry Truman summarized the philosophical rationale for this globalism before a joint session of Congress and committed the United States to “help free peoples maintain their free institutions and their national identity against aggressive movements that seek to impose on them totalitarian regimes” (Truman 1986: 58). This Truman Doctrine marked the beginning of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union (and their respective allies) and set the stage for the implementation of the containment policy as the official diplomatic strategy of the United States for almost two generations. In the space of a few short years, the United States implemented this policy by joining a series of multilateral (Rio Pact, NATO, ANZUS, and SEATO) and bilateral (with the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, China) pacts, developing a worldwide economic and military assistance program (e.g., the Mutual Security Act of 1954), and adopting a comprehensive domestic and international strategy (e.g., NSC-68) to combat the spread of communism.

Although the tactics varied from one administration to the next from 1947 to the early 1970s, each one sought to stop the expansion of communism through diplomatic, economic, and military instruments. The United States increased its defense spending dramatically, provided billions of dollars in assistance to aid countries threatened or perceived to be threaten by international communism, and engaged in a series of military interventions abroad to

stabilize the international order that favored Western-style democracies. These military actions ranged from stopping a perceived Russian–Chinese supported intervention into South Korea by North Korea (the Korean War, 1950–1953), the stand-off with the Soviet Union over the placement of missiles in Cuba (the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962) to the American intervention to aid South Vietnam over the attack by the North Vietnam (the Vietnam War, 1961–1975). In addition, the United States intervened overtly or covertly in several other places (e.g., Iran, Guatemala, Chile, and the Dominican Republic) to thwart the threat of communism. In all, Cold War diplomacy represented an activist global foreign policy that was driven by an ideological and moral imperative to resist the threat posed by the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China.

This Cold War diplomacy was animated and driven by what came to be called the Cold War consensus (McCormick 2010: 69–97). This consensus was based upon a series of interrelated assumptions about how the world and foreign policy operated during this time. First of all, the United States held a dichotomous view of the world divided between East and West or between the “free world” and the communist world. Second, and following from this first assumption, the United States viewed the communist states as unified and directed from Moscow. Third, the United States assumed unity among the states in the West and that those states would yield to and support American leadership on foreign policy questions. In this sense, bloc-to-bloc policies were to dominate. Fourth, the United States viewed skeptically change in the international system, especially change in the developing world. As a result, the United States viewed states that wished to follow nonaligned policy with suspicion. In all, stability or evolutionary change rather than rapid change was preferred by the United States.

By the early to mid-1960s, these assumptions were called into question by the actions of several states, and this reality ultimately produced some modification in American diplomacy. By the late 1950s, and certainly by the early 1960s, the Sino-Soviet split was recognized as real and persistent, and thus the claims of a monolithic communist bloc were called into question. Similarly, states within the Western alliance sought to pursue a more independent policy toward Eastern Europe. In turn, too, some Eastern European countries reciprocated with economic and diplomatic ties with the West (e.g., Poland and Romania). In this sense, bloc-to-bloc relations were unraveling. Finally, the non-aligned movement also became a formal organization in 1961, and this initial group of twenty-five states grew quickly over the years.

As a result, both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations adopted some accommodations to the realities of the global environment by taking supportive actions toward nonaligned states (e.g., newly independent African states) and toward some states in Eastern Europe (e.g., Poland). Yet, two crucial international events—the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War (that had important domestic consequences) ultimately shattered the Cold War Consensus and ushered in several new diplomatic approaches by subsequent administrations. The standoff in the Cuban Missile Crisis, for instance, raised questions about the wisdom of a confrontational approach toward the Soviet Union when each nation had such dangerous and destructive nuclear arsenals. In this sense, both states needed to adapt a new diplomatic approach toward one another. The Vietnam War raised questions about the limits of American power in pursuing a global containment strategy and seemingly undermined the public’s tolerance for such globalism. In this sense, a new diplomatic approach to America’s foreign policy was also now necessary.

With the collapse of the Cold War Consensus, particularly finalized by America’s defeat in Vietnam, the succeeding administrations adopted a variety of differing diplomatic approaches to shape U.S. foreign policy. These approaches oscillated between political realism and idealism for the next four administrations. During the Nixon and Ford years, and especially foreign policy under the direction of Henry Kissinger, the United States largely embraced a balance-of-power approach as its basic diplomatic strategy—an approach that had many of the

markings of the shopkeeper approach to international diplomacy. This new approach sought in effect to create a stable global order by recognizing the interests of the three major actors in international politics—the United States, the Soviet Union, and the People’s Republic of China—and taking actions so that each would recognize the interests of the other. In this design, American diplomacy would have less emphasis on promoting American domestic values in its foreign policy action and more emphasis on creating order and stability among the major powers.

In reaction, President Jimmy Carter endeavored in the late 1970s to replace this realist strategy with an idealist one. Now the United States would pursue a “world-order” diplomatic strategy in which global issues—whether human rights, nuclear nonproliferation, or economic development—would be the core focus of its policy and American domestic values would be the guide to its actions. In this sense, the United States would once again advance American values in its foreign policy. In turn, the Reagan administration responded to the Carter approach by embracing, once again, Cold War principles to guide its diplomatic efforts—with some of the markings of a warrior approach to diplomacy. In this sense, the world was once again viewed through a bipolar lens and the actions of the Soviet Union would be the central focus of attention in this diplomatic strategy. Finally, with the formal end of the Cold War in sight, the George H.W. Bush administration largely continued the accommodative diplomatic approach of the Reagan years. Eventually, the Cold War ended formally with the opening of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the reunification of Germany in 1990, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

After the Cold War ended and after the attacks of September 11, 2001, had occurred, each of the succeeding administrations continued to adopt distinct diplomatic approaches. The Clinton administration pursued a “liberal internationalist” approach with an emphasis on promoting democracies and freeing markets worldwide. Indeed, the administration announced the “strategy of enlargement” of market democracies as its diplomatic approach to replace the long-standing containment policy of the Cold War. Although President George W. Bush came to office in January 2001 committed to a realist approach to foreign policy in reaction to the Clinton years, the events of 9/11 significantly altered his approach. As a result, the Bush administration pursued a globalist strategy against international terrorism, including two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and sought to rally the international community against non-state and state-sponsored terrorism. In addition, the administration sought to animate its diplomatic approach through the promotion of democracy worldwide as the crucial antidote to international terrorism. Finally, President Barak Obama’s emphasis on global engagement and diplomacy represented yet another swing of the pendulum in U.S. diplomacy.

Types of American diplomacy

In carrying out its diplomatic approaches since the 1900s, the United States engaged in a number of diplomatic techniques. Several of these techniques came to be identified with particular labels and in effect reflected American foreign policy in different periods. A brief review of several of them will give a sense of the multiple kinds of diplomatic actions pursued by the United States.

Gunboat Diplomacy and Dollar Diplomacy

Beginning at about the time of President Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency and continuing for several decades of the early 1900s, American diplomacy was often described as “gunboat

diplomacy,” especially in its relationship with Latin America and the series of American interventions in that region (Ferrell 1959: 244–256). This kind of warrior diplomacy was epitomized, for example, by interventions in the Dominican Republic in 1905, Nicaragua in 1911, and Haiti in 1915, largely in accord with the so-called Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. Yet, the political maneuvering by the United States to create an independent Panamanian state in 1903 and then to obtain rights to build a canal across that newly created nation reflect this style of diplomacy as well. In all, this technique sought to use force or threat of force to produce outcomes favorable to the United States. Perhaps the aphorism invoked by President Theodore Roosevelt best summarized the diplomatic approach of the United States during this period: “Speak softly and carry a big stick.”

Roosevelt’s successor, William Howard Taft, sought to soften the criticism that had arisen over gunboat diplomacy by describing his approach as “substituting dollars for bullets” in dealing with other nations, especially in Latin America but also in East Asia. Such a diplomatic effort quickly was labeled “dollar diplomacy.” This kind of diplomacy sought to encourage American economic investments into a number of countries as a way to encourage stability in those nations. At the same time, of course, such a strategy was a way to advance U.S. economic interests and gain further American influence. Although, as one analyst noted (Gould 2009: 87), Taft and his Secretary of State, Philander Knox, “shared a commitment of capitalism,” these two leaders “were more inclined to pressure the business community to support their cause in the region [Latin America] than to get their orders from Wall Street.” As such, this diplomatic strategy was criticized for seemingly advancing U.S. imperialistic actions abroad.

In this sense, both of these American diplomatic approaches were largely viewed as pejorative by others, and both reflected “warrior diplomacy” on the part of the United States. Further, it is not clear that they advanced U.S. foreign policy, and, indeed, they may well have damaged American relations, especially with Latin America. Moreover, both types of diplomacy continued toward Latin America until President Franklin Roosevelt formally introduced the “Good Neighbor Policy” during his first term in office. This policy was in effect a “nonintervention policy” on the part of the United States and was a way to encourage neighborly cooperation in the Western Hemisphere. Furthermore, and importantly, the United States also proceeded to remove its forces from Nicaragua and Haiti, cancelled the Platt Amendment over Cuba, and ended its protectorate over the Dominican Republic as well by the end of Roosevelt’s second term.

Summit Diplomacy

In both an effort to manage the Cold War and to seek to end it, “summit diplomacy” became a major strategy to seek accommodation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Such diplomacy, as the name implies, involves direct negotiations between the top officials to deal with or address crucial foreign policy issues. Such summit meeting may take a bilateral or multilateral form, and they serve at least three different roles for U.S. foreign policy. First, these summit meetings are sometimes used to allow the leaders to meet and get to know one another and begin to “thaw” the chill in relationship between two nations. Nikita Khrushchev’s tour of the United States and subsequent summit meeting with President Eisenhower at Camp David in 1959 represented an important effort to modify Soviet–American relations during the height of the Cold War (Glass 2007). The “Fireside Summit” between the newly-appointed Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and President Reagan in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1985 allowed the two leaders to get to know one another and begin the process of changing the relationship between the two countries. More recently, President Obama held several meetings with his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, in his effort to “restart” U.S. relations after

the Bush administration. A second aim of this kind of diplomacy is to make significant policy breakthroughs through the direct intervention of the key leaders of each country. Perhaps the best illustration of this kind of summit diplomacy is the Reykjavik Summit in October 1986 between Gorbachev and Reagan where they reached an agreement to cut the nuclear arsenals of each nation by 50 percent. A third outcome that can result from summit diplomacy is the formal signature of an agreement that both sides have agreed to in principle previously. For example, major arms control agreements (e.g., SALT I and START) between the Soviet Union and the United States have usually been signed at these kinds of meetings. At the same time, outstanding issues are also negotiated at these summits to make possible the formal signing ceremony. In this sense, the third type of summit diplomacy combines substantive policy outcomes and the formal signings.

Shuttle Diplomacy

“Shuttle diplomacy” is another major addition to the diplomatic lexicon through recent American foreign policy actions. This diplomatic description is most closely associated with the actions of former National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in which he literally “shuttled” back and forth between Middle East capitals in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and the oil embargo that Arab states placed on the United States and others at that time. His initial aim was to make sufficient progress between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Egypt to allow the oil spigot to be turned back on for the Western states affected by the embargo. In fact, he was successful in negotiating two “disengagement agreements” between Israel and Egypt and one disengagement agreement between Israel and Syria. His efforts, however, to make more significant progress in forging a Middle East peace were ultimately stymied because of some intractable issues among the parties.

Still, this kind of determined diplomacy, the ability to stick to the negotiating process for a sustained period of time, and the moving back and forth between countries gained the label of shuttle diplomacy. As a result, and albeit to a somewhat lesser degree, this same kind of diplomacy has been utilized by American diplomats (and others) to try to resolve particularly challenging international issues, whether in the Middle East, the Balkans, or elsewhere. This type of diplomacy also is another illustration of shopkeeper diplomacy at work between nations today.

Public Diplomacy

Another aspect of America’s diplomacy today is public diplomacy. Such diplomacy, as defined by Philip Seib (2009: vii [emphasis added]), calls for “reaching out directly to foreign *publics* rather than foreign governments.” In other words, the aim of this kind of diplomacy, unlike the other aspects of diplomacy that we have discussed so far, is to explain American society, culture, and policy to the peoples of other countries, not to their leaders per se. The expectation is that America and American policy will be viewed favorably by foreign publics and thus improve prospects for successfully negotiating policy issues between the United States and other countries.

The United States has episodically employed public diplomacy throughout its history (although the term itself has only been in use since the Johnson administration), but it has only continuously employed this technique since the end of World War II (see Cull 2009, for a concise history of public diplomacy). These public diplomacy efforts were initiated within the U.S. government after the passage of the National Security Act in 1947, but the creation of the

United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1953 and various initiatives in the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations generated a broader array of activities to share American society and culture with the rest of the world. These activities over the years have included the use of numerous types of communication with the world (e.g., Voice of America, several publications, U.S. library facilities abroad, and, recently, extensive websites about the United States), the creation of foreign visitors programs, and establishment of exchange programs for American scholars and artists with other countries. In addition, USIA also conducted numerous surveys around the world to gauge the receptiveness of other nations to America and American policy.

Public diplomacy has gone through several changes that continue today (see Cull 2009; Seib 2009; U.S. Government Accountability Office 2009). Successful public diplomacy is important to American foreign policy in its own right, but it also important because of its close association with “soft power.” Soft power, a concept introduced by political scientist Joseph Nye (1990) and expanded on in later works (see Nye 2003 and 2004, and Rugh 2009), refers to efforts by a country to co-opt rather than coerce others to follow its policy lead. In this sense, the effectiveness of public diplomacy in conveying America’s soft power to the world is crucial for advancing America’s broader diplomatic aims, but public diplomacy can ultimately be an important instrument of any diplomatic approach pursued by the United States.

Notes

- 1 On the difficulties of defining diplomacy and diplomats, see Sharp (2009: 1–4). For the classic statement on the history, evolution, and styles of diplomacy, see Nicolson (1963).
- 2 The names for the two diplomatic styles discussed in this paragraph are drawn from Nicolson (1963: 78).
- 3 For full treatments of these “modes of diplomacy” and these “diplomatic methods,” see Berridge (1995) and Barston (1988: 103–129).
- 4 For a discussion of these values and beliefs, see McCormick (2010: 10–11).
- 5 For the quotations from the Monroe Doctrine, see “President’s Message” (1823–1824: 22–23)
- 6 For systematic data on the content of America’s international commitments from 1778–1899, see McCormick (2010: 15).
- 7 Mead (2001: 12–14).
- 8 See Kennan (1951: 12–17) and Ferrell (1959:192–200) for a more detailed discussion of these factors.
- 9 See, in particular, the essays by Tony Smith (2009) and Slaughter (2009).

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