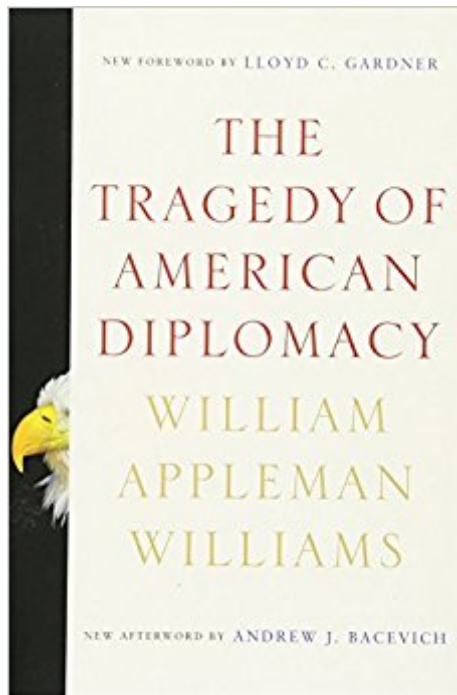




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# **The Tragedy Of American Diplomacy (50th Anniversary Edition)**



## Synopsis

“A brilliant book on foreign affairs.” —[Adolf A. Berle Jr.](#), *New York Times Book Review*

This incisive interpretation of American foreign policy ranks as a classic in American thought. First published in 1959, the book offered an analysis of the wellsprings of American foreign policy that shed light on the tensions of the Cold War and the deeper impulses leading to the American intervention in Vietnam. William Appleman Williams brilliantly explores the ways in which ideology and political economy intertwined over time to propel American expansion and empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The powerful relevance of Williams’s interpretation to world politics has only been strengthened by recent events in Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. Williams allows us to see that the interests and beliefs that once sent American troops into Texas and California, or Latin America and East Asia, also propelled American forces into Iraq.

## Book Information

Paperback: 384 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; 1 edition (April 6, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393334740

ISBN-13: 978-0393334746

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #70,854 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #59 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Diplomacy](#) #568 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Political Science > History & Theory](#) #2751 in [Books > History > Americas > United States](#)

## Customer Reviews

“The influence of Williams’s *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* . . . is beyond challenge. An iconoclastic attack upon conventional wisdom, it is equally important because it framed arguments about its subject. . . . No comprehensive scheme, no broad generalizations, and few but the narrowest studies of episodes in American foreign relations will be written, if they are to shine, without an awareness of and an accommodation to [this book].” —[Bradford Perkins](#), *University of Michigan*, in *Redefining the Past: Essays in Diplomatic History in Honor of William Appleman Williams*

“Stimulating and provocative. . . . A highly interesting contribution to

today's great foreign policy debate. (American Historical Review) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A former president of the Organization of American Historians, William Appleman Williams taught for many years at the University of Wisconsin and Oregon State University. His books include *The Contours of American History*, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, and *Empire as a Way of Life*. Andrew J. Bacevich is a professor of international relations and history at Boston University. Lloyd C. Gardner is the Charles and Mary Beard Professor of History at Rutgers University.

William Appleman Williams analyzes the complex tragedy of American diplomacy through historical relations between the U.S. and Cuba from the Spanish-American War through the Cold War, and beyond. This was a very enlightening text, where Williams challenges the traditional views of the cause of the Cold War, while explaining the U.S. government's agenda for economic expansion.

"*The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*" was an important book when it was published in 1959 at the height of the Cold War. It offered a critical, leftist narrative of American diplomatic history that offset the America-As-Global-Savior mythology then dominating American intellectual life. It opened minds and founded a whole school of thought -- the New Left "revisionist" approach to U.S. foreign relations. Unfortunately, the book was just as unbalanced as the mindset it critiqued. It was written in the grip of one (and only one) idea: that American foreign policy had been driven since the late 1800s by the goal of imposing an "Open Door" on the entire world in order to facilitate American economic expansion. That might have explained some U.S. policies in Latin America and China, but it was laughable as an exhaustive explanation of our diplomacy in World Wars I and II or the Cold War. The author, William Appleman Williams, oversimplified too much. And if he did research in official archives, it barely shows in the book: footnotes and bibliography are non-existent; many episodes are recreated from speeches or magazine articles; and only evidence that supports his thesis is presented. Bizarrely, for a book that argues that economics determined foreign policy, there is almost no discussion of economics or analysis of trade negotiations! Instead, Williams repeatedly cites the political economy musings of American politicians and thinkers, as if these explained actual negotiations and diplomatic maneuvers. Even sympathetic readers would admit that the opening of archives since 1959 has made "*The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*" seriously outdated. To its credit, the book was intellectually provocative and inspired a great deal of

productive historical research. However, the field has moved on since Williams wrote. Not recommended.

Very good

Excellent book. Foreign policy of U.S. Presented in clear concise easily understood terms. My opinion (as 8 year Viet Nam era USN vet who was at Yorktown Naval Weapons Station during Bay of Pigs invasion), should be required reading at high school level and read by every citizen with honest drive to understand the development of American political ego. If one really wants to understand U.S. involvement in economic expansion (including use of war and economic power to acquire resources for American enterprises) a must read. Copyright 1959, 1962, 1972, and this 50 year anniversary edition will take the reader from American Frontier" expansion to "Global Frontier" expansion. The discerning reader will understand the use of "Democracy and Freedom", "Self Determination of other nations", "Altruistic motives", and yes, FEAR, and DEMONIZATION as CARROTS to obtain public support for policies (destructive ones) that are totally ECONOMIC drivers to preserve the U.S system for global expansion. The "Open Door Policy" clearly defined from end of 1800s through TODAY regardless of political party in power. Must be willing and desire to understand. Even more relevant today as in the 1800s, 1959, and beyond Not for BLIND patriots, BLIND nationalists, or that 48% that goes to extremes to ignore the true methods and consequences of our foreign policy. This knowledge would be beneficial if there was actually a WILL to use it to change.

William Appleman Williams's *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* examines the role of capitalism in the shaping and implementation of American foreign policy. Former distinguished professor of American history at the University of Wisconsin, Williams created a work that challenged the traditional concept of American foreign policy and isolationism. Williams set out to illuminate the "tragedy" of American diplomacy and its connection to economics. Originally written in 1959, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* analyzes the role of capitalistic ventures in driving foreign policy. Williams constructed his revisionist history during the Cold War, which allowed him to provide a unique perspective on the motivations of American intervention around the world. During this time period the United States is generally regarded as a largely isolationist nation, but Williams shows that this is not entirely true. After conquering the American frontier, the United States needed new locations to sell its surplus goods. The United

States set their sights on new locations abroad. Williams argues that the United States was not intervening overseas because they wanted to help those struggling nations succeed, but rather they were simply expanding the market in which American products could be sold. The attempt to help other societies become more like the United States, Williams argues, was merely a cover for economic expansion. U.S. foreign policy hindered the self-determination of these nations and kept them from following their own economic path. The United States saw its system as the ideal model and used its considerable power and influence to shape the world in its own image. By placing such an emphasis on economic expansion and what Williams perceives were the true intentions of U.S. foreign policy, one must reevaluate the reasonings for many of the military actions taken by the United States. Did the United States intervene in Korea and Vietnam because they wanted to help the people and stop the spread of communism? Williams argues that American intervention occurred because of the need to protect potential markets. *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* is a thought-provoking book that provides a unique perspective to the existing historiography of U.S. foreign policy scholarship. Williams created an interdisciplinary work that blends history, political science, sociology, and economics quite seamlessly. Whether one agrees with Williams's assessment of American imperialist and capitalistic driven foreign policy or not, this is still a tremendously important work because the work is generated.

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