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“Securing Political Intelligence”: U.S. Pursuit of “Scientific Peace” and the Making of the 1919 Coolidge Mission

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the political, intellectual, and institutional conditions that led to the establishment of the 1919 Coolidge Mission in Vienna. Situating the mission within the context of the United States peace preparations and Woodrow Wilson’s pursuit of a “scientific peace,” it argues that the late 1918 demand for “securing political intelligence” in the territories of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire emerged as a response to the epistemic and institutional limitations of American diplomacy at the end of the First World War. Drawing on archival and published sources, memoirs, and secondary literature, and combining process tracing, contextual analysis, biographical and prosopographical elements, the article reconstructs how the pursuit for political intelligence was conceptualized, organized, and operationalized by the United States during the transition from wartime diplomacy to postwar peacemaking. Particular attention is given to the biography of Archibald Cary Coolidge, who was ultimately selected to lead the mission, as his academic expertise, institutional experience, and ties to the U.S. foreign service help explain how expert knowledge was mobilized in American diplomatic and peacemaking practices during and immediately after the First World War. The article demonstrates that the Coolidge Mission was a product of broader efforts to institutionalize knowledge production as a tool of American state power. By analyzing the making of the mission, the study contributes to the historiography of U.S. foreign relations by highlighting the interplay of Wilsonian ideals of rational, knowledge-driven policymaking and the institutional challenges the United States confronted as it sought to reshape the postwar international order.

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Introduction

On October 25, 1918, as the *USS Northern Pacific* reached the French port of Brest, Colonel Edward M. House once again prepared to set foot on European soil. Since becoming Woodrow Wilson's personal adviser during the winter of 1912–1913, the native Texan had undertaken several diplomatic missions across the Atlantic. In the spring and summer of 1914, House engaged in talks with German and British leaders regarding the possibilities of American mediation between the great powers, an Anglo-German agreement, and international disarmament.[1] As the July Crisis and the ensuing invasion of Serbia by Austria-Hungary rendered his efforts unsuccessful, the focus of the Colonel's trips to Europe shifted to attempts to end the war. Between February and June 1915, and again between January and March 1916, House engaged in what might be described as an early twentieth-century exercise in shuttle diplomacy, undertaking visits to London, Paris, and Berlin in a futile attempt to bring the warring powers to the negotiating table.[2] After the United States entered the First World War, Colonel House returned to Europe in November 1917, spending a few weeks in Great Britain before proceeding to France to take part in the Inter-Allied Conference and the meetings of the Supreme War Council in Paris.[3] As Europe drifted toward war, and even more so after its outbreak, President Wilson's "silent partner" played an increasingly influential role in the administration's involvement in international affairs.

Yet, despite the significance of his earlier missions, in the autumn of 1918, House found himself "confronted with the most difficult diplomatic challenge of his career."[4] Appointed Special Representative of the U.S. Government in Europe in matters relating to the war, he was dispatched to France to negotiate with Allied leaders the terms of the armistice. One member of his entourage described House's group as "the trailblazers, the pioneers who go forward to see if the road can be cleared towards peace."[5] Although by his own account, he had received no specific instructions, House knew perfectly well what he was expected to do.[6] Wilson wanted him to obtain the formal endorsement of the Fourteen Points by the Allied governments as the basis for future peace negotiations. With that objective in mind, he traveled from Brest to Paris and, over the following days, repeatedly met with Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau, and Vittorio Orlando to secure their agreement. On November 5, a satisfied Colonel telegraphed to the capital, reporting to Wilson that "we have won a… diplomatic victory in getting the Allies to accept the principles laid down in your January 8 speech and in your subsequent addresses."[7] For House, the path toward implementing the American peace program now seemed clearer than ever.[8]

As House continued his work in the French capital in preparation for the Peace Conference, a particular issue caught his attention. It quickly became evident that the United States needed to establish its own information network to obtain reliable insight into the continent's

[1] Charles E. Neu, *Colonel House. A Biography of Woodrow Wilson's Silent Partner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 121–136; *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, Vol. I* (ed. Charles Seymour) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926), 241–281.

[2] Godfrey Hodgson, *Woodrow Wilson's Right Hand. The life of Colonel Edward M. House* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2006), 103–124.

[3] *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, Vol. III*, 247–290.

[4] Neu, *Colonel House*, 368.

[5] Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era. A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904–1945, Vol. I* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), 331–332.

[6] Reflecting on his farewell to President Wilson before leaving for Europe, House recalled: "As I was leaving he said, 'I have not given you any instructions because I feel you will know what to do.' I had been thinking of this before he spoke and wondered at the strange situation our relations had brought about. I am going on one of the most important missions any one ever undertook, and yet there is no word of direction, advice, or discussion between us. He knows that our minds are generally parallel, and he also knows that where they diverge I will follow his bent rather than my own." See: *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, Vol. IV*, 88.

[7] *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, Vol. IV*, 188.

[8] Although House believed that he had achieved a complete victory during these negotiations, the reality was quite different. The British representatives agreed that the Fourteen Points would serve as the basis for the future peace only if the reservations regarding the freedom of the seas and reparations were included. Their conditions stated that "they must therefore reserve to themselves complete freedom on this subject when they enter the peace conference," and that "compensation will be made by Germany for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property." See: Grew, *Turbulent Era*, 354. Moreover, House acquiesced to the harsh military terms of the armistice proposed by French Marshal Ferdinand Foch. According to historians, the success of House's negotiations "was more apparent than real" and "at best, a partial one," with some even describing him as having "failed miserably." See: Neu, *Colonel House*, p. 372; Thomas J. Knock, "Wilsonian Concepts and International Realities at the End of the War," In *The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment After 75 Years*, edited by Manfred F. Boemeke, Gerald D. Feldman, and Elisabeth Glaser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 125.

highly volatile political situation.[9] One evening, he gathered his associates in the salon of the house at 78 rue de l'Université in Paris's 7th arrondissement, which served as his headquarters at the time, to convey his thoughts on the matter at hand. House told them that "he was going to recommend to the (State) Department that a man be sent immediately into the new States of Austria-Hungary to organize our political and economic intelligence work there and to report conditions in those countries as they actually were." According to his plan, this person "would have all the prerogatives and qualifications of an Ambassador and would take with him a large staff including military and naval attachés, and that it must be a man who knew German and was familiar with men and affairs in Germany and Austria."[10] Central and Eastern Europe posed a particular challenge for American intelligence. There were no diplomatic relations with either the defeated Central Powers or Soviet Russia, nor with the newly emerging nations seeking to establish themselves. Moreover, conditions in these areas were changing on an almost day-to-day basis.[11] In his note to the State Department, House stressed that they were "getting a mass of misinformation respecting present conditions in Austria, Bohemia, and the Ukraine." He pointed out that, in the absence of American sources of information, they were forced to rely on British, French, or Italian reports, which often reflected the biases of their respective countries. Thus, it was "exceedingly important," House emphasized, that the U.S. government "send at once to these countries agents" who would be in a position to address this situation. For him, "accurate and unbiased information" was seen as a prerequisite for the success of the American policy at the Peace Conference.[12]

With the rapid collapse of Austria-Hungary exposing the inadequacy of the U.S. pre-armistice research and the State Department's limited capacity to generate timely, field-based knowledge about Central and Eastern Europe, House's proposal to obtain "political intelligence" in the region paved the way to the U.S mission in Vienna under historian Archibald Cary Coolidge.[13] To explore the political, intellectual, and institutional conditions that shaped the creation of the 1919 Coolidge Mission, the article employs process tracing, contextual analysis, and biographical and prosographical reconstruction to argue that House's late 1918 demand for "securing political intelligence" in the territories of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire emerged as a response to the epistemic and institutional limitations of American diplomacy at the end of the First World War.[14] Drawing on U.S. archival and published sources, memoirs, and secondary literature, the study reconstructs how the American pursuit of information during and immediately after the First World War was conceptualized, organized, and operationalized. In this context, gathering "political intelligence" is not treated simply as a process of information collection; rather, it is understood as a key instrument in the pursuit of a Wilsonian "scientific peace," linking expert knowledge to diplomatic and political practice. This dynamic is examined through the developments that led to the establishment of the Coolidge Mission within the broader framework of American preparations for the Peace Conference, with special emphasis on Archibald Cary Coolidge, whose career during and immediately after the First World War demonstrates how academic expertise was mobilized and institutionalized as a tool of U.S. state power in efforts to reshape postwar international order.

Discussion

U.S. Peace Planning, Knowledge, and Pursuit of the "Scientific Peace"

The pursuit of 'objective knowledge' was at the center of American preparations for the peacemaking process. Woodrow Wilson's idea of New Diplomacy, which opposed power politics, secret diplomacy, arms race, economic conflicts, and colonial rivalries, was grounded in the notion

[9] *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, Vol. IV*, 228.

[10] Grew, *Turbulent Era*, 355.

[11] Arno Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking. Containment and Counterevolution at Versailles, 1918-1919* (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1967), 367.

[12] *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Paris Peace Conference, 1919 (FRUS, PPC), Volume I,* The Special Representative (House) to the Secretary of State, November 8, 1918.

[13] *FRUS, PPC, I,* The Special Representative (House) to the Secretary of State, November 12, 1918. With the exception of William Bullitt's mission to Moscow, most field missions dispatched by the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, including Coolidge's, have received relatively little attention in studies of American intelligence efforts during and immediately after the First World War, see: David A. Langbart, "'We should have our own observers of information': The American Commission to Negotiate Peace Looks at Russia, 1919", *Intelligence and National Security*, 38, no. 5 (2023): 765, 774.

[14] *FRUS, PPC, I,* The Special Representative (House) to the Secretary of State, November 12, 1918.

that foreign policy should rest upon rational analysis.[15] As Ray Stannard Baker, the president's press secretary at the Peace Conference, explained, if the postwar settlements envisioned by Wilson were to embody "the spirit of modern inquiry" against "the crude, deceptive, and destructive methods of the old military and diplomatic régime," they could not rest upon "caprice, or force, or greed, or fear, but upon exact knowledge."[16] To accomplish this task, Wilson established a new organization in the autumn of 1917. Known as the Inquiry, it was a group of experts—historians, geographers, economists, political scientists, and lawyers—mostly drawn from the leading universities of the East Coast. As one of its core members succinctly put it, their mission was to "study the political, economic, legal, and historical elements of the problems which would have to be faced in the treaty of peace."[17] At the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918, the Inquiry's executive board even provided the basis that informed President Wilson's Fourteen Points.[18] Consisting of around 150 scholars, the organization produced and collected nearly 2,000 reports and documents, along with approximately 1,200 maps, over the course of the next fifteen months.[19] Work of the Inquiry represented a novelty in the history of U.S. foreign relations, "for never before had universities been mobilized for such a service".[20] Moreover, it marked the first time that the American government "attempted to provide a systematic worldview ahead of time" in the realm of foreign policy.[21] These developments were fundamentally linked to Wilson's objective of creating a "scientific peace" after the end of the war—an idea that underpinned his efforts to reshape the international order. Thus, both the Inquiry and subsequent U.S. field missions, including the Coolidge Mission, were intended to play a central role in the American production and management of expert knowledge, aimed at informing and guiding U.S engagement in the postwar world.

When establishing the Inquiry, the American president deliberately kept it outside the jurisdiction of the Department of State, the government agency charged with conducting the country's foreign policy. Instead, it was placed under the direction of Colonel House, who held no official position in the administration, and was financed through the President's Fund for National Safety and Defense.[22] The reasons for this are somewhat unclear. By all accounts, Wilson harbored little confidence in his Secretary of State and at some point even considered the possibility of replacing him.[23] His decision to rely on academics, rather than diplomats, in conducting preparations for the Peace Conference may have also influenced his choice.[24] Whatever the case, it was evident at the time that the State Department, as one historian described it, was "weak and ineffectual."[25] Despite the early twentieth century attempts to professionalize the Department through administrative reorganization, expanded budget, new recruitment practices, and the

[15] For more on the origins of the New Diplomacy and the international circumstances surrounding its emergence, see: Arno J. Mayer, *Wilson vs. Lenin: Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917–1918* (Cleveland; New York: The World Publishing Company, 1964), especially 53–58; Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement. Written From His Unpublished and Personal Material, Vol. I* (Peter Smith: Gloucester, 1960 [1922]), 1–46. For a more recent assessment of the problems and contradictions in the practical application of the New Diplomacy at the Peace Conference, see: Alan Sharp, "A 'New Diplomacy'? The Big Four and Peacemaking, 1919," in *Peacemaking and International Order after the First World War*, eds. Peter Jackson, William Mulligan, and Glenda Sluga (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 179–201.

[16] Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement, Vol. I*, 108.

[17] James T. Shotwell, *At the Paris Peace Conference* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), 3.

[18] National Archives (NA), Records of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace (RG 256), Inquiry Documents, No. 887, The Present Situation. The War Aims and Peace Terms it Suggests; Library of Congress (LOC), Woodrow Wilson Papers (WWP), Series 5, Subseries A, 1917, Nov. 1–1919, July 9, A Suggested Statement of Peace Terms Revised and Enlarged from the Memorandum of December 22, 1917, January 2, 1918.

[19] For an in-depth account of the Inquiry's work, see: Lawrence E. Gelfand, *The Inquiry. American Preparations for Peace, 1917–1919* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1963).

[20] Shotwell, *At the Paris Peace Conference*, 5.

[21] Neil Smith, *American Empire. Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 135. As Smith notes, the Inquiry was, in essence, "the first think tank of any significance in U.S. foreign relations," see: Ibid, 119, 135. It should be noted that expert groups were established in both Britain and France—the French *Comité d'études* and the British Political Intelligence Department—with relatively similar purposes. For parallels and differences among them, see: Volker Prott, "Tying up the Loose Ends of National Self-determination. British, French, and American Experts in Peace Planning, 1917-1919", *The Historical Journal*, 57, no. 3 (2014): 727–750.

[22] Interestingly, it was Robert Lansing, Secretary of State, who formally submitted requests for the funds. See Gelfand, *The Inquiry*, 99–100.

[23] John Milton Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson. A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), Chapter 18; Smith, *American Empire*, 119.

[24] Gelfand, *The Inquiry*, 29.

[25] Smith, *American Empire*, 119.

creation of training programs, it nevertheless remained, as the Department's official history concedes, "poorly organized to meet the requirements of wartime."[26] In 1914, it employed only 208 people, a number that had risen to 440 by the end of the war, while its diplomatic service consisted of 48 accredited diplomatic posts.[27]

Since this situation rendered the U.S government "without any accumulation of information and with too small and scattered a trained personnel," it was left to the members of the Inquiry to provide the foundations for American participation in the Peace Conference.[28] During 1917 and 1918, they had completed a considerable amount of work. In total, the staff of the Inquiry produced a total of 263 reports on the European continent: 47 on Germany, 19 on Western Allies, 52 on Austria-Hungary, 82 on Russia and the Baltic states, and 63 on the Balkan states.[29] Many of them dealt precisely with the territories that, in November 1918, Colonel House had singled out as particularly problematic from an intelligence standpoint: "Poland, Bohemia, Ukraine, Austria, Servia (including Yugo-Slavia), Hungary, Bulgaria, Albania, and Turkey."[30] But by the time the Armistice was signed, the ongoing disintegration of Austria-Hungary had radically altered the situation on the ground. On October 28, the Czech National Committee in Prague declared the establishment of the independent Czechoslovak state. Two days later, the Slovak National Council asserted its independence from Vienna and opted for union with the Czechs. Meanwhile, on October 29, the sovereign state of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs was proclaimed in Zagreb. What followed in the territories of the collapsing empire was rightly described as "a period of chaos and strife... a free-for-all, during which the Successor States battled each other... for advantage or survival."[31]

Under the new circumstances, the Inquiry's reports proved to be insufficient and, in some cases, even an outdated source of information. Following House's proposal, a new policy aimed at "securing political intelligence" and dispatching field missions across Europe to obtain it was put into action.[32] On November 15, House received approval from Washington for his plan to "set up instrumentalities in these localities which will furnish us with information concerning political conditions in these countries and that this information should come to us through American eyes."[33] His first choice to head the mission in the territory of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire was a Foreign Service officer, Joseph C. Grew, who at the time was with him in Paris. Unfortunately, Grew was unable to accept the assignment, having in the meantime been appointed Secretary of the United States Commission to the Peace Conference.[34] In his stead, the historian Archibald Cary Coolidge was soon called upon to take up

[26] U.S. Department of State, *A Short History of the Department of State*. Office of the Historian. Accessed November 1, 2025. https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history. For a detailed account of the Department's condition and reform efforts at that time, see: Robert D. Schulzinger, *The Making of the Diplomatic Mind: The Training, Outlook, and Style of United States Foreign Service Officers, 1908-1931* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1975).

[27] Robert Francis Byrnes, *Awakening American Education to the World. The Role of Archibald Cary Coolidge, 1866-1928* (Notre Dame; London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 152; William B. McAllister, Seth Rotramel, Charles Hawley, Thomas Faith, *War, Neutrality, and Humanitarian Relief. The Expansion of U.S. Diplomatic Activity during the Great War, 1914–1917* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2020), 30. There were only 44 postings for 48 accredited positions, as some officials were responsible for more than one country; for instance, Charles Vopicka served as the official U.S. representative in Romania, Bulgaria, and Serbia, see: Ibid, 30.

[28] Sidney Edward Mezes, „Preparations for Peace", in *What Really Happened at Paris*, eds. Edward Mandell House, Charles Seymour (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 2.

[29] Gelfand, *The Inquiry*, 185. Additionally, a substantial number of reports were collected from external contributors.

[30] *FRUS, PPC, I,* The Special Representative (House) to the Secretary of State, November 12, 1918. For an examination of the reports dealing with the Austro-Hungarian territories, with a particular focus on the question of Yugoslav unification, see: Vukašin Marić, "Eksperti Inquiryja i jugoslovensko pitanje, 1917–1919", in *Nova istraživanja jugoslovenske prošlosti: perspektive sa postjugoslovenskog prostora*, eds. Natalija Dimić Lompar, Ognjen Tomić, Nikola Koneski (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije), 41–62.

[31] Victor S. Mamatey, *The United States and East Central Europe, 1914–1918. A Study in Wilsonian Diplomacy and Propaganda* (Port Washington; London: Kennikat Press, 1972), 346.

[32] *FRUS, PPC, I,* The Special Representative (House) to the Secretary of State, November 12, 1918; Georg E. Schmid, "Die Coolidge-Mission in Österreich 1919. Zur Österreichpolitik der USA während der Pariser Friedenskonferenz", *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, 24 (1971): 436. It should be noted, however, that this was not an entirely new concept. As early as June 1918, Sidney Mezes, the head of the Inquiry, suggested dispatching a mission to Russia to assess the situation there, see: Langbart, "'We should have our own observers of information'", 766.

[33] *FRUS, PPC, I,* The Special Representative (House) to the Secretary of State, November 12, 1918; Ibid., The Secretary of State to the Special Representative (House), November 15, 1918.

[34] Grew, *Turbulent Era*, 355–356.

the post.

Scholar in the Service of Diplomacy

In many respects, Archibald Cary Coolidge was well-suited for this task.[35] He was born in Boston on March 6, 1866, in an influential Brahmin family from Massachusetts. His lineage dated back to the earliest days of English colonial settlements in North America, including ancestors such as John Coolidge, Thomas Gardner, and William Randolph, who were among the original proprietors in the Commonwealths of Massachusetts and Virginia. On the father's side of the family, he was also a direct descendant of the third U.S. President, Thomas Jefferson. As might be expected of a young man of his stature, Archibald attended several private schools before entering Harvard.[36] There, he graduated *summa cum laude* in history in the class of 1887, after which he continued his studies in Europe. He attended some of the leading academic institutions on the continent, including the University of Berlin and the École des Sciences Politiques in Paris, before earning his Ph.D. in history in 1892 at the University of Freiburg with a dissertation entitled "Theoretical and Foreign Elements in the Constitution of the United States." During his European adventure, Coolidge also delved into diplomacy, an experience he regarded as valuable for his academic development, as his scholarly interests had become increasingly focused on contemporary international politics.[37] He worked for six months as a secretary at the American legation in Saint Petersburg, one month as private secretary to his uncle Thomas Jefferson Coolidge, the American minister in Paris, and two months as secretary of the legation in Vienna, embodying the typical practices of late nineteenth-century U.S. diplomacy, before returning to Massachusetts in 1893 to assume the role of instructor in History at Harvard.

Over the next 35 years, until his death, Harvard would remain Coolidge's academic home. In 1899, he was promoted to Assistant Professor and became a Full Professor in History in 1908. At Harvard, he introduced courses on Russian history, the Eastern Question, the Far East, and European history. During his time there, he focused on expanding the undergraduate curriculum and, later, on training graduate students. He is rightly regarded as the founder of Russian and Eastern European studies in the United States, having launched and developed pioneering courses at Harvard and, indirectly, influenced many other universities across the country through the students he helped train.[38] Over the course of his career, he became "an outstanding figure among the historians of modern Europe in America and among the world's students of international affairs."[39] From 1910 to 1928, he served as the director of Harvard University Library, which, under his leadership, became "one of the great libraries of the world."[40] Finally, he was one of the founding members of the Council on Foreign Relations and held the position of first editor of its journal, *Foreign Affairs*.

Despite his success in academia, or perhaps because of it, Coolidge remained closely connected with people in the U.S. foreign service. Although by the beginning of the twentieth century, he appeared to have abandoned the prospect of a career in foreign affairs, Coolidge worked diligently to improve the quality of the American diplomatic corps. He established "an informal school for diplomats for students who considered public service" and "helped rouse, educate, and obtain appointments for more than twenty Harvard graduates interested in international affairs."[41] Two of the most important among them were William Phillips, who served as Assistant Secretary of State during Woodrow Wilson's administration, and the above-mentioned Joseph C. Grew, who would later become Under Secretary of State. They embodied Coolidge's so-called "professional diplomat's theory of international relations," which held that the United States needed to

[35] For the biography of Archibald Cary Coolidge, see: Harold Jefferson Coolidge, Robert Howard Lord, *Archibald Cary Coolidge. Life and Letters* (Books for Libraries Press: New York, 1971 [1932]); Byrnes, *Awakening American Education to the World*; Robert H. Byrnes, "Archibald Cary Coolidge: A Founder of Russian Studies in the United States", *Slavic* Review, 37, no. 4 (1978): 651–667; Tasker H. Bliss, "Archibald Cary Coolidge: March 6, 1866 -- January 14, 1928", *Foreign Affairs*, 6, no. 3 (1928): 352–355.

[36] Likewise, all four of his brothers graduated from Harvard, see: Byrnes, *Awakening American Education to the World*, 17.

[37] Schulzinger, *The Making of the Diplomatic Mind*, 26–27.

[38] For a concise overview of his impact on the development of area studies in the United States, see: Byrnes, "Archibald Cary Coolidge: A Founder of Russian Studies", 651–667.

[39] Coolidge, Lord, *Archibald Cary Coolidge*, 345. He wrote three important books: Archibald Cary Coolidge, *The United States as a World Power* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1908); Archibald Cary Coolidge, *The Origins of the Triple Alliance* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917); Archibald Cary Coolidge, *Ten Years of War and Peace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927).

[40] Byrnes, "Archibald Cary Coolidge: A Founder of Russian Studies", 653.

[41] Byrnes, *Awakening American Education to the World*, 157.

build "a corps of expert diplomats who understood the complexity of international relations" in order to pursue an active foreign policy in a contested international environment.[42]

After the United States entered the First World War, Coolidge readily placed himself at the service of his country. During the period of American neutrality, he spent most of his time "with maps and official reports constantly before him, he followed every movement on the battle fronts... he would read the official communiqués... compare the accounts of the various correspondents."[43] But once America joined the conflict, Coolidge immediately became a member of the research committee of the National Board for Historical Service, a volunteer organization committed to placing "the historical scholarship of the country at the disposal of the government."[44] Still, according to his son, the historian wanted to do more, and he "had been pulling every sort of string in Washington to get into active service of some sort on the other side of the water."[45] Collidge did not have a particularly high opinion of the conditions in the State Department, and, as he confessed in a letter to a colleague, thought that "the government bureaus are not filled by officials of any remarkable competence."[46] Fortunately, there were "a considerable number of great committees... formed to help out the different departments," which were "made up of men who have volunteered their services and who are looking for a chance to serve, not to become famous."[47] Coolidge surely counted himself among those gallant men.

The opportunity for his more active involvement in the American war effort came in the autumn of 1917. After the Inquiry was founded, Coolidge was among the first scholars to join its ranks, described by James T. Shotwell, a member of the organization's Executive Committee and Director of Research, as "the outstanding authority in the American academic world on the history of Eastern Europe and a master of the literature of European diplomatic history."[48] In the Inquiry, Coolidge was put in charge of the Eastern European Division, where he served until the end of April 1918.[49] From his base at Harvard, he coordinated a group of researchers who studied national issues and potential border changes in the region, which could serve as a foundation for lasting peace. Coolidge carefully selected the most capable candidates to address specific problems, persuaded them to join the Inquiry, and supervised their work, many of whom had previously been his students.[50] Their role proved highly significant for the American peace preparations, particularly given "the lack of reliable and organized information on problems whose shadows were just becoming apparent, and American ignorance of and inexperience with the many issues that arose in Paris."[51] However, Coolidge's time at the Inquiry was not to last. In the spring of 1918, he was entrusted by the Department of State with the task "to proceed to Europe to study and report upon the economic and commercial conditions in Russia."[52] Traveling through London, Coolidge reached Stockholm in mid-July, ostensibly on an assignment with the War Trade Board. After spending a few weeks in the Swedish capital, which he described as "an excellent center of information about Russia, Finland, and Northern Europe," Coolidge continued his journey eastward. During August, he arrived in Murmansk and then proceeded to Archangel, spending roughly three weeks in Russia gathering intelligence on local political developments. By the beginning of October 1918, Coolidge was back in the U.S.[53]

[42] Schulzinger, *The Making of the Diplomatic Mind*, 34–35. Paul Reinsch and Lewis Einstein were other influential advocates of this idea.

[43] Coolidge, Lord, *Archibald Cary Coolidge*, 159.

[44] Byrnes, *Awakening American Education to the World*, 162. For the National Board for Historical Service, see: Gelfand, *The Inquiry*, 44–45.

[45] Coolidge, Lord, *Archibald Cary Coolidge*, 167.

[46] He described the organization of the State Department in 1913 as "incredible, and would be anywhere but in the United States," see: Schulzinger, *The Making of the Diplomatic Mind*, 60. For the letter, see: Coolidge, Lord, *Archibald Cary Coolidge*, 169.

[47] Ibid., 169.

[48] Shotwell, *At the Paris Peace Conference*, 6. Shotwell, professor of contemporary history at Columbia University, was chairman of the National Board for Historical Service, see: Gelfand, *The Inquiry*, 44.

[49] Ibid., 54; *FRUS, PPC, I*, Report on the Inquiry, May 10, 1918.

[50] Byrnes, *Awakening American Education to the World*, 166. The most important among them were Frank Golder, the first American to publish a scholarly book on Russian history; Robert Howard Lord, who would succeed Coolidge as the Inquiry's head of the Eastern European Division after his departure; and Robert J. Kerner, the Inquiry's leading specialist on Austria-Hungary. See: Byrnes, "Archibald Cary Coolidge: A Founder of Russian Studies", 256; NA, RG 256, Inquiry, General Correspondence, Archibald Cary Coolidge to James T. Shotwell, November 28, 1917.

[51] Byrnes, *Awakening American Education to the World*, 166.

[52] Coolidge, Lord, *Archibald Cary Coolidge*, 174.

[53] Byrnes, *Awakening American Education to the World*, 167. After his stay in Russia, Coolidge was against the idea of Allied

Road to Vienna

Following the approval of Colonel House's idea to establish an American political intelligence service in Europe, Coolidge was named Special Assistant to the Department of State on November 16, 1918, "with instructions to proceed to Eastern Europe to investigate and report upon conditions there."[54] He set out for Europe across the Atlantic just a few days later. However, at the time, the exact destination and the precise scope of his assignment remained uncertain. Dispatches sent by Secretary Lansing to the American ambassadors in Paris and Rome, as well as to U.S. diplomatic and consular missions in the Balkans, were equally vague as his original orders; they stated that Coolidge had been instructed "to the Balkans and possibly later to the Ukraine for the purpose of making a careful study of conditions in those countries, and to report the results of his studies to the Department."[55]

In his original proposal to Lansing, House envisioned sending men drawn from both the diplomatic service and the army across Europe under the nominal auspices of Herbert Hoover's United States Food Administration, using it as a practical cover for their political and intelligence work.[56] Instead of being accredited as representatives of the State Department, they would be equipped with documents presenting them as members of Hoover's relief network.[57] Lansing and Hoover both agreed with this idea, and the sum of $50,000 was authorized for the operation.[58] However, on December 5, House informed the Secretary of State that their plan could not proceed due to delays in reaching an agreement among the Allies regarding relief policies. As time was of the essence, he now proposed that selected officers be released from the Army and sent abroad in civilian clothing as representatives of the Department of State, enabling the network to be set up in the field without further delay.[59]

Upon arriving in Paris the following day, Coolidge was promptly presented with a new proposal. Since the Hoover connection fell through, Hugh S. Gibson, formerly a secretary at the American embassy in London and originally intended to coordinate U.S. intelligence efforts from Vienna, was no longer available.[60] With Gibson out of the picture, the task fell to Coolidge. As he recounted in the letter of December 28:

> *"I was asked if I wanted to head an official party to get information for the Commission of goings-on in Austria and Poland, making Vienna, if it seemed wise, my headquarters, and establishing people in Prague, Pesth, etc., when possible, to report to me. The thing seemed to me to be well worth doing, so I accepted.... The job is a curious one, for the mission, though official, is not diplomatic, as we are still technically at war with Austria, and have not recognized most of the new governments there; and though we are to keep it as quiet as we well can, it is not mysterious or in the nature of detective work. For instance, we may take a house in Vienna, but we are not to move into the embassy. My men are almost all officers, though they have got to go out of uniform for the moment and were (with one exception so far) in civil life before the war. A large proportion of them are Harvard graduates.... I still keep up my official connection with the Inquiry in Paris, and if the peace negotiations take some time, we may go back to work there."*

On December 26, Coolidge was officially delegated by the State Department to the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, "for the purpose of proceeding to Austria for that Commission to observe political conditions in Austria-Hungary and neighboring countries."[61] He was instructed to proceed to Vienna via Switzerland and, from there, to dispatch agents to cities such as Prague, Zagreb, Budapest, Lviv, and Warsaw, with the task of tracking local

intervention in this country. For a detailed account of his mission to Russia, see: Coolidge, Lord, *Archibald Cary Coolidge*, 173–191.

[54] Coolidge, Lord, *Archibald Cary Coolidge*, 195.

[55] Ibid., 195; Schmid, "Die Coolidge-Mission in Österreich 1919", 439.

[56] *FRUS, PPC, I,* The Special Representative (House) to the Secretary of State, November 12, 1918.

[57] As House contended, "This would be, I think, quite justifiable as any representative sent by Hoover into these countries must depend upon, in a great measure, our agents for knowledge of political conditions which will have so important an influence on relief policies." See: Ibid., The Special Representative (House) to the Secretary of State, November 21, 1918.

[58] Ibid., The Special Representative (House) to the Secretary of State, November 27, 1918; Ibid., The Secretary of State to the Special Representative (House), November 26, 1918.

[59] Ibid., Colonel E. M. House to the Acting Secretary of State, December 5, 1918.

[60] Ibid., The Secretary of State to the Special Representative (House), November 26, 1918; Ibid., Colonel E. M. House to the Acting Secretary of State, December 5, 1918.

[61] *FRUS, PPC, II,* The Secretary of State to Professor A. C. Coolidge, December 26, 1918.

developments and keeping the Commission informed.[62] The next day, Coolidge and his party departed from Paris. During their journey, Coolidge began to sense the challenges that awaited him in the period ahead. At various stops, he was besieged by representatives of different nationalities—"some of them triumphant, some of them pathetic, all convinced of the justice of their claims, and all hoping or fearing great things from the Peace Commission in Paris and from President Wilson."[63] In the meantime, on the last day of 1918, Lansing decided that the members of the mission would not be sent into the field as officials of the State Department, which would have conferred diplomatic status, but rather as representatives of the Commission. In Vienna, they would establish an intelligence network, which the U.S. delegation in France would use to maintain oversight of the situation throughout Central Europe.[64] As Coolidge arrived in what had once been the capital of the Habsburg Empire on January 5, 1919, his true task was only just beginning.

Conclusion

From January 5 to May 22, 1919, Archibald Cary Coolidge and his team gathered and transmitted several hundred reports from Vienna, documenting political developments in Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Their work provided the American Commission with valuable intelligence, described by one member of the British delegation in Paris as "the sole source of reliable information" from Central Europe.[65] Emerging from the institutional limitations of the State Department, the insufficiency of pre-armistice research by the Inquiry, and the rapidly changing political landscape of Central and Eastern Europe, the Coolidge Mission—one of twelve dispatched by the American Commission to Negotiate Peace across Europe and Asia during the Peace Conference—was, in the context of Wilson's pursuit of a "scientific peace," an effort to address gaps in information through the mobilization of scholarly expertise. Its establishment reflected the idea that American foreign policy should be grounded in careful, rational analysis and the systematic collection of reliable and "objective" data. The making of the Coolidge Mission thus marked an important moment in the evolution of the American foreign-policy apparatus, illustrating how the U.S., while emerging as a global power, navigated the growing pains of building an effective international presence, and exemplifying a broader transformation in U.S. foreign policy, in which expert knowledge was increasingly institutionalized as a resource of state power.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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[62] Ibid., The Secretary of the Commission to Negotiate Peace (Grew) to Professor A. C. Coolidge, December 26, 1918.

[63] Coolidge, Lord, *Archibald Cary Coolidge*, 196–197.

[64] NA, RG 256, 184.01/3A, Robert Lansing to Acting Secretary of State, December 31, 1918.

[65] Byrnes, *Awakening American Education to the World*, 171.

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