

Dallas Co. Community College District



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E. AMBROSE

and of Brothers

and **DOUGLAS G. BRINKLEY**

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RISE TO GLOBALISM

AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY SINCE 1938

EIGHTH REVISED EDITION



I returned and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise nor riches to men of understanding, but time and chance happeneth to them all.

ECCLESIASTES

We are willing to help people who believe the way we do, to continue to live the way they want to live.

DEAN ACHESON

The biggest thing that has happened in the world in my life, in our lives, is this: By the grace of God, America won the Cold War.

GEORGE BUSH

[1]

The Twisting Path to War

I hate war.

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

The United States felt fairly secure in the world of 1938. Neither of the great totalitarian political forces of the century, Fascism nor Communism, was a threat. So long as Britain and France continued to stand against Hitler and the Nazis, the United States had nothing to fear militarily from Germany. Elsewhere, anti-Communism was triumphing in Spain, while in central and eastern Europe governments hostile to the Soviet Union continued to contain Communism.

On the other side of the world the United States, in combination with the British, French, and Dutch, still ruled the Pacific. American control of Hawaii and the Philippines, Dutch control of the Netherlands East Indies (N.E.I., today's Indonesia), French control of Indochina (today's Laos, Cambodia [Democratic Kampuchea], and Vietnam), and British control of India, Burma, Hong Kong, and Malaya gave the Western powers a dominant position in Asia. Japan, ruled by her military, was aggressive, determined to end white man's rule in Asia, and thus a threat to the status quo. But Japan lacked crucial natural resources, most notably oil, and was tied down by her war in China.

On the great land mass connecting Europe and Asia, Russia was relatively weak and nonexpansive. In the Middle East and Africa, European colonialism dominated. In Latin America, American economic imperialism guaranteed cheap raw materials for American industries and a dependable market.

The United States in 1938 saw no pressing need to play any great role in the world. Isolationism reigned in the Congress, reflecting a national mood. The Nye Committee, conducting a Senate investigation, had "proved" that Wall Street had dragged the United States into World War I. The aftermath led many to believe that entering World War I had been a mistake—so many as to make disarmament and neutrality the dominant factors in American foreign policy in the 1920s and 1930s.

The attitude of the President himself reinforced isolationism. Unlike Winston Churchill, Hitler, or the Japanese leaders and unlike his cousin Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt saw neither glory nor romance in war, nor did he feel that it strengthened the national fiber. If not a pacifist, FDR was certainly no militarist. On a number of occasions he declared, with deep emotion, "I hate war."

American foreign policy in 1938 was to support the status quo, but only through vaguely worded statements. Roosevelt, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and a majority of the American people did not want a German domination of Europe or a Japanese domination of Asia, but neither were they ready to do much to stop it. Least of all were they willing to improve the armed forces so that the United States could threaten to punish aggression.

In mid-March of 1939 Hitler's armies overran Czechoslovakia. Roosevelt failed to support a Senate resolution that would have repealed the arms embargo (required in case of war by the neutrality acts of the mid-thirties) and allowed American industries to sell war goods to France and Britain on a cash-and-carry basis. Although FDR and a majority of the people had declared that their sympathies lay with the democracies, they had also demonstrated to Hitler that in the immediate future he had nothing to fear from the United States. On August 23, 1939, Hitler announced the Nazi-Soviet Pact, which provided for the division of Poland between Russia and Germany and relieved Germany of the nightmare of a two-front war. On September 1, 1939, the Nazis struck

Poland; two days later Britain and France declared war on Germany, and World War II was under way.

Americans split sharply over the question of how to react. Isolationists resisted any steps that might lead to aid for the democracies, fearing that the United States would thereby become so committed to an Allied victory that, as in 1917, she would be drawn into war against her will. Interventionists, meanwhile, wanted to abandon neutrality and give military aid to Britain and France. Roosevelt took a middle ground. In a speech to a special session of Congress, FDR declared four times that his policy was designed to keep the United States out of war. He then asked for repeal of the embargo on arms and approval of a cash-and-carry system. Congress agreed in November 1939.

Cash-and-carry symbolized much that was to follow. It aligned the United States with the democracies, reiterated American concern and friendship for Western Europe, and made it clear that the country would resist any attempt to upset the balance of power in Europe. But it also indicated that the United States was unwilling to pay a high price to stop Hitler. America would sell arms to the democracies as long as the democracies picked them up and carried them off. America was taking uncommonly large risks by not doing more.

Just how great those risks were, Roosevelt knew as did few others in the world. On October 11, 1939, world-renowned physicist Albert Einstein, a Jewish refugee from the Nazis, warned FDR that the Germans were working on the problem of harnessing atomic energy into a bomb. If Hitler got an atomic bomb, he would surely conquer Europe. Roosevelt was impressed by Einstein's message. He conferred privately with key congressional leaders and together they started the Manhattan Project. This secret project was designed to build an atomic bomb capable of being dropped from an airplane, and to get it built before Hitler could complete his own plans.

The Manhattan Project was the beginning of the mar-

riage between science and government in the United States, and thus one of the most important legacies of World War II. It was also the first use of extreme secrecy about government activities, justified on the grounds of national security. In the case of the Manhattan Project, most members of Congress did not even know where the funds they had appropriated were going.

But although Roosevelt was willing to act decisively in the race for an atomic bomb, there was otherwise a distinct limit on the American contribution to stopping Hitler. After German armies overran Poland in the fall of 1939, a period of stagnation set in on the western front. Americans called it a "phony war" and saw no pressing reason to strain themselves to build up their strength. FDR increased the regular army from 210,000 to 217,000 and asked for an army budget of \$853 million, which the Congress cut by nearly 10 percent. These paltry figures constituted an announcement to Hitler that the United States did not intend to fight in Europe in the near future.

The German spring offensive of 1940 brought forth a tough verbal but limited practical response from the United States. The President asked for a supplemental appropriation to raise troop strength to 255,000; Congress, after hearing Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall's desperate appeals, raised the force to 375,000. The Nazis, meanwhile, rolled on. On May 15 the new British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, urgently requested forty or fifty American destroyers to protect Britain's Atlantic supply line. Churchill called it a matter of "life or death." Roosevelt was reluctant to act. On June 5, with the fall of France imminent and Britain about to be left standing alone, he told a Cabinet official that it would require an act of Congress to transfer the destroyers to England and implied that he was not ready to ask for such a bill.

He was ready to speak out. On June 10, 1940, the President told the graduating class of the University of Virginia that the United States would follow "two ob-

vious and simultaneous courses," extending to France and Britain "the material resources of this nation" and speeding up the development of these resources so that the American armed forces could be strengthened. The speech was hailed by interventionists in the United States as setting a new course, but the French quickly discovered its limits. On June 14 French Premier Paul Reynaud appealed to Roosevelt to send American troops to Europe in France's hour of need. Roosevelt refused. Even had he wanted to act, he had no troops available to send overseas. Within the week the French signed an armistice with Germany.

The fall of France was a shattering blow. No one had forecast it. The United States now faced an entirely new situation. No longer could the nation comfortably expect that the British and French would stop the Germans. The British, standing alone, might survive, although even that was questionable, but would never be able to roll back the Nazis by themselves. The best-disciplined and most highly educated and productive nation in Europe now dominated the Continent. The balance of power was gone. Hitler posed no immediate military threat to the New World, but if he could conquer England and get control of the British fleet, then overrun Russia—suddenly real possibilities—he would command the greatest military might the world had ever known. What could happen then was anyone's guess, but it was becoming increasingly apparent that it behooved Americans to do something more than sit by and watch. Hitler could be stopped and some kind of balance could be restored in Europe only if others came to Britain's aid.

Isolationism was obviously an obstacle to forthright presidential action, but FDR had an inner conflict that reflected the public confusion. He was very much of his time and place, sharing general attitudes on the mistake of entering World War I. In a famous campaign speech in Boston on October 30, 1940, FDR declared: "And while I am talking to you mothers and fathers, I give you one more assurance. I have said this before, but I

shall say it again and again and again: Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars."

Neither, it seemed, was a great deal of American equipment. The British still obtained supplies only on a cash-and-carry basis and they lacked the destroyers necessary to protect the convoys transporting those goods they could afford to purchase. On July 21, 1940, Churchill made another eloquent plea for destroyers: "Mr. President, with great respect I must tell you that in the long history of the world this is a thing to do *now*." The British were losing merchant shipping in the Battle of the Atlantic in appalling numbers, the Battle of Britain was reaching its peak, and the German General Staff was preparing plans for an invasion of the British Isles. The President allowed private groups to work out the details of a destroyer-for-bases deal, which eventually (September 2) gave the British fifty overage American destroyers in return for rent-free bases on British possessions from Bermuda to British Guiana.

There was, meanwhile, a growing tension between the War Department and the White House. General Marshall reasoned that the only way to defeat Hitler was to fight and defeat the German army in northwestern Europe. To do that Marshall needed a mass army; to get that he needed conscription. But given the tenor of Roosevelt's third-term campaign, there was no possibility that the President could give public support to a conscription bill.

Congress proved more willing to act than the President. Private groups, led by Republicans Henry L. Stimson and Elihu Root, Jr., persuaded Congressmen favoring intervention to introduce a selective-service bill in both houses of Congress. Roosevelt remained aloof, but he did give General Marshall permission to support the bill; the President also helped by appointing Stimson, an interventionist, Secretary of War. In late August of 1940, Congress authorized the President to call the National Guard and other reserves to active duty for one year, and on September 16 it provided for selective ser-

vice for one year. Both measures limited the employment of troops to the Western hemisphere.

In November 1940 Roosevelt won the election. Churchill, among others, thought that the reelected President would be willing to assume a more active role in the struggle against Hitler. The Prime Minister sent FDR a lengthy and bleak description of the British situation, emphasizing that his nation was running out of money. Cash-and-carry would no longer suffice, for "the moment approaches when we shall no longer be able to pay cash for shipping and other supplies."

Roosevelt responded sympathetically. On December 7, 1940, he called in the press, outlined the British dilemma, and said he believed that "the best defense of Great Britain is the best defense of the United States." Seeking to avoid the mistakes of Woodrow Wilson and the long controversy over World War I war debts, Roosevelt said he wanted to simply lend or lease to England the supplies she needed. He compared his scheme to the idea of lending a garden hose to a neighbor whose house was on fire.

In a radio address to the nation a few days later, Roosevelt justified lend-lease as essential to national security. If England fell, "all of us in the Americas would be living at the point of a gun." He said the best way to keep the United States out of the war was to "do all we can now to support the nations defending themselves against attack by the Axis." He declared again that he had no intention of sending American boys to Europe; his sole purpose was to "keep war away from our country and our people." He would do this by making America the "great arsenal of democracy."

The isolationists were furious. They charged that lend-lease was a most unneutral act, placing the United States squarely on the British side. Senator Robert Taft found the idea of loaning military equipment absurd. He said it was rather like loaning chewing gum: "Once it had been used, you didn't want it back."

By early March 1941, however, the Administration

had overcome the opposition, and the lend-lease bill went through Congress with an initial appropriation of \$7 billion. Secretary Stimson correctly called it "a declaration of economic war." But it was hardly enough to sustain a Britain on the defensive, much less give Hitler cause for concern.

What was needed was a more extensive American involvement. Realizing this, Roosevelt declared an Atlantic neutrality zone that extended almost to Iceland, ordering the Navy to patrol the area and report the location of German submarines to the British. In April 1941 American troops moved into Greenland. In July, following Hitler's invasion of Russia, his first big mistake, American troops occupied Iceland, which released British troops for the Middle East, and the U.S. Navy began escorting convoys as far as Iceland. By September the U.S. Navy was fully at war with Germany in the Atlantic. When a German submarine fired a torpedo at the American destroyer stalking it, FDR brazenly denounced the "rattlesnakes of the Atlantic" for the supposedly unprovoked act and ordered the Navy to shoot on sight at all German submarines they encountered. In October FDR persuaded Congress to remove nearly all restrictions on American commerce; henceforth, American merchant vessels could carry goods to British ports. He also extended lend-lease to Russia.

Roosevelt's tone, in public and private, was by November of 1941 one of unrestrained belligerency. German advances to the gates of Moscow made it impossible to underestimate the threat. Roosevelt seems to have reasoned that Hitler could not long permit American ships to transport goods to Britain. The Germans would have to order their submarine captains to sink the American vessels. FDR could then overcome isolationist opposition in Congress and obtain a declaration of war.

Whether he was right or not will never be known. It is clear that by December 1941 American foreign policy in Europe had failed to make any significant contribution to stopping—much less overcoming—Hitler. In retro-

spect, the steps the President and Congress took to protect American interests in Europe were halting and limited. Everything hinged on Russia and Britain. If they kept going, America could—eventually—supply them with the tools and men to do the job. The United States, in the meantime, was taking great risks.

The American ship of state was drifting, without a rudder or power, in a storm. The world's greatest industrial democracy could not stem the tide of Fascism. Roosevelt's caution was so great that in September 1941, when the original selective service bill ran out and had to be repassed if the soldiers already partly trained were to be retained in the Army, he refused to pressure Congress, either privately or publicly. Working behind the scenes, General Marshall was able to get the draft bill passed—by one vote. Even this left the U.S. Army ridiculously small (1.6 million men) if the nation ever intended to play a role in the conflict raging in Europe.

Fortunately for the United States, the British and Russians held out against Germany, making it possible for America to later exert her power to help win the war. Fortunately, too, the Japanese solved Roosevelt's problem of how to get fully involved in the war.

Japan was the aggressor in the Pacific, as Mussolini was in the Mediterranean and Hitler was in Europe. Since the mid-thirties, Japan had been involved in a war of conquest in China. From the beginning the United States had protested, but because FDR had not supported his demands with action, the Japanese ignored him.

The overall Japanese program called for Asia for the Asians (although some Asians were going to be more equal than others). The Japanese proposed to substitute themselves for the white rulers in China, Indochina, Malaya, Burma, the Philippines, and the N.E.I. It was essential to the Japanese that they control these areas if Japan were to be a great power, for despite her human resources Japan was almost devoid of critical raw ma-

terials, especially oil, which was available in Southeast Asia.

The American colony of the Philippines lay directly athwart the Japanese proposed line of advance. Whether correctly or not, the Japanese were convinced that the United States would never allow them to advance into Malaya or the N.E.I. without striking against their lines of communications. More fundamentally, they believed that the United States would never willingly allow them to become a great power and would consistently oppose their advance southward. Thus, although the Japanese realized that they were doomed if they goaded the United States into war and the United States chose to fight it to a finish, they felt they were also doomed without war. "Japan entered the war," a prince of the Japanese imperial family later wrote, "with a tragic determination and in desperate self-abandonment."

The fall of France in 1940 and Britain's preoccupation with Germany opened the door to Southeast Asia for Japan. Battered down in her war with China, Japan decided to overcome her crippling shortage of oil through a program of southward expansion. Only the Soviet Union and the United States were potentially strong enough in the Pacific to interfere; Japan moved politically to minimize these threats. In the late summer of 1940 she signed a five-year nonaggression pact with the Soviets, an agreement that Stalin, fearing Hitler, was happy to sign.

Japan also entered into the Tripartite Pact with the Germans and Italians, a defensive alliance that pledged mutual support if any one of the three signatories were attacked. The German invasion of Russia in June 1941 opened new possibilities for Japan, and a great debate within Japan ensued. Should Japan take advantage of Russia's desperate position vis-à-vis Germany and attack the Soviets through Siberia? Some military leaders thought so. Others argued that because of Hitler's involvement in Russia, Germany no longer posed so much of a threat to England; this strengthened the Anglo-American position in the Pacific because Churchill was

now free to send part of the fleet from the home isles to Britain's Asian colonies (as he in fact did do in 1941). Japan, therefore, should seek to reach an agreement with the United States, making such concessions as were necessary to stave off war. Still others held out for the long-planned conquest of Southeast Asia.

Roosevelt listened in on the debate through the medium of MAGIC,* the code name applied to intercepted and decoded Japanese messages, and characterized it as "a real drag-down and knock-out fight . . . to decide which way they were going to jump—attack Russia, attack the South Seas [or] sit on the fence and be more friendly with us." The decision was to reject war with Russia and instead move south immediately, meanwhile trying to avoid war with the United States by carrying on negotiations as long as possible. The first step was the unresisted occupation of French Indochina, which gave Japan possession of air and naval bases stretching from Hanoi to Saigon.

The U.S. Navy did not wish to provoke the Japanese. It wanted time, not only to bring about Hitler's defeat but also to build a first-class striking force. The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Harold R. Stark, advised the President to do nothing when the Japanese moved into French Indochina. But whatever the military realities, FDR also had political realities to deal with. The polls indicated that nearly 70 percent of the people were willing to risk war in the Pacific rather than let Japan continue to expand. FDR froze all Japanese assets in the United States. The British and Dutch supported his

*While the Americans were listening in on the Japanese, the British had broken the German code (they called their system ULTRA) and the Germans had broken the British code. And while the Japanese were decoding American messages, the Russians were reading Japanese radio traffic. On balance the Americans got more useful information from MAGIC and the British from ULTRA than the Axis got from their monitoring systems.

move. The effect of the freeze was to create an economic blockade of Japan. She could not buy oil, steel, or other necessities without Roosevelt's permission.

The embargo made it clear to the Japanese that they either had to pull back from Indochina and China and thereby reach an agreement with the United States that would provide them with access to oil, or go to war. The one slim hope remaining was that America's fear of a two-ocean war would impel Roosevelt to compromise. From August until November 1941, the Japanese sought some form of acceptable political compromise, all the while sharpening their military plans and preparations. If the diplomatic offensive worked, the military offensive could be called off, including the planned attack on the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor.

In essence, the Japanese demanded from the United States a free hand in Asia. There were variations through a series of proposals, but the central points always included an Anglo-American promise not to "meddle in nor interrupt" a settlement between Japan and China, a recognition of Japan's "special position" in French Indochina, an agreement not to reinforce Singapore and the Philippines, and a resumption of commercial relations with Japan, which included selling oil.

Although the Americans were willing to go part way to compromise, they would not consider giving the Japanese a free hand in China. Since it was precisely on this point that the Japanese were most adamant, conflict was inevitable. Neither side wanted war in the sense that each would have preferred to gain its objectives without having to fight for them, but both were willing to move on to a showdown. In Japan it was the military who pressed for action, over the protests of the civilians, while in America the situation was reversed. Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoye of Japan resigned in October when he was unable to secure military approval of a partial withdrawal from China in order to "save ourselves from the crisis of a Japanese-American war." His successor,

General Hideki Tojo, was willing to continue negotiations with the United States, but only until late November. If no progress was made by then, Japan would strike.

In the United States, Roosevelt stood firm, even though his military advisers strongly urged him to avoid a crisis with Japan until he had dealt with Germany. Secretary Hull made one last effort for peace, suggesting on November 21 that the United States should offer a three months' truce. Japan might have accepted, but Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese leader, protested vehemently, and Roosevelt would not allow Hull to make the offer. "I have washed my hands of the Japanese situation," Hull told Stimson on November 27, "and it is now in the hands of . . . the Army and Navy."

A little over a week later, on Sunday, December 7, 1941, the Japanese launched their attack, hitting Pearl Harbor, the Philippines, Malaya, and Thailand.* They soon added the N.E.I. to the list. On December 8 the Anglo-Americans declared war on Japan, but the United States still had no more reason to go to war with Germany than it had had on December 6, so even in the excitement over Pearl Harbor, FDR did not ask Congress for a declaration of war on Germany. All earlier war plans had assumed that the United States and the United Kingdom would concentrate their efforts against Germany; suddenly it seemed that the war would take an entirely unexpected course, with the Americans fighting only the

*One of the most persistent myths in American history is that FDR knew the attack on Pearl Harbor was coming but refused to give the commanders in Hawaii advance notice. In fact, Washington gave the military in Hawaii plenty of warning about the imminent outbreak of hostilities. There was no specific warning about an attack on Pearl Harbor because no one imagined the Japanese were capable of such a daring raid. MAGIC was no help because the Japanese fleet maintained radio silence.

Japanese. On December 11 Hitler ended the uncertainty by declaring war on the United States.*

The United States was finally at war with the Axis. The status quo in Europe and in Asia had been challenged and was being upset. America had been unable to preserve it short of war. The need now was to defeat the Axis on the field of battle, a task of staggering proportions but one that carried with it great opportunities for the extension of American power and influence. The United States was quick to grasp them, even while saving the world from the unimaginable horror of being ruled by Hitler and the Japanese Army.

*An inexplicable action. No one has ever explained why Hitler did it. He was not required to do so by the terms of the Tripartite Pact; he did not discuss his actions with his own military leaders or foreign office, nor indeed with anyone else. Thus Hitler, after a long string of successes, made two fatal errors between June and December of 1941—the invasion of Russia and the declaration of war against the United States.

[2]

The War in Europe

Give me allies to fight against!

NAPOLEON

There is only one thing worse than fighting with allies,
and that is fighting without them.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

The Grand Alliance of World War II, sometimes called the "Strange Alliance," joined together Britain, the world's greatest colonial power, led by Churchill; with Russia, the world's only Communist nation, led by Stalin; with the United States, the world's greatest capitalist power, led by Roosevelt. Only Hitler could have brought them together, and only the threat of Nazi Germany could have held them together through four years of war. The Big Three mistrusted each other, but each of the partners knew he needed both of the others. No combination of two was powerful enough to defeat Germany. It took all three to do the job.

So the Grand Alliance was successful. Despite many stresses and strains, it held together to the end, a great achievement. In the process, however, nerves and resources were stretched almost to the breaking point.

The process began in January 1942 when Churchill and his military leaders came to Washington to discuss strategy. Churchill advocated a series of operations around the periphery of Hitler's European fortress, combined with bombing raids against Germany itself and encouragement to Resistance forces in the occupied countries, but no direct invasion. He called this "closing the ring."