

John Foster Dulles

Secretary of State (1888 – 1959)



Special Collections and University Archives, The Gelman Library, The George Washington University

Dulles served as U.S. Secretary of State from 1953 to 1959, and was a significant figure in the early Cold War era, advocating an aggressive stance against communism. He played a great part in planning at the CIA, where his brother ALLEN WELSH DULLES was the Director. Both his grandfather, John W. Foster, and his uncle, Robert Lansing, served as Secretaries of State.

Born in Washington, D.C., Dulles attended Princeton University and George Washington University Law School. He then joined the New York City law firm of Sullivan & Cromwell. He tried to join the Army during World War I, but was rejected because of poor eyesight.

In 1912, he married Janet Avery, with whom he had two sons and a daughter. One of their sons, Avery Dulles, converted to Catholicism, entered the Jesuit order and became the first American priest to be directly appointed Cardinal. He taught and resided at Fordham University. His other son, John W. F. Dulles, was a professor of history, and his daughter, Lillias Hinshaw, was a Presbyterian minister.

In 1918, WOODROW WILSON appointed Dulles as legal counsel to the U.S. delegation to the Versailles Peace Conference where he served under his uncle, Robert Lansing. In 1945, Dulles worked as adviser to Arthur H. Vandenberg and helped draft the preamble to the United Nations Charter, later serving as a UN delegate. Dulles was appointed to the Senate on July 7, 1949, to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Democrat Robert F. Wagner.

When Eisenhower became President, he appointed Dulles as his Secretary of State to succeed DEAN ACHESON. Dulles spent considerable time building up NATO and forming other alliances as part of his strategy of controlling Soviet expansion by threatening massive retaliation. In an article in *Life* magazine, Dulles defined his policy of brinkmanship: "The ability to get to the verge without getting into the war is the necessary art."

Suffering from cancer, Dulles resigned from office in April 1959, and was succeeded by CHRISTIAN A. HERTER. The following month, he died in Washington at age 71.

