

Introduction

John Foster Dulles

Born February 25, 1888, John Foster Dulles was the first son of the Reverend Allen Macy Dulles and Edith Foster Dulles. He grew up in the parsonage of the First Presbyterian Church of Watertown, New York. His father was one in a long line of Dulleses involved in church service, and religion was a central theme in John's upbringing. It was not, however, the only significant influence. Edith Foster Dulles was the daughter of John Watson Foster, who enjoyed a long and fruitful diplomatic career, culminating as secretary of state for President Benjamin Harrison. After retiring from public life, Foster developed a substantial law practice in Washington, DC, where he hosted his grandchildren for extended visits throughout their childhood. It was here that John was first introduced to the complexities of law, diplomacy, and politics.

Following in the footsteps of his father and several uncles, John Foster Dulles entered Princeton University in 1904. Concentrating in philosophy, he was named valedictorian of the class of 1908. After receiving a degree in law from George Washington University, and enlarging his circle of contacts in the capital, he began a legal career in 1911 with the Wall Street firm of Sullivan and Cromwell, one of the most powerful law firms in New York City. For forty years, with only brief departures, Dulles stayed with the firm, building an enormously successful career in international business law. As historian Ronald W. Pruessen states, "This was to be his real career, the one at which he spent most of his life, and it was to affect greatly almost everything else he ever did."

In 1917, with the entrance of the United States into World War I, Dulles enlisted in the army. After serving briefly with Military Intelligence, he became the assistant to Vance McCormick, chairman of the War Trade Board. In this capacity Dulles traveled extensively in Denmark, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Spain, negotiating with the Neutrals to guarantee the effectiveness of the Allied blockade of Germany. After the war, Dulles served as a delegate to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, where he helped to draft the passages pertaining to German reparations. Returning to Wall Street, Dulles rejoined Sullivan and Cromwell and in 1926, at the age of thirty-nine, became its senior partner. During these years he frequently spoke in public on matters of international finance, particularly reparations and war debts.

Concerned with issues left unresolved in Paris and the international upheaval caused by the Great Depression, Dulles became increasingly occupied with questions of war and peace. Writing for the *Atlantic Monthly*, he stated that "the true explanation of the imminence of war lies in the inevitability of change and the fact that peace efforts have been misdirected toward the prevention of change. Thereby forces which are in the long run irresistible are temporarily dammed up. When they finally break through, they do so with violence." Dulles further developed his ideas in his book *War, Peace, and Change* (Harper and Brothers, 1939). He also became involved with peace efforts undertaken by the American Protestant churches, accepting the chairmanship of the Commission on a Just and Durable Peace, a blue ribbon commission established by the Federal Council of Churches to create the foundations for a liberal world order at the conclusion of World War II. He served from 1940 to 1946, and as a leader of a major Protestant study group, Dulles gained access to a vast audience. His work for the commission was reported in newspapers across the country, and mass periodicals excerpted his writings. From the early 1940s, he was becoming a recognizable public figure.

Meanwhile, Dulles's political involvements were growing. As early as 1940 he emerged as the principal foreign policy adviser to the presidential aspirant, Thomas Dewey. By 1944 he helped write the Republican campaign platform and served as Dewey's liaison with Cordell Hull and the Depart-

ment of State during the 1944 campaign. He was an adviser to the U.S. delegation to the San Francisco Conference, where the United Nations was created, and in 1946 was appointed as a U.S. delegate to the first session of the UN General Assembly. Emerging as one of the Republican architects of the postwar bipartisan foreign policy, Dulles served as an adviser to Secretary of State James F. Byrnes at the first meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers. There followed attendance at the London and Moscow meetings in 1947 and at the Paris meeting in 1949. In that same year, Dewey, then governor of New York, appointed Dulles to fill the unexpired seat of Robert Wagner in the Senate, but, in the 1950 election, Dulles failed in his bid for election to a regular term.

After leaving the Senate, Dulles was appointed by President Harry S. Truman as consultant to Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson, with the difficult task of negotiating and carrying to conclusion the Japanese Peace Treaty, which he completed in 1951. Dulles then began to distance himself from the Truman administration, writing highly critical articles and giving speeches condemning the Truman policy of containment as “sterile” and “negative.” He emerged in 1952 as the most likely candidate to serve as Dwight D. Eisenhower’s secretary of state. Three weeks after his victory over Adlai Stevenson, President-elect Eisenhower named Dulles to the position, thus beginning a tenure that would last over six years until he was stricken by cancer in the early months of 1959.

Eisenhower was once regarded as a president who reigned but did not govern, while Dulles was portrayed as a stern, unbending moralist who preached about atheistic communism and reveled in bringing the United States and the Soviet Union to the brink of nuclear confrontation. The opening of the Eisenhower papers revealed a president who was much more directly involved in the daily business of government; recent scholarship on Dulles also has begun to change his image. For instance, research shows that Dulles’s views on the possible use of atomic weapons were measured and judicious, that he developed a sophisticated strategy designed to separate Beijing from Moscow, and that he did not regard all forms of neutralism as immoral and was more open to the possibility of serious negotiation with the Soviet Union than was previously thought. As additional materials are declassified, new light will be shed on one of the most important figures of the twentieth century, a man whose life was virtually a microcosm of twentieth-century U.S. foreign relations.

The Papers of John Foster Dulles

The documents comprising this collection are from the John Foster Dulles Papers in the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library of the Princeton University Libraries, to which Dulles willed his papers. The complete collection contains personal and some official correspondence, speeches, articles, press conferences, and official documents. These papers are found on rolls 1–66; roll 67 is a microfilm copy of *A Guide to the Papers of John Foster Dulles*, a three-volume index to the papers.

Most of the official government documents relating to Dulles’s tenure as secretary of state reside in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas. As these documents are declassified, copies are sent to Princeton. These materials from the Eisenhower Library are separately cataloged and indexed at the Mudd Library. None of these official papers from Abilene is included in this microfilm collection.

In addition, Princeton University microfilmed Dulles’s state papers during his time as secretary of state. Between 1956 and 1962, Philip A. Crowl, the historian selected by Dulles to gather his papers, put together a collection of 192 rolls of microfilm totaling 131,000 frames. The entire 192 rolls contain highly classified documents (Top Secret and above), and they were closed to researchers upon their arrival at Princeton in 1962. Historians interested in examining this resource should con-

sult the archivist of the Seeley G. Mudd Library at Princeton University for additional information on how to apply for access to the collection and for further information on its status.