

Traditional U. S. Foreign Policy

WHEN THE SENATE RATIFIED THE ATLANTIC PACT, ON July 21, 1949, by a vote of 82 to 13, a seemingly complete reversal of traditional American foreign policy was approved. In the famous Farewell Address, which is still read aloud to the House of Representatives every February 22, Washington strongly advised "as little political connection as possible" with foreign nations. He said further:

"Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a 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 combinations and collisions of her friendships, or enmities."

Isolationism from Europe was not just a personal foible of the "Father of his Country". It was a well-reasoned policy approved and advanced by all the revolutionary leaders. Even Alexander Hamilton, who favored a strong executive, demanded legislative control over the President's power to make commitments to other governments. His draft for the Constitution provided that not only treaties but also all "agreements with foreign na-

tions" should require "the advice and consent of the Senate".

A year before Yorktown was fought, John Adams wrote from Paris that "our business" with European nations "is commerce, not politics, much less war. America has been the sport of European wars and their policies long enough."

On June 12, 1783, when independence was assured, the Congress of the Confederation adopted a resolution saying: "The true interest of the states requires that they should be as little as possible entangled in the politics and controversies of European nations."¹

On June 25, 1787, during the formulation of the Constitution at the Philadelphia Convention, Charles Pinckney, of South Carolina, made the famous speech in which he asserted: "We mistake the object of our Government if we hope or wish that it is to make us respectable abroad. Conquest or superiority among other powers is not, or ought not ever to be, the object of republican systems."²

Just a month later, on July 25, 1787, John Jay, who was Secretary of Foreign Affairs when the Constitution was adopted, asked George Washington in writing "whether it would not be wise and seasonable to provide a strong check to the admission of Foreigners into the administration of our national government".³ Something

¹ Quoted in Edwin M. Borchard: *American Foreign Policy* (Indianapolis: National Foundation Press; 1946), p. 4.

² Quoted in Max Farrand: *The Records of the Federal Convention* (New Haven: Yale University Press; 1937), Vol. IV, pp. 28-29. The manuscript, in Pinckney's own handwriting, is now in the Library of Congress.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 61.

of this fear, or prejudice, is still enshrined in the Constitutional prohibitions against the acceptance of "emolument, office or title of any kind whatsoever" by any Federal employe, from any "foreign state" (Article I, Sect. 9).

Indeed, the evidence of isolationist determination in the early days of the Republic is far more unanimous, from every state of the Union, than was the case with respect to any other single political issue that could then be identified.

2.

NEVERTHELESS, this attitude was soon modified by the course of world events. Shortly before the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine, in 1823, President Monroe wrote to Thomas Jefferson and to James Madison, both former Presidents and then the last of the active revolutionary statesmen, asking their opinion of the notable departure in foreign policy which he was planning. Monroe did not consult John Adams, also a former President, apparently only because the latter had then reached the advanced age of 88 and had completely retired from public life.

Under date of October 24, 1823, Jefferson replied as follows:

"Our first and fundamental maxim should be, never to entangle ourselves in the broils of Europe; our second, never

to suffer Europe to intermeddle with cis-Atlantic affairs. America, North and South, has a set of interests distinct from those of Europe, and particularly her own. She should therefore have a system of her own, separate and apart from that of Europe. While the last is laboring to become the domicile of despotism, our endeavor should surely be, to make our hemisphere that of freedom."

After laying down this fundamental principle, however, Jefferson went on to indorse the proposal of British Foreign Minister Canning, for Anglo-American co-operation to prevent the restoration of European colonialism in South America. Completing the passage quoted above, Jefferson wrote:

"One nation, most of all, could disturb us in this pursuit; she now offers to lead, aid, and accompany us in it. By acceding to her proposition, we detach her from the bands, bring her mighty weight into the scale of free government, and emancipate a continent at one stroke, which might otherwise linger long in doubt and difficulty. Great Britain is the nation which can do us the most harm of anyone, or all on earth; and with her on our side we need not fear the whole world. With her, then, we should most sedulously cherish a cordial friendship; and nothing would tend more to knit our affections than to be fighting once more, side by side, in the same cause. Not that I would purchase even her amity at the price of taking part in her wars."

On October 30, 1823, Madison wrote to President Monroe in like vein, his observations also having a curiously timely ring today:

". . . It is particularly fortunate that the policy of Great Britain, though guided by calculations different from ours,

has presented a co-operation for an object the same with ours. With that co-operation we have nothing to fear from the rest of Europe, and with it the best assurance of success to our laudable views. There ought not, therefore, to be any backwardness, I think, in meeting her in the way she has proposed, keeping in view, of course, the spirit and forms of the Constitution in every step taken in the road to war, which must be the last step if those short of war should be without avail."

Thus, only forty years after the recognition of American independence, within the life-span of John Adams, Jefferson and Madison, a very significant qualification of isolationism had already been established. In the words of Jefferson, certainly no slavish Anglophile: "We should most sedulously cherish a cordial friendship" with Great Britain. The Monroe Doctrine was, indeed, as much a declaration of Anglo-American solidarity as a "hands off" warning to Continental Europe.⁴

3.

THE MONROE DOCTRINE, long the cornerstone of our foreign policy, had two separate but reciprocal parts. There was the warning to Europe not to intervene in American affairs. There was also the pledge, giving balance and ethical justification to that warning, that the

⁴ Complete documentation is found in J. Reuben Clark, *Memorandum on the Monroe Doctrine*, Dept. of State, Publication No. 37, December, 1928.

United States would not intervene in European affairs.

Thus, in enunciating the Doctrine in his message to Congress on December 2, 1823, President Monroe asserted that "the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers."

But, Monroe promptly added: "In the wars of the European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy so to do." And then:

" . . . Our policy in regard to Europe, which was adopted at an early stage of the wars which have so long agitated that quarter of the globe, nevertheless remains the same, which is, not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers; *to consider the government de facto as the legitimate government for us*; to cultivate friendly relations with it, and to preserve those relations by a frank, firm, and manly policy, meeting, in all instances, the just claims of every power, submitting to injuries from none."

The phrase here italicized in this passage from the Monroe Doctrine demands consideration. Recognition of any de facto government as legitimate, regardless of its moral character or the means by which it acquired power, was of course implicit in the revolutionary origin of our own Republic. As Jefferson said: "We surely cannot deny to any nation that right whereon our own government is founded, that every one may govern itself according to whatever form it pleases, and change those forms at its own will."⁵

⁵ Quoted, Borchard, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

In addition to automatic recognition of any stable government, whether democratic, aristocratic, autocratic or theocratic, the revolutionary origin of the United States also implied a policy of non-intervention.

This again merely conceded to others that same right to manage their own affairs that Americans had asserted for themselves. Non-intervention is specifically emphasized in the passage from the Monroe Doctrine quoted above. Non-intervention continued to be preached and practiced after the Monroe Doctrine became effective. On December 26, 1825, in a message to the Senate nominating delegates to a Pan-American congress at Panama, President John Quincy Adams said:

"It will be seen that the United States neither intend nor are expected to take part in any deliberations of a belligerent character; that the motive of their attendance is neither to contract alliances nor to engage in any undertaking or project importing hostility to any other nation."⁶

It has not been easy to efface the principle of non-intervention from American foreign policy. Indeed, as late as the middle of World War II, on November 23, 1943, Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle said in an official address:

". . . from a military point of view, the proposition that the United States should engage in a series of adventures for the purpose of intervening in the affairs of other states seems merely absurd. Our divisions are thoroughly engaged in the task of smashing the Japanese and the Germans. Nor have we any intention to scrap the well-settled policy of non-

⁶ Quoted, Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

intervention in the affairs of other states. The policy of non-intervention in other peoples' affairs is and must be the first principle of sound doctrine. Unless this is the settled practice of nations, there can be no principle of sovereign equality among peace-loving states and probably no permanent peace at all. The Nazis practiced the principle of forcing their neighbor nations to install governments satisfactory to their ideas. We are content to leave to them the patent on that idea."

Non-intervention and automatic recognition of any stable government were two of the points in the three-point suspension on which the traditional American foreign policy depended. The third was neutrality.

The doctrine of neutrality, of course, is only a formalization of the principle of non-intervention, and stands or falls with the latter. Once popular American slogans, such as "freedom of the seas", recall that the United States for a long time vigorously defended "neutral rights". But the doctrine of neutrality is obviously inconsistent with that of collective security, which starts from the premise that all "peace-loving" nations should combine to resist aggression by any government, anywhere.

From this follows the conclusion that a neutral is virtually an ally of the aggressor, since under the division of "We or They" it can be said that those who are not with us are against us.

This argument would have seemed grotesque to most Americans prior to 1917. But it was advanced as official American policy by Secretary of State Cordell Hull in a radio address on April 10, 1944. Mr. Hull then asked the European neutrals "with insistence, to cease aiding our

enemy". By neutral "aid", the Secretary explained, he meant "the aid which their trade with the enemy gives him."

4.

BEFORE drawing any conclusions from the change in the fundamental character of American foreign policy, a second great development in the history of that policy must be examined.

As the Monroe Doctrine charted a course for governmental relationships with Europe and Latin-America, so the Open Door Manifesto defined these for the Far East. Together, the Open Door and the Monroe Doctrine go far towards telling the entire story of American foreign policy, up to the outbreak of the first World War.

Like the Monroe Doctrine, the Open Door Manifesto was promulgated with British support, in order to block imperialistic expansion, in this case at Chinese expense, on the part of non-British powers, particularly Russia. In backing American opposition to conquests by others, however, the British in both cases were careful to hold on to what they had won for themselves.

The Open Door policy means much more than those words alone imply. In addition to demanding full equality with other nations for American commercial interests, it also crystallized American support of Chinese political independence and territorial integrity. Actual establish-

ment of this policy took the form of parallel diplomatic notes, over the signature of John Hay as Secretary of State, dispatched to the British, French, German, Japanese and Russian governments, on September 6, 1899. The date is important.

Exactly seven months earlier, after heated debate and in the face of a determined opposition led by Senator Hoar of Massachusetts, the Senate had ratified the Treaty of Peace with Spain, with just one vote more than the requisite two-thirds majority. Hostility to annexation of the Philippines was the basis of the opposition, which would probably have won against the expansionist leadership of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge except for the challenge to American pride given by the Filipino insurrection. T. R. thanked the Filipinos for having "pulled the treaty through for us."⁷

The United States had annexed Hawaii, at the request of its legislature and by joint resolution of Congress, on August 12, 1898. By the immediately subsequent acquisition of the Philippines, the McKinley Administration was in a position to make its influence felt on the Asiatic mainland. And it so happened that the British Government, worried by the Russian penetration of Manchuria, facing vigorous German rivalry everywhere, and moving into the Boer War, was then greatly in need of American good will.

After the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine, Canning had reported to the House of Commons that he "called the New World into existence to redress the

⁷ Cf. A. Whitney Griswold: *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company; 1938), Ch. I.

balance of the Old.”⁸ At the end of the Nineteenth Century, maintenance of the balance of power by Britain demanded similar co-operation from the United States in the Far East.

Therefore, in a speech to his constituents at Birmingham, May 13, 1898, Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, “virtually took the stump for an Anglo-American alliance.”⁹ John Hay, then our Ambassador in London, responded in kind. The British officially declared themselves, by policy and tradition, favorable to freedom of trade in China. So the road for Anglo-American co-operation in the Far East had been both surveyed and carefully mapped when Hay, after becoming Secretary of State, dispatched the famous circular note.

The essence of this manifesto was the flat assertion that “the Government of the United States will in no way commit itself to any recognition of the exclusive rights of any Power within or control over any portion of the Chinese Empire . . .” And the note further urged, as necessary for the preservation of an “open market” in China, “declarations by the various Powers claiming ‘spheres of interest’ in China as to their intentions in regard to the treatment of foreign trade and commerce therein . . .”¹

In the words of the expert analysis made by Dr. Willoughby, all of the replies excepting that of Russia, “substantially accepted Secretary Hay’s proposal”. Wil-

⁸ Speech of December 12, 1826.

⁹ Griswold, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

¹ Text from Westel Woodbury Willoughby: *Foreign Rights and Interests in China* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1927), Vol. I, pp. 68-69.

loughby adds: "The Russian reply, however, distinctly failed to commit the Russian Government to the exact propositions made by Secretary Hay."²

The following summer (1900) the Boxer rising flared up throughout China. Many foreigners were killed, and, from June 13 to August 14, the Legation Quarter in Peking was besieged. Nevertheless, on July 3, the United States reaffirmed its interest in the Open Door and the protection of Chinese sovereignty. In a circular telegram to all governments having treaty relations with China, Secretary Hay then said:

"The policy of the Government of the United States is to seek a solution [of the existing troubles] which may bring about permanent safety and peace to China, preserve Chinese territorial and administrative entity, protect all rights guaranteed to friendly powers by treaty and international law, and safeguard for the world the principle of equal and impartial trade with all parts of the Chinese Empire."³

5.

OVER PROTRACTED Japanese objection, the policy of defending China from aggression was reaffirmed by the Washington treaties of 1922. One of the most significant results of these was to terminate the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902. As seen by a famous British Foreign Minister, Viscount Grey of Fallodon, this alliance had be-

² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

come "a matter of some embarrassment and even of anxiety" to Britain, because: "We dared not risk offending the United States."⁴

Therefore the British agreed to scrap this balance of power alliance, the more readily because it had been originally directed against Russia, which in 1922 seemed impotent. In place of the London-Tokyo alliance was substituted an Anglo-American working agreement in the Far East. Its anti-Japanese alignment was well illustrated by the 5-5-3 ratio in capital ships agreed upon for the United States, Britain and Japan respectively.

The manner in which Japan was then out-maneuvered by American diplomacy; the consequent resentment that led to the ascendancy of the Japanese military extremists, their repudiation of the Open Door and, finally, the attack on Pearl Harbor, are chapters of recent and generally familiar history. Underlying the American opposition to Japanese expansion throughout was both a general opposition to aggression as such and a particular desire to counter it in the Far East. This desire led naturally to strong support of Nationalist China, as symbolized by its dynamic leader, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek.

From the domestic viewpoint, this Far Eastern policy was logical, popular and wholly non-partisan. Its implications were made clear by Republican Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson, on January 7, 1932, in a declaration that the United States would not recognize the Japanese conquest of Manchuria. This doctrine of non-recognition was carried to its logical conclusion a decade later by

⁴ Edward G. Grey of Fallodon: *Twenty-five Years, 1892-1916* (New York: F. A. Stokes Company; 1925), Vol. II, pp. 103-4.

Secretary Hull's note of November 26, 1941, to Tokyo. Recognized by our military leaders as the quasi-ultimatum that produced Pearl Harbor, this note demanded that Japan "give up all extra-territorial rights in China" and deal there only with the government of Chiang Kai-shek.

It was further due to President F. D. Roosevelt's insistence that Nationalist China was given "Great Power" recognition and awarded one of the five privileged seats on the Council of U.N.⁵

The consistency of this background of support for China's political integrity is what made the sell-out of China to Russia at the Yalta Conference such an extraordinary and revolting action. That personal secret agreement of February 11, 1945, made by Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, approved all of the earlier Russian encroachments on China, and more, to be confirmed under American pressure by the Sino-Soviet Treaty signed in Moscow on August 14, 1945.

Moreover, this was a treacherous deal, because made behind the back of our Chinese ally, something which the State Department itself later called "unfortunate".⁶ At one secret stroke a dying American President destroyed the entire structure of friendship with China, and with it the Open Door as a pillar of American foreign policy. Across the ruins, Communism moved in swiftly.

But the Administration that fell heir to the personal diplomacy of Mr. Roosevelt would not admit the blun-

⁵ Cf. Department of State Publication 3573: "United States Relations With China", p. 37.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

der, as shown by the following colloquy on Yalta, at the Senate investigation of the MacArthur dismissal, June 4, 1951:

SECRETARY ACHESON: "Russian participation or intervention in Manchuria was something which nobody had any power to prevent. . . . It was much better to have it take place when it could do our fighting effort some good than to have it take place after that effort was over and we had suffered severe losses."

SENATOR SMITH (N.J.): "Do you think that is a justification for our having made a secret agreement that in effect legalized the theft of parts of China and interests in China from the Chinese without their knowing anything about it or without their being represented and keeping it from them until the Russians had moved into Manchuria?"

SECRETARY ACHESON: "That was the reason why it was done. Looking at it in the light of what was known at that time, I doubt very much whether anyone in this room would have disagreed with it."

SENATOR SMITH: "I can't help but feel that it would have been very difficult for me to have undercut an ally in that way, and then keep the matter secret from the ally."⁷

As the facts gradually leaked out, the morally indefensible betrayal of China by the United States aroused widespread apprehension among the American people, both as to the quality and as to the real objectives of American foreign policy. Administration efforts to excuse and palliate the Yalta blunder served only to intensify confusion. To assert that the sudden and complete reversal of the long-established Far Eastern policy was

⁷ *New York Times*, June 5, 1951.

justified was also to say, by implication, that the policy reversed was fundamentally faulty, that to fight a war with Japan in behalf of Chinese nationalism had been a dreadful mistake.