
1970 Report of the Advisory Committee on "Foreign Relations of the United States"

The Advisory Committee on *Foreign Relations of the United States*, consisting of representatives from the American Political Science Association, the American Historical Association, and the American Society of International Law met in Washington at the Department of State on November 6, 1970. A report on its meeting, printed below, was prepared and submitted to the Secretary of State, William P. Rogers, by Paul A. Varg, Chairman, W. Stull Holt and Ernest R. May, American Historical Association; David Deener and Stephen M. Schwebel, American Society of International Law; and Elmer Plischke and Inis L. Claude, American Political Science Association.

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At the conclusion of its deliberation the Committee adopted the following recommendations:

1. That the Secretary of State affirm that the publication *United States Foreign Relations* is of great importance to the Department's relation with the academic community and that the high quality of the series since its beginning in 1861 must not be permitted to decline;
2. That the Secretary endorse a policy of reasonably prompt examination of *Foreign Relations* proofsheets submitted to the geographic and other Bureaus for clearance and that a lapse of six months with no action constitute *de facto* clearance and that the Historical Division be authorized to proceed with the publication of the documents under consideration;
3. That the Secretary communicate to the heads of other departments and agencies, especially the Secretary of Defense, his desire that *Foreign Relations* constitute as complete a record as possible and that the volumes be published as promptly as possible;

4. That the addition of the two new positions recommended by the Department represents a most significant forward step toward alleviating the persistent problem of slippage in publication and that every effort be made to assure that this proposed advance be realized;
5. That when vacancies occur on the staff of the Historical Division the filling of these positions be authorized so as to help in the warding off of further slippage;
6. That a senior foreign service officer be assigned to the Division and given the responsibility for dealing with questions of clearance of documents for publication;
7. That efforts be made to meet the requests of professional associations who are expressing deep disappointment over the discontinuance of the publication entitled *Current Documents*.

The Committee recognizes the many competing pressures upon the Department. It is aware that daily operations quite naturally absorb its first attention. However, the Advisory Committee affirms its view that *United States Foreign Relations* is a major asset of the Department, deserving some continuous attention from its highest officers. *Foreign Relations*, more than any other Department activity, has served to maintain the prestige and credibility of the Department within the international academic community, for historians, political scientists, international lawyers, and other scholars around the world know that *Foreign Relations* never omits, conceals, or misrepresents. It is evidence that the Department can and does tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and the United States benefits thereby.

The Advisory Committee understands and respects the needs of individual scholars for access to the full archives recording our foreign relations. It shares their concern that this and forthcoming generations of students develop a sophisticated understanding of the complexities of foreign affairs. An absence of public understanding offers a formidable barrier to effective work by the Department, and the university community can make a proper contribution to public understanding only if its members have adequate resources for informing themselves. Weighing the interest of preserving confidentiality against the interest of informing the public, the Department has established a policy of opening records after a twenty year time period. In practice, however, the

opening of records is tied to the publication of *Foreign Relations*, for the editors of *Foreign Relations* act, in effect, as the Department's declassification officers. Owing to the slippage in *Foreign Relations*, records are now open only after twenty-five years, and the interval threatens to lengthen. This has caused deep dissatisfaction and mounting criticism by professional scholarly organizations.

It is the view of our Committee that the Department should exert every effort to bring *Foreign Relations* up to the twenty-year mark at the earliest feasible date.