



# **United States Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period, 1918-1941: The Golden Age of American Diplomatic and Military Complacency (Praeger Studies of Foreign Policies of the Great Powers)**

*Benjamin Rhodes*

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This study presents an in-depth survey of the principal policies and personalities of American diplomacy of the era, together with a discussion of recent historiography in the field. For two decades between the two world wars, America pursued a foreign policy course that was, according to Rhodes, shortsighted and self-centered. Believing World War I had been an aberration, Americans naively signed disarmament treaties and a pact renouncing war, while eschewing such inconveniences as enforcement machinery or participation in international organizations. Smug moral superiority, a penurious desire to save money, and naïveté ultimately led to the neglect of America's armed forces even as potential rivals were arming themselves to the teeth.

In contrast to the dynamic drive of the New Deal in domestic policy, foreign policy under Franklin D. Roosevelt was often characterized by a lack of clarity and, reflecting Roosevelt's fear of isolationists and pacifists, by presidential explanations that were frequently evasive, incomplete, or deliberately misleading. One of the period's few successes was the bipartisan Good Neighbor policy, which proved far-sighted commercially and strategically. Rhodes praises Cordell Hull as the outstanding secretary of state of the time, whose judgment was often more on target than others in the State Department and the executive branch.

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