State’s Spies: The Bureau of Secret Intelligence and the Development of State Department Bureaucracy in the First World War

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by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 3

Introduction 4

Chapter 1: Defining Bureaucracy in Theory and American Practice 12
   Bureaucracy Theory 14
   State Department Bureaucracy, 1877-1914 24

Chapter 2: Violations of Neutrality and Inventing the Bureau 35
   German Violations of Neutrality in the United States 37
   Foreign Relations and Violations of Neutrality on the High Seas 43
   Creating the Bureau 52

Chapter 3: The Bureau and Its Contemporaries 58
   American Intelligence Services in the First World War 59
   Counterespionage and the Bureau in its Early Period 63
   Foreign Intelligence 71
   Foreign Relations 82

Conclusion 85

Biographical Glossary 93

Images and Photos 96

Bibliography 102
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Introduction

Before sunrise on August 14, 1898, an American bugler woke to face a fetid Filipino heat. He climbed the stone steps carefully, stepping over spent cartridges scattered about torn Spanish flags. As he raised the Star-Spangled Banner over Manila’s Fort Santiago, he could see just over the horizon the carcass of the Spanish flagship *Reina Cristina* hulking in Manila Bay, its first smokestack bowed towards the American West. Dawn on August 14 coronated the first day of the American occupation of the Philippines, and with it, the birth of an American empire.

Although victory brought with it certain developments in bureaucracy to administer America’s new empire, the United States failed to invent modern bureaucracy in the area perhaps most needed for the world’s newest Great Power: foreign policy.¹ Well into the twentieth century, the United States remained a sleeping giant, unwilling to assume international commitments generally expected of the world’s most powerful countries. It took until Allied victory in the Great War, when the United States become a creditor nation and partially responsible for the rebuilding of Europe, for it to embrace its newfound status as international arbiter.

Nowhere is the dearth of bureaucracy, and the adverse consequences of its absence, more clear than in the Woodrow Wilson administration (1913-1921) and its foreign policy and intelligence establishment. Wilson (1856-1924), like his predecessors, faced a State Department beset with nepotism and party cronyism. Rather than tackling the problem head-on, Wilson chose to monopolize foreign policy formation himself, making his close friend and confidant

¹ For a detailed collection of essays examining the bureaucratic reforms involved in administering empire, and for essays arguing that these reforms were the first steps towards the administrative state seen today, see, for example, *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, Ed. Alfred W. McCoy & Francisco A. Scarano, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).
Colonel Edward Mandell House (1858-1938) an official foreign representative that supplanted the Secretary of State. Unlike Wilson, House prioritized reform in the State Department, seeking to replace party officials with men he believed capable and experts in their respective fields. These men, however, came exclusively from House’s social circle, including his son-in-law Gordon Auchincloss (1886-1943), who later played a key role in budding American intelligence efforts while in the service of the wartime State Department. As a result, House’s attempted reforms often sidelined official bureaucracy and yielded a disorganized and informal administration of Wilson’s foreign policy. Where a more modern bureaucracy might have hired anonymously and by merit, House drew on personal connections defined by his own old-boys club.

When, for example, House and Auchincloss met, it was rarely in an official context. At one such meeting in the summer of 1917, as the two lit cigars and sipped on mint juleps at an elite Maine country club, they discussed newfound evidence that Sweden was routing German espionage orders through Sweden’s own embassy in the United States, a major victory in efforts to circumscribe German communications. Instead of an official meeting governed by administrative procedure, however, this revelation was shared instead during an unplanned, blasé chat between House and his son-in-law interrupting a round of golf while on a family vacation. Remarkably, this interaction was the most common way intelligence moved from the State Department to the Oval Office throughout the First World War. With modernity at their fingertips, American diplomats and policymakers ignored their burgeoning bureaucracy in favor of an aristocratic, “great man” kind of diplomacy, inadvertently scoring victories for innovative and more modern German espionage.
As the United States was increasingly drawn into World War I, it had neither a centralized nor effective intelligence agency to combat the country’s new foes. Counterespionage operations were conducted by the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Investigation, the Treasury Department’s Secret Service, and local police departments, often in isolation from one another. Before American entry into the war, American agents rarely, if ever, collected foreign intelligence, particularly in Europe. Not only was foreign intelligence rarely connected, but when it was, it was often not filtered back to a centralized source. With German subterfuge’s increasing prominence in the United States, the American government faced mounting pressure to confront these threats in united and novel ways. This thesis addresses one part of the American response to these threats to national security: the Bureau of Secret Intelligence (“the Bureau”) in the Department of State.

The Bureau is a unique and a nearly unstudied window into the creation and administration of foreign relations in the Woodrow Wilson administration. Officially constituted within the Office of the Counselor in 1915 and run by a young career diplomat named Leland Harrison (1883-1951), its staff and purview remained limited to information sharing among departments and daily briefings for the Secretary of State. After the United States entered the war, however, the Bureau gradually grew to coordinate an informal organization of human intelligence larger than the United States had ever seen, albeit fairly

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2 I hesitate to employ an acronym (such as “BSI”) for the Bureau of Secret Intelligence, because, as this thesis argues, Washington had yet to be beset by an army of acronymed federal agencies. The culture of bureaucracy, in other words, simply did not exist, underlined by the fact that, in interdepartmental communication, government employees themselves rarely used acronyms. I do use an acronym for the Bureau of Investigation, however, both because it was the direct forerunner to the FBI, and because it may be easier for the reader to distinguish between it and the subject of this thesis. Suffice it to say, all future reference to the Bureau of Secret Intelligence will either use its full name or “the Bureau” for short.

3 For a chart showing the official and de facto chains of command in the Wilson administration, see the final page of the “Images and Photos” section.
ineffective. Even though the Bureau had a limited impact on policy, it played a key role in the
development of an American foreign-policy bureaucracy by attempting to centralize a nexus
between intelligence and foreign policy, and contemporary scholarship has neglected its role in
this second context.

The Bureau, and House’s general hiring philosophy when it came to the State
Department, show, in fact, a reformer committed to defeating a party spoils system and
rewarding loyal individuals with applicable expertise in the administration of foreign policy that
he (and, through him, Wilson) set. House's reformism, however, was not a full reversal from
nepotism and pure meritocracy. Instead, it was a half-measure that paved the way for a more
meritocratic system, in which House insisted upon hiring officials that were qualified and loyal,
crucially in that order. This partial level of modernization allowed House to fit in well in a
European system that often still resembled 1815 Vienna. He was the fundamental arbiter of
American foreign relations, did not liaise with federal departments, and preferred to engage with
the statesmen of Allied Europe over the then-novel bureaucrat.4 House negotiated Germany’s
Sussex Pledge (1916) to end unrestricted submarine warfare almost single-handedly, and he did
not include any senior member from the State Department, and certainly no member from the
Bureau.5 In fact, as Wilson was debating a peace note to the belligerents in December 1916,
House saw himself as central to the “great man” dynamic of European diplomacy, writing in his
diary, “I fear the President has nearly destroyed all the work I have done in Europe.”6 As a
result, while House should be considered a reformer, House’s diplomatic independence
purposefully circumscribed State Department prerogatives in ways not fully modern.

5 Cooper, 364.
6 House’s Diary, 23 December 1917, The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, ed. Arthur S. Link, (Princeton:
At the same time, House explicitly desired a State Department that could support him and Wilson. As the president-elect began to select his cabinet and appoint officials in late 1912 and early 1913, House advised that he reward not big donors and Democratic bigwigs, but rather lawyers and bureaucrats House could trust to execute executive policy efficiently. This advice was a near mirror image of Wilson’s own ideals of administration that he espoused as a young university professor in the late nineteenth century. Yet Wilson did not practice what he preached, and the United States did not take advantage of institutionalized intelligence available to it. Partly because Wilson’s principals neglected the Bureau, it remained a small, largely ineffective office. Nevertheless, the Bureau is due recognition as the American government’s first attempt in creating a centralized intelligence agency.

Its ineffectiveness may begin to explain why little scholarship has addressed the Bureau, much less the State Department during the war, despite the fact that entire home libraries could be filled with the books and articles written on Wilsonianism and the First World War. As we approach the centennial of America’s entry into the Great War, then, there is perhaps no better time for a fresh look at the administration of Wilson’s policy priorities. As a result, an analysis of the evolution of the first attempt at a modern intelligence agency and its effects on American policy during the war should be welcome. Despite a wealth of historiography tackling the relationship between Wilson and other foreign policy notables, few historians have pulled the curtain back to reveal the federal departments and burgeoning bureaucracies behind them.

Using the Bureau as a case study, this thesis assesses the degree of modernization in the creation and administration of Wilson’s foreign policy during the First World War. To do so, it seeks to situate the Bureau in the history of the modernization of the State Department, which, at this time, faced a crossroads. Traditionally dominated by wealthy party officials, with the gradual
rationalization of the Consular and Diplomatic Services, the State Department was beginning to
give way to a professional class of career diplomats. Wilbur J. Carr, something of the father of
the United States Foreign Service, aptly captured this tension between old-school and new-
school diplomacy when he was first posted to the American Embassy in London in 1916, writing
that he was “shocked to see that the staff still wore top hats and long-tailed coats to work,” while
he preferred a shorter coat.\(^7\) Although this thesis highlights as an example of bureaucratic reform
this understudied office, the Bureau still confirms the degree to which the “long-tails” held the
“short-coats” at bay. The Bureau confirms the renowned Wilson Papers editor Arthur S. Link’s
argument that Wilsonianism was marked by “individualist” policy formation, a function of
perceived elitism and ineptitude in the foreign service.\(^8\) It also gives credence to the argument
more recently advanced by Robert Tucker in which he asked whether Wilson “would have made
effective use of [a] more satisfactory....foreign policy establishment,” noting that he seemed “to
have made little use of the resources the State Department did have to offer.”\(^9\) However, an
office that centralized and categorized American intelligence, and, at times, directed its use, the
Bureau stands out as an important bridge between a State Department dominated by “long-tail”
diplomats and one defined by the rational administration later embraced in the creation of the
career-driven Foreign Service in 1924.

This thesis proceeds in three parts: a theoretical view of bureaucracy and a brief history
of governmental administration in the United States, the factors leading to the establishment of

Dunne, 2013), 277. Because aristocrats wore tails and bureaucrats did not, this distinction is a helpful
metaphor to describe the gulf between old-school and new-school diplomacy. I therefore use “long-tails”
and “short-coats” synonymously with these terms.
\(^8\) Link, Arthur, *Wilson the Diplomatist: A Look at His Major Foreign Policies*, (Franklin Watts: New
York, 1957), 24-25.
the Bureau and the Bureau’s creation itself, and the Bureau's operations relative to other
government agencies and Wilson himself. In order to construct an understanding of what a
modern foreign policy process should have looked like during the Wilson presidency, this thesis
uses a composition of classical bureaucracy theory, including scholarship from Woodrow Wilson
himself. Having constructed a series of standards by which we can judge the relative modernity
of the Bureau and the administration of Wilson's foreign policy, the chapter then situates the
period of study within a larger history of the modernization of American governance in general
and the State Department in particular. The Bureau occupies a small but fascinating slice of this
history, created as an ad hoc response to growing violations of American neutrality, both within
the United States by German saboteurs and British propagandists, and without the United States
by British attempts to monopolize transatlantic trade and Germany’s unrestricted submarine
warfare. The actual creation of the Bureau was largely informal and designed by cabinet
deputies, only remotely engineered by House himself. Often without House’s direct oversight,
the Bureau developed innovative managerial and archival techniques to more effectively log
incoming intelligence, distribute reports to relevant agencies, and use this information to
influence policymaking. These developments often occurred in tandem, though sometimes at
odds, with America’s other security services as the Bureau tackled new roles in counterespionage
and foreign intelligence.

Nor, as the conclusion discusses, are interagency rivalries and attempted monopolization
of the formation of foreign policy problems unique to the Wilson administration. The Bureau is
but a shadow of the aristocratic politics that accompanied American intelligence in the next war,
and the war after that. As the essayist Lewis Lapham curtly notes, the two most important
questions in a job interview with the CIA in the late 1950s had nothing to do espionage or
foreign policy. Instead, they were markers of social distinction: “1. When standing on the thirteenth tee at the National Golf Links in Southampton, which club does one take from the bag [and] 2. On final approach under sail into Hay Harbor on Fishers Island, what is the direction (at dusk in late August) of the prevailing wind?”10 Perhaps seemingly esoteric, a study of bureaucracy theory shows just how far federal bureaucracy both has come and has yet to go.

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Chapter 1: Defining Bureaucracy in Theory and American Practice

“The process of the life of the State is a great organic process of the mind.”
-Woodrow Wilson

“The bureaucracy is a circle from which no man can escape.”
-Karl Marx

“And the man or woman who fails to do his duty, not as he sees it, but as society at large sees it, will be held up to the contempt of all mankind.”
-Philip Dru in Edward Mandell House’s Philip Dru: Administrator

Introduction

Set scene: On a bright morning in 1921, Philip Dru, a young West Point graduate, awakes from a sunstroke in Fort Magruder, Texas. All is not well in his beloved country. An evil plutocratic regime has seized control of the federal government, enslaving an unwitting, God-fearing proletariat. Dru rallies local supporters around his banner, creating a people's army to which he leads a glorious victory over the menacing junta. Thereafter, he rules the United States, not as a democratically elected leader, but as an “administrator.” As Administrator, he institutes a host of progressive and technocratic reforms that yield social equality and an American bureaucracy set free from politics, an institution relegated to the sands of time. With American prosperity ensured, Dru goes on to bring a universal balance of power to world politics, and when his work is done, sails into the sunset with his wife Gloria, forever to be remembered the harbinger of world peace.

12 Karl Marx, Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, 1843.
So went the plot of the novel penned by Colonel Edward Mandell House (1858-1938), Woodrow Wilson’s confidant and key foreign policy advisor. House later wrote in his diary in 1917, “Philip Dru expresses my thought and aspirations, and at every opportunity, I have tried to press rulers, public men, and those influencing public opinion in th[e] direction [of technocracy].” Did Philip Dru embody House’s theory of modern bureaucracy? Though House may have called Dru an administrator, is Dru really a “bureaucrat?” These are, perhaps ironically, central questions in any study seeking to understand attempts at modernization of American foreign relations during the Wilson administration.

In many ways, House was the architect of Wilson’s administration and of a budding “Wilsonian state.” Nowhere was House’s influence more pronounced than in the State Department, where virtually he alone decided who occupied major posts, particularly after Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan’s departure in 1915. House hand-selected at least two people involved in the Bureau (Counselor Frank Lyon Polk and Auchincloss), a Bureau that was at least partially designed to be auxiliary to a foreign policy formation process helmed by House. So, while in House’s mind, State Department reforms, particularly in the case of the Bureau, were attempts at rationalization and modernization, can we really call them that?

To answer this question, this chapter first turns to theory. It seeks to develop a theoretical framework of bureaucracy that can be used to judge the relative modernity and efficacy of the Bureau and, therein, the administration of Wilsonian foreign policy. To do so, it turns to Wilson's own writings, and that of Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831) and Max Weber (1864-1920), while also relying upon contemporary scholarship on classical bureaucracy theory, theory with which Wilson would have been intimately familiar as a professor of political science. In this

regard, the chapter seeks to “define” bureaucracy. As an introductory lens, however, a view of previous attempts to modernize the State Department, and a general grasp of the administrative history of the federal government during this period should be helpful. As such, the chapter then turns towards defining the boundaries of State Department bureaucracy, and the relative difficulties it would pose a would-be modernizer in 1915.

Finally, this chapter argues that, given the outsized influence of German political philosophy upon Wilson’s scholarship at Johns Hopkins and Princeton, a distinct fusion of various takes on classical bureaucracy theory exists that can be applied to Wilson's foreign policy process and the Bureau of Secret Intelligence. This fusion includes expectations of expertise and professionalism in the Bureau and the State Department, a bureaucratic identity, a formal chain of command in the formation of foreign policy, and some incorporation of the bureaucracy into the policymaking process. It further argues that, compared to other federal departments, the State Department’s bureaucracy was later to modernize, partially because Congress consistently viewed it as relatively unimportant, and partially because some Secretaries of State, particularly William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925), preferred a political spoils system to civil service. Altogether, prospects for modernization were bleak as Wilson took his oath of office, and if not for House and the First World War, might not have proceeded at all.

**Bureaucracy Theory**

A gentleman in Princeton’s Class of 1890 likely would not have found Professor Woodrow Wilson’s political economy lecture the easiest class of his undergraduate career. Professor Wilson would have required his graduate students to read Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* in original German, and if an undergraduate had yet to firmly grasp the German language on his way to his degree, he would be liable to be tested on the entirety of a translated version of
Bluntschi’s *Staatsracht*.\(^{16}\) Wilson’s political philosophy was steeped in the German tradition, and he expected the same from his students. In a study of Wilson’s foreign policy bureaucracy, with the Bureau of Secret Intelligence as a window into its operation, no more than Wilson’s own writings are the most fitting material with which to develop an applicable theory of bureaucracy. As a result, this section examines understandings of bureaucracy advanced by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, one of the largest influences upon Wilson’s writings, and Max Weber, the spiritual grandfather of sociology and perhaps the most notable scholar in administration studies.

**Hegel.** For Hegel, in a normative sense, the hallmark of modern administration is that it does not play favorites, does not engage in nepotism, and is not plagued with personal prejudices. Its gears turn dispassionately to determine, inform, and enact the universal interest. Carl Shaw argues that Hegel’s bureaucrats “constitute the highest advisory committee for the [chief executive],” more than private citizens.\(^{17}\) Moreover, a kind of committee presupposes a purpose, and to fulfill that purpose, that chief executive would at least have to read the committee’s written counsel.\(^{18}\) As much as bureaucrats are advisory, however, both Weber’s and Hegel’s bureaucrats in their most modern form benefit from some degree of independence.

Shaw argues that both Hegel and Weber place the genesis of bureaucracy in an absolutist state in which the monarch seeks to erode the feudal prerogatives of aristocratic landholders. Both, however, distinguish between the administration of this period, and “modern”


\(^{18}\) Insofar as House supplanted Lansing as chief foreign policy advisor, and as Wilson found it difficult to consult the Bureau’s memoranda in a timely manner (much less memoranda from cabinet secretaries), this Hegelian requirement certainly was not completely fulfilled.
administration, in which bureaucracy is relatively “autonomous from the ruler’s arbitrary will and regulated by objective laws.” This is Hegel’s point, and raises a problematic contradiction in Weber’s modern bureaucracy.

Weber’s bureaucrat is subsumed and constricted by legally-codified regulations. These regulations, in part, protect the citizenry from a self-interested and overzealous bureaucracy, in which “discretion” would fill gaps between regulation. Weber, however, argues that protection is derived primarily from the democratic will in the form of the chief executive (in Weber’s Germany, unlike Hegel’s, chosen democratically). In order to arrive at a coherent theory of bureaucracy to apply to Wilsonian foreign policy and the Bureau, we need to offer some kind of resolution of this contradiction. Hegel offers an answer, writing, “the maintenance of the state's universal interest and of legal norms in this sphere of particular rights, and the work of bringing these rights back to the universal, have to be superintended by the executive power.” In this sense, bureaucracy and the democratic will can, at times, balance each other, and a modicum of the capacity to do so may be desirable in a modern bureaucracy.

_Weber._ To be sure, Hegel was among the most important sources for both Wilson's and Weber's developments of their respective theories of administration. Weber believed

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19 Shaw, 384.
20 For a detailed discussion of this contradiction, see Shaw, 385.
21 quoted. in Shaw, 387. Emphasis original.
bureaucratic administration to be the hallmark of modernity, and the silver bullet to Western geopolitical dominance. Weber was Whiggish in his historiography, seeing an inexorable march towards technocratic governance bereft of politics or democratic control. He understood bureaucratic governance to be “‘the most rational means of carrying out imperative control [domination] over human beings.’”23 Weber argued that modern bureaucracy was defined by three factors: 1) posts having official duties that are governed by standardized, legally-enforceable regulations, 2) a clear hierarchy of command, and 3) standardized regulations that are legally enforceable.24 Also key to Weber’s conception of bureaucracy is regular record-keeping preserved in organized and easily-accessible archives.25 “Public monies,” as well, “are divorced from the private property of the official.” A bureaucrat’s job is a vocation, and requires his or her “full working capacity” and resignation of any duties pertaining to private business.26 In seeking to distinguish modern governance from premodern predecessors, Weber wrote that “the ruler execute[d] the most important measures through personal trustees, table-companions, or court-servants.”27

25 For the historian, this may be the key Weberian requirement. As I describe later in my thesis, for the Bureau, this is a mixed bag. Records of the State Department are indeed organized and easily accessible in the National Archives at Takoma Park, though in boxes and files, organization seems to be more ideal than practice. In Box 8, for example, of “Records of the Counselor,” the folder “Human Espionage” is far more a collection of intermittent memoranda, ordered neither thematically nor chronologically. It is not clear, however, whether this fault should be ascribed to Harrison and his assistants, State Department archivists of the early twentieth century, or State Department archivists well-removed from the war. 26 Weber, 957. As David Kennedy notes, a fair number of Wilson’s “dollar a year men,” plucked from business to run special and temporary offices involved in the war effort, did not approve of this requirement, and often contravened it. See David Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*, (New York: OUP, 1980), 132-133.
27 Weber, 956. House is the epitome of the unofficial “personal trustee,” while House’s selection of individuals for appointed office quite literally amounted to his “table-companions.”
Weber further construes “rank as the basis of salary,” in which bureaucrats are guaranteed a salary and pension based upon the relative functional importance of the office.28 Each time the State Department attempted reform, the addition of new positions with relatively high salaries was rarely matched with higher salaries in older, yet more important, positions.29 Modern bureaucracy also presupposes an idea that officials cannot “buy” their offices.30 Most Americans following their elections would probably allege that the United States has yet to enter that kind of bureaucratic modernity, with plum ambassadorships to minor Western allies often awarded to major political donors. This practice certainly did not escape the Wilson administration.31

Perhaps important for understanding the tension between Secretary of State Robert Lansing’s legalism and Wilsonian idealism, Weber also views “empirical justice” or “rationalist” law as a hallmark of the bureaucratic state.32 A bureaucratic state arbitrates disputes on the basis of precedent and analogy, rather than “charisma” or expedience. As one of the most accomplished and capable of international lawyers to serve in the State Department, Lansing figured heavily in policymaking before America's entry into the war. Debates over neutrality defined Wilson’s foreign policy from 1914-1917, and legal opinions from those well-trained in neutral rights were particularly advantageous. At times, however, Lansing preferred strict adherence to international law, when Wilson and House preferred greater flexibility. In this

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28 Weber, 963.
29 West, 220.
30 As, for example, British aristocrats had done when purchasing military commissions for third-born sons.
31 Rudolph and Rudolph, 213. This is not to say, however, that some degree of informality could not coexist with a rational bureaucracy in practice. Weber admitted that “interest groups as advisory bodies” are often consulted (as one might consider the War Industries Board), but stresses that these informal bodies be subservient to an administrative system.
32 A more detailed discussion of this tension follows in Chapter 2.
sense, Lansing acted like a Weberian bureaucrat, and this created tension between the State Department and the White House.

While this tension makes Weberian theory particularly applicable, the simple facts of elite American society make other Weberian requirements less relevant. For example, Weber advanced a theory of “administrative democratization,” whereby if posts are determined by merit, they must therefore be democratically accessible. Economic and income disparity certainly prove otherwise, but in the case of the World War I State Department, that posts depended upon independent wealth made a “democratic” State Department fairly difficult in practice, even with Secretary of State Bryan, the so-called “Great Commoner” at its helm in 1914. In fact, Bryan occasionally found it difficult to disburse political patronage for the same reason Wilson found it difficult to recruit professorial men of talent: funding.

Short of funds, the State Department of the Gilded Age depended upon the personal fortunes of officials sent abroad to represent the United States. The history of Wilson’s initial search for foreign ambassadors is punctuated by refusals from some of the most accomplished academics and scholars of American universities, not out of disdain for the president, nor out of xenophobia, but for purely financial reasons—most academics could not afford to live abroad. It is altogether exceptional that the government paid House’s (and House’s family’s) way to his

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33 Weber, 963.
second quasi-official visit to Europe in 1915, with most officials (notably Harrison) forced to pay for travel and also relocation fees.  

Ultimately, this debate begs the question of what kind of authority should be extended to members of the Bureau and others involved in Wilsonian foreign policy to shape policy at odds with Wilson himself. Can we allow Counselor Frank Polk to undermine Wilson with legal opinions and individual case work if it comes from a place of expertise and in service of the common interest? As a student of Hegel, and a contemporary of Weber, Wilson addresses this question forcefully.  

Wilson. Wilson’s own writings on government bureaucracy, notably in his 1887 essay “The Study of Administration,” are quite clearly modeled on German political theory, particularly Hegel. As is clear in Wilson’s disdain for political patronage in the State Department, he showed an early desire for large, technocratic administration. In 1887, he wrote “the crooked state of administration, the confusion, sinecurism, and corruption ever and again discovered in the bureaux at Washington forbid us to believe that any clear conceptions of what constitutes good administration are as yet widely current in the United States.”  

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34 Charles Neu, *Colonel House: A Biography of Woodrow Wilson’s Silent Partner*, (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 170. As one example, after paying hundreds of dollars to ship Harrison’s back to the United States in 1915 when he was recalled to direct the newly-created Latin American section, his belongings remained in customs limbo in the Port of New York for two weeks. In what was perhaps an abuse of authority (or at least an action that may have extended beyond a Hegelian understanding of bureaucratic prerogative), Harrison personally called New York City’s customs collectors to have his belongings released. See travel reports in folder “A,” Box 1, Papers of Leland Harrison, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., hereafter cited as “LHP.”  

35 There are also other aspects of Weber that are difficult to apply, notably for their rhetorical panache. Weber wrote, “the professional bureaucrat is chained to his activity to his entire economic and ideological existence. In the great majority of cases he is only a small cog in a ceaselessly moving mechanism which prescribes an essentially fixed route of march. The official is entrusted with specialized tasks, and normally the mechanism cannot be put into motion or arrested by him, but only from the very top.” Because it was mainly members of a landed class that worked for the Department, it would be hard to make the argument that they were “chained” to anything other than their own predilections.  

is true to form for any progressive, enamored of big government, yet deeply skeptical of both party machines and Republican rule in Washington.\textsuperscript{37}

For a model of reform, Wilson turned to Germany. Link quotes Wilson as arguing that Prussia and Napoleonic France had designed a “science of administration” that “must be Americanized, not in language only, but in thought, in principle, in aim as well,” sentiments reflected in Wilson’s “The Study of Administration.”\textsuperscript{38} For Wilson, a German school of administration was marked by a “a body of thoroughly trained officials,” which he called “a plain business necessity” for the United States.\textsuperscript{39} Wilson shared much with Weber, also having a Whiggish account of history, but to more pernicious ends. Through Wilson’s racial lens, it is fairly clear that he shared a kind of Weber’s Occident/Orient divide in the form of American exceptionalism. Wilson declared in a 1907 address to fellow academics, “we have divided our learning as if we have done away with our Union of States....and so we have neglected the very genius of our race, which is the genius of organization.”\textsuperscript{40} Wilson also favored hierarchy in the bureaucracy as a means of accountability, but he nonetheless broke with Hegel and Weber in advocating for a strong bureaucracy, mainly to augment executive power, a belief he held as early as 1887.\textsuperscript{41}

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the university, which Wilson called the “national church,” was central to this vision of administrative government.\textsuperscript{42} In his first speech as Princeton’s president,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{37} As will be explored later, it is a trenchant irony that a progressive should prefer so small a bureaucracy in the State Department, and should prefer to become his own Secretary of State.
\textsuperscript{39} Wilson, 216.
\textsuperscript{40} PWW, Vol. 17, 544.
\textsuperscript{41} Sager and Rosser, 1138.
\textsuperscript{42} Nemec, 193.
\end{flushright}
Wilson saw a grand vision for his university, declaring, “in days quiet and troubled alike Princeton has stood for this nation's service, to produce men and patriots,” in which these men and patriots “must lead the world.”\(^\text{43}\) This idea, however, was not limited to Princeton. His idea of progress yielded a kind of triumphalism in which “history seemed to guarantee the universal [victory] of the American way of life.”\(^\text{44}\) Embracing Frederick Jackson Turner’s thesis that the frontier had historically shaped the American ethos, Wilson, while a professor, believed that the United States would have to look abroad with the frontier conquered.\(^\text{45}\)

Wilson’s different vision of administration is important. For Hegel, bureaucracy was a guarantor of civil and human rights for the state, a fixed institution that could weather, to some degree, changes in the will of the chief executive. For Weber, the bureaucracy was heavily circumscribed through government regulations and legal codification and tradition. There was a firewall, of sorts, between democratic politics and civil administration. Wilson, however, viewed the bureaucracy as the means to the end of the democratic will, represented in the office of the presidency. Bureaucracy, in Wilson's terminology, should be “organic,” not mechanical. This perhaps eccentric understanding of rationality leads to a greater presidential prerogative, and helps explain Wilson’s “individualistic” governance.

Wilson may have sought to protect a personal presidential prerogative even more forcefully if he thought along Weberian terms. Weber saw bureaucracy as near leviathanical, writing, “the individual bureaucrat is, above all, forged to the common interest of all the functionaries in the perpetuation of the apparatus and the persistence of its rationally organized

domination.” A student of American democracy should have an interest in developing a theory of bureaucracy that may be subverted to popular will, and a president should have a greater interest in applying that theory to her own presidency.

Weber believed that the bureaucracy would grow omnipotent over time, but it would not act out of self-interest, but instead expertise. In Weber’s eyes, the greatest danger in bureaucracy was not political tyranny, but the dehumanization of its bureaucrats. Perhaps ironically, Weber likely underestimated the incentives to occasionally rebel against the system, whether out of cultural differences (e.g., anti-war diplomats), pretensions for political power (e.g., Senate-appointed deputies resigning to run for office), or simple greed (e.g., corruption and graft). While a completely technocratic bureaucracy may be a Platonic ideal, it would be unreasonable to let it significantly inform the efficacy of the Bureau and Wilson’s foreign-policymaking process.

In fact, there may be some room for “individualistic” chief executives to coexist with their bureaucracies. Rudolph and Rudolph argue that Weber’s shift from patrimonial administration to bureaucratic administration is not as clear-cut as he presents. They point to early modern examples of “record keeping ‘that leaves nothing to be desired,’” further suggesting that “personal authority is not necessarily inimical to organizational effectiveness, to the setting and realization of organizational goals.”

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46 Weber, 960. From an historiographical standpoint, Weber’s argument that technocratic, mechanical bureaucracy would subsume other forms of political governance is problematic. It should go without saying that the United States continues to elect a president, and that president often installs informal bureaucracies unique and temporary to his administration. This is to say that there should be room for informality in modern bureaucracy.

47 Rudolph and Rudolph, 205. In particular, the cite T. G. Tout’s *Chapters in the Administrative History of Medieval England*, which for at least a half century was hugely influential on generations of scholars of British history and political science. They could perhaps also point to Roman imperial administration. After Augustan tax reforms, Roman administration functioned largely without Senatorial oversight, and often separate from maniacal, lascivious, or incompetent emperors. See, for example, Jonathan Edmondson, *Augustus*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009), and Oscar Robinson, *Ancient Rome: City Planning and Administration*, (New York: Routledge, 1992).
Towards a Theory of Modernity. Based upon these readings of important contemporary designers of classical bureaucracy theory, several standards are clearly applicable for a theoretical evaluation of the relative modernity of the Bureau and Wilson’s foreign policy process. It is clear that we should expect bureaucrats with professional expertise in areas that are enumerated in a fixed job description, and we should expect these bureaucrats to follow an official chain of command between the president, cabinet departments, and offices within those departments. While it may be acceptable for Lansing and Wilson to make decisions on the basis of political expedience and charisma, we should expect State Department bureaucrats to steer clear of political questions. We should also look for a kind of bureaucratic identity, in which State Department officials viewed their posts as part of a larger career, and viewed themselves as civil servants, separate from the political sphere. Perhaps most crucially, it is not enough that a modern bureaucracy in the State Department could have informed Wilson's decision-making. Rather, to call the Bureau “modern,” Wilson and his foreign policy notables must have taken advantage of a novel bureaucracy made available to them. Very few of these requirements, however, were ever regularly met, particularly in the early history of the modernization of American governance.

State Department Bureaucracy, 1877-1914

The late nineteenth century witnessed a rapid rise in American economic power and global stature. By 1895, the United States had overtaken Great Britain in industrial output, while the telegraph and railroad linked the country in ways never before imagined.48 With greater connectivity came a grander federal government committed to equitably-distributed public welfare, a philosophy called progressivism at its helm. Several historians of the American state

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place the birth of the American administrative state firmly in this period. Stephen Skowronek, for example, argues that “an emergent intelligentsia rooted in a revitalized professional sector” in the late nineteenth century led the development of a robust “administrative realm possessing ‘finish, efficacy, and permanence’” that reshaped American governance. For those departments he examines, particularly the United States military, his argument is convincing.

By 1900, bureaucracy had become a political fact of every major Western state. Prussia had established its civil service in 1873, Britain in 1870, Canada in 1882, and France’s Third Republic in fits and starts after Napoleon’s administrative reforms for the greater part of the nineteenth century. The United States did likewise with the Pendleton Civil Service Act of 1883. For each, promotion based on performance, and hiring based on aptitude and expertise was the rule, not the exception. At their heart, these early efforts at reform were built upon moral opposition to a party spoils system, and an abiding belief that career government officials should transact the business of the state. Relatively disenfranchised themselves from major party politics, a broad coalition of patrician interests sought to dampen the occasionally populist influence of big city machines. It would not be unreasonable to assume, however, that this

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51 Skowronek, 47.

52 Skowronek, 53.
coalition believed that, if only rationality should prevail, their interests would be served at all levels of government administration.\textsuperscript{53}

Ultimately, however, reformers found it much easier to tout and access more trivial arms of the federal government, like the United States Sanitary Commission, an outcropping of the wartime state that was aimed at treating and helped wounded veterans.\textsuperscript{54} These reformers rallied around the newly-created Civil Service Commission (now the Office of Personnel and Management) that was designed to select civil servants on the basis of merit, design entrance examinations, and craft best practices. While ostensibly separate from the political sphere, its chiefs were subject to Senate confirmation, served directly under the President, and needed cooperation from cabinet secretaries.\textsuperscript{55} Attempting to remove these men from their posts, or even pledge to replace them in the future with nonpartisan experts, was fraught with political danger, as those in office were invariably party elites. Gradually, however, more and more positions were folded into the civil service (mainly in the Interior and Post Office Departments): 1,649 positions under Chester Arthur (1881-1885), 11,757 under the first Grover Cleveland administration (1885-1889), and 10,535 under Benjamin Harrison (1889-1893).\textsuperscript{56} Growing classifications of government employees as civil servants were instead a game of political gamesmanship, in which each administration attempted to “freeze” their appointees in office before the opposing party entered the White House.

\textsuperscript{53} For any hope of modernizing the State Department, there exists here a fundamental contradiction. The middle-class, progressive elite felt disenfranchised from a system dominated by big business and Dixiecrats, and pursue a reform agenda entirely designed to benefit their own interests. As a result, reform came not so much out of the national interest than self-interest. If this analysis were applied to Wilson and House, their embrace of “great man” politics may not be so surprising after all.

\textsuperscript{54} Skowronek, 53.

\textsuperscript{55} Skowronek, 68.

\textsuperscript{56} Skowronek, 70.
Reform efforts under Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909) had a distinctly different flavor that Wilson would inherit. Roosevelt had an early interest in the civil service having served as a junior member on the Civil Service Commission from 1889 to 1895. He approached his position with zeal, attacking Postmaster General John Wanamaker, whom many of the era viewed as a prime example of political spoils run amok.\textsuperscript{57} Roosevelt attempted to reform the civil service to ensure retention of qualified individuals, but also extended further presidential prerogative over these civil servants.\textsuperscript{58} This design largely resembles House’s attempts at reform, and may have been an early precedent for them.

Efforts to reform the military faced the same challenges as civilian departments: entrenched political cronyism in local offices (particularly state militias) and connections between members of Congress and administrative offices in the War Department.\textsuperscript{59} Throughout his term as Secretary of War (1899-1904), Elihu Root pursued reforms that forced the military to embrace bureaucratic administration, while still placating its competing interests. Root subjected National Guard units, for example, to more regular federal inspection by offering them more federal funding. He also reduced the length of their tours of foreign duty if called into federal service, and reduced the number of scenarios in which they could be called into federal service, extending further authority to federal troops.\textsuperscript{60} Wholesale reorganization of War Department hierarchy complemented these smaller reforms.

Prior to reorganization, civilian bureaucracy was a corollary to and coequal with military leadership. The Secretary of War vied with a Commanding General to exert control over the

\textsuperscript{58} Skowronek, 188.
\textsuperscript{59} Skowronek, 216.
\textsuperscript{60} Skowronek, 217.
armed forces, resulting in frequent intradepartmental squabbles. With a landslide Republican victory, Roosevelt and Root successfully nixed the position of Commanding General, replacing it with a chief of staff. The plan also called for a “General Staff Corps,” in which a general or admiral from each service would serve rotating terms advising the president while still subservient to the Secretary of War. This system would become the Joint Chiefs of Staff, founded as a direct result of democratic will and presidential efforts to centralize and rationalize the power of the Executive.

The reorganizations of this period, however, bypassed the State Department. State was largely exempt from civil service reforms that had been enacted after the Civil War, as it had been traditionally seen as the “president’s office,” in which foreign affairs (still a relatively minor part of a president's statesmanship) was reserved entirely for the executive. And while the staffs of other federal departments grew exponentially, from 1887 to 1907, the State Department added only a few extra clerks, even though the number of messages passing through the State Department’s index and diplomatic bureaus increased from 37,000 to 94,000, over 156%. It is partially due to the State Department Roosevelt bequeathed Bryan, and the State Department Lansing inherited, that Skowronek argues that Wilson “could do little to secure the integrity of the Civil Service Commission or the professional ideal,” and that he “failed to place relations between party and bureaucracy on a new plane.”

The State Department’s bureaucracy of the Gilded Age was but a shadow of the giant it would become at the dawn of the American Century. Before 1866, State had only two appointive offices: the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary. As the American economy recovered from

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62 West, 11.
63 Skowronek, 196.
civil war and barreled towards international dominance, two additional Assistant Secretaries were added in 1866 and 1875, mainly to deal with the legal questions surrounding increased foreign trade.\textsuperscript{64,65} It is notable that almost fifty percent of the individuals selected for appointive office were trained as lawyers, even if many were appointed because of political connections to the Republican Party.

Indeed, Stuart argues that, because of near-uninterrupted Republican control of government over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these political appointees became a sort of unofficial civil service, because they did not have to fear (much less experience) removal at the hands of a Democratic administration. While this likely contributed to unintended professionalization, it still amounts to party (thus patrimonial) rule, and, at least initially, maintained a bureaucratic identity on the basis of party, not expertise.

In 1905, the State Department consisted of nine bureaus: Accounts (the Department’s finances), Indexes and Archives (records), Law (a small office with only two lawyers employed full time on legal matters), Rolls and Library, Statistics (research), Diplomatic, Consular, Passports (later the Bureau of Citizenship that processed immigration, emigration, and passport requests), and Trade Relations.\textsuperscript{66} In principle, bureaucrats were supposed to staff these departments: technocratic officials who would make a career of serving in the State Department. In 1895, President Cleveland by executive order required the State Department to administer


\textsuperscript{66} Plischke, 259. Until the 1924 Rogers Act creating the Foreign Service, the Diplomatic and Consular Services were split, yet both supervised by the Third Assistant Secretary. In essence, consular officials were American trade officials, focusing on furthering American business interests and minor casework for Americans living abroad and far from an American embassy. Unlike consular officials, officers in the Diplomatic Service benefitted from diplomatic immunity, and furthered diplomatic
exams to prospective members of the consular service, though “administration was perfunctory,” with exams held only irregularly, and low marks sufficient for service. President Roosevelt, however, broadened this requirement in 1905 to prospective members of both the diplomatic and consular services. Secretary of State Root, in consultation with Roosevelt, sought, and failed to win, Congressional civil service requirements for the two services. In fact, winning Congressional approval of any legislation the State Department desired was rare for Secretaries of State.

If anything, Congress viewed the State Department as a governmental backwater. State was consistently underfunded relative to other federal departments with equal importance. In 1906, for example, Congress appropriated more than eight times as much money for the Treasury Department than for State. The same year, members of the House appropriations subcommittee overseeing the State Department lambasted Secretary Root for expenditures exceeding that year’s appropriation. Laconically, Root declared, “I do not think the appropriation is enough.” When pressed, he explained that the funding for the consular service was so low, that consulates in “minor” cities had trouble “keeping the floors swept.” West argues that funding problems extended well beyond minor consular offices, to the point where officers were “grossly underpaid, and the best men often chose to leave the department for high pay and less

67 Stuart, 205.
68 Stuart, 205.
drudgery.”71 This trend undoubtedly did not help create a bureaucratic identity or sense of careerism among the Department’s more talented officers.72

While Secretary Root literally fought to keep the lights on in foreign posts, several reforms continued unabated. Root, using his experience in the War Department, recruited a senior clerk from the State Department who, in consultation with State Department clerks, reworked the Department’s record-keeping system by instituting numerical subject classification.73 One year earlier, Root had discovered Wilbur J. Carr, a founder of the State Department’s Foreign Service (created by Congress in 1924). At that time, Carr had been serving in the consular service, and in 1906, was promoted to lead it under Third Secretary Huntington Wilson’s direction. It was Carr who drafted the 1905 civil service requirements for consular officers and who then designed and administered entrance exams.7475

Root’s major reform he likely considered small at the time, and he only saw a small part of it in action. In 1905, Huntington Wilson pressed Secretary Root to allow him to reorganize the Department along geographic lines. This organization remains today. Root was skeptical, however, and only allowed Wilson to create a Division of Latin American Affairs on an

71 West, 22.
72 By 1914, it turned out that needed funding for consular posts would have critically aided newfound responsibilities for American representatives abroad. When war erupted, America’s diplomatic and consular missions abroad were ill-equipped to address questions and crises that American diplomats had yet to face. The United States still lacked diplomatic relations with many countries, having to rely on consular officials to conduct diplomacy. Before the First World War, these consular officials focused predominantly on issues unique to their service: trade disputes, tariff enforcement, patrimonial intervention on behalf of notable Americans, etc. Yet with the outbreak of hostilities, these consuls found themselves with Americans who needed to be evacuated, and as representatives of a neutral government that within weeks had become the main intermediary between the belligerents. See Nicole Phelps, “The US Consular Service as the World's Consular Service: The Burdens of Neutrality and the Push for Reform, 1914-1924,” Policy History Conference, Columbus OH, June 2010.
73 Plischke, 204; West, 6.
74 Plischke, 210.
75 West, 13.
experimental basis. Full reorganization along these lines did not occur until 1909, under a new Secretary of State.\textsuperscript{76} Lackluster reform in the State Department under Root’s leadership is surprising, given his successes as Secretary of War. Efforts at reform throughout this period were noticeably half-baked and piecemeal, to the point that one of Root’s contemporaries complained that his bureaucratic ineffectiveness might lead him to believe that the perfect idea of heaven was “being surrounded by stenographers while [Root] did all the work.”\textsuperscript{77}

More significant technocratic reforms came under the leadership of Secretary Knox. In 1909, Congress passed a Tariff Act, giving the State Department the duty to track compliance with international tariff obligations. Knox explained to Congress that these new duties necessitated lawyers familiar with international trade regulations, and in an act uncharacteristic for Congressional oversight of the Department, granted the entirety of Knox’s request for an additional $100,000 for salaries and staffing costs. In concert with the Tariff Act, Congress created the office of the counselor to be occupied by a legal official who would be second only to the Secretary. In so far as the post “required legal and technical skill,” the counselor could ostensibly function as bureaucrat-in-chief of the State Department.\textsuperscript{78} The legislation also required the hiring of additional, technocratic legal officials. As was standard practice, however, Congress set the salary of these officials at levels higher than the Third Assistant Secretary, two rungs above them in departmental seniority.\textsuperscript{79} As much as could be expected from Congress, the legislation poised the Department for even further modernization under the next president, Woodrow Wilson.

\textsuperscript{76} West, 19.
\textsuperscript{77} West, 7.
\textsuperscript{78} Stuart, 213. Admittedly, the counselor still required Senate confirmation.
\textsuperscript{79} Stuart, 214.
Yet, with Wilson’s appointment of his first Secretary of State, “the Great Commoner” William Jennings Bryan, it became clear that further bureaucratization would be unlikely to occur. To be sure, Bryan’s leadership of the State Department was a significant impediment to any effort at bureaucratization, and his resignation was a key moment in the development of a modern State Department.\(^8^0\) Bryan was a staunch moralist and non-interventionist, appointed to the Secretaryship for his popularity in the Democratic Party. Bryan’s lack of foreign policy experience, though of initial importance to Wilson, was obvious when he was appointed Secretary of State in 1913. A well-traveled orator, he was a career politician and a populist star, but not cut from the cloth of an elder statesman. That many party leaders and newspaper men praised his appointment shows quite well how the State Department had yet to enter the modern era, pleased that another spoilsman was in power to award offices to men of their ilk.\(^8^1\)

Bryan was the perfect steward of a department relegated to the federal backwaters. Congress had appropriated only $5 million for the Department when Bryan was appointed, less than one percent of the federal budget, and the State Department employed only 213 people, including support staff and secretaries.\(^8^2\) Rather than addressing the Department’s bureaucratic problems, Bryan exacerbated them, preferring to hire party members with no experience in foreign affairs over promoting career consular officials.\(^8^3\) As Stuart writes, “the only new

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\(^8^0\) If anything, Wilson’s appointment of Bryan may have revealed a general disdain Wilson had for the State Department. West argues that Wilson had little respect for members of the diplomatic service, considering it a “sinkhol[e] for the unambiguous or indifferently or talented persons.” Moreover, in 1913, Wilson placed foreign affairs considerably low on his list of priorities, famously declaring that it would be a great irony if he were to have to focus on international relations in his term as president. See Charles Neu, *Colonel House: A Biography of Woodrow Wilson’s Silent Partner*, (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 91.


\(^8^2\) West, 4. This figure only accounts for the Washington office. There were 450 employees overseas, this compared to 24,500 employed overseas sixty years later.

\(^8^3\) Stuart, 225.
appointment that indicated the slightest desire to maintain an effective foreign office was that of John Bassett Moore, who was named Counselor,” a man who would not remain in government service for very long. In the face of Bryan’s incompetence, House actively bolstered career officers to handle issues Bryan could not. In 1913, House wrote a letter to Wilson asking the president to instruct his Secretary of State to schedule examinations for the consular service, and later pressured the president to present to Congress a law mandating regular examinations and expertise in foreign relations for any aspiring member of the diplomatic or consular services. In no uncertain terms, Bryan was a significant obstacle to the modernization of the State Department.

Any reformer in 1914 would have faced a challenge with the State Department. With a long and storied history of nepotism and party politics, and a Secretary of State all but the perfect steward of the status quo, the Department’s history showed a body incapable of fulfilling major requirements for bureaucratic modernity. Yet if Colonel House was committed, he could at the very least model his attempts upon earlier successes in civil service reforms affected other organs of American government. And these reforms were gravely needed. Bryan would have to be defeated in order to develop bureaucratic administration in the State Department that could respond to debilitating assaults on American neutrality, the first and fundamental purpose of the Bureau of Secret Intelligence.

84 Stuart, 226.
85 West, 43.
Chapter 2: Violations of Neutrality and Inventing the Bureau

It might be so [that there are five hundred thousand German reservists in the United States], but we [have] five hundred thousand and one lampposts to hang them from.

-United States Ambassador to Germany James Gerard\textsuperscript{86}

You’re asking the two of us to create foreign policy by ourselves?! That’s usually not a good idea...

You’ve got the Pentagon, the NSC and—what do you call it?—the State Department!

-Toby Ziegler, \textit{The West Wing}\textsuperscript{87}

Introduction

When the guns of August first sounded in 1914, the United States was decidedly removed from the Great Power politics. Woodrow Wilson had begun his second year as president, having campaigned on domestic politics and championing progressive causes. Both Britain and Germany, however, saw the United States as an economic powerhouse that could turn the tide for either side. As a result, Germany and Britain each engaged in a concerted effort to win American business support and, ideally, American intervention. Britain’s naval supremacy, however, all but assured its monopoly over American goods, while Anglo-American cultural and historical ties guaranteed the primacy of British propaganda. Britain’s advantage led Germany to employ sabotage, subterfuge, and commit other violations of American neutrality, even while it attempted to capitalize on the German population in the United States, then about nine million people, or eight percent, of the American population.\textsuperscript{88} Britain also violated American neutrality

\textsuperscript{86} Diana Preston, \textit{Lusitania: An Epic Tragedy}, (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 313.


\textsuperscript{88} U.S. Census Bureau, “Census of Population and Housing: 1910 Census,” That such a large proportion of ethnic Germans lived in the United States at the time explains such an extensive “spy mania” that
within the United States, by recruiting American nationals for service in Europe, censoring and reading American communications, and its own, more effective, propaganda campaign. Moreover, in the early years of the war, Britain’s wholesale and illegal blockade of Germany and control of the Atlantic, posed a grave—if not existential—threat to American international trade. To preserve both its sovereignty and security, the American government was forced to respond to these violations of its neutrality.

German and British violations of American neutrality led to the establishment of the Bureau of Secret Intelligence. Although German espionage and British propaganda efforts were largely ad hoc and improvised at the onset of the war, both benefitted from more modern levels of administration than their American counterparts. Crucially, the creation of the Bureau was just as ad hoc, much more a half-measure response to increasing violations of American neutrality than a planned expansion of State Department administration.

Germany’s intermittent strategy of unrestricted submarine warfare, however, was decidedly counterproductive, particularly when considering the sinking of the British passenger ship Lusitania and its ensuing effects upon German-American relations. This chapter argues that the Lusitania crisis provided Colonel Edward House and Wilson the opportunity to oust a Secretary of State steadfastly committed to a State Department defined by political nepotism and moralism, and to replace him with a rational bureaucracy that could support diplomatic doctrine and objectives set by the White House. Contrary to long-standing historiography on

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gripped the American populace at large. Between January and April 1917, for example, The Washington Post ran over 30 stories related to German spies. By 1918, the Committee on Public Information, the government’s official propaganda arm, was running full broadsheets entitled “Spies and Lies,” declaring, “German spies are everywhere.” See appendix for an image. See James Gilbert, World War I and the Origins of U.S. Military Intelligence, (Toronto: Scarecrow Press, 2012), and William H. Thomas Jr., Unsafe for Democracy: World War I and the U.S. Justice Department’s Covert Campaign to Suppress Dissent, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 23.
Wilsonianism, the creation of the Bureau of Secret Intelligence was a concerted effort by House to rationalize State Department administration, and was a model of modernization the State Department would experience in full a decade later. Although Wilson and his foreign policy principals rarely availed themselves of the centralized intelligence made available to them by Harrison’s Bureau, the creation of an effective intelligence clearing house that could both coordinate intelligence efforts and make intelligence sharing more effective was an important step in the modernization of State Department bureaucracy.

**German Violations of Neutrality in the United States**

On August 2, 1914, German Ambassador Johann von Bernstorff clutched a bespoke briefcase close to his chest as he disembarked the Dutch luxury passenger liner *Noordam* in New York. Bernstorff was not met with fanfare, a hired car, a porter, or any other convenience accorded to ambassadors of one Great Power to another. Instead, Bernstorff hailed a cab, made for Grand Central Station, and made a rapid return to the German embassy in Washington, briefcase metaphorically glued to his waistcoat. In it was $1.5 million, earmarked for German subterfuge and propaganda in the United States.

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89 John Milton Cooper Jr., Neu, and Hodgson all view Colonel House as a political animal, desperate to make his own, individual mark on American statecraft abroad. Neu, Hodgson, and Alexander and Juliette George all see House as someone who thought he could shape Wilson to pursuing his own objectives, a major reason why he declined a formal cabinet post to remain an informal adviser as a way to not limit his own prerogative. These biographers focus more on House’s individualism and less on governmental structures in order to address his personal interactions with Wilson. The definition of Wilsonianism generally sees House and Wilson divorced from the rest of the Wilson administration. Few historians, Graham Stuart and Robert Butts among them, acknowledge House’s attempts to construct a diplomatic apparatus that could help him, and thus Wilson, implement the policies they chose. In this regard, I break with generally-accepted historiography to argue that House is much more of a reformer than we generally give him credit. See Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography*; Charles Neu, *Colonel House*; Geoffrey Hodgson, *Woodrow Wilson’s Right Hand*; Alexander and Juliette George, *A Personality Study*; Butts, *An Architect of the American Century*.

This funding was secured, and programs administered through, an interdepartmental arrangement that would have seemed foreign in parochial Washington, D.C. When Bernstorff returned that summer to Berlin, he was called into the secret and nondescript headquarters of the Nachrichten-Abteilung, the German naval intelligence service, known in intelligence circles as simply “N.” The commanding officer and Foreign Secretary von Jagow explained that the Foreign Office would oversee espionage operations in the United States employing naval intelligence officers. The Foreign Office drew no distinction between propaganda and subterfuge, and the two resided within the same operation, officially directed by Bernstorff.91

Shipping fraud was a significant part of these domestic anti-neutrality programs, in which Germany agents chartered neutral ships, made for a neutral port, and radioed German military cruisers to be met somewhere in between. Then, in international waters, wartime goods were transferred from a “neutral” ship to a belligerent one, evading the spirit of American neutrality. For the first two years, German agents operated with relative impunity until the Secret Service and Bureau of Investigation invested adequate resources toward tracking and interdicting German shipping fraud.92 Sometimes, German agents plotted to supply German submarines off the mid-Atlantic coast by hiring fishing schooners to carry provisions from small coastal towns to submarines waiting three miles off shore, technically in international waters. In a 1916 memorandum, Harrison worked with the Secret Service to trap and successfully convict a

91 Reinhard Doerries, Imperial Challenge: Ambassador Count Bernstorff and German-American Relations, 1908-1917, (Durham: Duke UP, 2008), 42. It should probably go without saying that a foreign ambassador directing plots to blow up bridges is not adhering to international law and the rights of neutral nations. Given that Bernstorff’s British counterpart did not also oversee a spy ring in the United States, Bernstorff’s activities created consternation in the American government early in the war.
German agent of just that.\textsuperscript{93} Often one of the biggest challenges was to track the fraudulent or forged shipping manifests and the shell companies used to purchase American ships illegally, duties that fell largely to Auchincloss and his law partner David Miller in New York.

Shipping fraud, however, was one small part of elaborate and intricately organized spy rings. The German espionage operation in the United States had two directors: the military attaché Captain Franz von Papen from military intelligence, and the naval attaché Karl Boy-Ed from naval intelligence. Germany sent each to the United States as hostilities began, instructed to organize and execute espionage and sabotage operations, with Bernstorff given financial oversight.\textsuperscript{94} With the initial help of two military deputies to forge papers and maintain communications, von Papen directed recruitment of German nationals within the United States, and smuggled German agents from Europe to the Americas. Von Papen particularly focused on raising a German-American force that could strike within Canada and prevent a feared transfer of Japanese troops to the Western Front from North America. Boy-Ed, on the other hand, directed a less professionalized but much larger spy ring, but both had a hand in Germany's major acts of sabotage within the United States. These men benefitted from previous military service, and the managers of the espionage program within the United States were previously posted to Nachrichten-Abteilung in Berlin or other branches of German military intelligence.\textsuperscript{95} As Wolf von Igel’s papers later showed, von Papen brought with him a viciously effective Prussian bureaucratic and administrative system to wreak havoc on American industry, infrastructure, and morale.

\textsuperscript{93} Memorandum, Flynn to Polk, 23 February 1916, folder “German Espionage Activities,” Box 3, Classified Files, OC.
\textsuperscript{94} Doerries, 175.
\textsuperscript{95} Doerries, 176.
At the same time, however, two notable spies, Franz Rintelen and Kurt Jahnke, were given operational autonomy from von Papen and Boy-Ed, answerable only to Berlin. Rintelen benefitted from aristocratic connections to Junker military leadership, denting both the relative modernity of the attachés’ programs, and also the efficacy of covert German operations in the Americas in general. Rintelen was famously deported by the United States, interdicted in Britain, and was convicted of espionage in the United States. Jahnke, on the other hand, while nominally under von Papen, was based in San Francisco, relatively autonomous due to the sheer distance between New York and California.96 Crucially, German agents often worked hand-in-hand with their Austrian counterparts.

In November 1915, American Secret Service agents discovered a passport fraud ring operated by Austrian consulate officials in New York, mainly to transport Central Power reservists in the United States to the front. Even more troublesome, German agents attempted to blow up bridges and roads along the Canadian border early into the war. In 1914, one German-Austrian spy ring attempted to destroy the international bridge of the Canadian Pacific Railway in Vermont, but local police intercepted and arrested the agents before the bombs were planted. In a second case, a German agent attempted to blow up the Welland Canal in New York, but was arrested in December 1915. In both cases, Secretary of State Robert Lansing attributed German failure to “the efficiency of the United States Secret Service and the special agents of the Department of Justice.”97 In reality, however, most American counterintelligence coups at the time were accidental, or depended upon spoon-fed British intelligence reports.

Federal authorities failed several times, sometimes gravely, to prevent debilitating sabotage operations. The Austrian consulate in New York organized a number of clandestine

96 Doerries, 176.
97 Lansing, 71.
attacks on American shipping. As Lansing described, “between March 6, 1915 and September 13, 1915, there were explosions on thirteen ships outward-bound from American ports, and...between March fifth and August twenty-ninth, there were ten explosions in industrial plants.” On July 30th, 1916, German agents destroyed tons of munitions on New Jersey’s Black Tom Island, causing the deaths of seven Americans. The explosion felt similar to an earthquake, registering a 5.0 on the Richter scale and causing damage to the Statue of Liberty and buildings within a twenty-five mile radius. The sheer amount of damage made it one of the worst acts of terrorism the United States had ever seen, and in psychological damage, perhaps second only to 9/11. This attack occurred after the creation of the Bureau of Secret Intelligence, showing serious deficiencies in American counterespionage abilities.

German propaganda was just as robust, though less effective. Bernstorff claimed that only one million dollars had been spent on propaganda programs in the United States, but a picture of a much grander, and much more expensive, operation clearly emerges. On behalf of the German Foreign Office, Bernstorff went in to the newspaper business, attempting to acquire a number of major publications that would then later be used to print pro-German “news.” Berlin, for example, bought the Evening Mail outright in 1916 for $1.3 million, acquired a controlling interest in The National Courier, helped the New York Irish World fend off a British...

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98 Lansing, 73.
100 It should also be noted that Black Tom was the beginning of a pernicious paranoia of German spies that gripped the United States. When, in 2001, George Bush chose a proper war on an abstract noun, until 1917, Wilson elected instead for an abstract war on a proper noun, continuing to decry violations of neutrality with nervous hands and a preacher’s rhetoric. Although the Bureau’s shifted gears, for the most part, to foreign intelligence when war finally arrived, the American government in general was the beneficiary of more funding and more staff to address spy scares. Oftentimes, however, rational bureaucracy did not necessarily result from more money and manpower.
101 Doerries, 50.
takeover, and bought a Manhattan Jewish newspaper for $220,000.102 The German government also partnered with preexisting pro-German outlets, particularly the nationally-syndicated *Vaterland*.103 Berlin hired American journalists as well to write pro-German pieces. Perhaps the most famous is William Bayard Hale, hired in the fall of 1914 to write a book highlighting early British violations of American rights at sea, for which he was paid a sizable sum of $15,000 per year.104

Historians differ on the importance and effectiveness of German propaganda. Link, David Hirst, and Justus Doenecke believe that, had it been even more forceful and more extensive, “it could well have preserved peace between the two countries.”105 Others, such as Doerries, see German propaganda efforts as little more than impotent. It is clear that propaganda successes were isolated and rare. Moreover, the German Foreign Office recruited relatively inexperienced civilians to run the propaganda arm of the office who did not effectively judge possible American responses to German propaganda. Even the former chief of the German Colonial Office who ran several programs in New York committed grave faux pas, defending the sinking of the *Lusitania*, for example, days after American lives had been lost. The Foreign Office recalled him before the State Department could deport him.106 Yet early on, at least, German propaganda arguments were convincing for Wilson. In 1915, the *Vaterland* summed up its opinions of Allied interests pithily: “Russia wants Constantinople, France wants revenge, and

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102 Doerries, 58.
103 Doerries, 41.
104 Doerries, 43.
106 Doerries, 54.
England wants Germany's commerce.” Various months later, Wilson declared that he viewed the war as nothing more than “just a fight...to see who is strong enough to prevent the other from fighting better. I do not see anything else that is involved.” Although it is doubtful that Wilson ever read Vaterland, it is notable that the ideology underlying his commitment to neutrality tracks German arguments so clearly. Though German propaganda may have sometimes suffered from its own bureaucratic failure, it still benefitted from rational administration, to the point that Link, Hirst, and Doenecke may be right.

The growing number of these German violations of neutrality forced the United States to face a pervasive and novel threat. Spy rings were elaborately organized, independent from each other, though benefitting from bureaucratic efficiency. German espionage had entered the modern era, and American authorities were forced to respond. Shipping and passport fraud, counterespionage, foreign intelligence, and propaganda collectively made it necessary for the State Department to develop administrative and operational reforms to tackle them. Domestic violations of neutrality, however, were only half the story.

**Foreign Relations and Violations of Neutrality on the High Seas**

German violations of neutrality were not limited to the United States. Indeed, their most lethal form—unrestricted submarine warfare—wreaked havoc on international shipping, and most influentially, on American lives. Germany, however, was not alone in violating American rights in international waters. Britain’s blockade of Germany and attempt to control transatlantic trade violated American economic rights as well, and invoked the ire American business interests as their access to continental markets were severely restricted. Moreover, British programs on

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107 qtd. in Doenecke, 26.
American soil designed to help maintain its maritime dominance made Britain far from a friendly nation.

The first step of Britain’s propaganda battle in August 1914 was to cut the one private transatlantic telegram cable that connected the United Kingdom and the United States to which Britain did not have access. This action, entirely belligerent, forced all information to pass through British censors, shaping American sentiment on the war. British censors were aided by a newly constituted British War Propaganda Bureau, a professionalized staff of stenographers and copywriters who produced a dizzying array of material eventually passed on to private newspapers for reprinting in the United States. In short, Britain’s operation put Germany's to shame.

Britain’s propaganda aided a second violation of neutrality within the United States: recruitment of American citizens to serve in the British armed forces. Britain maintained in its consulates in New York and Ohio recruiting offices, replete with doctors and nurses for physical examinations. In more than one case, the British consulate purchased transatlantic tickets for recruits. This kind of recruitment was a serious violation of the fifth Geneva Convention, and a

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109 Michael Ryan Floyd, *The Formative Period of Anglo-American Relations During the First World War, July 1914-December 1915*, (University of Alabama. PhD Diss., 2010), 28. Floyd apparently made some kind of error formatting his page numbers, in which the numbers in-text do not appear in successive order. As a result, my page citations refer to the text’s appearance as a PDF document.

major transgression of American sovereignty.\textsuperscript{111,112} The propaganda and recruitment, of dubious legality, were overshadowed by the British blockade of Germany.

In 1914, American business interests had good reason to fear war. American exports to Britain and Germany were split fairly evenly: $345 million to Germany, and $459 million to Britain.\textsuperscript{113} With Britain’s almost immediate decision to make cutting off Germany from international trade a major priority, business interests grew even more worried. Britain’s list of war contraband, published the same day Britain cut the transatlantic telegram line, was lengthier than the State Department had expected, including foodstuffs on top of military provisions.\textsuperscript{114} In effect, under the policy, any shipment of any kind of food to Germany would be liable to British seizure. Under 1909 prize rules, ratified by every major power, foodstuffs were considered “conditional” contraband, in which a belligerent would need to prove that the contraband was destined for an enemy’s armed forces to be legally seized.\textsuperscript{115} Britain had no intention of following these rules, making their policy a violation of American neutrality. And for an American agricultural sector that exported over $1 billion a year worth of commodities, this

\textsuperscript{111} See folder “British: Canadian Recruiting,” Box 1, Records Kept by Leland Harrison Concern Pro-German Agents, Records of the Office of the Counselor, Department of State, National Archives, College Park M.D., hereafter abbreviated “OC.” There are about forty memoranda and reports from New York customs agents and Bureau of Investigation agents to the Counselor’s office at this time, and these reports appear in Harrison’s records. Each of these reports contain “Neutrality Matter” in their subject line, essentially categorizing them as foreign relations matters necessary for coordination with the State Department. They begin in April 1915, suggesting that Harrison and the State Department were coordinating, to some degree, surveillance of these British activities. At the very least, it suggests that the Bureau’s efforts as an intelligence clearing house began well before its public founding. In either case, administrative efforts to categorize and organize intelligence in a way to inform foreign policy (i.e., whether to press Britain on its violations of neutrality) support the idea of the Bureau as a modernizing agent.

\textsuperscript{112} Also see Geneva Convention V, Art. 4, “Corps of combatants cannot be formed nor recruiting agencies opened on the territory of a neutral Power to assist the belligerents.”

\textsuperscript{113} Floyd, \textit{Formative Period}, 29.

\textsuperscript{114} Floyd, \textit{Formative Period}, 35.

policy was a major concern. American ships carried only seventeen percent of international shipping, while “Britain alone owned [forty-five] percent of all cargo vessels that could carry [one hundred] tons or more.”116 As a result, American firms looking to ship abroad were dependent upon British-owned ships, which, at the onset of the war, appeared to give Britain a significant amount of economic leverage over the United States. With the economic vitality and independence of American merchants at risk, American Ambassador to Britain Walter Hines Page registered an official protest with the Admiralty.

Many Democrats were irate at Britain, and Wilson's lack of immediate action. In January 1915, Texas Governor Oscar Colquitt called the Wilson administration "the greatest failure in the history of the Presidency" for failing to keep cotton prices up, resulting, Colquitt declared, in poor access to credit and “thousands of [the South’s] people starving.”117 In June, a Democratic Massachusetts Senator told Wilson that he could face a Southern “backlash if he did not condemn Britain.”118 Nor were Britain’s violations of neutrality isolated incidents.

Britain’s actions in 1914 foreshadowed later attacks on American international trade. In the fall of 1916, the British circumscribed trade with American companies even further, requiring American merchant ships to submit to British control if they wanted access to British coaling stations, while basic goods such as bolts of cloth continued to be seized as “contraband.”119 Britain decimated American lard exports to Sweden, exports that had increased tenfold from 1914 to 1916. Also in 1916, Britain publicly admitted to reading American first class international mail as a matter of course, which, it also publicly admitted, was in direct

117 qtd. in Doenecke, 43.
118 Doenecke, 43; War Department Memorandum, folder “British Neutrality Matters,” Box 1, Records Kept by Leland Harrison, OC.
violation of “the provisions of Article I of Hague Convention No. 11” which “they would no
longer observe.”\textsuperscript{120} Transgression of American rights was cause for war, but addressing them
risked war, making reasoned mediation critical to ensure Wilson’s continued desire to maintain
neutrality.

Given concerns Britain created through its actions, and perhaps out of a prescient concern
for a slippery slope, it became fairly clear that some diplomatic mission to Europe was necessary
to allay tensions with both Britain and Germany. If we were to apply our Weberian model to this
mission, we would expect it to be led either by a policy-focused bureaucrat, or a political
principal assisted by a team of policy-focused bureaucrats. While the presence of smoky
backroom deal would not itself disqualify the application of the “modern” moniker, the majority
of negotiations would still need to be conducted by teams of experts in their areas, in ways not
dissimilar from merger negotiations in corporate boardrooms. As a result, with American lives
threatened and the economic vitality of the entire (Democratic) American South in jeopardy, one
would expect Wilson to send his Secretary of State and career diplomats. Wilson’s diplomatic
mission was instead far from this ideal.

Bryan, to say the least, was far from Wilson’s first choice. As addressed in the first
chapter, it seemed Bryan’s main qualification for the appointment was his popularity within the
Democratic Party, a national figure Wilson could tap to unify Democrats as he began his first
term. A secondary reason was what Michael Kazin has called an “ideological affinity” between
two deeply religious men. As Arthur Link argues, Wilson insisted that “America’s mission [was
to] fulfill [a] divine plan by service to mankind, [and] by leadership in moral purposes.”\textsuperscript{121} This

\textsuperscript{120} Doenecke, 180.
\textsuperscript{121} Link, 14.
rhetoric does not sound so different from the progressive Prohibitionist preacher in William Jennings Bryan.\textsuperscript{122} But similarities ended there. Wilson deeply distrusted Bryan as a diplomat, and as a representative of his own foreign policies. Wilson wrote at the time, that he “would allow Mr. Bryan to resign from the cabinet before [I] would let him undertake such a delicate mission, for which he felt so unfitted.”\textsuperscript{123}

Given this distrust, Wilson decided to go in another direction. Going down the line of State Department hierarchy would have been counter to Wilson’s own predilections. Lansing was a recent appointee at that time, and one whom Wilson did not believe worthy of matters of state. If anything, it would not have been entirely unexpected to imagine Wilson going himself, alone. Wilson, after all, had resolved to be his own Secretary of State, for which McAdoo identified the appointment of Lansing as Bryan's successor as evidence. Ultimately, Wilson chose House to make House’s second mission to Europe on behalf of Wilson.

The theoretical consequences for this choice should not be understated. House was no expert of international diplomacy. Instead, he was a political animal, most adept in the country club salons of Austin and New York, not London's Foreign Office.\textsuperscript{124} Nor was House endowed with Hegelian democratic will. He was neither elected to his office of advisor nor approved by the Senate. Instead, House was the epitome of the Weberian “personal trustee” that executed “the ruler’s...most important measure,” a defining structure of Weber’s patrimonial state, not its modern, bureaucratic form.\textsuperscript{125} Indeed, House held no official diplomatic credentials to present to any representative of each government’s sovereign. Yet, each country's social elite welcomed

\textsuperscript{122} Kazin, 217.
\textsuperscript{124} For more on House’s political beginnings in Texas, see the biographical glossary.
\textsuperscript{125} Weber 956.
him with the tacit understanding that he held Wilson’s ear.\textsuperscript{126} Moreover, House took no experts with him—no lawyers specializing in the rights of neutral nations, no economists specializing international trade and Southern cotton exports, and no students of British government. Though not necessarily an expert, not even Auchincloss accompanied House, tending to his wife Janet sick with appendicitis. Instead, in February 1915, House steamed for England with only his family on, incidentally, the \textit{Lusitania}.\textsuperscript{127,128}

This trip was important for the history of the Bureau and the State Department’s role in the First World War for two reasons. First, Wilson viewed the trip as successful, which ensured that he would continue to treat House as his unofficial Secretary of State and would sideline the State Department for the rest of his administration. Second, because Bryan saw House’s role concreted as a direct result of the trip, Neu argued that the trip, in concert with Wilson’s handling of the \textit{Lusitania} crisis, also drove Bryan towards resignation.\textsuperscript{129} House cabled to Wilson reports of productive meetings with Prime Minister Asquith and British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward

\textsuperscript{126} Joyce Grigsby Williams, \textit{Colonel House and Sir Edward Grey: A Study in Anglo-American Diplomacy}, (New York: University Press of America, 1984), 39. It should be noted that House began to groom these relationships in his first mission to Europe in 1913.

\textsuperscript{127} Neu., 169. It should also be noted, however, that House corresponded extensively with Auchincloss, and invited Auchincloss quite earnestly to accompany House to Europe as his personal secretary. This correspondence suggests a strong bond between the two that would lead to Wilson installing House’s son-in-law as Assistant Counselor of the State Department less than a year later. As another aside, without citation, Neu alleges that Janet Auchincloss was recovering from appendicitis removal; however, after reading the entirety of Auchincloss diaries comprising this period, I can find no evidence of appendicitis, or a medical procedure. Over the course of two years, however, Gordon Auchincloss regularly wrote of his wife being sick with something, though with progressively less frequency. I suspect that Janet may have had a prolonged experience with mental illness, causing Auchincloss to spend more time with his work, incidentally better preparing him for his impending government service.

\textsuperscript{128} One of the reasons why the sinking of the \textit{Lusitania} shocked so many Americans was its symbolism for luxury, transatlantic travel. The \textit{Lusitania} was known for carrying literal and metaphorical Anglo-American loyalty, and was widely considered one of the most advanced passenger ships of its time. It would not be unreasonable to assume that House (and perhaps Wilson) selected the ship both for its practical benefit of getting House to Europe faster, but also for the status it conferred upon him, necessary as an unofficial representative.

\textsuperscript{129} Neu., 190.
Grey, lauding them and their Liberal government in ways far more effusive than any statements House made regarding in Germany.\textsuperscript{130} Indeed, House seemed to move expertly through British social circles, meeting—and, on his account, charming—officials from David Lloyd George (1863-1945) to a young Winston Churchill, welcomed into even the smokiest of backrooms.\textsuperscript{131} His visit reinforced his own anglophilia, and started to redefine American neutrality as more partisan and directed towards “German militarism.”\textsuperscript{132} This shift directly affected the nascent Bureau of Secret Intelligence and attempts at modernization of the State Department, because it gave sharper political purpose to bureaucratic efforts to track violations of neutrality, and because it put House in the position to hire more staff to rationalize Department administration.

House’s European tour was marked, however, by American civilian casualties in Germany’s turn to unrestricted submarine warfare, perhaps the most pernicious of Germany’s violations of American neutrality. German tactics were “unrestricted” because U-boats fired upon passenger liners in addition to merchant ships with war contraband (e.g., munitions), and did not follow international rules of engagement (rules defined by surface ships) by signaling the ship first and allowing civilians an opportunity to disembark and radio for international assistance. As Arthur Link explains, any effort to stay truly neutral was near impossible for Wilson. The American people could not abide American citizens being killed without warning, from the darkness of the depths of the Atlantic, using a weapon relatively inapplicable to extant legal paradigms.\textsuperscript{133} Wilson’s resolve was first tested in March 1915, when one American civilian

\textsuperscript{130} Neu., 185.
\textsuperscript{131} Neu., 182.
\textsuperscript{132} Neu., 173. Grey wrote in his diary that he believed House thought German militarism to be the ultimate cause of the war, a narrative Wilson would echo in his “War Message” to Congress on April, 1917.
\textsuperscript{133} Link, 55-65.
perished on the British passenger ship *Falabra*, an event that necessitated Lansing’s involvement as a legal expert, and sidelined Bryan with only a layman’s facility. This event was, of course, exacerbated by the sinking of the British liner RMS *Lusitania* two months later.

When House learned of the sinking of the *Lusitania* while on a stroll with Grey in his personal botanical gardens, he near immediately cabled Wilson with a vehement admonition: “we can no longer remain neutral spectators....We are being weighed in the balance, and our position amongst the nations is being assessed by mankind.” Grey was particularly convincing in this visit, in which Joyce Williams argues that Sir Edward Grey “only fortified House’s pro-Ally feelings.” House, of course, was not angry with a violation of international law. He was not well-versed in the laws and customs of cruiser warfare, nor in prize rules. Instead, his was a visceral anger at the American lives lost on the tony British liner, an anger (and not disinterested legalism) that informed American foreign policy.

House’s anglophilia was only bolstered upon his return to the United States. Directly after meeting House as House disembarked in New York, Auchincloss recounted that House “thought war was imminent between the U.S. and Germany....All in all [House] was very warlike

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134 Link, 54.
135 It should be noted that the sinking of the *Lusitania* as a watershed moment should not have been entirely justified. Although it was a civilian liner, it was also carrying contraband, and not the conditional sort. The first torpedo caused a massive explosion when it made contact with the liner, ripping a huge gash in its side. A large cache of munitions bound for British lines was at fault. Although the rules of cruiser warfare still would have required the captain of *U-20* to declare himself and allow the civilians onboard to disembark, blame was certainly on both sides, particularly considering that Cunard, the owner of the *Lusitania*, gave passengers no warning of the tons of explosives underneath their feet. In a development still puzzling scholars of Woodrow Wilson, rather than bolstering Wilson’s “German militarism versus British navalism" narrative, it instead brought the United States closer to war.
137 Williams, 61.
that first evening.”138 House continued to press for a vigorous American response several days later in a meeting with Wilson and Lansing to discuss the legality and practicality of arming merchantmen after the sinking of the Lusitania.139 Ultimately, House and Lansing convinced Wilson to respond with a firm diplomatic note—over Bryan’s objections—declaring that the United States “would hold Germany to a ‘strict accountability’….for lives and property lost as a consequence of illegal submarine attacks against American neutral shipping.”140 Partially because he feared the note would lead the United States into war, or at least out of neutrality, Bryan resigned June 9, 1915.

Regardless of the precise reasoning behind Bryan’s resignation, it afforded House and Wilson an opportunity to make some attempt to purge Bryan’s State Department of Democratic Party lackeys and install a novel coordinating agency the likes of which the United States had yet to see. Though Bryan’s departure and House’s visit to Europe solidified his role as de facto Secretary of State, it also elevated a bureaucrat on the basis of his expertise and capability, Robert Lansing.

Creating the Bureau

A month after Bryan’s resignation, House warned Wilson that the State Department was his “most important instrument at present and everything should be done to perfect it so that your policies may be carried through in the shortest time and most efficient manner.”141 House wanted some form of technocracy, though not always in the State Department. During his initial

138 Confidential Diary of Gordon Auchincloss, 6 June 1915, Box 1, Gordon Auchincloss Papers (MS 580). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, 12 February 2015. Hereafter cited as “GAP.”
140 Link, 54.
141 qtd. in Neu, 199.
conversation with Auchincloss after his return from Europe, he also declared that he sought to create “a commission of the most efficient men in America to handle the munitions, equipment, [and other] problems in conjunction with the Government” to organize what he saw as America’s impending entry into the war.\textsuperscript{142} In this sense, House’s intercessions into American governance should be viewed as a kind of middle ground in the regularization of American diplomacy. Though House wanted bureaucracy and accountability, he wanted his own men, not institutional memory or integrity. And with the Bureau of Secret Intelligence, he got what he asked for.

When Wilson’s foreign policy principals, Lansing and House, met with the President in November 1915 to discuss officializing the Bureau, House had already secured a critical appointment in the State Department.\textsuperscript{143} To replace Lansing as Counselor of the State Department, House convinced Wilson to appoint Frank L. Polk, a Yale man, then Corporation Counsel of the City of New York, and a reliable member of House’s social circle in New York City.\textsuperscript{144} Though a capable lawyer, his appointment was almost certainly an act of nepotism. So, fittingly, the Bureau was made an ancillary office at this meeting, directly beneath the Counselor of the State Department. Even with, or perhaps because of, Polk’s appointment, information organized and collected by the Bureau rarely diffused along an official chain of command.

The precise history of the Bureau’s founding is opaque, and requires parsing several competing sources. Lansing maintained in his memoirs that Leland Harrison, a career diplomat and chief of the Department’s Latin American division, was awarded control over the infant

\textsuperscript{142} Confidential Diary of Gordon Auchincloss, 6 June 1915, Box 1, GAP.


\textsuperscript{144} Finding Aid, Frank Lyon Polk Papers (MS 656), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Archives, 12 February 2015. Hereafter cited as “FPP.” Although Polk did not keep a diary, he appears as a frequent dining companion, and later a friend, in Auchincloss’ diary. Moreover, when Auchincloss ate with House in the city in 1912-1915, Polk was often also present.
Bureau in April 1916. The State Department’s official administrative history does the same. Yet official records from Harrison’s department and his personal papers paint a different picture. First, as early as May 1915, Harrison was compiling his “Human Espionage Activities” file, relaying a report from Secret Service Chief William Flynn to Lansing, then Counselor. In fact, correspondence between Harrison and other agency officials began quite before the sinking of the Lusitania, suggesting that Harrison was, at least in some unofficial capacity, archiving the result of intelligence activities run by the government’s existing security services. Indeed, the Bureau of Investigation was forwarding memoranda addressed officially to the Counselor's office as early as 1914, each tagged with “neutrality matters,” emphasizing how defined the fledgling Bureau was around violations of American neutrality. It seems the Washington Post concurred in this assessment.

A Washington Post article published on December 12th, 1915 declared that:
A central organization for gathering evidence of offenses against the neutrality of the United States has been created as the first step in the federal government’s determination to more stringently enforce neutrality, outlined by president Wilson in his address to Congress. The Postoffice Department, the State Department, and the Department of Justice and the Treasury Department will join in gathering information, which will uniformly be assembled and acted on in the State Department under the Direction of Counselor Polk...This plan was decided upon at a conference between Counselor Polk, Chief Flynn of the secret service, Chief Postoffice Inspector Koons and Assistant Attorney General Warren, who handled neutrality cases in the Department of Justice.

145 Lansing, War Memoirs, 318.
146 Flynn, memorandum for the Secretary of the Treasury, 10 May 1915 in folder “Human Espionage Activities,” General Correspondence 1915-1918, Box 8, OC.
147 See memoranda in folder “British Neutrality Matters,” Box 1, Classified Case Files, OC. An example of one of these memoranda follows in the Appendix.
148 Newspaper Clipping, 12 December 1915, in folder “12 December 1915,” Box 8, General Correspondence, Leland Harrison Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., hereafter cited as “LHP.” American newspapers in the early twentieth century had yet to adopt a standard style (such as the AP Style Guide) and so sometimes spelled federal offices (e.g. “Postoffice” and “Post Office”) and positions (e.g. “president” and “President”) differently. This quote is, in fact, a direct excerpt.
That the Bureau was created to “more stringently enforce neutrality” is key, and highlights the
degree to which House desired bureaucratic aid to provide minor assistance in securing Wilson’s
insistence upon American neutrality. The announcement may have also served as a denouement
after the United States drifted closer to war in the summer and early fall. Finally, Lansing and
Wilson probably saw an opportunity to formalize it after Bryan’s departure, though the more
official Bureau carried little more efficacy than its progenitor. The phrase “assembled and acted
on,” however, apparently caused some consternation in the Department of Justice.

As it turns out, the *Post* piece was a leak, and evidently an irksome one at that.\(^{149}\) The
conference, which took place at Polk’s office on December 10, 1915, was aimed at augmenting
intelligence sharing and collection between the State Department and the country’s existing
security services. Protective of the Bureau of Investigation’s responsibilities, Warren wrote to
Polk that the phrase “‘uniformly assembled and acted on’....may tend to mislead the public into
the belief that there is to be, in some way, a derogation of the proper functions of this
Department.”\(^{150}\) Polk responded deferentially, both complaining of the leak and telling Warren,
“I have taken great pains to impress all newspaper men who have spoken to me about it
yesterday and today that this Department in no way intended to undertake the direction of the
work of any other Department and that our function was merely to cooperate and assist.”\(^{151}\)
Ultimately, this exchange corroborates Treasury Secretary’s McAdoo’s contention to Wilson that
the Bureau, rather than a budding centralized intelligence agency, was instead an intelligence

\(^{149}\) Polk, at least, claims that it was a leak. Given the lack of interest Polk had in the Bureau, it is unlikely
that he would have orchestrated it. Unfortunately, the sources available in the National Archives give
little clue as to from where the leak may have originated.

\(^{150}\) Warren to Polk, 13 December 1915, in folder “Declarations of War - De Wolf, Tensard,” Box 9,
Classified Case Files, OC.

\(^{151}\) Polk to Warren, 14 December 1915, in folder “Declarations of War - De Wolf, Tensard,” Box 9,
Classified Case Files, OC.
“‘clearing house.’”\textsuperscript{152} Though perhaps less exciting, as a bureaucratic invention that collects and files information, expedites investigations and counterespionage activities, and provides a centralized berth of information for use by policymakers, the Bureau at its inception was an important step in the modernization of the State Department.

Throughout the Bureau’s existence, particularly at its onset, it suffered from chronic understaffing. Even in 1918, the height of wartime involvement, the office of the Counselor had only four principals based in Washington, D.C. dedicated to foreign and counterintelligence.\textsuperscript{153} The office had only seven more employees,\textsuperscript{154} none of whom was an expert, but rather part-time stenographers hired to alleviate an uptick in wartime correspondence.

Like other government agencies, the Bureau grew in size as the United States entered the war. At first, additional staff were posted to New York, and were based around Auchincloss’ law practice. Auchincloss himself, hired in the spring of 1917, split his time between these responsibilities and the more traditional legal questions the Counselor handled.\textsuperscript{155} His law partner, David Miller, focused on tracking financial fraud and violations of the 1917 Trading with the Enemy Act.\textsuperscript{156} In 1918, the two were supplemented with the State Department’s limited wartime secret service under the leadership of Chief Special Agent Joe Nye.\textsuperscript{157}

This initial and basic structure of the Bureau shows an office ready to address the challenges facing it. A career diplomat with managerial experience had been tapped to head an

\textsuperscript{152} McAdoo to Wilson, 16 April 1917, in folder “16 April 1917,” General Correspondence, Box 522, William Gibbs McAdoo Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., hereafter cited as “MP.”
\textsuperscript{154} \textit{Register}, 24.
\textsuperscript{155} Confidential Diary of Gordon Auchincloss, 31 March 1917, Box 1, GAP.
\textsuperscript{156} See memoranda in folder “Charles Von Helmut file,” Box 2, Classified Records, OC. Also well-connected to House, Miller later outstripped Auchincloss in political influence, becoming the \textit{de facto} chief of Wilson’s Enquiry in 1919, an assembly of academic experts that helped decide the fate of much of the Great Powers’ colonial holdings.
\textsuperscript{157} Memorandum, 4 May 1918, in folder “(A),” Box 1, Special Agent Nye’s Personal File, OC.
office devoted to administrative tracking of intelligence from a wide array of sources. It was further tasked with expediting intergovernmental cooperation and intelligence sharing. An ad hoc response to increasing violations of neutrality, it was nonetheless established as a novel and important bureaucratic method to augment public safety within the United States and to support Wilson’s general goal of keeping the country out of war. In this regard, even at its outset, the Bureau represented an important development in bureaucratic modernization in the State Department. While the Bureau started as a clearing house, however, it grew into a coordinating office for intelligence programs both at home and abroad, a process the next chapter examines.
Chapter 3: The Bureau and Its Contemporaries

“It’s easy to forget what intelligence consists of: luck and speculation. Here and there a windfall, here and there a scoop.”
-George Smiley\textsuperscript{158}

“Generally speaking, espionage offers each spy an opportunity to go crazy in a way he finds irresistible.”
-Kurt Vonnegut\textsuperscript{159}

Introduction

On a twilit evening in a brisk Dover port, a middle-aged man disembarked a posh transatlantic passenger liner, valise in hand, porter in tow. As Frank Anderson approached the British customs authority, he may have been beset by a bout of nerves as it hit him that this was his first day as a confidential agent in the service of his State Department and Leland Harrison’s Bureau. His hands shook as he handed the customs agent his bags, stronger still when, after the agent motioned to his supervisor, Anderson realized his ordinary inspection was about to turn extraordinary. American Ambassador Walter Hines Page explained in a classified cable to Harrison a week later that when Anderson had “his trunk....opened [and searched] in the usual way....the first thing that came to light was a letter making it quite clear that [Anderson] was, or had been, in the employ of our government.”\textsuperscript{160} Anderson, it appears, had forgotten that his bags might be searched upon entry to a foreign country, and caused Page such a “headache” that he found it necessary to write to Secretary of State Lansing as well.\textsuperscript{161} Anderson was one of a slate of (often bumbling) private citizens with whom the State Department contracted for “confidential

\textsuperscript{159} Kurt Vonnegut, Mother Night: A Novel, (New York: Random House, 2009), 191.
\textsuperscript{160} Page to Harrison, 31 December 1918, in folder “Frank Anderson,” Box 4, Classified Case Files, OC.
\textsuperscript{161} Page to Harrison, 31 December 1918, in folder “Frank Anderson,” Box 4, Classified Case Files, OC.
work,” many of whom comprised a burgeoning, though scarcely effective, foreign intelligence service.

This chapter examines how the Bureau’s operations evolved to include foreign intelligence, and how its organization, its many failures notwithstanding, could affect the formation of American foreign policy. In order to contextualize the programs the Bureau pursued and helped coordinate, the chapter first provides a brief introduction to the major secret services during the war, including the Treasury Department’s Secret Service, the Justice Department’s Bureau of Investigation (BOI), the War Department’s Military Intelligence Division (MID), and the Navy Department’s Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI). It then assesses the Bureau’s successes in two areas: counterespionage within the United States and foreign intelligence abroad. Ultimately, the story of the Bureau, relative to its contemporaries, reinforces the narrative of a State Department late to modernize, and modernize in a way that resulted in few lasting reforms. Still, as a development in the centralization and rationalization of intelligence that could have influenced policymakers should they chosen to use it, the Bureau represents a notable and important midpoint in the modernization of the State Department, more modern than a smattering of party lackeys, but less modern than the meritocratic organization Congress in 1924 had intended the Foreign Service to become.

American Intelligence Services in the First World War

America’s security services may most easily be split into two categories: civilian and military. Civilian agencies—the Bureau of Investigation, the Secret Service and customs agents in the Treasury Department, and postal inspectors—benefitted from a preexisting organization, training in law enforcement tactics, and relatively adequate levels of funding. To varying degrees, they could adapt to track German spies and subterfuge efforts, though not to great success. Military services—the military intelligence in the War Department and the Office of
Naval Intelligence in the Navy Department—had previously focused entirely on wartime service, and did not routinely surveil American citizens within the continental United States. Moreover, neither military nor naval intelligence had seen meaningful action since the Spanish-American War thirty years prior to Americans entry in the First World War. As the war neared, threats to national security required improvisation and a sizable increase in the American intelligence community, a void the Bureau, as a coordinating agency, was critical in filling.

Founded in 1908 under the Roosevelt administration, the Bureau of Investigation was created to serve as an investigatory arm of the Department of Justice. As the progressive state grew, the BOI was tasked with enforcing a greater number of federal laws and statutes, focusing particularly on antitrust violations, banking fraud, and human trafficking.\textsuperscript{162} The Bureau of Investigation also took the lead in counterespionage investigations, its chief, A. Bruce Bielaski, directing evidence collection for trials that resulted in the convictions of several high-profile German conspirators, including Franz Rintelen. The Espionage and Sedition Acts (1917 and 1918 respectively), however, quickly and radically expanded the Bureau’s prerogatives, in which, Thomas argues, the law enforcement agency’s fundamental purpose became to police and “suppress dissent.”\textsuperscript{163} Christopher Capozzola broadens the argument to contend that the BOI’s


\textsuperscript{163} Thomas, 32. Illustrating the degree of British influence on American security policy, the Espionage Act was passed alongside the Trading With the Enemy Act shortly after American entry in April 1917. Initially, it banned interference with governmental activities related to military involvement and empowered the Postmaster General to seize and censor mail he believed to serve these ends. The Sedition Act amended the Espionage Act to including proscriptions on “any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the United States.” In practice, the legislation gave the government the authority to prosecute, and persecute, nearly any form of dissent, targeting most political and ethnic minority groups. The legislation was both born of and contributed to a widespread culture of fear and paranoia that allowed the Bureau of Investigations to expand rapidly and viciously. See, for example, Lon Strauss, \textit{A Paranoid State: The American Public, Military Surveillance and the Espionage Act of 1917}, (University of Kansas. PhD Diss., 2012); Daniel Donalson, \textit{Espionage and Sedition Acts of World War I: Using Wartime Loyalty Laws for Revenge Profit}, (New York: LFB, 2012).
dogged (and sometimes illegal) enforcement of the Espionage and Sedition Acts on such a wide scale inspired in turn the development of civil liberties groups (including the forerunner of the American Civil Liberties Union) and a new voluntarist conception of the American state.\textsuperscript{164} Despite an intelligence presence in Latin America before and during the early period of the war, the Bureau of Investigation’s focus was decidedly domestic, but decidedly broader than a myopia on suspected German agents. The BOI often worked closely with postal inspectors and customs agents, the Treasury Department’s contribution to combatting violations of neutrality within the United States.

Until 1917, military intelligence had a sporadic history, ad hoc positions created during wartime and then deactivated come the end of hostilities. As a result, the Military Intelligence Division (now the Defense Intelligence Agency) was not institutionalized with American entry into the war in 1917. Under the direction of Colonel Ralph Van Deman, and later Brigadier-General Marlborough Churchill, it was split into several sections that covered signals and human intelligence.\textsuperscript{165} It had little domestic impact, however. Before the war, it read mail in Texas on account of continued unrest in Mexico, but without any larger mission.\textsuperscript{166} One subsection, MI-4,

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  \item \textsuperscript{165} Contemporary intelligence gathering is divided into six main areas: human intelligence (HUMINT), information gathered from individuals by individuals; signals intelligence (SIGINT), information gathered from telegraphic, telephonic, and radio communications, to name a few; geospatial intelligence (GEOINT), information gathered from aerial photography; open source intelligence (OSINT), information gathered from, for example, newspapers or public radio; technical intelligence (TECHINT), information gathered by examining the adversary’s technology; and financial intelligence (FININT). In the United States, there are either separate agencies for each kind of intelligence gathering, or subdivisions within agencies. To a certain degree, this process began during World War I, and also comprise a helpful way to systematize American security services at the time. See the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s “Intelligence Collection Disciplines,” 2016.
  \item \textsuperscript{166} See folder “Carranza,” Box 4, Classified Case Files, OC. The First World War coincided with the thick of the Mexican Revolution (ca. 1910-1920), in which much of Mexico was intermittently split into warring factions seeking to claim political legitimacy. Perhaps most notable was revolutionary, paramilitary Mexican leader Pancho Villa’s raid on Columbus, New Mexico in March 1916, and the
\end{itemize}
was supposed to work with local police and the Bureau of Investigation, but their mission was small, and consisted mostly of intelligence. Army Intelligence’s most important figure was H.O. Yardley, the founder of America’s cryptographic Black Chamber, the United States’ first dedicated code-breaking outfit and the main forerunner of the National Security Agency. Yardley had first arrived in Washington in 1912, employed by the State Department’s code room. As will be further discussed below, he pressured the State Department to adopt a much stronger code system, and continued to prod the American government on cryptographic security throughout his storied tenure.

A dedicated office for intelligence in the Navy was born of serious military deficiencies in the years following the Civil War (1861-65). The service postbellum shrank drastically, with ironclads decommissioned and America’s largest ship still powered by wind instead of coal, and armed with smoothbore cannon over rifled artillery. In 1883, President Chester Arthur ordered the U.S. Naval Institute created as part of a modernization initiative to study foreign navies so as to, at the very least, make American coastlines defensible in the face of rapid technological innovation. By World War I, this office had morphed into an Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) that focused on signals intelligence, geographic surveys, and the tracking of foreign fleets. ONI helped the State Department track shipping fraud and root out wireless stations abroad that


168 Gilbert, 45.
170 Dorwat, 12.
signaled to German submarines. With training from the Secret Service, ONI also instituted minor domestic programs dedicated to signals intelligence, taking advantage of the military bureaucratic reforms the State Department had largely avoided in the late nineteenth century. By having access to a cadre of officers and enlisted men it could train in wiretapping, interception of radio traffic, and human intelligence tradecraft, the ONI would be far more successful than its civilian counterparts abroad in achieving its military missions, in foreign intelligence often overlapping with the improvised programs Harrison pursued. Before the war, however, ONI remained largely inactive, and Harrison was tasked with the centralization of intelligence, particularly relating to counterespionage and domestic violations of neutrality.

**Counterespionage and the Bureau in its Early Period**

From its inception, the Bureau’s primary responsibility was counterespionage, but its first forays into counterespionage coordination reveal the degree to which it was dependent on other security services and British intelligence. American Ambassador Page and Britain’s military attaché Sir William Wiseman supplied British intelligence that often had some effect upon Wilson’s foreign policy. Federal agencies also sometimes came together to execute effective operations that could impact foreign relations. For example, in early 1915, a New York passport ring appeared to be operating with impunity, issuing false documents to German nationals wishing to return to Germany in order to enlist in its armed forces. At least two federal agencies were involved in apprehending the ring’s directors, along with local New York City police investigators. Both Secret Service Chief William J. Flynn and Bureau of Investigation Director A. Bruce Bielaski sent regular reports to the Department of State on their surveillance of German...

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171 Dorwat, 103.  
172 Dorwat, 112.
and Austrian consular officials. Warren explained to Polk that Lansing asked the BOI to “prepare for him a resume of the evidence [it] had...in connection of Captain Von Papen with the passport frauds last winter, which summer [sic] I prepared and gave to Mr. Lansing.” These and other reports from Department of Justice agents were complemented by reports from the Secret Service, all implicating the German government’s New York office in anti-neutral activity.

State Department Solicitor Lester Woolsey largely agreed with the Secret Service’s and the Department of Justice’s appraisal of culpability, and addressed a memorandum to both Lansing and Wilson that the United States demand the German officials’ recall. Later that month, Wilson did exactly that. In this case, various intelligence sources came together in the State Department to realize a presidential directive that had real consequences for American foreign policy. But as the war grew further protracted and House was extended further prerogative over American foreign policy, intelligence reports rarely made their way to the Oval Office.

Counterintelligence successes, contingent upon upon interagency collaboration, spread beyond New York as the United States inched closer to war. Partially as a result of the passport fraud case, Wilson directed the Secret Service to surveil the German Embassy. The Secret Service actually detailed a group of agents to the State Department who reported directly to Harrison. As German violations of neutrality grew more egregious, Lansing, and thereby Harrison, increased the level of surveillance, ordering the embassy’s telegraph and telephone lines tapped in 1916. These agents were led by Joseph “Bill” Nye, the future Chief Special Agent of the State Department’s limited wartime security service. He submitted daily briefings, and in

173 Flynn to Lansing, 3 November 1915, in folder “Passport Fraud,” Box 8, OC.
174 Flynn to Lansing, 3 November 1915, in folder “Passport Fraud,” Box 8, OC.
175 Jeffreys-Jones, 58.
the briefing for January 31, 1917, “Nye informed Lansing that during [Lansing’s] 4 p.m. meeting with [Bernstorff], the [German] Ambassador would tell him that Germany had renewed unrestricted submarine warfare.” This operation was probably the epitome of interdepartmental collaboration, and gave Lansing fruitful intelligence independent from British sources. This January briefing and the information therein led directly to Bernstorff’s dismissal as ambassador and America’s entry into the war, illustrating that the Bureau did have some influence on American foreign policy, at least when Lansing read its reports.

Advance warning of the resumption of submarine warfare only scratches the surface of how critical State Department wiretaps were to the Bureau and Lansing. In October 1916, Nye’s agents intercepted a conversation in which Bernstorff discussed German propaganda efforts, asserting “in my opinion we should always observe the principle that either a representative of ours should buy the paper, or that the proprietor should be secured by [indirect] support.” Active wiretapping gave the State Department a picture of how German propaganda worked in the United States, implicating Bernstorff as its head and providing support for Wilson's decision to break diplomatic relations with Germany in February 1917. Much of Auchincloss’ initial work in New York (before transferring to Washington) consisted of a scheme to convince New York politicians to table a bill outlawing indiscriminate government wiretaps. In this case, the recruitment of dedicated and specialized bureaucratic agents with technical expertise in a novel tool fulfills the qualifications of bureaucratic modernity. As this information was passed up the administrative hierarchy from Nye to Harrison and eventually to Wilson, the Bureau’s experience with wiretapping should be considered a bureaucratic victory.

176 State Department, History, 8.
177 Memorandum from Nye to Harrison, folder “Censorship,” Box 5, Records kept by Leland Harrison: Letters Received,” OC.
178 Letter, Auchincloss to Polk, 10 May 1917, in folder 15, General Correspondence, Box 6, GAP.
Most of the Bureau’s other successes, however, were instead accidental. In July 1915, a Secret Service agent followed Heinrich F. Albert, the German propaganda director, onto the subway. Albert dozed off on the train, giving the agent the opportunity to snatch the bag. Fortuitously, the bag contained major information on the identities of German spies in the Northeast along with information about planned operations. The importance of the contents of this briefcase should not be understated, since it included records of Bernstorff’s attempts to buy American newspapers, balance sheets of Americans hired to spy on behalf of Germany, and the rudiments of the architecture of Germany’s entire espionage operation in the country at the time. Secret Service agents delivered the briefcase's contents to Treasury Secretary McAdoo the next day while he was on vacation at his summer house in Maine. Instead of returning to the Department in Washington, he met Colonel House and Secretary of State Lansing at House's own summer home on the North Shore. Though the briefcase’s contents were certainly time-sensitive, that it made its way not through secure rooms in Washington but instead among the principals’ summer homes illustrates the informality of Wilson's foreign policy process. In one of the great intelligence coups during American neutrality, America's foreign policy principals bypassed the bedrock of their government in favor of their own brand of personalpolitik.

The incident prompted Wilson to write to House a week later, “I am sure that the country is honeycombed with German intrigue and infected with German spies.” The Germans thought it was English agents who stole the briefcase, shielding Secret Service counterespionage operations from further German scrutiny. Yet the Germans’ mistake is not so much a

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179 Jeffreys-Jones, 62.
180 Jeffreys-Jones, 63.
181 Neu, 204. The briefcase's contents make no appearance in the official records of the Bureau, suggesting that the principals altogether bypassed the bureaucracy available to them.
182 wilson to house 5 aug 1915
183 Neu., 204.
reflection on an American ability to keep their surveillance clandestine as it is a reflection of the very real lack of capabilities that American intelligence services harbored relative to the English. Indeed, this incident is far from intricate or innovative. In fact, snatching the briefcase amounted to little more than a mugging. Given the limited manpower of the intelligence services in New York at that time, there is little reason to believe that any American intelligence service knew the contents of the briefcase beforehand. In a December 1918 letter to Gordon Auchincloss, Chief Special Agent Nye calls it “a crime that [American domestic intelligence was] so inefficient for three long years, but I hope some day we will wake up,” further illustrating the very real lack of capabilities the American government suffered throughout the war. In reality, the Secret Service, and thus the Bureau, at many points throughout the war, just got lucky.

America’s final major counterespionage success before its entry into the war came with the von Igel raid of 1916. After the successful culling of the German spy organization in the United States and von Papen’s dismissal, his secretary Wolf von Igel continued his work in New York. In April 1916, the Germans decided to transfer documents detailing the entire spy organization in the United States to its embassy in Washington, where they would presumably be protected by diplomatic immunity. As they were removed from the office safe, Bureau of Investigation agents raided the office, where they arrested von Igel and seized his papers. This seizure, conducted without British intelligence or aid, gave the United States a more independent view of German actions beyond the front, including plans to encourage native revolts in Ireland and India. But Bureau of Investigation agents conducted this raid, with no evidence of State Department involvement. In other words, this feat was not won by the Bureau of Secret

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184 Letter, Nye to Auchincloss, 3 December 1918, in folder 147, General Correspondence, Box 7, GAP.
185 Jeffreys-Jones, 63.
Intelligence, but rather other government agents. Yet once the State Department received the
information begotten by this raid, the information itself had the ability to affect foreign policy.

Coordination with other agencies required ancillary offices elsewhere, particularly with
Harrison in Washington and New York as the locus of pro-German activity. To this end, when
the United States entered the war, House successfully sought his son-in-law’s—New Yorker
Gordon Auchincloss—appointment. Auchincloss’s duties were not limited to counterespionage,
but in his initial posting in New York in spring 1917 (the main center of German espionage), he
helped ensure that the Bureau and other federal agencies were able to work effectively. Whereas
Harrison worked extensively with other agencies to impede German sabotage, Auchincloss took
the lead on financial crimes and violations of the 1917 Trading with the Enemy Act, consulting
with the Secret Service and Assistant Attorney General Charles Warren frequently.\(^{186}\) For the
most part, Auchincloss’ activities highlight the kind of improvised half-modernity that is so
indicative of House’s attempted reforms. In his diary on March 30, 1917, Auchincloss explained
that “Chief Flynn of the Secret Service, called at my request to make certain investigations for
me with reference to Muller, Schall & Co,” a law firm suspected of aiding German money
laundering.\(^{187}\) Investigation of the firm continued for at least a year, in which House enlisted
Auchincloss’ law partner (and later architect of the League of Nations) David Miller to track and
annotate each of Muller Schall's financial transactions. These reports were forwarded to Lanier
Winslow, one of Harrison's deputies, with Harrison attached.\(^{188}\) Insofar as this information was
organized and controlled by a central bureaucracy with delineated roles, this kind of activity

\(^{186}\) Auchincloss Diary, 27 May 1917, Box 1, GAP.
\(^{187}\) Auchincloss Diary, 30 March 1917, Box 1, GAP.
\(^{188}\) There are at least forty such reports in the “Classified Case Files” maintained by Harrison.
fulfills parts of our requirements for modernity. The ad hoc, informal use of Auchincloss’ law partner, however, does not, particularly when the firm was still actively practicing law.189

Ultimately, the Bureau’s role as an intelligence clearinghouse became fairly evident by 1917. The vast majority of domestic materials available in the Bureau’s archive are carbon copies of informational reports made by other agencies, particularly ONI, MID, the BOI, and the Secret Service. Sometimes, these programs were small and far-flung. In fall 1917, ONI informed Harrison that its agents were tracking German agents in Alaska who were attempting to stir up labor strikes in order to get access to Alaska’s copper and iron mines.190 ONI’s efforts may themselves have been surprisingly indicative of proper funding, but also indicative of a situation in which Harrison was kept apprised of nearly everything, even the less consequential.

Within the State Department, however, it appears that some offices viewed Harrison’s office as an outlet for the creation and execution of new policy. The chief of the State Department's Bureau of Citizenship advised in a letter to Counselor Polk, “In view of the fact that this country is now at war, it appears to me that a more systematic cooperation should be put into effect, especially between this Bureau and the office of which Mr. Harrison has charge.”

Naturalization policy, while not decided in the White House, still would have been fairly significant, and also dependent upon accurate and centralized intelligence that could be applied to incoming migrants from the Central Powers. Moreover, the Bureau of Citizenship chief told Counselor Polk that he had went to BOI chief Bielaski about the idea, suggesting

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189 In fact, it appears based on archived documents that Miller took the lead in tracking German financial fraud. Miller’s importance to the Bureau’s counterespionage operations also run counter to Auchincloss’ narrative in his diaries, in which it is suggested that Auchincloss turned over the law firm’s operations entirely to his law partner when he was recruited to join the Office of the Counselor. This signals a level of disorganization that the Bureau had difficulty surmounting.

190 Memorandum, 5 October 1917, in folder “A-Al,” Box 4, Classified Case Files, OC.
interdepartmental coordination as well.\textsuperscript{191} Clearly, Harrison’s efforts to create a bureaucratic process to transfer centralized intelligence where the government considered it most necessary made some kind mark.

Actual coordination, however, was more the exception than the rule. Although the State Department developed its own intelligence service as it continued to cooperate with the Secret Service and the Bureau of Investigation, these other agencies led the vast majority of counterespionage operations. Though initially established to coordinate these operations, there is little evidence to show that the Bureau ordered other agencies to undertake projects. Instead, it seems to be quite the opposite—other agencies informed the Bureau \textit{ex post facto} of their operations. This fact in and of itself does not necessarily undermine the efficacy of the Bureau, so long as the Bureau effectively communicated the results of these operations to principal policymakers within the administration. Yet because it appears that Lansing read Harrison’s reports only selectively, it is unlikely that Harrison’s attempted coordination of counterespionage activities had much effect at all upon Lansing’s formation of foreign policy. Furthermore, if Lansing rarely read these reports, it is likely that both Wilson or House communicated only rarely, if at all, with Harrison’s Bureau.

Indeed, in both Harrison’s personal and official papers, there were no records of any papers sent between Harrison himself and Wilson at all, and the only records present of communication between Lansing and Harrison come after Lansing’s tenure as Secretary of State. Memoranda that made their way to Wilson’s desk were addressed from other agencies to the White House with Harrison carbon copied. Therefore, it is probable that Harrison’s work got lost

\textsuperscript{191} Bureau of Citizenship to Polk, 24 April 1917, in folder “Passports,” Box 12, Classified Case Files, OC. The Bureau of Citizenship chief may also have understood that more power and funding lay in the Justice Department, and preferred to have it as an ally.
in the bureaucratic jumble, particularly as Wilson’s principal foreign policymakers continued to operate in a diplomatic world focused on statesmen rather than the burgeoning bureaucracies behind them. This, too, was the case for the Bureau’s forays into foreign intelligence.

**Foreign Intelligence**

As the United States neared outright war in early 1917, it faced a crisis in foreign intelligence. MID had yet to be reconstituted, and ONI was limited to monitoring ship movements and coastal defenses. The Bureau of Investigation and the Secret Service, while actively policing subterfuge attempts within the United States, had little presence abroad. Through impromptu and intermittent steps, Harrison’s Bureau gradually built an intelligence capacity abroad. Despite the Bureau’s successes abroad, and bureaucratic developments that led to a more modernized State Department, the Bureau’s ameliorative programs were counterbalanced by the lack of professionalism of the private citizens it recruited as, in the Department’s terminology, “confidential agents.”

The intelligence community’s lack of capacities at the outbreak of the war, both domestic and foreign, led to a perhaps unlikely champion for modernization: Treasury Secretary William Gibbs McAdoo. Like most major cabinet-level officials, McAdoo was intimately connected to House’s social circle, and a regular dinner guest according to Auchincloss’ diary. Also married to Wilson’s own daughter, McAdoo was one of few individuals who could hope to bend the president’s ear on foreign policy as, McAdoo wrote, the president “resolved to be his own secretary of state.” In fact, McAdoo initiated a forceful push for reform, sending Wilson several letters pressing for a larger and new Intelligence Bureau.

192 Auchincloss Diary, 3 December 1914, Box 1, GAP.
193 See, for example, Auchincloss Diary, 3 December 1914, Box 1, GAP. At one dinner between Auchincloss, McAdoo, and House, McAdoo joked that “we’ll make a Democrat out of [Auchincloss] yet,” an apt note of foreshadowing before Auchincloss’ impending government service.
As the United States prepared to send troops to Europe, McAdoo wrote Wilson several
times to enlarge the Bureau and make it a more effective intelligence organization. In these
letters, we see a cogent vision for a centralized intelligence agency so modern that it took until
the Second World War to come to fruition. On April 16, he wrote, “During the war it will not, I
believe, be possible for Mr. Polk to successfully take care of the large volumes of work that will
have to be handled....The work of an Intelligence Bureau, properly organized, ought to have the
undivided attention of a suitable head and a competent staff of assistants.”194 “To overcome th[e]
difficulty [of interdepartmental information sharing],” McAdoo wrote, “we established, as you
know, a sort of ‘clearing house agency’ in the State Department, over which Mr. Polk has been
presiding, through which the services of [the Secret Service, the Bureau of Investigation, and
postal inspectors] have been coordinated in a more effective degree than heretofore.”195 From
here, McAdoo advised that Wilson create a centralized “Bureau of Intelligence” housed within
the State Department, with “the undivided attention of a suitable head and a competent staff of
assistants.”196

A month later—still with no response from Wilson—McAdoo pressed these reforms
again, mainly in response to members of the American Protective League playing spy.197

194 McAdoo to Wilson, 16 April 1917, in folder “16 April 1917,” General Correspondence, Box 522, MP.
195 McAdoo to Wilson, 16 April 1917, in folder “16 April 1917,” General Correspondence, Box 522, MP.
196 McAdoo to Wilson, 16 April 1917, in folder “16 April 1917,” General Correspondence, Box 522, MP.
197 Founded in March 1917 by a wealthy Chicago businessman, the American Protective League (APL)
was a quasi-judicial police force auxiliary to the Department of Justice. Attorney General Thomas Watts
Gregory allowed the group to operate as a kind of civil defense force, not extended police powers but
intended to supplement the Department of Justice. Private citizens comprised the APL in its entirety, and
they often operated entirely independently from the government to coerce and intimidate innocent
Americans they suspected of German sympathies, socialist or communist activities, and draft-dodging.
McAdoo further complained in his letter than the APL member had introduced himself as a member of
“the Secret Service,” and the APL manufactured for themselves badges that carried no legal authority.
They were ultimately guilty of gross violations of civil rights throughout the war, and offered American
security services little to no benefit. It is also important to note that the APL was no small group; by two
months after its founding, it boasted one hundred thousand members, and it continued to grow throughout
the war. See Capozzola, 42-52.
McAdoo protested this “Secret Service Division of the American Protective League” because, primarily, McAdoo feared they might hurt the Treasury Department’s Secret Service’s brand. “It seems to me,” McAdoo lamented, “that [the Secret Service] should become confused in the public mind with a volunteer organization, made up of a vast number of members scattered throughout the United States, over which no direct control is exercised by any responsible official of the Government in Washington.” Nor were the civil liberties and rule of law concerns lost on McAdoo, since he argued that, it being “necessary to avoid the stirring up of internal discord,” no “horde of so-called Secret Service operatives be let loose upon the country to pry into the private business of peaceful citizens.”

The Treasury Secretary understood that without a professionalized security bureaucracy, the safety and constitutional rights of Americans would continue to be threatened. “Existing agencies of the Government,” he pleaded, must “be coordinated into an efficient system.” McAdoo’s efforts, however, were stymied by interdepartmental rivalries and Wilson's self-imposed isolation.

Other department heads bristled at McAdoo’s suggestions. Assistant Attorney General Warren wrote that such an agency would impede the Bureau of Investigation’s operations, while the Postmaster General complained in an Oval Office meeting with Wilson, an account of which was later sent to McAdoo. Two more letters, five in total, were written over the course of the summer. It took seven months, however, for Wilson to respond to McAdoo’s memorandum, this to a cabinet secretary and ultimate supervisor of the Secret Service. This was a familiar

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198 McAdoo to Wilson, 15 May 1917, folder “15 May 1917,” Box 522, General Correspondence, MP.
199 McAdoo to Wilson, 15 May 1917, folder “15 May 1917,” Box 522, General Correspondence, MP.
200 McAdoo to Wilson, 5 July 1917, folder “5 July 1917,” Box 522, General Correspondence, MP. The Department of War, it appears, was the only part of the government at all interested in McAdoo’s plan.
201 McAdoo to Wilson, 6 July 1917 and 9 July 1917, in folders “6 July 1917” and “9 July 1917,” Box 522, General Correspondence, MP.
202 Wilson to McAdoo, 19 November 1917, in folder “19 November 1917,” General Correspondence, Box 523, MP.
narrative: governmental jealousies among political appointees prevented administrative modernization that their own bureaucrats (and McAdoo) demanded. And, again, the Progressive Wilson singularly stood in the way of progress. As a result, reforms never came, and American intelligence remained dependent upon British sources and poorly-liaised security services designed for domestic work.

As in counterespionage, the Bureau suffered from chronic understaffing, and, though it developed its own spy capabilities abroad, it remained largely dependent upon British intelligence. British intelligence’s primacy over and, at times, manipulation of American foreign policy is a significant trend in the history of the Wilson administration. Throughout the Republican Party’s near-uninterrupted half-century control of the presidency, British diplomats had cultivated intimate relationships with Party leaders; British Ambassador to the United States Sir Cecil Spring Rice even served as best man to Theodore Roosevelt in 1886. Yet the British Foreign Office had failed to cultivate connections to the Democratic Party, Wilson's wing in particular. In something of an historical accident, Sir William Wiseman, publicly the naval attaché and privately in the service of MI6, Britain's foreign intelligence service, became the key to Anglo-American relations as the United States neared and declared war in 1917.

Wiseman was both an eccentric and a charlatan. Hailing from a storied naval family whose prestige had fallen by the wayside by the beginning of the twentieth century, Wiseman initially decided against military service to become a journalist. While at Cambridge, he became an accomplished boxer, wrote a play panned by critics, and eventually left Cambridge prematurely to become a banker in New York. Wiseman was an unlikely character, therefore,

204 Fowler, 18.
to gain House’s confidence as Wiseman entered wartime service. Upon his return to New York in the winter of 1916, however, House summoned him for an audience at his New York penthouse, where he charmed the second-most important man to American foreign relations at the time. Evidently momentarily blinded by title and social prestige, House informed Wiseman of Wilson’s impending “Peace Without Victory” speech, to which Wiseman responded “not even Shakespeare could improve on Wilson’s prose.” Fittingly, Wiseman’s path to power, and Britain’s path to ultimate influence, followed a familiar path: lunches, cigars, and intimate dinners. As Wiseman’s influence grew, so too did his access.

This is not to say that wartime foreign intelligence did not include American agents in Britain that could augment, and audit, British sources. On August 24, 1917, Harrison forwarded a memorandum to Polk detailing a conversation between an American informant and British Prime Minister Lloyd George. Lloyd George expressed English interest in covertly transferring English ships and American munitions to Japan. Any ship transfer would have upset a naval status quo in the Pacific and also would have subverted American law. At the very least, the Bureau tried to diversify its sources of intelligence, though it rarely ever truly subverted British influence. American dependence upon Allied intelligence throughout the war translated to foreign influence over Wilson’s foreign policy and bureaucratic opinion to varying degrees at all levels of government.

According to Auchincloss’s diary, he became the main conduit between the State Department and Wiseman. Soon after Auchincloss began his work in New York, he met with Wiseman over lunch to go “over fairly thoroughly the kind of cooperation that we should

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205 Fowler, 25.
206 Memorandum, Harrison to Polk, 24 August 1915, in folder “Human Espionage,” General Correspondence 1915-18, Box 8, OC.
endeavor to establish between this country and England. I have asked him for information on certain names and he has promised to give them to me and from now on to deal with the State Department through me.”\textsuperscript{207} As principal assistant to the Counselor of the State Department, Auchincloss was well-positioned to communicate intelligence and directives from Wiseman to the Bureau and the State Department at large. Auchincloss notes that in May 1917, Wilson “talked freely [Wiseman] him and took him upstairs to [Wilson’s] study.”\textsuperscript{208} Wiseman continued to communicate intelligence to American officials while also coordinating English counterespionage and propaganda activities.\textsuperscript{209} The brunt of actionable British intelligence not provided by Wiseman instead came from Ambassador Page. Wilson and House later viewed Page as “hopelessly pro-British,” and rightfully so.\textsuperscript{210} Regardless, Page became a critical player in wartime intelligence. Case files that Edward Bell, the First Secretary of the Embassy, organized on his behalf make up about twenty percent of the Office of the Counselor’s records, and Page is the single most frequent interlocutor with Harrison.\textsuperscript{211} More troublingly, there is some reason to suggest that Harrison may have shared pro-British sentiments.

Perhaps Lansing’s key connection to American intelligence was Harrison’s daily intelligence briefings on which Lansing’s office was carbon copied.\textsuperscript{212} Yet, despite this fact, Lansing consistently refused to view Britain as a belligerent. To the contrary, in early 1917, Lansing exclaimed, “[the United States] must go in on the side of the Allies, for we are a

\textsuperscript{207} Auchincloss Diary March 30 1917, Box 1, GAP. Though Auchincloss writes in detail about his interactions with Wiseman, there seem to be few, if any, sources to corroborate his description of his role.

\textsuperscript{208} Auchincloss Diary, 29 May 1917, Box 1, GAP.

\textsuperscript{209} Jeffreys-Jones, 45.

\textsuperscript{210} Neu, 219.

\textsuperscript{211} See Classified Case Files of Edward Bell and Correspondence of Leland Harrison with Leland Bell, OC.

democracy.” This outburst is but one example of Lansing's anglophilia, shared with much of the Wilson administration, particularly Wilson himself. It also suggests some level of bias in Harrison’s daily briefings. That these reports were fairly ineffectual suggests that even quotidian American intelligence was to some degree hamstrung with anglophilia. There appear to be no records of Harrison’s briefings, however, and the degree to which they influenced either Lansing or the White House is unclear. What is clear, however, is that the Bureau was pervaded with British influence, influence that seemingly kept State Department bureaucracy from behaving fully impartially and independent, as would be expected of any fully “modern” bureaucrat.

Although the State Department’s general lens of analysis may have been misaligned, Harrison still instated several programs that modernized the American government’s ability to collect intelligence abroad. For example, under Harrison’s Bureau, the State Department began a tradition of daily diplomatic cables that continues today. Harrison received, or was carbon copied on, reports from American legations and/or consular officials on a daily basis, containing what these officials considered to be notable or important developments at their posts. Often times, Harrison would highlight certain reports and ask ONI, MID, or the BOI to investigate further. These reports were short and concise, and mainly designed to keep Washington apprised of the situation on the ground. Harrison also designated a point person to collect and archive these reports, J. Klahr Huddle, adding another layer of administrative tactics and efficiency. The reports are an important development in a broadly dispersed but centralized administrative method of collecting information that may be of some import in policymaking. They also

214 See folder “Memoranda (of u.s. agents reporting on mexican and german espionage activities),” Box 11, Classified Case Files, OC. A photo of one of these daily reports follows in the appendix.
215 See folder “memoranda (from harrison on such matters…),” Box 11, Classified Case Files, OC. Thanks to his efforts, there exists a lengthy archive of these reports, taking up the greater part of an entire box.
originated in part, and undoubtedly helped further, a large and ad hoc intelligence service Harrison helped create, even without the blessing of any foreign policy principals.

This intelligence service grew gradually, and in the early years of American wartime involvement, the responsibility for foreign intelligence still largely fell on the shoulders of domestic services. Just before American entry, Harrison prepared a memorandum for Lansing on the prospects for revolution in Cuba. In it, he cautioned that the American embassy was “unable to cover the activities of [potential revolutionaries],” and counseled that the American government adequately staff the embassy for espionage work. Harrison did not, however, suggest that new staff originate from the State Department, nor even from the Departments of War or Navy. Instead, he “recommend[ed] that a Special Agent [of the Department of Justice] be sent immediately at our expense to Costa Rica and Cuba.”216 It is significant that even at this point Harrison still viewed his Bureau as one that filed intelligence rather than collecting it. More significant still, however, seemed to be “at our expense.” Harrison later appealed for more funding for the single BOI agent that the Department of Justice did send to Cuba, signing his letter as “Chief, Secret Service, State Department,” the only apparent time that he ever put a title to his role in writing.217 By April 1918, the Bureau of Investigation’s foreign corps grew to several countries, including those outside of the United States, in what is evidently a forgotten chapter of the agency’s history.218

These attempts at interdepartmental collaboration, however, suffered from a large degree of bureaucratic inefficiency. Because British intelligence—the brunt of American wartime intelligence—passed through the State Department, several steps of rerouting were necessary to

216 Memorandum, 9 January 1917, in folder “Cordier to Coy,” Box 8, Classified Case Files, OC.
217 Letter, 25 May 1917, in folder “BE,” Box 4, Classified Case Files, OC.
218 See letter Harrison to Bielaski discussing BOI agents in Central America and Western Europe, 30 April 1918, in folder “BE,” Box 4, Classified Case Files, OC.
communicate this information effectively with America’s security services. At one point in late
1917, Bureau of Investigation Chief Bielaski requested a code book from Harrison, which had to
be sent by courier from the American Embassy in London to MID, which was then routed to
Harrison, which was then loaned on a temporary basis to the BOI with an ONI minder, all with
H.O. Yardley, the head of America’s cryptographic Black Chamber, complaining about lack of
access.\(^{219}\) This growth, however, was in tandem with Harrison’s own efforts to create an
international intelligence service managed by the State Department.

Harrison was not alone in this service’s creation; indeed, Auchincloss appears to have
been integral. In August 1917, Auchincloss noted in his diary that he had lunch with the Third
Assistant Secretary of State to discuss sending “special assistants to Europe for intelligence
work” which he “took up....with Harrison,” declaring that he would “do [his] best to push it
along.”\(^{220}\) Pushed it along he apparently did. Harrison later developed an intelligence network,
from 1917 to 1919, based around American embassies and legations, much like how CIA station
officers are currently organized. Many of Harrison’s confidential agents were like Frank
Anderson, businessmen familiar with their posts and connected to local notables, yet lacking any
experience in tradecraft or diplomacy. Sometimes, however, these individuals were recruited
from other security services. In Denmark, the State Department employed a former BOI Special
Agent who was trained in counterintelligence work, spoke the language fluently, and came well
recommended. He was, however, later fired for incompetence.

Even among those who should have been qualified, Harrison’s intelligence service was
far from effective. This kind of centralization, based on smaller constituent parts organized
directionally and staffed by individuals who required some modicum of qualifications, was

\(^{219}\) Bielaski to Harrison, 22 November 1917, Box 8, OC.
\(^{220}\) Auchincloss Diary, 29 August 1917, Box 2, GAP.
nonetheless an important step in the modernization of the State Department. Given the organization’s informality, however, and, to a certain degree, underfunding, this organization was prone to failure.

In Latin America, Harrison gradually came to direct espionage operations exclusive to his Bureau. Though this responsibility may have devolved from his previous post in the Latin American division, he directed operatives in several countries. For example, Harrison corresponded extensively with one agent, W. Sprague Brooks, in Cuba about ostensibly nefarious German activities in Havana.\(^{221}\) This correspondence reflects a relatively standard practice by which American agents conducted espionage abroad. Harrison communicated directions to American consulates and embassies by coded message that would then covertly relay these messages to American agents, often also consular officials themselves. Brooks, along with other agents, submitted regular reports back to these consulates and embassies.\(^{222}\) That being said, beyond Harrison’s daily intelligence briefings for Lansing, there is little evidence showing that intelligence from American agents made its way to the desks of foreign policy principals without Auchincloss’s or Polk’s intervention.

While serving as House’s secretary during winter 1917/18 at the Interallied Conference, Auchincloss “discussed generally....the possibilities of using the Poles for intelligence work for the United States,” along with Wiseman and another American intelligence agent in Europe.\(^{223}\) He continued to work on expanding American intelligence capabilities abroad throughout his time in Paris, meeting again with Wiseman and “Sommerset Maugham [perhaps the most

\(^{221}\) Memorandum, in folder “W. Sprague Brooks, General Correspondence 1915-18, Box 8, OC.
\(^{222}\) Memorandum, in folder “W. Sprague Brooks, General Correspondence 1915-18, Box 8, OC.
\(^{223}\) Auchincloss Diary, 3 December 1917, Box 1, GAP.
important Anglo-American secret agent in Russia during and directly after the war] over lunch and....discussed....the establishment of an intelligence section by the Americans and the British composed of Poles for work in [Central Europe].”

These agents would have complemented covert consular officials throughout Central Europe already tasked with intelligence work, such as the young Allen Dulles.

Anglo-American cooperation continued to define American intelligence throughout the war. England’s cryptographic Room 40 was far superior to American counterparts in Naval and Military Intelligence, much to principal cryptographer H.O. Yardley’s rancor, who told Harrison in 1918 that weak American ciphers and poor investment in decoding abilities are “very much to be deplored.” Perhaps the most notable and widely known of Room 40’s contribution is its decoding of the Zimmerman Telegram, a major precipitating event of American entry into World War I. Bell regularly communicated British intelligence to both Harrison and Lansing, including occasionally sharing cracked German codes. But London was not always cooperative, to the point that Lansing directed Harrison to lead a failed operation to infiltrate German intelligence circles with American secret agents to buy keys to German diplomatic codes. Some schemes bordered on the theatrical. American consular officials in Scandinavia delivered the following suggestion for an operation in Germany:

You must in your work employ women, bring over a dozen skilled German speaking, immoral beauties from New York. Two should always be at the station when German trains arrive. I should place them where their nets soon would catch fish. The greatest

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224 Auchincloss Diary, 6 December 1917, Box 1, GAP.
226 Letter, Yardley to Harrison, 8 July 1918, in folder “Sisson Telegrams,” General Correspondence 1915-18, Box 8, OC.
228 Jeffreys-Jones, 75.
229 Letter, Page to Lansing, 7 October 1917, Bell’s Case Files, Box 2, OC.
230 Jeffreys-Jones, 77.
weakness of the Germans is their readiness to talk too much. These women should every
day report to a [central reporting station]. Step by step I should be glad to point out
where the German offices are, their [sic] publications and we will meet them on their
own ground.231

Harrison was tasked with a diverse range of foreign espionage operations, few of them
particularly effective. Rather than American bureaucracy, intelligence more often came from
British cigar clubs and tea rooms, much to the chagrin of American foreign relations.

**Foreign Relations**

Ultimately, to assess how “modern” the Bureau should be considered, we need to
understand the influence it had upon American foreign policy during World War I. It is unlikely
that any bureaucratic arm could have a significant impact on foreign relations, much less a novel
and somewhat ineffective Bureau of Secret Intelligence. Link argues that,

> in the areas that [Wilson] considered vitally important—Mexico, relations with the
> European belligerents, wartime relations with the Allied powers, and the writing of a
> peace settlement—Wilson took absolute personal control. He wrote most of the
> important notes on his own typewriter, bypassed the State Department by using his own
> private agents [and] ignored his secretaries of state by conducting important negotiations
> behind their backs.232

If we are to accept Link’s thesis, it is unlikely that the Bureau could have had much effect,
particularly if Lansing had little influence on policy himself.

The Bureau was only influential through Auchincloss’s relationship with his father-in-
law Colonel House. Auchincloss vacationed regularly with the House family, and the two often
discussed intelligence work while away. Indeed, on August 31, 1917, after a round of golf, the
two discussed German cables sent through Swedish sources to agents in the U.S. ordering several

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231 Memorandum, in folder “Scandinavian Intelligence Work,” General Correspondence 1915-18, Box 8,
OC. Unfortunately, no records appear to exist detailing whether this operation was ultimately pursued and
whether it resulted in any actionable intelligence.

sabotage operations.\textsuperscript{233} In July, they discussed peace terms, after which Auchincloss left to spend quality time with his son.\textsuperscript{234} In this case, the Wilson administration relegated intelligence to family politics between golf games and tea time. This practice, however, does not mean that the Bureau should be written off as an institution of the past. First, interaction with civil servants on the basis of connections, rather than party loyalty, is a step forward so long as House selected individuals on the basis of merit. Second, while failing to properly use the Bureau as a resource condemns the relative modernity of Wilson’s creation of foreign policy, its existence partially challenges Link’s “individualistic” thesis. Third and finally, it is clear through the prevalence of familial and social connections that the Bureau defies easy “modern” or “anti-modern” classification, instead serving as a bridge between the two.

Auchincloss, though, did find himself in a more official capacity when he accompanied House to Europe as his secretary at the 1918 Interallied Conference. Auchincloss wrote in his diary in late November that he accompanied House “to call on [Prime Minister Georges] Clemenceau….to straighten him out before Lloyd George saw him at ten o clock.”\textsuperscript{235} At a meeting of the war council, he had a physical seat at the table, though it is not clear how much influence he carried during the meeting itself.\textsuperscript{236} These incidents were the height of Auchincloss’ influence. It is likely that Auchincloss’s official activities were circumscribed by his title—he probably served as little more than a glorified personal assistant.\textsuperscript{237}

Auchincloss was the only member of the Bureau that liaised regularly with a foreign policy principal, and no other member of the Bureau, and perhaps no other member of the State

\textsuperscript{233} Auchincloss Diary, 31 August 1917, Box 1, GAP.
\textsuperscript{234} Auchincloss Diary, 29 July 1917, Box 1, GAP.
\textsuperscript{235} Auchincloss Diary, 28 November 1917, Box 1, GAP.
\textsuperscript{236} Auchincloss Diary, 20 November 1917, Box 1, GAP.
\textsuperscript{237} “Gordon Auchincloss Papers,” Finding Aid, GAP.
Department, had as much access to House as he did. After Wilson nearly fired Secretary of State Lansing for his 1917 outburst to the press that the United States would enter the war before Wilson had resolved to break diplomatic relations with Germany, bureaucratic access to the president became even more difficult. Even House’s unofficial channels for foreign policy formation closed when he had a falling-out with Wilson in the wake of the Treaty of Versailles fiasco: Wilson withdrew even further unto himself, foreign policy and intelligence bureaucracy all but abandoned.238

Still, Auchincloss, Nye, and Harrison all found themselves representing the United States in Paris for negotiations exterior to Versailles, to some degree influencing the course of European politics for at least half a century. For what Wilson considered to be minor issues of foreign relations (e.g., policy towards Poland, balkanizing the Ottoman Empire, or French intelligence), the Bureau (or, more accurately, the Bureau’s officials) was influential upon American foreign policy. Yet they had little, if any, access to the real policymakers, chief among them the president, who decided his own policy virtually alone. For the crucial requirement of actually using the bureaucracy, Wilson and his State Department fall short. As a result, the Bureau’s preserved a personalpolitik type of diplomacy that failed to adapt to the great bureaucratic potential available to it, leaving modern foreign relations another two decades to develop.

238 Nye, 441.
Conclusion

How modern, then, can we call the Bureau and the administration of Wilson’s foreign policy? Answering this question requires returning to the initial theory of modernity offered in the first chapter: foreign policy principals using bureaucracy available to them, career bureaucrats with expertise in their work, an official chain of command with circumscribed rules on the diffusion of information for the purposes of policymaking, and a kind of bureaucratic identity fostered among the bureaucrats themselves. In concluding the final chapter, we already have the answer to the last and most important part of bureaucratic modernity: actually making use of the bureaucracy. As we have seen, Secretary of State Lansing largely ignored intelligence reports that Harrison prepared for him, and these reports very rarely made it to the White House along official channels. Only through House’s nepotistic connections to Polk and Auchincloss could information travel to Wilson, and after House’s break with Wilson in 1919, the State Department was rendered all but impotent. Wilson’s distrust of a State Department long-staffed by party loyalists rather than experts in their regions, and one long-dominated by the Republican Party, led Wilson to prefer making himself his own Secretary of State to instituting a foreign policy bureaucracy that could support him. It did not help that party loyalists such as James Gerard and Walter Hines Page were awarded key ambassadorships in the United Kingdom and Germany respectively, and that Wilson's first Secretary of State was a staunch defender of a party spoils system. Because Wilson preferred to practice “long-tailed” diplomacy over trusting “short-coats” with more than quotidian administration, the Bureau and Wilson’s foreign policy fail this crucial requirement of our bureaucracy theory.

It also does not help that many ambassadors had little experience in foreign relations, and that many of the State Department’s “confidential agents” were selected more for their business
connections than aptitude in tradecraft. In an ad hoc response to a counterespionage and foreign intelligence crisis, the individuals selected to be stopgaps were exactly that, and benefitted from little expertise other than a track record of business deals in their assigned countries. Even in the case of Denmark, in which a former Bureau of Investigation agent was posted to collect intelligence by virtue of his experience in tradecraft and knowledge of Danish and German, he was a resounding failure, with every embassy official successfully petitioning Harrison for his recall.

While the outer regions of the Bureau failed this theoretical requirement, administration in Washington, however, may have fulfilled it. Harrison himself was a career diplomat who successfully passed Diplomatic Service examinations and rose to direct the Latin American section before being tapped to run the nascent Bureau. 239 Each of his deputies were members of the Consular or Diplomatic Services, and his boss, Frank Polk, was an expert in corporate and international law. Lansing himself was appointed Counselor for his expertise in international law, not party loyalty. 240 Gordon Auchincloss had also built expertise in questions of international law in his legal practice with David Miller. Even if selected due to their connections

239 It should be noted that while Harrison was certainly a qualified careerist, he by no means won his post through sheer meritocracy. One contemporary described him as “Leland Harrison, Eton, Harvard (Porcellian Club), Knickerbocker Club, served in Washington as assistant secretary of state for several years, where his accent, his spats, Rolls Royce, and aloofness even among social equals were not likely to appease democratic instincts.” Quoted in J. Robert Moskin, American Statecraft: The Story of the U.S. Foreign Service, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2013), 342.
240 This point presumes that political appointees could be considered bureaucrats, and begs the question of where the line should be drawn between administrators and principals. Political appointments are certainly necessary in American democracy, and these positions often require some level of expertise to administer effectively. What seems clear for the requirements of bureaucratic modernity is not just that a qualified individual occupy a bureaucratic post, however, but that this individual be a bureaucrat, a “career man.” Polk had little experience in government entering federal service, and ceased to serve in government after his term as Counselor. Harrison, on the other hand, made a career out of his diplomatic service, and this service informed to a large degree how he viewed himself. While his social status helped him receive his first post, and helped ensure his rapid rise through the State Department ranks, that he was also an experienced bureaucrat makes him a kind of bridge towards a Foreign Service that was, at least by design, thoroughly meritocratic.
to Colonel House, we can certainly say that they had some expertise entering a field that was entirely novel in 1917. In this regard, the Bureau partially fulfills the expertise requirement of our bureaucracy theory.

Yet, due to these connections with Colonel House, it is clear that information rarely traveled along an official chain of command. Information instead moved on the basis of dinner parties and family connections, in which Auchincloss, as Harrison's deputy, far more often met with House than did Harrison himself. In fact, it is striking that in Harrison’s personal papers, no records exist of correspondence between the two. That Wilson did not treat the State Department in ways we would now consider modern violates this third piece of our theoretical view of bureaucracy.

What is clear, however, in the personal papers of the men affiliated with the Bureau is the degree of collegiality they developed with each other. To varying degrees, Polk, Harrison, Auchincloss, and Nye all become good friends over the course of their service with the State Department. While Harrison was abroad, Nye offered to look in on his wife and newborn child, and repeatedly demanded that Harrison join him and his wife for dinner.241 Nye’s frequent correspondence is standard among each of these individuals. Nye wrote to Harrison in 1922 that both he and Polk would be in Washington and would “devote a day to go golfing” with Harrison.242 Auchincloss frequently corresponded with Polk, mainly because he was another regular at House’s dinner parties. Auchincloss’ diary entries show serious concern over Polk’s

241 See letter Nye to Harrison, undated, Box 1, Nye’s Personal Correspondence, OC.
242 Nye to Harrison, 17 May 1922, folder “Nye,” Box 9, LHP. It might be more accurate to say that Nye would attempt to play golf. He later wrote to Harrison that he had “entered a golf tournament which the bank is having at Southampton and judging from the handicap which the committee has given me I should win the booby prize, which I presume will be a book of instructions as to how to play golf.” See undated letter, folder “Nye,” Box 9, LHP.
nervous breakdown in 1918, and seem veritably elated when he returned to the State
Department. More amusing anecdotes, though, come from Nye. When Auchincloss
complained to Nye in 1918 that his seasickness was unbearable on his wartime voyage to the
Interallied Conference in Paris, Nye quipped in a response, “I know that you would be ready for
all meals because I never knew you to miss one and were I along I would beat you.”
Through their service as bureaucrats, these men became friends, and viewed their government service as
defining in their lives. Clearly, the officials affiliated with the Bureau fulfilled this final
qualification for bureaucratic modernity.

Normatively speaking, however, are deviations from bureaucratic modernity and
efficiency so bad? For Wilson, they certainly were. Most people would agree that an effective
foreign policy bureaucracy provides information to the president or other decision-makers that
would allow him or her a clear picture and a perhaps better decision. A better understanding, for
example, of German domestic politics, that took into account Wilhelm II’s proclivities, gradual
predominance of the military, and virtual sidelining of Ambassador von Bernstorff and
Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg might have led Wilson to presume that the resumption of
unrestricted submarine warfare was a matter not of if, but when. This kind of analysis could well
have taken place within the State Department, as it does today. The failure of Wilson’s foreign
policy, and the ensuing failure of Wilsonianism in general, comes from Wilson’s refusal to
actually use any professional advice from career diplomats and bureaucrats. House was far from
an expert in foreign relations, and Wilson personally made very little use of the Enquiry he
constituted to inform questions of national sovereignty in the wake of the balkanization of the

243 See Auchincloss Diary, October and December 1917, Box 2, GAP.
244 Nye to Auchincloss, 4 November 1918, Box 6, General Correspondence, GAP.
Ottoman Empire and Russia. As Ambrosius argues, policy myopia led to deleterious effects for American interests and war aims under Wilson’s monopolistic leadership, interests and aims that remained undefined throughout the United States’ time as a belligerent.

But a lack of complete and utter bureaucratic rationality may not be a problem generally. When, for example, Robert McNamara became Secretary of Defense in 1961, he demanded complete control over hiring and firing, and is perhaps best known today for his “whiz kids,” statisticians and technocrats brought into the Department to rationalize administration, much as they had done for the Ford Motor Company before. These new officials, however, near universally served with and under McNamara. As he wrote, “It’s a very dangerous position...hiring people you don't know.” Ultimately, this vision of bureaucratic modernity is not so different from House’s. House wanted as much influence as possible over the selection of major offices, and while his selections may not be considered technocrats to the degree that McNamara’s staff may have been, there were selected to some degree on the basis of ability. And certainly few scholars would say that McNamara’s Defense Department was anti-modernization. In this sense, there should be some room for personality and improvisation.

Otherwise, some have worried that Weber’s fear of hegemonic rationality might have come true, particularly in foreign policy. In a 1972 examination of bureaucracy’s role in Nixon's foreign policy, Council on Foreign Relations member Francis Rourke wrote, “it is...now argued that bureaucracies push for policies designed to serve not so much the national interest as their own hegemonial ambitions as organizations—competing more for primacy in the governmental

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246 Ambrosius, 8.

247 Rudolph and Rudolph, 225.
structure of the United States than with any foreign adversary.” Should we fear bureaucracy or treat it as a scapegoat for foreign policy failures? As anti-government animus reaches even greater heights in this presidential election cycle, this question seems to be repeated in one way or another from candidate’s podiums to pundit’s desks to the editorial pages of every major publication.

Rourke argued the alternative was not much better. He was rightly concerned that taking foreign policy out of the hands of bureaucracy and delivering it to single and unaccountable presidential advisers “reminiscent of European ‘cabinet diplomacy’ in the nineteenth century, greatly enhances the likelihood that the foreign policy of the United States will serve presidential rather than national interests.” Rourke identified Kissinger as the epitome of this potential problem, a man with whom many parallels could easily be drawn to House.

Ultimately, Congress debated these same questions before passing a bill in 1924 finally modernizing the American foreign service, and rationalizing the degree to which State Department bureaucrats like Harrison could influence American foreign policy. J. Robert Moskin argues that, coming out of the First World War, “many blamed an enigmatic diplomacy conducted by the elite for the horrendous war.” The sheer amount of work with which the State Department and American embassies abroad was tasked coming out of the war was monumental—with the United States becoming a creditor nation and leading the reconstruction of Europe—was just as great an impetus for reform. Within this context, fate found the young

249 Rourke, 79.
Congressman from Massachusetts John Jacob Rogers at a 1919 dinner party in London with J. Wilbur Carr, then still a minor secretary at the American embassy. A short conversation in London grew into a three-year legislative project that eventually won the support of Secretary of State Charles Evan Hughes and President Coolidge in 1922, declaring “hereafter the Diplomatic and Consular Service of the United States shall be known as the Foreign Service of the United States.”

Passed in 1924, the Foreign Service Act combined and standardized the Consular and Diplomatic Services, creating for the first time in American history a dependable foreign service bureaucracy. In particular, it created standardized pay scale, guaranteed salaries that made it affordable for men of middling means to serve abroad, required the Secretary of State to recommend to the president that officers with meritorious service be promoted to minister, as well as furnish the names of officers and employees in the Department of State “who have demonstrated special efficiency.” After three decades, the legislation also affirmed “the principle of appointment after examination, of officials in the lower posts, and of their promotion on the basis of merit, even to the post of minister,” legislation that Secretaries of State had tried to secure since 1895. Capable men through examination, not simply through knowing a foreign policy notable like House, could advise and help steer American foreign policy. Among those men were Harrison and each of his deputies, including G. Howland Shaw. Shaw went on to write a rousing defense of the Foreign Service in 1934, naming administrative functions that Harrison had introduced to a Department in transition. Though the Bureau was dissolved in

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252 Moskin, 345.
254 Garner, 777.
1926, this 1924 legislation is a fitting epitaph for the Bureau of Secret Intelligence, true to form for an organization that served as a bridge from “long-tailed” dominance to “short-coat” leadership. By 1941, one of Harrison’s such short-coats, posted to Vienna in the First World War, would be at its helm, and his name was Allen Dulles, World War II spymaster and architect of the American Century.
Biographical Glossary

As a resource for readers, a biographical glossary follows for individuals mentioned several times and important to this thesis’ narrative. Generally, the length of the biographical information provided is directly proportional to the relative level of importance to the Bureau and the creation of Wilson’s foreign policy. The glossary concludes with a graphical representation of the official and unofficial hierarchy of the individuals addressed.

**Gordon Auchincloss** (1886-1943) was born in New York to a minor businessman and the heiress of a major railroad fortune, the seventh of eighth children. His mother’s connections won him entry to Yale in 1908 and Harvard Law School in 1911. Shortly after his marriage to House’s daughter Janet House, House ensure his entrée into Democratic politics, eventually serving as assistant treasurer for the Democratic National Committee. Auchincloss was appointed assistant to the Counselor (Frank Polk) in 1917, and intermittently served as Colonel House’s personal secretary before his dismissal in 1919. Upon his return to the United States, Auchincloss reentered private practice, practicing law until his death in 1943.256

**William Gibbs McAdoo** (1863-1941) served as Treasury Secretary from 1913 to 1918. McAdoo went on to compete for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1920 and 1924, and served as junior Senator from California from 1933 to 1938.257

**A. Bruce Bielaski** (1883-1964) was the second Chief of the Bureau of Investigation, serving from 1912 to 1919. More so than any other whom individual this thesis addresses, Bielaski was the consummate bureaucrat, graduating from a minor law school, hired by merit, and rising through the ranks of the Department to eventually run the BOI. After leaving the Bureau of Investigation, Bielaski directed a team of prohibitions agents, and later ran a company that investigated arsons. Bielaski remained active in Department politics as the longtime President of the Society of Former Special Agents, dying in 1964.258

**William J. Flynn** (1867-1928) served as Director of the Secret Service from 1912-1917, and Chief of the Bureau of Investigation from 1919 to 1921.

**Leland Harrison** (1883-1951) like other State Department officials of this period was the second son born to wealthy New York parents. His father traveled throughout Europe, and Harrison was briefly educated at the prestigious English Eton College before attended Harvard College and Harvard Law School. After his service in the Counselor’s office, he was appointed Assistant Secretary of State in 1922, and continued to be an important Foreign Service Officer throughout his career. He is perhaps best known as the States Post Office, and Domestic Surveillance During World War I,” *Social Justice*, 8.
Colonel Edward Mandell House (1858-1938) was born to a wealthy Houston businessman in 1858, and was educated at number of preparatory schools for brief periods of time before arriving at Cornell in 1877. He did not earn his degree, however, returning to Texas to take care of his dying father. His political career began in Texas, and he became a key figure for four Democratic governors, one of whom, James Hogg, awarded House with the honorary title of Colonel. House became Wilson's main confidant, battling with Edith Galt Wilson after he marriage to Woodrow. He fell out with Wilson during League of Nations negotiations in 1920, and never wielded as much influence in politics again.

Robert Lansing (1864-1928) was the 42nd Secretary of State, serving from 1915 to 1920. After graduating from Amherst in 1886, Lansing became an experienced and well-regarded international lawyer. Both as a result of his qualifications and connections to House's social circles in New York, Wilson appointed Lansing Counselor in 1914 and Secretary of State in 1915. In 1890, Lansing married into the Foster family, becoming an uncle to Allen and John Foster Dulles. In 1919, Lansing began to gather support among the cabinet to declare Wilson incompetent, handing the presidency to Vice President Thomas R. Marshall. Lansing’s plans were dashed, however, by Edith Galt Wilson, who in 1920 ousted Lansing from the cabinet. Lansing then returned to private practice and published his War Memoirs before his death in 1928.

Joseph “Bill” Nye was the first Chief Special Agent of the Bureau of Secret Intelligence from 1917 to 1920, but served mainly as the forerunner to the Diplomatic Security Service. Unfortunately, few records exist on his background or biography. The State Department neglected to publish a Register in 1919 and 1920, and his personal files at the National Archives do not contain, ironically, any personal information that could give clue to his background, much less his birthdate.

Walter Hines Page (1855-1918) was the American Ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1913 to 1918. He was a key conduit between British intelligence and the British Foreign Office and the Wilson Administration, although Wilson had little respect for him. Hines was appointed due to his financial and press support for Wilson in the 1912 election. Page owned a number of newspapers in North Carolina, and was hugely influential in the publishing industry throughout his career. In late 1918, Page developed pneumonia, and returned to North Carolina for hospice care and, eventually, his death.

Frank Lyon Polk (1871-1943) served as Counselor of the State Department from 1915 to 1919, briefly as Acting Secretary after Edith Galt Wilson demanding Secretary Lansing’s resignation, and Under Secretary until 1920. Polk was a distant relative of President James Polk (1845-1849), and was a prominent New York lawyer throughout his career. Polk did suffer from a nervous breakdown in 1917 which continued to impact his work for the rest of his career.

259 See Finding Aid, LHP. It is unfortunately fairly difficult to construct a full biographical view of Harrison. The vast majority of his personal papers date to 1922 and later, and next to none of his personal papers refer to his time before beginning at the State Department.
260 See Neu.
261 Nye’s personal papers, OC.
262 Finding Aid, FPP.
Charles Warren (1864-1954) was born in Boston, the great-great-grandson of historian and key figure in the Revolutionary War Mercy Otis Warren. After graduating from Harvard College and Harvard Law School, Warren would go on to become an important jurist and legal scholar. He served as Assistant Attorney General from 1914 to 1918, overseeing the Bureau of Investigation and drafting the Espionage Act. After leaving the Justice Department, Warren served for many years as a resident scholar of sorts for the Supreme Court. He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1922 for his *History of the United States Supreme Court*, still a key text for historians of the Court.

Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) served as the 28th President of the United States from 1913 to 1919. Born to strict Presbyterians in Staunton, Virginia, Wilson graduated from Princeton in 1879, and later became a professor at Johns Hopkins University. As a doctoral student, he wrote his seminal work *Congressional Government*, and later expanded upon his research as a professor at, and later president of, Princeton. Wilson served one term as Governor of New Jersey before assuming the Presidency. After a series of strokes in 1919, his wife Edith Galt Wilson secretly took the reins of government, eventually requesting a number of resignations from Wilson's cabinet members, including Robert Lansing. Wilson never fully recovered, for the most part retreating from public view, passing in 1924.

William Wiseman (1885-1962) was born to a long line of baronets famous for their naval service. His grandfather had commanded Britain’s Australian fleet in the 19th century, following in a line of naval commanders stretching back to the reign of Elizabeth I. After studying at Jesus College, Cambridge, the family’s ancestral college, Wiseman

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263 Fowler, 7-18.
Images and Photos

A depiction of German espionage in Argentina that ONI provided to Harrison in 1918
An example of a “neutrality matter” memorandum the BOI regularly sent the State Department
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
OFFICE OF THE COUNSELOR
July 10, 1917.

MEMORANDUM.

GERMAN ACTIVITIES.

ADAM ZEH, formerly connected with the Austrian Consulate at Charleston, W.Va., in a minor capacity, states that he has two brothers in the Austrian Army; that he did not return with the consular party because he has taken out his first papers and desires to become a citizen; and that if he returns to Austria now he will be considered a deserter. LOE, Ch., 7/1/17

MAX LINGEL was taken in custody at San Antonio, and gives statement as to his activity for the past several months. Because of Lingel's knowledge of Germans and German activities in that section of the country, he was released upon promise to secure information concerning certain persons suspected of German activity. ETN, SA, 6/22/17

ALFRED ENGELKE, auditor for the Hamburg American Line, admits that he and Mr. KRONACHER, Hamburg-American agent at Baltimore, were responsible for the sending of mail in apple and ham barrels on the C.S. LIEF GUNDERSON on February 23, 1917, from Baltimore to Sweden, with ultimate German destination. He also admits sending mail through members of crews of neutral vessels, the mail having been turned over to one Johnson, a shipping agent at Hoboken. JK, NTO, 6/27/17
SUMMARY OF INTELLIGENCE

3.30 P.M., MONDAY, THE 15TH APRIL, 1918.

GENERAL

Argentine.—The Argentine Mission to Chile is not thought likely to achieve political results, but may lead to closer commercial relations. It is reported that President Trojaqen has not abandoned his scheme for a conference of South American Republics with a view to some form of common action. He is of opinion that the time is not yet ripe for expressing his own, and the public's, sympathy with the Allies.

WESTERN THEATRE.

British Front.—The 12th April.—Sharp local fighting took place, south of the Somme, in the neighbourhood of Hangard, and positions, into which the enemy had forced his way, were regained by counter-attacks, delivered by British and French troops. North of the Somme, the enemy's artillery was more active.

Night of April 12/13.—Heavy fighting developed in the evening in the neighbourhood of Neuve Eglise and Walverghem. The enemy succeeded, after a prolonged struggle, in forcing his way into the village of Neuve Eglise. We advanced our line slightly in the neighbourhood of Festubert, and secured a few prisoners. Early in the night a strong hostile attack, preceded by a heavy bombardment, was launched against our positions east of Loos. The enemy succeeded in entering our lines at certain points, but was driven out again by our counter-attack, and a second attack attempted by the enemy later in the night, in the same locality, was successfully beaten off. During the early part of the night, the enemy also attacked west of Mericville, and was repulsed. On the remainder of the northern battle front, the situation was unchanged.

The 13th April.—In the region of Neuve Eglise, the enemy was vigorously counter-attacked by our troops and driven out of the village, leaving a number of prisoners, including a battalion commander, in our hands. A further attack, made later in the morning, was successfully repulsed. In the course of the morning, a number of other unsuccessful attacks were made by the enemy at different points along the battle front, north of the La Bassee Canal. Three separate attacks against our lines south-west, west, and north of Mericville, were in each case repulsed after heavy fighting. An attack, attempted by the enemy south of Meteren, was successfully driven back, and four attacks, launched against our positions south-east of Ballancourt, were beaten off in turn. Heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy in these several unsuccessful attacks. In the afternoon, another attack in strength developed between the Beque de Paradis, south-west of Meteren, and Walverghem. Severe fighting continues on the whole of this front. In other parts of the British front, the day passed without any incident of importance.

Night of April 13/14.—After heavy fighting, lasting throughout the evening, the strong attacks launched by the enemy, in the afternoon of the 13th, from Meteren to Walverghem were repulsed. Early in the night, the enemy again attacked at Neuve Eglise, for the fourth time, and was once more repulsed. In the course of the night fighting was again resumed in this locality. In addition to the attacks already reported, the enemy made a determined attack in the evening against our defences in the neighbourhood of Pestulart, and was beaten off. On this portion of the battle front, and north-westwards as far as Loos, numerous bodies of hostile troops were effectively engaged during the evening at short range by our infantry and artillery fire. At the end of a day of continuous fighting and frequent assaults, many of them delivered in great strength, on all parts of the Lys battle front, our line was reported to be intact. The enemy's losses were reported to have been most severe.

A daily British intelligence briefing on which State Department officials were carbon copied
“Spies and Lies,” one of many advertisements by the government’s propaganda office that contributed to a sense of paranoia throughout the war. William H. Thomas Jr., Unsafe for Democracy: World War I and the U.S. Justice Department’s Covert Campaign to Suppress Dissent, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 23.
Leland Harrison as Assistant Secretary of State in 1923. Courtesy of the Office of the Historian, Department of State.

Joseph “Bill” Nye as Chief Special Agent in 1920. Courtesy of Office of the Historian, Department of State

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