THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND THE NEW DIPLOMACY

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In a single generation the United States has so altered its approach to world problems that we may fairly speak of its present policies as a new departure in American diplomacy. The formal agreements signalizing the new diplomacy—membership in the United Nations and participation in economic and military mutual security programs—came with dramatic suddeness in the brief space between the end of the second great European war and the outbreak of a new one in eastern Asia. But men's minds change slowly. How could a people reverse, in five years, a hundred and fifty year old isolationist tradition? Are United States foreign policy and popular opinion in alignment? If so, how close is the alignment and how strong are the bonds that tie public opinion to national policy? If not, how could the government of a free nation act without the support of a majority of the people?[1]

The answers to these questions are crucial, especially with respect to that part of American policy which pertains to collective security. The role of the people as an influence on national policy in the United States is such that if stability and continuity of policies are to be maintained, the underly-

1. Studies of the public's relation to, and influence on, foreign policy in the United States are too numerous to list here. Thomas A. Bailey has written extensively on the subject. See especially his *The Man in the Street: The Impact of American Public Opinion on Foreign Policy* (New York, 1948); for provocat ve analyses of several aspects of the relationship see Gabriel A. Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy* (New York, 1950).

ing principles must have the knowledge and full approval of the public. This is not to suggest that the general public makes foreign polices, or that it should do so. International intercourse is so complex that no great mass of people can have sufficient information or enough skill to do more than agree on broad and basic lines of action. To abandon separation from the world and to approve participation in collective security programs is such a basic line of action.[2]

No decision in this century has been of greater consequence for the United States than its determination to adopt and whole-heartedly pursue policies of collective security. The decision was adopted upon mature consideration, after the policy had been urged on the nation many times and in many forms. It is unnecessary to describe the American attitude toward international bodies in the nineteenth century. The practice of separate or unilateral action, sometimes incorrectly called isolation, is well known. It is of central importance that this practice broke down gradually, and under the impact of changing technology, while ideological bases for American participation in collective agreements remained unformed. The development of steam navigation, the laying of the Atlantic Cable, the expansion of wireless communication, as well as the phenomenal economic changes and population movements accompanying the spread of the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century, literally forced American involvement in international agreements. By 1900 the United States was a participant in some fifteen collective treaties whose purpose was to order and regulate the use of new instruments of communication and the increasingly great movements of people and goods. These nineteenth century agreements did not result from popular will or pressure. The American public of the nineteenth century was not as well informed as today, for mass communications media were relatively undeveloped. The influence of changing conditions and the impact of events in distant parts of the world were not so quickly or directly felt. Nevertheless, United States adherence to collective agreements in the late nineteenth century resulted from

2. Dexter Perkins, *The American Approach to Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, 1952). See Perkins' conclusion for his views on the importance of popular influence on the frame of reference within which officials formulate policy.

efforts of citizen groups rather than from decisions by policy boards or government bodies. For example, American participation in pacts for outlawing the white slave trade, for establishing standard weights and measures, for regulating narcotics traffic and for adhering to copyright and patent treaties, stemmed from pressures generated by reform societies, export associations, authors and publishers, and other private bodies. Whether these be called lobbies, pressure groups, or public opinion, the facts remain that most of the initiative for American adherence to multilateral treaties came from some part of the general public and that the overall effect of the pacts was national in scope. It is also to the point that most of these early agreements were social or economic, rather than political pacts.

In scarcely more than ten years, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States acquired for the first time in its history a number of widely separated dependent territories. In the same decade, the Boer War, the Boxer Rebellion, the Moroccan Crisis, and other uprisings challenged the political *status quo* in various parts of the world. Americans responded to the stimuli hesitantly and reluctantly, yet these and other developments combined to turn the people's attention gradually but steadily toward the role of international combinations in maintaining stability and in preserving the conditions necessary for orderly international intercourse.

The idea of collective security as understood today hardly existed in the minds of United States citizens in the early twentieth century, yet four times in the decade before 1914 Americans considered safeguards for preserving harmony among nations. Secretaries of State John Hay, Elihu Root and William Jennings Bryan, and President William Howard Taft urged support of arbitration agreements, "cooling off" treaties and conciliation pacts. These plans provided for collective review of problems which those states directly involved might not be able to solve peacefully. Such review was aimed at international agreement on just and lasting settlements. Statesmen envisioned the application of some pressure against a nation which refused to accept the decision of the arbitral body, although use of military force was not an element in American-sponsored plans. These plans should not be called pacts of collective security in the broader sense, but the effort represented a step

toward recognizing the need for an ordered international society of members with safeguarded rights. Scores of such agreements were written, and America adopted more than fifty between 1905 and 1914.

These were thoroughly emasculated by the Senate before it would consent to approve them, although it seems certain that the public would have accepted more sweeping agreements, as was demonstated by the favorable reception given President Taft when he sought popular support for his arbitration pacts.[3] Here it may be noted that the United States Senate, never as responsive to public feeling as the House of Representatives, was even less so before the Seventeenth Amendment was added to the Constitution.[4] Long after the adoption of that provision, that the upper house be elected by popular vote, the Senate remained less responsive to public feeling than the House. The League of Nations story is an example of the Senate's independence, as well as of the fact that American national sentiment was not positively formed in favor of participation in international security programs. Four decades have passed since Woodrow Wilson, as chief architect of American policy, urged on the nation his pact embodying collective security principles. Neither the security provisions, in Article Ten of the League Covenant, nor the broader policies embodied in the Fourteen Points and the remainder of the Covenant became a part of the American nation's policy at that time. However, the collective security concept was more thoroughly reviewed than it had been previously, and it seems clear that a majority of the American people were willing see the United States join the League of Nations.[5] Without considering whether Republican or Democratic influences were paramount, or whether United States participation in the League was desirable, the Senate, for partisan political considerations, frustrated the wishes of a large body of the people as expressed through polls, state legislatures, and the ac-

3. W. Stull Holt, *Treaties Defeated By the Senate* (Baltimore, 1933), pp. 230-231.
4. The Seventeenth Amendment became a part of the United States Constitution in 1913.
5. Even Henry Cabot Lodge thought that much of the leadership of national opinion favored the League; see his *The Senate and the League of Nations* (New York, 1925), p. 147.

tion of private national organizations.[6]

Plainly, in the first two decades of this century, the American public was quite willing to be led into an international association, either through the conciliation treaties or as members of the League. In the years between the two great wars the American people never completely accepted the idea of separation from the world. But the minority that was willing to accept the principles and responsibilities of collective security was small, and the political, economic and social philosophies of isolationists dominated the foreign policy of the nation to a far greater extent than in previous decades.[7] Widespread public fear of Bolshevism following the Russian Revolution combined with pressure from special interest organizations to effect drastic curtailment of immigration and thus to limit the social and cultural influences of Europe and Asia on the United States. The ever-rising tariff walls, until the mid-thirties, limited economic exchange to a greater extent than participation in the various reparations agreements promoted economic cooperation. Senator Gerald P. Nye's investigations of international trusts and monopolies convinced large numbers of Americans that foreign ventures were more likely to strengthen reactionary financial and munitions cartels than to promote democracy. America's refusal to join the League, and the government's adverse attitude toward European security proposals such as the Locarno agreements, excluded the United States from the international political scene.[8]

6. Later, in the Coolidge administration, large and powerful national organizations, including the American Bar Association, The American Federation of Labor and the National Association of Manufacturers, favored American participation in the Permanent Court of International Justice, yet the Senate ignored this evidence of public interest in internationalism. See Denna F. Flemming, *The United States and the World Court* (Garden City, 1945), pp. 49-50.
7. William W. Kaufman, "Two American Ambassadors: Bullitt and Kennedy", in Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, *The Diplomats*: 1919-1939 (Princeton, 1953), pp. 649-681.
8. Compare Dexter Perkins, "The Department of State and American Public Opinion", in *ibid.*, pp. 282-308, with Kaufman, "Two American Ambassadors."

Only a segment of the American people continued to hold to the idea that no nation could wall itself off from the rest of the world, but this element in the United States was not without influence. It was certainly a factor in the American decision to encourage and to participate in the several great-power conferences for arms limitation, and it may have been the decisive factor in the calling of the Washington Conference, at which the United States agreed to cooperate with eight other nations in measures to ease international tensions. A stronger example and perhaps the only occasion on which the public had a determining influence in pushing the nation in the direction of collective security between 1919 and 1939, is that of the Kellogg Pacts.[9] Aristide Briand's suggestion of a bilateral pact was at first ignored by the Coolidge administration. But the idea of an agreement to outlaw war was a compelling one, and in the months following the French proposal popular support of the idea was strongly expressed through the press, private organizations and public petitions. Only after Secretary Kellogg was convinced that most of the nation's newspapers favored American adherence to the multilateral pacts renouncing war, and that the public was solidly behind the proposal, did the government act. There can be little doubt that popular feeling was largely responsible for American support of the peace pacts of 1927. It also seems plain that this episode constituted the only strong and positive effort of the public in the two decades, to move toward collective action.

The end of twenty years of uneasy peace in Europe and of intermittent war in Asia found no broad support for the idea of collective security in the United States, either in the government or among the people. Contrary to the attitude at the time of the Kellogg pacts, at the time of Munich the people not only were determined to oppose any move that might lead to American participation in international activity, but also were determined, through

9. Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (New York, 1955), pp. 708-709. This widely used text reflects Bailey's views on the influence of public opinion on foreign policy.

neutrality laws, to erect barriers against involvement.[10] These two sets of seemingly contradictory conditions—strong approval of the peace pacts and strong approval of neutrality legislation—suggest that the United States firmly believed in the value of an ordered and stable world, and as firmly rejected responsibility for maintaining such a world.

The march of events from 1939 to 1949—from the outbreak of war in Europe to the conquest of China by communism—convinced the American in a single decade what half a century of speeches had not: that it is in America's interest to support international stability and order, by force if necessary, through collective action. As had been the case in the nineteenth century, technological developments underlay the changing ideology. To the cable, wireless and steamship were now added, first, the telephone, radio and airplane and on the heels of these, missiles and nuclear energy.[11] In 1939, just prior to the moment when the holocaust of war was let loose in Europe and after nearly eight years of an absence of peace in Asia, the American people were willing to agree to extend aid to victims of aggression ***only*** if convinced that United States forces did not risk involvement in a conflict.[12] Within four years a heavy majority of the American people were ready to join a world organization having police power, and to contribute police forces.

10. United States relations with Latin American countries are excluded from consideration in this study; collective security arrangements between the United States and western hemisphere nations were made earlier than elsewhere.
11. Neither the reversal, since 1934, of American tariff policies nor the enormous increase, since 1945, in American private investment abroad should be overlooked. The economic influences involved have been highly important in making much of the general public as well as leaders in business and political fields "world-conscious" and "internationally-minded". See ***Fortune***, January 1958, for a report on private American investments abroad.
12. American Institute of Public Opinion Poll, cited in Bailey, ***Diplomatic History***, p. 750. The figures were 69% for and 31% opposed to supporting European democracies against dictators by every means short of war.

In 1949, ten years after the public had registered its willingness to support governments representing democratic processes *only* if the use of force was not involved, the nation approved by a two-thirds majority the first military alliance it ever apopted in time of peace.[13] The North Atlantic Theaty Organization was, in America, universally regarded as a collective security pact.

It is of central importance that these and other evidences that the American public was adopting principles of collective security were accompanied by developments which underscored the breadth and depth of the adoption. The political defeat of Senator Gerald Nye (long-time symbol of American distrust of Europe) and of other isolationists, and the several House and Senate resolutions approving world organizations and American participation therein, were only indicators. More fundamental factors were present, and three accompanying developments gave added meaning to the new diplomacy.

One development relates to the Senate, always jealous of its special Constitutional position, and of its influential and frequently decisive role, in the making and conduct of foreign policy.[14] Ever ready to resist any arrangement it disliked, its committees have not hesitated to ignore popular opinion on occasion. Convincing evidence strongly indicates that such an attitude is highly unlikely now and in the future. In the past two decades Senators have developed the "bipartisan foreign policy"—one supported by two otherwise opposed partisan bodies. The practice now has the sanction of three administrations, those of Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower, and serves to broaden the base of policy. But bipartisanism does not always work, and its failures have resulted in closer ties between the public and the Senate. After the second world war, because of the narrow majorities in Congress, control of the Senate was maintained by the slimmest of margins. Under these cir-

13. A Gallup poll reported 81% of the people in favor of American membership in a world organization with police power, as of April 1945; a Gallup poll of May 1949 reported 67% of the people favored ratification of the NATO Pact. See Bailey, *Diplomatic History*, pp. 837 and 892.
14. Article II, section 2, of the United States Constitution prescribes the Senate's powers and responsibilities in matters relating to treaties and appointments of ambassadors, ministers and consuls.

cumstances, leaders of both parties have paid the closest attention to public attitudes toward foreign as well as domestic programs. The practice of holding open public hearings on a variety of issues has been greatly increased;[15] discussions at these hearings are widely disseminated, not only by the press but by radio, television and the motion picture camera. The use, by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, of private bodies to make "fact-finding" reports on foreign problems is a method for discovering public attitudes as well as for obtaining other data. The discussions stirred by the release of reports by university staffs, professional research institutes and statistic-collecting agencies give Senators valuable information about public attitudes toward policy proposals.

A second development of the mid-twentieth century has made for another kind of tie between public opinion and the nation's foreign policy. This is the new connection between foreign policy on the one hand and foreign loans, aid and subsidies on the other. These have been accompanied by high taxes on individual incomes as well as on commodities; the relationship between payments to foreign countries and income taxes has engendered especial interest and concern on the part of the general public.[16] This greater interest is directly reflected in the House of Representatives, which is not only particularly concerned with revenue bills,[17] but, because of the shorter term of office and smaller constituency, is that part of the national government most closely influenced by popular feeling.

A third new development that binds government policy to public attitudes is the opinion poll. In crude form the public opinion poll, as a method of discovering popular views, was used three quarters of a century ago by the *New York Tribune* and by other organs. The carefully-planned, elaborately-organized and scientifically-conducted poll is less than a generation old, but an enormous amount of opinion material relating to foreign policy has been

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15. See Perkins, ***American Approach to Foreign Policy***, p. 170, on this point.
16. In the fiscal year 1960, individual income taxes will account for 52% of the Treasury's receipts. See U.S. Treasury Department, Internal Revenue Service Publication No. 17, 1960, p. 5.
17. See Article I, section 7, of the United States Constitution.

assembled. Only experts can provide useful analyses of this data, but it clearly reveals that neither the old reliance on a policy of separate action nor the isolationist view of the world now has wide and powerful support among the American people.

Additional strength has been given to the influence of public sentiment on foreign policy through private organizations whose purpose is to channel the attitudes of leaders of public opinion, directly into policy-making bodies. Such an organization is the American Assembly, established by Columbia University President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1950.[18] The Assembly brings together representatives of labor, the professions, agriculture, business, government and the political parties. The aim of the organization is to provide a forum in which responsible leaders can freely exchange ideas and attitudes, and whose ultimate purpose is to encourage wide public discussion of general policies.[19]

Many more examples could be given of the increasingly strong ties between public opinion in the United States and basic American foreign policies, and illustrations of America's adoption of collective security principles can easily be multiplied. But the conclusions would remain unchanged: the government is in closer touch with public and popular views today than at any time in Uuited States history. The people accept the basic idea that Americans have a responsibility for helping to established and maintain conditions that will permit unfettered international intercourse in cultural economic and political fields. In support of this basic idea, the people are firmly behind American participation in the United Nations as well as in smaller and more specialized collective security organizations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organiza-

18. Background studies and other reports of this organization are printed by the American Assembly, Graduate School of Business, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.

19. The work of such groups is not new but is quite different from that of most earlier private organizations, which concentrated their attention largely on peace programs. See Merle Curti, ***Peace or War, The American Struggle***, 1636-1936 (New York, 1936).

tion.[20] The American government, whether in the hands of Republicans or Democrats or guided by bipartisan committees, is not free to change the basic policy and objectives or to abandon the organizations established to implement the policy without prior changes of great magnitude in public sentiment.

20. According to Under Secretary of State Douglas Dillon, as of April 1960, "our collective system of defensive security pacts" involves "nearly half a hundred nations." See text of Dillon's speech to the AFL-CIO Conference on World Affairs, reproduced by the United States Information Service (Taipei, Taiwan) in its "News Backgrounds", 21 April 1960.