

S/S 7623928 WDB



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
ACTION MEMORANDUM

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November 17, 1976

TO : The Secretary  
 THROUGH: M - Mr. Eagleburger  
 FROM : PA - William D. Blair, Jr., Acting *WB*

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The Future of the Foreign Relations SeriesSummary

The Foreign Relations series, a major asset in our openness program, faces serious problems of coverage and declassification, particularly with regard to important papers of other agencies. These problems also affect the schedule, and there is much pressure to speed up publication. We need your decision on policy. Should the series continue about as at present, or should we take steps to strengthen it? These would include asking President Ford to issue instructions (similar to those of Presidents Kennedy and Nixon) calling on State and other agencies to improve the documentary coverage and accelerate declassification and publication. A memorandum to the President is attached for your decision.

Discussion

The Congress and the public are demanding ever more insistently that the Federal Executive provide detailed and expeditious information about its activities. In this context the Department's Foreign Relations of the United States series assumes special significance, as the most venerable and comprehensive effort of the government to provide an objective record of its performance.

At this juncture the future of the Foreign Relations series appears uncertain, because of two inter-related problems. One persistent concern is that the series has fallen well behind the prescribed

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Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP  
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 Declassify after \_\_\_\_\_  
 With concurrence of: \_\_\_\_\_  
 IPS by *[Signature]* Date *9-11?* obtained \_\_\_\_\_ not obt. \_\_\_\_\_

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twenty-year line. The delay now reaches to twenty-seven years, and further slippage seems in prospect.

This nagging problem, however serious, is less worrisome than the prospect that the series may become less and less able to fulfill its prime mission-- full and fair representation of the foreign-policy process as it has affected the important issues. Difficulties in this respect arise because many agencies besides the Department of State now contribute importantly to foreign policy and diplomacy. To compile an accurate record today, scholars from the Office of the Historian must examine not only State Department records, but also those of the Departments of Defense and Treasury among others, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Energy Research and Development Agency, and above all the National Security Council.

In addition, Department historians must be able to facilitate declassification of the other-agency documents selected for publication, so that the Foreign Relations series can issue according to a dependable and reasonably expeditious schedule. Unfortunately, it cannot be said that the existing arrangements for access and clearance ensure fully comprehensive coverage.

If it proves impossible to maintain sufficiently comprehensive coverage and reasonably expeditious issue, then the quality and utility of the Foreign Relations series are bound to decline. Criticism from the domestic foreign affairs community will increase. The hands of those in the Congress and elsewhere who advocate unworkable standards of disclosure will be strengthened (we expect a substantial effort to be made in the next Congress to redefine the classification system by legislation, in part to require much earlier and fuller release of documentation on foreign policy and defense). To avoid serious difficulties of this kind and to strengthen public confidence in our management of official information, the Executive agencies clearly must make

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every effort to ensure the highest possible standards of disclosure consistent with the real requirements of national security.

Given the comprehensive nature of the Foreign Relations series, encompassing materials from a broad range of agencies, it is arguable that responsibility for conduct of this program might be exercised by the National Security Council. Practical as well as theoretical considerations, however, weigh heavily against any such rearrangement. The bulk of the work remains in and with the State Department; the National Security Council staff is not now equipped to assume this charge, or designed to conduct operations generally. Location of the function in the Department of State has stood the test of a century's experience and continues to produce a result reflecting credit on the Executive as a whole.

In these circumstances, the need appears to be to support the Historian's Office in responding to current conditions and in assuring the continuing integrity of the series. In broad terms, there appear to be two policy options:

The first would be to continue as at present, accepting the consequences of mounting deficiencies in coverage and increasing delays in publication. This however would tend to contradict the Department's posture of openness and impede efforts to improve its credibility with Congress and public. Nevertheless, these political costs might prove enduring in the short run and perhaps for some time to come.

A conceivable variant on this option might be to achieve acceleration by reducing coverage, perhaps to the extent of documenting only the role of the Department itself; but, because this course would force exclusion of patently indispensable information, the net effect would be to destroy the

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usefulness of the volumes. For this reason we do not consider this variant as an acceptable alternative.

The second realistic option would be to strengthen the series. This would mean improving its substantive coverage of other-agency documentation and accelerating its publication schedule--i.e., beginning to reduce the time lag back toward the 20-year goal. This would require clarification of the series' mission, by or in the name of the President, to ensure full cooperation of other agencies. For full implementation, some additional manpower and printing funds would also have to be found, for faster review and publication of more, and more diversified, foreign policy materials, though a start could be made with present resources.

We believe that gains from this second option would far outweigh the essentially modest additional costs associated with it. (We are not requesting resources now, and if you decide in principle that we should move in the direction recommended, we would expect to seek them through the normal budgetary channels.)

Recommendation: That you sign the attached memorandum to the President to request an instruction to the foreign affairs agencies concerning comprehensive policy content and accelerated publication of the Foreign Relations series.

*12/8 Per Seco 32013  
Secretary signed memo -  
to be dispatched and  
Sec's return*

Attachment:

Memorandum to the President.

PA/HO:GFWash:bjm 11/16/76  
Ext. 21931

*by plan 76*  
R - Samuel Goldberg

THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

December 7, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

From: Henry A. Kissinger

Subject: Publication of Foreign Relations  
Series

The American people have a deep and abiding interest in the development of their foreign policy, and our government has an unmatched record of accomplishment in providing the basic information they must have in order to make wise decisions. In this process a most effective instrumentality has been the series of documentary volumes, Foreign Relations of the United States. For 115 years this distinguished collection has given a fair and balanced publication of our principal diplomatic, economic, and military papers. The 260 volumes covering the years from Lincoln to Truman include documents from many departments and agencies. Widely respected for candor and dependability, the Foreign Relations series contributes both to the credibility of the United States abroad and to public respect at home for the integrity of the foreign policy record.

However, the series today is in need of assistance if it is to maintain its performance in the face of changing conditions. In the postwar period, numerous agencies in addition to the Office of the President and the Department of State increasingly have contributed to the formulation and conduct of foreign policy; and the record of these contributions requires review for selection, declassification, and orderly publication in the series, in accordance with

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the same high standards of scholarship and prompt disclosure that have been applied to the records of the traditional foreign policy sources. To ensure that this is done, I recommend that you approve and sign the two attached memoranda directing the responsible officials to take certain measures to strengthen Foreign Relations and expedite the process of declassification and publication.

Attachments:

1. Draft memorandum to the Secretary of State.
2. Draft memorandum to other senior officials.

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Suggested Message

THE WHITE HOUSE

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The official documentary series entitled Foreign Relations of the United States was first published in 1861 as part of President Lincoln's annual message to the Congress. The series, which now includes some 260 volumes, has long provided the American people an indispensable perspective on the nation's history. The charge of Foreign Relations is to provide a comprehensive review of U.S. foreign policy and diplomacy. In recent years the volumes in the series have included considerable documentation from the records of many agencies and departments besides the Department of State, reflecting the expansion of governmental engagement in the foreign-policy process.

President Kennedy in 1961 and President Nixon in 1972 indicated that the lengthening interval between events and their description in Foreign Relations should be shortened, without impairing the quality of the volumes, in order to meet the public need for

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timely information about how our foreign policy was made. I share the considerations that actuated my predecessors. Therefore, while recognizing the difficulties involved, I ask that you develop means of ensuring fully comprehensive coverage of American diplomacy and of accelerating production of the Foreign Relations series. Our goal should be to publish the volumes about twenty years after the events they record.

In order to achieve these goals in the most expeditious and effective manner, I am today instructing the Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, the Administrator of General Services, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs to cooperate fully with you in supplying and declassifying appropriate documents to the maximum extent consistent with the requirements of national security.

GERALD R. FORD

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Suggested Message

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE  
THE ADMINISTRATOR OF GENERAL SERVICES  
THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR  
NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

Subject: Improvement and Acceleration of the Foreign Relations Series

The documentary series entitled Foreign Relations of the United States, published by the Department of State, is the means by which the Presidents of the United States since Abraham Lincoln have provided a frank and comprehensive record of the nation's foreign policy and diplomacy for use of the American people. To ensure the most authoritative coverage possible, it is necessary for the compilers of Foreign Relations to examine relevant records of the large number of departments and agencies which contribute to the foreign-policy process.

I have today instructed the Secretary of State to develop a program designed to ensure full coverage of our foreign relations and to reduce the gap between events and publication of the record to twenty years. The Department of State will continue to seek the

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assistance of appropriate agencies and departments in collecting and declassifying documents deemed appropriate for publication in Foreign Relations.

I ask each of you to cooperate fully with the Secretary of State, to the maximum extent consistent with the requirements of national security, in facilitating thorough examination and expeditious declassification of the relevant parts of the historical record in your keeping.

GERALD R. FORD