The art of the shadow deal

Previous presidents have sometimes chosen to bypass official foreign-policy channels. Donald Trump’s pressure on Ukraine was something darker.

A mericans used to recoil at secret deals, but under Donald Trump, back-channel intrigues thrived: accounted-for, concentrating power, deciding the presidency. As a back-channel diplomat, the president’s assistant sought to influence the country’s relations with Ukraine. This approach was not as unusual as it seemed. John Bolton, for example, had been an active back-channel diplomat in the White House.

In February 2019, Mr. Trump warned John Bolton that he would lose his job as national security adviser if he continued to have dealings with Ukraine. Bolton was, however, a master at back-channel diplomacy. He had used similar techniques in his roles as a congressman and a retired general.

The operation was complex and involved multiple stakeholders. The president, along with his advisors, made several secret trips to Ukraine to meet with Ukrainian officials. These meetings were not reported to the public, and their purpose was not disclosed.

The goal was to influence the outcome of the 2020 presidential election in the United States. The president wanted to ensure that Ukraine continued to provide military supplies to the U.S. forces in Afghanistan, and that it would support his campaign. The informal channel of communication was crucial to achieving these objectives.

The operation was successful in some respects. Ukraine did continue to support the U.S. military campaign, and the president won re-election.

However, the back-channel diplomacy was also a cause for concern. It raised questions about the transparency and accountability of the U.S. government. The secret operations were not subject to oversight, and there was no mechanism to ensure that they were conducted in the best interests of the country.

In 2020, the president was impeached for his role in the back-channel diplomacy. The impeachment trial was held in the Senate, and the president was acquitted.

The back-channel diplomacy was seen as a violation of the Constitution and a threat to the rule of law. It was clear that the president had used his position to pressure foreign leaders for personal gain, and that he had obstructed justice.

In conclusion, back-channel diplomacy is a dangerous and illegal practice. It undermines the principles of transparency and accountability that are essential to a functioning democracy. The president’s actions were a threat to the integrity of the U.S. government and to the values that the country holds dear.