AN ARCHITECT OF THE AMERICAN CENTURY:

COLONEL EDWARD M. HOUSE AND THE MODERNIZATION OF UNITED STATES DIPLOMACY

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
AddRan College of Liberal Arts
Texas Christian University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December, 2010

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my parents for their encouragement and support. Additionally, I thank my dissertation advisor Mark Gilderhus. His invaluable suggestions and direction improved the project greatly. I also thank the other members of my dissertation committee which included Gregg Cantrell, Todd Kerstetter, and Ken Stevens. Their constructive criticism only made the dissertation better. Any mistakes are mine alone.

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Introduction

Colonel Edward House occupied a unique position in American history. The Texan wielded great power and influence for most of Woodrow Wilson's presidency. Unlike the relationship of Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Hopkins, House's position with Wilson remained unofficial. In fact, House refused the offer of a cabinet post from the president-elect in 1912. Nevertheless, House and Wilson for a number of years remained so close that the colonel in the minds of many filled the role of a presidential alter ego. House picked numerous cabinet officials and impacted the direction of Wilson's foreign policy as it pertained to the Great War. House held distinct views on America's position in the world and pushed his benefactor into embracing his conceptions. These views entailed a grand cooperative vision in which the U.S. participated with other nations in an organization that provided for the future peace and security of the world. House's vision served as a basis for Wilson's conception of the League of Nations. House left an enduring impact on U.S. foreign policy while he served as Wilson's closest advisor.

I

House's early life offer valuable clues as to how the colonel constructed his latter role as a presidential advisor and international figure. House believed in the idea of great men shaping history and bending events to their will. He also thought that the political arena provided the best avenue to achieve greatness. Moreover, House knew due to his poor public persona and persistent illnesses had to construct a distinctive position for himself. House found that his path to greatness rested in exerting power behind the scenes. During his early years in politics he served as a confidential advisor to a series of Texas governors, a position House later filled in the Wilson administration.

Nevertheless, state politics proved too small an arena for the colonel's ego.[1]

House found his chance to move onto the national stage through the presidential candidacy of Woodrow Wilson. He provided some key services for Wilson during the course of the 1912 campaign and quickly gained the confidence of the candidate. After Wilson's election House acted as a de facto chief of staff as he helped fill administration jobs. When the president-elect assumed office on March 4, 1913 House offered some advice on domestic policy but his ambition soon turned his attention towards diplomacy.[2]

House believed that global politics provided the best way to achieve prominence. Though driven by ambition and ego House helped to usher in an era of American internationalism. His role as peace envoy, during American neutrality, eventually resulted in the U. S. involving itself in a European war. House understood that due to the growing interdependence of the world events in one part of the globe necessarily affected another.[3]

House continued to advocate an internationalist policy when America entered the war. He helped Wilson draft the Fourteen Points and House wrote an early covenant of the League of Nations. Despite the rejection of the League by the Senate House ushered in a era of internationalism that America could not abandon. House helped the United States join the roster of the Great Powers through his efforts. Despite his labors to modernize American foreign policy the colonel also undermined Wilsonian diplomacy. At times House misled and outright lied to the president about the results of his European missions. Wilson thought that real opportunities arose to bring about an end to the Great War during the years of American neutrality. Furthermore, House led Wilson to believe that he had insisted the armistice be based on the Fourteen Points and that the Allies had

accepted those terms. Wilson, armed with this erroneous belief, found his position at the Versailles Peace Conference greatly weakened. Nonetheless, House remains an important figure in bringing America out of its era of isolationism onto the international stage.[4]

II

The historical literature on House remains scattered. House's manipulation of the historical record presents numerous problems for scholars. The colonel not only influenced many figures of his time but also shaped historical perceptions of his actions. The early literature bears the heavy imprint of the presidential advisor. *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House* appeared as a four volume set that told the story of House's career as a diplomat and foreign policy advisor during and just after the Great War. Charles Seymour, a professor of American history at Yale and staff member of the American Peace Commission, compiled and edited this collection with the assistance of House. These works filled with personal correspondence and diary entries placed House at the center of the diplomatic drama attendant to America's entry into the war and the peace in its aftermath. This collection is highly sanitized and must be used carefully in any evaluation of House's role. Other works tainted by partisanship are such tomes as Arthur D. Howden Smith's *Mr. House of Texas.* George S. Viereck's *The Strangest Friendship In History* remains a curiosity piece in that the book is comprised of real and imagined conversations between the author and his subject, which raises the question of the veracity of the work. In the end, the early works on the colonel provide more questions than answers for the scholar.

Other works while promising leave important gaps in the scholarship. Rupert

Richardson, prominent Texas historian and former president of Hardin-Simmons University, in 1964 produced *Colonel House: The Texas Years, 1858-1912.* This work details House's early years in Texas and his dominant role in the state Democratic Party. Richardson offers interesting clues into House's ideological framework. Thomas House, father of the colonel, was a poor English baker who settled first in New Orleans and then Houston. The elder House, a truly self-made man, expanded a humble bakery into a thriving retail business, which led to diversified business interests. These included a cotton brokerage firm and landholdings making Thomas House one of the wealthiest men in Texas. This background influenced the son's pro-British views and classical liberal thinking he evidenced later in his career. Richardson's narrative suffers because of the time constraints of the work and his rather tempered exploration of House's personality.

Charles Neu, formerly professor of American diplomatic history at Brown University, built upon Richardson's exploration of House's formative years. In his 1989 article "In Search of Colonel Edward M. House: The Texas Years, 1858-1912" he explored more fully the personality of the elusive presidential adviser. Neu describes how House early in his career developed a penchant for manipulation, a skill he developed as House served as a confidential advisor to various Texas political figures. Neu also found that House not only sought to control individuals but he tried to influence the historical record. House concerned with building a legacy cloaked many of his activities in Texas politics with an aura of secrecy.

The exploration of the Wilson and House relationship remains another area of scholarly inquiry. Alexander and Juliette George, political scientists at Stanford University, produced a book in the 1950s that examined this relationship. Their

Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House remains the only in depth study of this friendship. The Georges' portrait of Wilson is one of a psychologically frail chief executive who needed constant reassurance from his alter ego. Paradoxically, Wilson also had an outsized sense of self and an advisor carefully appealed to the president's vanity. The Georges' House is one who filled these needs inherent in Wilson's personality. He carefully reassured the president while manipulating the chief executive towards positions held by House. The League of Nations and collective security became two instances in which the colonel influenced the president's thinking. The relationship frayed as House departed the shadows and offered unwelcome advice on compromise measures with the Republican Senate during the treaty fight.

Charles Neu in another piece on Colonel House offered some additional insight into this significant friendship. In his article "President Wilson and Colonel House: The Early Years" Neu traces the genesis and early developments of this relationship. Again, Neu reinforced many of the conclusions that the Georges arrived at in their work. House was the rock that Wilson relied upon especially in the wake of the death of the first Mrs. Wilson. The colonel remained for the most part in his apartment in New York and never ventured to Washington unless called upon. In many circumstances, Wilson traveled to House's home seeking his advice and comfort. In Neu's estimation the relationship changed in 1915 when Edith Boling Galt replaced Colonel House as the president's closest confident. The author also found that at times House exaggerated his own importance and engaged in some self-delusion, though this interpretation conflicts with the evidence of House's continued diplomatic role during and after the war. House was only shunted from the inner circle at the Paris Peace Conference.

Another significant relationship of House compromised one more work in the scant literature on Wilson's primary advisor. Joyce Grigsby Williams' *Colonel House and Sir Edward Grey* discussed the relationship between the Liberal British foreign minister and the presidential alter ego. While critical of both men the author theorized that the relationship between the two men refined House's thinking about collective security. She noted that House at one point in 1914 discussed with Grey the concept of a Pan-American treaty that some scholars point to as a model for the League of Nations. British Liberals like Grey had confidence in the concept of a concert of nations that ensured order. Williams suggests that Grey influenced House's thinking and in turn pushed Wilson in this direction. The author makes an interesting supposition that goes undeveloped. The scattered nature of House historiography leaves open the possibility of combining these fragments into an interesting narrative.

One other major work appeared on House in Europe in the early 1970s. Inga Floto, a professor of history at Copenhagen University in Denmark, published her thesis entitled *Colonel House in Paris* in her native country. The work, later translated into English appeared in the United States as a supplementary volume in the *Papers of Woodrow Wilson.* Floto produced a decidedly negative assessment of House and his approach to diplomacy. The author portrayed the colonel as continually out of his depth at the Paris Peace Conference. House, outmaneuvered by the Allies at the pre-armistice negotiations, remained an easy target for Clemenceau and various Allied leaders. According to Floto House at times prevaricated and outright deceived President Wilson, sabotaging American efforts for a just and effective peace agreement. In the end, the writer theorized that House betrayed the president on his absence from the conference

when he attempted to redraw the peace treaty based upon French demands. Wilson disgusted at this betrayal froze House out of further negotiations. Arthur Link, the preeminent Wilson biographer and editor of the president's massive collection of papers, showered praise upon Floto's book.

Link, no doubt left a lasting impression upon many scholars over the years. In his elegantly written five volume biography of the chief executive Link diminishes the importance of House and his influence upon President Wilson. John Milton Cooper in his recent biography of Wilson and his classic *The Warrior and the Priest,* a comparative study of the chief executive and Theodore Roosevelt, echoes these themes. Thomas J. Knock in his *To End All Wars* also takes issue with House's influence with Wilson then weakens his conclusion with detailed passages on the close working relationship they enjoyed.

Link's impact on Wilson studies continue in even more recent work. In 1998, two articles appeared about the elusive House upon the eightieth anniversary of the armistice. David Esposito, an adjunct professor of history at Penn State, wrote an article on House that appeared in the Phi Alpha Theta journal *The Historian.* The article entitled "Imagined Power: The Secret Life of Colonel House" portrayed the advisor as almost delusional. Esposito's House is one who lived in fantasy world and exaggerated his own importance. House repeatedly misled the president and caused many problems when Wilson went to Paris. Robert Tucker, professor emeritus at Johns Hopkins University, in his article "An Inner Circle of One: Woodrow Wilson and His Advisors," claimed House received too much credit as a presidential advisor. Tucker undermined his own argument by describing House's role as akin to a modern chief of staff and national security advisor

combined. Evidence presented by the Georges and by Margaret MacMillian in her book on the peace conference *Paris 1919* refuted claims made by Esposito and Tucker. Both works point to the fact that many European diplomats sought House's counsel. Many of these figures met with House during the course of the war or at the peace conference. In many circumstances, these individuals preferred the company of House to that of the president. House apparently used understandable terms and a conversational approach as opposed to Wilson's idealistic tone and lecturing manner. These examples tended to undercut both arguments as to House's lack of influence and flights of fantasy.

Other studies confirm House's sway. Mark T. Gilderhus's scholarship on Wilson's Latin American policy points to House's power. In his *Pan American Visions* Gilderhus portrayed House as one who primarily directed Wilson's attention to foreign policy. In fact, House suggested and was even the point man in the early formulation of the proposed Pan American treaty. The effort eventually failed, but again many scholars find a model for the League of Nations embodied in this proposal. The evidence suggests that House affected Wilsonian foreign policy profoundly. While these debates over House's influence are interesting they offer little insight into the man.

The House literature remains scant and at times contradictory. No scholarly biography exists except the disappointing 2006 Godfrey Hodgson book which offers nothing beyond the initial House tomes. The first generation of works on House presents him as the grand puppet master of the Wilson administration. The House of this school of thought orchestrated every success of the administration while remaining blameless for its failures. The other view prevalent among Link and his disciples presumes that House was at best an incompetent and at worst some self-delusional egomaniac. These flaws

crippled Wilson's implementation of a new world order.[5]

III

This dissertation will close the gap between the earlier works on House and latter Link influenced literature. The project takes the middle ground when assessing House. The colonel exaggerated his influence and had an active fantasy life. Nevertheless, House also profoundly impacted U. S. foreign policy and its position in the world. Chapter one covers House's early years and the impact that it had on the confidential advisor. Chapter two relates House's emergence as a national figure as he attached himself to Woodrow Wilson. Additionally, this chapter will probe House's attempt to lay out a blueprint for Wilsonian diplomacy.

Chapter three will discuss and analyze House's role as a shuttle diplomat while he sought to mediate an end to the Great War during the years of American neutrality. This chapter in particular will examine how House modernized American foreign policy. Chapter four will examine House's diplomatic role after America entered the First World War and ultimately helped to usher the United States onto the roster of the Great Powers. The conclusion will briefly discuss the break between House and Wilson and the colonel's legacy.

The dissertation will concentrate some on the early life of House and how he constructed his unique political persona. It also relates the story of how House rose to national prominence. Nevertheless, the majority of the work concentrates on House's work as a diplomat and policymaker during the years of 1914-1918. During those years House helped to turn America away from its long policy of isolationism to embrace internationalism. While House continued to serve on the American Peace Commission at

Paris during the peace conference this work stops short of telling that story. A work of that magnitude would entail another project and House's most significant impact on U.S. foreign policy came before the peace-making. The United States could no longer stand aloof from developments in one corner of the globe because it effected the growing international interests of America. This dissertation will tell the story of the enigmatic House and how he was truly an architect of both Wilsonian diplomacy and the American century.

Endnotes

1. Rupert Richardson, *Colonel Edward M. House: The Texas Years, 1858-1912* (Abilene: Hardin-Simmons Publications In History, 1964), 234-235.

2. Alexander L. George and Juliette L. George, *Woodrow Wilson And Colonel House: A Personality Study* (New York: Dover Publications, 1964), 110-111.

3. George, 158-159.

4. George, 192.

5. For examples of Hodgson's efforts see Godfrey Hodgson, *Woodrow Wilson's Right Hand: The Life Of Colonel Edward M. House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

Chapter One
The Early Years

A look at Edward M. House's early years provides some of the insights needed to understand the diminutive Texan's later career on the world stage. His youth in Texas and his relationship with his father helped shape the confidential advisor who hovered over the shoulder of Woodrow Wilson. House's early years in the East also helped to form the world view and methods that he employed later when he embarked on his life's work in politics. Additionally, House's career as a political boss in the turbulent Texas political arena also left its mark upon the mysterious presidential advisor. In those years House began to wield power and create a unique role for himself. By the time that House met Woodrow Wilson he had settled into the role that he would occupy throughout most of the eight years the two men shared a special relationship. This chapter will explore how House's early years impacted the future presidential advisor and how he created his unique political persona.

I

The most significant influence on the young Edward House was his father. Thomas House began life as a humble immigrant baker from Great Britain. He amassed a large fortune in the cotton trading market and founded a cotton brokerage store in Houston. Thomas House represented an emerging mercantile class that attempted to bring some economic order to the largely rural and unsettled state. The elder House embodied an ideal to the younger Edward.[1]

Edward House saw his father as a figure of mythic proportions. In early popular accounts of Edward House's life his father signified the heroic generation that settled the state in the wake of the Texas Revolution. Thomas House, as legend stated,

first acquired his land grant from the Republic of Texas government because of his service in Colonel Edward Burleson's army during the revolution. House thought that his father's alleged service in the Texas army only reinforced Thomas's heroic stature. The young Edward longed to emulate his father's reported feats and hoped to live up to the legend of the elder House. Later biographers of the younger House found that Thomas House did not settle in Coryell County, Texas until just after the Texas Revolution. It remains unclear if Edward ever learned that his father arrived in Texas at this later date.[2]

In many ways the relationship between Thomas and Edward House mirrored the father and son relationships of other members of the American upper class during the middle and latter parts of the nineteenth century. Thomas W. House made his substantial fortune on his own. He enjoyed a prominent position in the upper echelons of Houston society. The senior House provided his children with an idyllic childhood with family vacations to Europe and a second home in Galveston. Edward House's earliest memories dealt with the Civil War and Reconstruction. These memories left an enduring imprint on Edward House's worldview. [3]

House's recollections of the Civil War reinforced his idealistic picture of his father. Thomas House during the course of the war supported the Confederacy and employed ships that ran the federal blockade imposed by President Abraham Lincoln along the Gulf of Mexico. He also shipped cotton to Matamoros, Mexico, in exchange for consumer goods needed on the Texas home front. To Union officials the elder House's actions bordered on criminal if not treasonous activities. But to an older Edward House recalling his early memories of his father only made Thomas a more imposing

figure. House's ideas of heroism and greatness reflected the qualities he saw in his father.[4]

House evidenced greater admiration of his father with his further remembrances of the Civil War. He related "that one regiment of Texas soldiers came to Houston and disbanded there." "They (the soldiers) looted the town." These soldiers attempted to break into "Father's storehouse but he stood at the door daring anyone to enter." House elaborated on the story and told that his father held off this unruly mob with a shotgun. By modern standards some might understand the actions of the troops as they looked for needed food and supplies. Nonetheless, Thomas House again arose in a crisis situation to make a stand against a throng of criminals set upon disrupting law and order. This quest for order provided an organizing principle for the younger House. Edward saw that great men brought order out of chaos and he longed to achieve this status. [5]

Thomas House represented a heroic ideal to the young Edward, one which he tried to emulate during his youth. Edward House lived his early life in the great outdoors of Texas. House related in his memoirs that he and his brothers not only hunted and went on shooting expeditions but also did such things as swing at great heights from homemade trapezes. These feats of physical exertions attempted to simulate the real life danger and adventure that House maintained that his father had participated in during Edward's youth. The younger House also gravitated to figures that also possessed heroic qualities like legendary Texas Ranger Captain Bill McDonald.[6]

House's early hero worship resembled that of other key figures of the twentieth century like Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt, also a child of the Civil War, worshipped his father and sought in some ways to outdo the senior Roosevelt. He did this by

building his asthmatic body into a robust frame. He also entered the public arena of politics in much fuller fashion than did Theodore Roosevelt Sr. Nevertheless, both men believed that their fathers were great men and that individuals could shape events. House and Roosevelt both wanted to live "heroic lives" and found politics to be the arena to accomplish their respective goals.[7]

While Roosevelt entered politics through the public sphere House remained in the background. This may have been due to House's own professed ill health and lack of stamina. As a youth House took a fall and suffered a head injury. This incident brought on what House called "brain fever." The onset of this malady allowed House, throughout his life, to use the cause of ill health to allow him to withdraw to the shadows. House also possessed a poor speaking voice and public persona which only led him to retreat further from public view. These reasons along with how House's understanding of American politics worked led the young man to take a more private role in achieving his own perceived " great man" status.[8]

While House pursued manly pursuits in his youth his persistent illnesses removed him from the traditional male role of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. House's early retreat into the private sphere limited his ability to exhibit his maleness. House for the most part showed little interest in business and lived quite contentedly on the numerous investments he had inherited. He preferred spending his time in the company of his wife Loulie and his daughters or going on tours of Europe. House seemingly shied away from such manly traits like achievement, ambition, dominance, and independence. Instead, House withdrew into the feminine sphere and embraced such qualities as vulnerability, dependence, passivity, and invalidism. House

found that one of the ways to display his manliness was in the realm of politics. Politics provided an outlet for House to demonstrate achievement, ambition, and dominance. While House could not enter into the arena like Theodore Roosevelt both men found that politics provided a way to demonstrate their masculinity.[9]

House's early experiences also give insight into another aspect of his character. Young Edward found that Reconstruction had a disquieting effect on the populace of Houston. He found it a time of riots and an era when "negroes" had control of the town government. During a period of white supremacy House found Reconstruction a disquieting part of his life. To the young Edward men of his father's class represented order and certainty. Reconstruction and the confrontations it generated in House's words "left quite an impression upon me." One central theme that replayed itself throughout House's career was a craving for order and a sense of certainty. This would be demonstrated later in the kinds of candidates that House chose to manage. These men that House selected maintained the established order and remained conservative if not resistant to rapid change.[10]

II

Edward House also enjoyed a much more diverse educational experience than the average Texan of his generation. Again, Thomas House's fortune led to this possibility. House spent much of his teenage years at boarding schools in Virginia and New Haven, Connecticut. Young Edward entered the Hopkins Grammar School in New Haven with the goal of eventually attending Yale. House proved an indifferent student and never gained entrance into that Ivy League school. Nevertheless, House's years in the East proved invaluable for the skills that he learned and the connections he made.[11]

House showed a penchant, even at an early age, for attaching himself to influential people who exercised great power. House repeated these patterns at later stages of his life. The young House made one such friend in the person of Oliver T. Morton. Morton, the son of the powerful Republican from Indiana, Oliver P. Morton, allowed Edward a unique vantage point to observe unfolding drama of the 1876 presidential election. House hoped, as a partisan Democrat from the South, that the candidate of his party would win the election. The younger Morton, as a devoted Republican from a northern state, hoped that his father would gain the nomination of his respective party. When Senator Morton failed to get the nomination his son avidly supported the Republican standard bearer Governor Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio. In turn, House threw his support behind the Democratic nominee Governor Samuel Tilden of New York. Despite this partisan divide the two youths remained fast friends. Both even decided to forego plans to attend Yale and instead agreed to matriculate at Cornell. In the course of the election House journeyed to New York City and as he put it "hang around Democratic headquarters which I remember were at Everett House in Union Square." He even saw the Democratic nominee Samuel Tilden go in and out of headquarters several times. House used his connections to the elder Morton to keep abreast of the developments that occurred in the course of the presidential election. He mastered his technique of establishing connections and gaining entry into the corridors of power. House furthered his education in politics and continued to use his access to power when disputes in the presidential election arose.[12]

In 1877 House and his young friend Oliver T. Morton actually sat in on the deliberations that picked the president. House enjoyed unlimited access to areas of public

life that only the vast majority of people his age could only dream about. The young Texan slipped in and out of the meetings of the Electoral Commission, which was a board of Democrats and Republicans appointed to settle the question of disputed electoral votes in the states of Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana. House also gained admittance to the White House where he saw President and Mrs. Grant and several members of the cabinet. The young House admitted "it was educational in its way." He also conceded that he "lagged at the end of my class" at Hopkins Grammar School. House also attended Senate debates which planted the idea within him of how American politics worked.[13]

House found that only a few men wielded real power when it came to questions of national policy. He stated that "only two or three men in the Senate and two or three men in the House" ran the government. House also recognized that the president along with the legislative branch remained the source of real power. He dismissed all other members of the federal government as figureheads. In the end, the young House hungered, after glimpsing these power centers and elites, to gain entrance to the governing class. House also developed a rather dismissive attitude when it came to the public at large. To many, the masses only created problems which the educated elites solved. Later, House thought he filled this role. House continued his formal education at boarding school and Cornell in order to enhance his chances at joining the American power elite. The young Edward, even at this early date, demonstrated patterns he manifested later in life. His ability to understand power and attach himself to patrons with access began in House's youth.[14]

III

House entered Cornell University but did not complete his college degree. In 1879,

House returned to Texas after his father Thomas fell ill. In 1880, Edward House's great hero died of various maladies. The younger House and his brothers decided to manage the estate of Thomas House jointly for several years. Throughout the decade of the 1880s, House pursued several business investments that included railroads and utility companies. Nonetheless, the role of businessman bored House who wanted to return to his first love, politics. By 1885, House engineered a move to Austin, the Texas state capital. But he still remained aloof from the political scene. This continued until Governor James S. Hogg sought re-election. The election of 1892 set House off on a career path in politics that he would not leave until after World War I.[15]

In 1892, the Democracy in Texas seemed rife with political strife. Hogg, whom House always considered his political mentor, brought much of these tensions upon himself with the creation of the Texas Railroad Commission. The Commission arose out of the demand of farmers who suffered at the hands of unregulated railroad companies that operated in the state of Texas. These companies, in many circumstances, charged low rates on freight hauled long distances for preferred customers like corporations. In order to balance their books railroads charged outlandish fees on short routes on small producers like farmers. In 1890, Hogg who at the time occupied the position of state attorney general, ran for governor on a reformist agenda. He promised to enact legislation that would create a railroad commission that would regulate railroad freight rates. Hogg even convinced the veteran U.S. senator John H. Reagan, who authored the bill that created federal oversight with the creation of the Interstate Commerce Commission, to sit on the state board. In 1892, the birth of the Texas Railroad Commission served to create great controversy as Hogg sought re-election.[16]

Hogg faced a two-prong attack when he sought another term in the governor's mansion. The "Bourbon" or conservative wing of the Democratic Party that embraced a laissez-faire philosophy rejected the commission on traditional economic ideological grounds. Many Texas Democrats thought that unfettered market forces should determine the fate of small producers like farmers. These advocates of the free market coalesced around the alternative candidacy of the railroad lawyer George Clark. Hogg also saw a challenge mounted from his left.[17]

The origins of the other challenge lay in the makeup of the personnel of the railroad commission. The commission bill signed by Governor Hogg made the body appointive rather than elective in nature. The sitting governor possessed the power to name members to the commission. Additionally, Hogg refused to appoint a representative of agrarian interests to the board. This action angered many in the Farmers' Alliance which arose out of the agricultural discontent of the 1880s. In fact, Hogg refused to endorse some of the more "radical" programs supported by the Alliance. These programs included the sub-treasury plan. It called for low interest loans, backed by the federal government, for the benefit of debt ridden farmers. Many reform-minded Democrats followed Hogg's lead. Nevertheless, cash-strapped farmers who could not find redress in either of the programs of the Republicans or Democrats chose a third party alternative. The Populists filled this need for a third way.[18]

Divisions in the Texas Democracy could have doomed the re-election chances of Hogg. Despite this rather gloomy forecast Edward House sought out the governor and offered his services as a campaign manager. House and Hogg only knew each other in passing. Additionally, House possessed no formal political or governmental experience.

Nonetheless, House signed on as one of Hogg's three campaign managers. A friend of House, General H. R. Hamby assumed the official position as campaign chairman. House remained in the background and largely turned out Hogg voters on election days or kept track of delegates pledged to the governor. Any other duties that House performed for the Hogg campaign remain clouded in mystery. The newspapers of the era only identify House as a member of the governor's party. Any definite role House filled is lost to history. In the end, House performed his duties well enough at the Houston state convention to beat back a challenge from the conservative wing of the Democracy and its leader Clark. This set the stage for a hard fought general election battle as Clark refused to bow out and mounted a race as an independent Democrat with Republican backing. Republicans desperate for a return to state power since the end of Reconstruction saw a way back to the governor's mansion as they saw the fractured nature of the Texas Democrats.[19]

House admitted that the general election of 1892 did not look promising. Most of the state's urban newspapers endorsed Clark. Texas Democrats feared that a divided party could lead to a Populist victory. This outcome meant unthinkable consequences for many who feared a triumph by the People's Party. The Populists, or so many thought, would institute programs deemed "radical" and plunge the state into chaos.[20]

The People's Party also posed a challenge to the ruling class of the state. Middle class men like House found their positions threatened. Many men thought they possessed the ability to govern a patriarchal society that ensured good social order. Texas Populists appealed to groups that undermined that system. African Americans and poor whites disputed the public sphere that long had been the exclusive world of white elite and

middle class males. Status anxiety seemingly pervaded the ranks of Texas Democrats as they faced the possibility of their hold on government slipping away. Texas electoral campaigns of the 1890s allowed men like House to prove their strength at the ballot box and as males engaged in a series of contests that ensured their continued dominance of a hierarchical society.[21]

Hogg eked out a victory over the conservative Clark and the Populist nominee Thomas Nugent. In return for House's service to the campaign, Hogg awarded him with the honorary title of colonel. Miss Ima Hogg, the daughter of the governor, claimed that House learned all his political skills from her father. In Ima Hogg's opinion House remained the pupil and Hogg the master teacher. Even though House served as legislative liaison on the governor's staff the victory left him without the power and access he craved. The governor proved too independent minded to listen to the counsel of only one man. House looked to another candidate in order to enjoy unfettered power.[22]

IV

After Hogg decided not to run for re-election House turned to Charles Culberson to find such power. Culberson, the Texas attorney general asked House at least as early as January 1894 to manage his campaign. The relationship between the two men suggested that Culberson remained largely the junior partner in this political relationship. House also employed the use of flattery and mentioned the fact that both men suffered ill health to secure a relationship with the Texas attorney general. Later House employed both devices to cement the bonds of friendship with Woodrow Wilson. Additionally, Culberson, the son of a prominent Texas congressman, showed little independent thought

or action. House took the unusual step of openly taking charge of the Culberson campaign. The colonel refrained from doing this in all other campaigns that he managed. Usually a friend or colleague of House occupied this position. House preferred to stay in the background and do the real work and not have to handle the demands made upon a campaign chairman. House described the public as almost "childish" in its acceptance of the "shadow" of the campaign for the "substance" of governing. This showed the colonel's disdain for the masses and his own belief that only the elite could effectively govern. House made the point that "each chairman of the campaign which I directed received the publicity and the applause of both the press and people." House noted that real power remained with him because the other chairman "passed out of public notice within a few months, or at most within a year." This statement showed House's own preferred method of wielding power behind the scenes.[23]

Nevertheless, other candidates also moved toward running for the gubernatorial nomination. The venerable elder statesmen of Texas politics John Reagan also considered joining the race at the insistence of Governor Hogg. According to House Hogg harbored mixed feelings about the Culberson candidacy. Hogg liked the attorney general's integrity but faulted him for his conservative and cautious manner. House liked these qualities in the candidate, and they drew the colonel to Culberson. One subject that divided national and state Democrats proved to be the topic of the competing currency systems of gold and silver. The subject aroused great debate along class and economic lines. Bankers and business leaders preferred the gold standard with tight money policies. Lenders could get a better return on loans they gave out if the federal government adopted the gold standard. Producers like farmers and small businessmen

thought that silver offered a panacea for their debts. Unlimited coinage of the metal would provide easy access to cash and provide a means to pay off their arrears. Hogg and Reagan feared that Culberson would soft pedal the silver issue in the coming campaign. The issue again showed the influence of House upon Culberson as the campaign manager stood for the gold standard and sound money. Additionally, Hogg and Reagan dreaded that financially strapped farmers would leave the Democratic fold and vote for the Populist candidate in the general election. As House agreed to become campaign manager for Culberson Hogg pleaded with the colonel to abandon the attorney general and endorse Reagan. House refused to do this and decided he would stay with Culberson "to the finish"; he urged Hogg to remain "neutral."[24]

Culberson and House at first derided Reagan's candidacy. Culberson in particular stated that Reagan posed as a "Cincinnatus" figure. Reagan wrote several letters to selected individuals around the state and said if the voters wanted him he would have no choice but to accept a potential draft for the nomination. Reagan hoped to pose as an unselfish citizen-statesman, going back to the time of George Washington, who heard the call of the people to serve. By contrast, House and Culberson eschewed the traditional American practice of "standing" for election. Instead, Culberson through personal appearances and House through correspondence used more modern campaign techniques to actively ask for support and votes. By May of 1894 Reagan had to drop his detached candidacy and actively court the electorate through the same sort of personal appeals that Culberson and House used. But Culberson and House who both worked for months to put an organization into place possessed a distinct advantage over Reagan.[25]

Throughout the spring of 1894 Culberson consulted with the colonel on matters big

and small. Almost daily the candidate wrote his campaign manager asking where he should make public appearances and how he could best spend his time. In those days Texas Democrats held county-wide conventions and primaries to select nominating delegates to send to the state convention. Early organization and marshalling of resources proved a key task in assuring that Culberson gained the Democratic nomination.[26]

Political historians over the years have noted the accomplishments of Mark Hanna, William McKinley's campaign manager during the presidential election of 1896. But House, at least on the state level, matched Hanna's political acumen. Scholars of House pay scant attention to the gubernatorial race of 1894, perhaps because of House 's efforts. The colonel destroyed much of his political correspondence that covered the Texas years. House attempted to reshape his image, when he moved into the national stage, as one of a concerned private citizen called upon to do the public's work and not a political boss. He constructed an efficient and formidable political machine that aided in getting his candidates elected to the governorship and other state offices. House built an organization through various means that ensured a Culberson win. House relied on a disciplined and well planned campaign structure to ensure a victory. He systematically targeted written communications to counties that held nominating conventions or primaries in order to turn out Culberson followers on the date of the election. House's letters, generally addressed to prominent leaders, asked for support on primary or convention days. House usually wanted other names of potential supporters from correspondents so he could write additional letters to them soliciting support. If he found such a receptive party he would then promise to send campaign literature. This material

usually contained a copy of Culberson's opening campaign speech that addressed the candidate's stand on many public issues of the day. To defray campaign costs House asked potential Culberson supporters to get the speeches printed in friendly Democratic papers as a supplement. House kept campaign costs low and reached the widest pool of voters available through the subscribers and buyers of these papers.[27]

House also employed other methods to aid Culberson's candidacy. He arranged with officials to hold early county primaries and conventions in counties where the attorney general showed greater electoral strength. House hoped to create a bandwagon effect in which Culberson appeared to wrap up the nomination and driving other candidates from the race. Conversely, House urged Democrats to hold later primaries where Culberson showed weakness. House's penchant for manipulation manifested itself in how he managed the questions of the county primaries. He also carefully scheduled Culberson's personal appearances. During the days leading up to the Dallas County Democratic primary he overrode the advice of local campaign advisors and directed Culberson to make appearances in the rural counties of Hunt and Van Zandt. House knew that an efficient campaign organization would carry the election in an urban county like Dallas, where Culberson already enjoyed widespread support. Additionally, House feared that if Culberson lost the Dallas County primary it would reflect badly on the attorney general's candidacy. House thought that appearances in rural counties offered a better use of his candidate's time and resources. In rural settings personal contact with Culberson could be better utilized than in more urban counties where the media and campaign workers could get out the word about the attorney general. House possessed a keen understanding about how to organize and best utilize campaign resources in the rather unorganized

electoral system of Texas of the 1890s.[28]

House also employed other devices to ensure that Culberson's delegate voters got counted when the Democrats met in Dallas at their state convention in 1894. In some instances, House wrote to various potential delegates and asked them sign over their votes through a proxy system. He inquired whether the potential delegate could attend the gathering in Dallas. Personal attendance remained the most favored decision made by delegates selected in the nominating primaries or conventions. If delegates could not attend House offered an alternative. Usually House suggested the name of a loyal Culberson man who would attend the Dallas gathering and ensured the proxy vote got cast for the Texas attorney general. Additionally, he wanted all delegates, if selected as Culberson delegates, to vote for his candidate. If Culberson won a county he wanted delegate votes to reflect the attorney general's victory. House also sought to reward Culberson supporters by placing them on one of the county delegations pledged to the candidate if an individual did not already possess a place.[29]

The colonel also wrestled with other issues as the primary season of 1894 closed and the general election beckoned. For example, he worked hard to bridge chasms that continued to plague the Democratic Party. In 1892, splits between the Bourbons and the Hogg wings of the party almost cost the Democrats the governor's mansion. House wanted Culberson to win in the East Texas counties that the colonel labeled the "citadel" of "Hoggism." This meant that East Texas remained the center of support for the sitting governor and if Culberson could attract enough voters here he could sew up support from the Hogg faction in the Democratic party. He convinced many farmers that Culberson would continue the reform policies of Hogg and that he also supported the unlimited

coinage of silver. This effectively outflanked the efforts of Reagan and forced the veteran politician from the race. Later House remembered that Reagan and Culberson both represented the forces of "liberalism." In 1894, however, House presented Culberson as a more conservative and circumspective politician to the Clark forces. Culberson reflected the kind of candidate that House liked; he would not challenge the status quo too much or endorse any kind of rapid change. He convinced many so-called Bourbons or "Gold Democrats" that Culberson really supported business interests and sound money. House worked hard to paper over differences between these two groups of Texas Democrats in order to face down a formidable Populist opposition during the general election in the fall.[30]

House engineered a clear victory for Culberson when it came time for the Democrats to meet at their nominating convention in Dallas. Both Reagan and the other major contender S. W. T. Lanham, dropped out of the race and endorsed Culberson for governor. Meanwhile, House patched up any lingering differences between Hogg and Culberson. Nevertheless, major differences still existed between Reagan and Culberson over the silver issue. Culberson wanted limited coinage of silver while Reagan wanted the unlimited coinage of the metal. The silver question divided Texas Democrats because it illustrated a battle for control of the party that played out across the country. Conservatives hoped to either maintain control or consolidate their power over the party, while Silver Democrats wanted to turn back Bourbon challenges and keep their hold on the critical agrarian vote where Populists had made key electoral inroads. This stalemate continued until the conservative or Clark wing of the party gained control of the platform committee. The Clark followers inserted a plank that called for parity and generally

endorsed the conservative policies of the Cleveland administration. Culberson and House proved that while courting the "liberal" element they could keep the conservatives happy. House showed great diplomatic skill in his early political career at reconciling diverse interests.[31]

The pressure of the Populist candidacy of Thomas Nugent during the general election again caused Culberson and House to change their position on silver. The attorney general spoke out in favor of silver generally to keep Hogg Democrats in the fold. This showed House's pragmatism as he shifted from a primary campaign to the general election. Conservative or Gold Democrats also stuck with Culberson. Many knew House's stance on the issue and thought perhaps that Culberson's campaign manager would restrain the potential governor's stand on silver. The Democratic candidate also proved to be a reasonable choice since many found it distasteful to vote for the Populist candidate Nugent. The conservatives probably provided the necessary votes that led to Culberson's victory. House proved he could navigate and manipulate the various factions of the Texas Democratic Party. He found a candidate that could attract the reform Hogg voters and the conservative Clark voters and weld those feuding factions into a winning coalition.[32]

When Culberson took office House continued as a presence in the new governor's administration. In many ways the House-Culberson relationship mirrored the one the colonel would later enjoy with Woodrow Wilson. For example Governor Culberson consulted with House on patronage issues, asking the colonel to approve his candidates for appointments such as the director of the state's Confederate veterans' home. House was a visible presence at the governor's mansion just as he later maintained a noticeable

attendance as an advisor to Woodrow Wilson and helped pick the president's cabinet.[33]

Together Culberson and House charted a rather conservative course for the state. Little of legislative importance happened during Culberson's first term, and House provided no concrete plans that went beyond Hogg's basic reforms. But House for the first time enjoyed unlimited access to a type of power he witnessed as a young man.[34]

House recreated his winning formula for Culberson when the governor ran for re-election two years later. The Populists ran an informal fusion campaign with the Republicans whereby the Republicans put no gubernatorial candidate in the field and instead encouraged their voters to support the Populist candidate Jerome Kearby. In return, Populists were to vote for Republican William McKinley for president. This alliance caused great concern in Democratic circles, and Culberson asked House to make sure the African American vote turned out to ensure the governor's re-election. Again conservative Democrats provided the margin of victory over the Populist candidate Kearby. Many supporters of Culberson, who backed prohibition of alcohol in the state, portrayed Kearby as a heavy drinker. Additionally, many pointed out that a vote for the Populist-Republican ticket would mean that William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, would lose Texas. These arguments proved effective and allowed Culberson to carry the election. Despite this winning strategy Kearby achieved forty-four percent of the vote. Nevertheless, House once again bridged key divides among the Texas Democrats that brought them victory in 1896.[35]

By 1898, the Populists, drained of strength, faded from the political landscape. In Texas factional disputes between the conservatives and the more liberal Hogg wing of the Democracy continued to plague the party. House built his power base in a unique

fashion by supporting successful pro-silver Democrats while maintaining his conservative views. He was willing to sacrifice personal principles for political expediency. He again managed the successful senatorial campaign of Charles Culberson as the governor moved from Austin to Washington. He secured the legislative votes necessary and drove all other candidates from the field. With Culberson securely placed in the United States Senate House turned back to gubernatorial politics.[36]

V

Major Joseph Sayers a Confederate veteran and Texas congressman who wanted to sit in the governor's mansion asked House to manage his campaign. The colonel began to hone the role that he occupied throughout the Wilson years. He stayed at his Austin home or at his summer residence in Massachusetts. He usually cited reasons of health or business to explain his absence from active campaign appearances. House concentrated on the overall strategy of the campaign while allowing other members of his "crowd" to direct the day-to-day management of the Sayers electoral operation. Nonetheless, House always offered Sayers his greatest compliments and service if called upon.[37]

House provided assistance to Sayers by his use of the press. In 1897 and 1898 the colonel, managed to get favorable newspaper coverage of the campaign. He planted items in friendly Democratic papers that highlighted Sayers's pro-silver stance. Consequently, Silver or Hogg Democrats could justify a vote for Sayers despite the candidate's rather conservative views when it came to government intervention to foster economic recovery.[38]

Additionally, House offered Sayers some well timed advice. He told Sayers

that he should support one of the emerging political power brokers in Texas politics. Congressman Joseph Bailey wanted the position of minority leader in the House of Representatives. House constructed an alliance with Bailey to lessen the likelihood of conflict between the two. If Sayers supported Bailey then the newly minted minority leader would bless the gubernatorial run of the Confederate veteran. This cleared the field of other conservative candidates in the Democratic primary of 1898.[39]

House also employed other devices to achieve the nomination for Sayers. The colonel wrote letters and courted the support of potential Sayers's supporters. He asked Judge James Wells, a key political boss in South Texas, to organize the region for the Sayers campaign. In addition, House requested of Wells the name of several good men he could enlist into the campaign by sending them Sayers literature. House wanted to use Wells's contacts to build an efficient machine in South Texas not only for Sayers but for future campaigns. House seemed confident of a Sayers victory. He thought well placed victories in the county primaries in McLennan, Hamilton, and Harris would drive the more progressive attorney general M. M. Crane from the race. House also had to worry about the candidacy of Richard Wynne, a Fort Worth lawyer and old Reagan disciple. Nevertheless, Sayers soon clinched the nomination and got ready for a generally unexciting general election campaign.[40]

In 1898, House began to build his mysterious and enigmatic political persona. He did not attend the state Democratic convention in Galveston and failed to return to Texas until mid-October. House still wielded great political power in the state despite his public pose on the side line. The colonel relied increasingly on two allies in the Sayers campaign to further his hold over the candidate. Frank Andrews, a Houston lawyer, and

Joe Lee Jameson, a Democratic state official, communicated with House on an almost daily basis. Andrews wrote numerous letters to the colonel asking for campaign advice and providing political intelligence as it pertained to the campaign. Andrews briefed House over a potential fight over the chairmanship of the Galveston convention. He also reported that Sayers apparently did not want to involve himself in discussions over the platform. The future governor appeared unwilling to assume a greater responsibility for the party outside of being its nominee. Andrews and Jameson continued to communicate with House on other areas of concern before and after the election. These patterns of employing allies as House's eyes and ears would be repeated during the Wilson campaign of 1912 and in the State Department during World War I.[41]

Patronage again became a key issue as Sayers took office in March 1899. Andrews, who remained in Austin after the election to represent Texas railroads before the Texas Railroad Commission and acted as House's unofficial liaison with the governor, wrote the colonel over matters large and small. He even sent applications to House's home for his approval. While House stayed in the background many potential office seekers knew that the Texas kingmaker remained the final word for one wanting a state position. While at first the relationship between Sayers and House seemed calm, disharmony soon broke out.[42]

The discord originated with Sayers's desire to chart his own course. As noted before the colonel began to stay away from Austin especially during the summer season. He communicated with Sayers only on a sporadic basis and noted he heard from the governor only once during the summer of 1899. House felt that Sayers, who showed signs of going his own way, suddenly did not want to hear the colonel's

recommendations when it came to the filling of state jobs. In the end, House told Andrews he might not make any more recommendations in the expectation Sayers would not heed his advice. Sayers, at least at first, proved harder to manipulate than Culberson. House, in his correspondence, even began to derisively refer to Sayers as the "old man." Nevertheless, House believed that he and his lieutenants like Andrews and Jamison could bring the governor back into line. Sayers owed too much to House and his "crowd" to challenge the constant subtle advice and counsel offered by the colonel. Eventually, Sayers, well-managed by the House, faction fell back into line as the malleable state chief executive and resumed following the colonel's recommendations on matters like patronage.[43]

By 1901, House described the pursuit of politics, at least on the state level, as a joyless experience. He seemingly did not look forward to another gubernatorial campaign. One explanation rested on the absence of Culberson from the state scene. The colonel and the former governor apparently had an almost symbiotic relationship. House would suggest a policy or person for a state job, and Culberson would carry out the colonel's wish. The struggle with Sayers also probably discouraged the frequently ill House. Additionally, House began to renew his business interests. Oil investments and the potential for making money took up more of the colonel's attention and for a while distracted him from Texas politics.[44]

Nonetheless, as the governor's race heated up House returned to his first pursuit. House surveyed the field and selected at least two candidates he considered likely to win the Democratic nomination and the governorship. He induced Senator Culberson to sound out his first choice, Texas Supreme Court Justice Thomas Jefferson Brown, to

gauge his interest in the race. Brown declined and House moved on to other candidates. Eventually, House fixed upon S.W.T. Lanham as his choice. Lanham, a Texas congressmen and Confederate veteran, saw the governorship as a capstone to a long public career. The elderly Lanham proved a good choice as he would follow any directions offered by House and his followers when it came to electoral politics and governing. Nevertheless, House worried about the entrance of other candidates into the race.[45]

In particular, the potential candidacy of House's old ally South Texas political boss Judge James Wells vexed him. The colonel thought that Wells would, in return for old political debts owed him, ask House and his allies to run his campaign for the Democratic nomination. House advised Wells to meet with several of the colonel's friends like Frank Andrews, Joe Lee Jameson, and Albert Sidney Burleson, a Texas congressman and ally of the colonel, to discuss the race. He thought these men could dissuade the judge from entering the gubernatorial contest He disparaged the lack of networking that Wells had done in only writing a dozen letters to potential supporters around the state. House compared it unfavorably to Sayers who wrote to thousands of correspondents around the state as the 1898 governor's race heated up. House also harbored other concerns about the Wells candidacy. He decried the lack of organization of Wells's campaign. House noted that neither Jameson nor any of House's other allies wanted to manage the Wells campaign. Additionally, House thought that other obstacles rested in the way between Wells and the governor's mansion.[46]

Edward House and many Texans of the early twentieth century thought religion played a role in the election of public officials. House believed that Wells and his wife's

Catholicism hindered the judge's path to the nomination. While the colonel denied any personal prejudice he suggested that Wells's campaign would bring out "rabid" Protestants who opposed the judge's candidacy. Later the colonel noted the own "rabid" Catholicism of Wells's spouse. He confided to Frank Andrews that Mrs. Wells refused to enter Protestant churches for weddings or funerals. House also told Andrews he thought that while Wells could win the nomination it would be a long and difficult fight. House recorded that he and his friends might not just be "political orphans" but "politically bankrupt." This meant House who worked so hard to gain access to the corridors of power would not give it up for a hazardous bet on an uncertain Wells candidacy. While House pretended he did not care which candidate he backed, the colonel evidenced great relief when Wells did not make the race.[47]

House stated to friends that he wanted little to do with the 1902 gubernatorial contest, but despite these protestations he once again returned to his old machinations. Lanham proved a most malleable candidate, and House once again at least took long distance control of the congressman's campaign. He secured the financing of the campaign by getting his brother Thomas W. House Jr., a Houston banker, to lend funds for the effort. In fact, Lanham's main rival for the Democratic nomination, Thomas Campbell, a Palestine lawyer and Hogg protégé, withdrew from the race pleading he could not keep pace with Lanham's campaign fundraising. Nevertheless, House viewed with dismay the disorganization of the Lanham campaign. The candidate's official campaign manager showed little talent for organizing a statewide race. Letters often sent to Lanham's campaign headquarters in Fort Worth from supporters often went unanswered. Lanham's campaign officials seemed almost

uninterested in getting their man elected. Eventually, House sent Joe Lee Jameson to Lanham headquarters to bring some organization and discipline to the campaign. In the end, Lanham won the Democratic nomination and the election once House's lieutenants infused some needed organization into the effort. Again House earned thanks from the candidate for his work but by this point he harbored bigger ambitions than occupying the position of a Texas kingmaker. Great men, in House's estimation, could not be limited to a state electoral arena. National politics beckoned.[48]

VI

Even while House maintained an active interest in state politics he took steps to close this chapter of his life. He spent more time away from Austin and at his summer home in Magnolia, Massachusetts. House also eschewed pleas from friends and the press to mount his own gubernatorial race. Even as early as 1895 political figures touted him as a possible candidate. The colonel refused to give into these exhortations and instead stayed in the background.[49]

In 1898 House took steps to build a relationship with the titular head of the Democratic Party William Jennings Bryan. Already a national figure as a result of his 1896 race for the presidency, Bryan sought a winter home for his family away from Nebraska. Bryan's daughter who suffered ill health provided the impetus for a second home. House realized that Austin might offer the perfect solution for the Bryan family's quandary. If the Bryans settled in Austin this provided the needed access House wanted and presented him with a chance to ascend to the national stage. Even as early as 1898 the colonel harbored ambitions of occupying the role of a Democratic Mark Hanna. House would move into the national power elite and fulfill an ambition he harbored since

his youth. The colonel next took steps to ensure that Bryan moved to Austin.[50]

House enlisted the support of his old political mentor Governor James Hogg to help carry out this plan. Hogg since his retirement from the governorship had taken a job as an attorney representing corporate interests. Nonetheless, Hogg remained a Silver Democrat and a vocal supporter of Bryan. Both men stressed the benefits of Austin's mild climate, and soon the Bryans relocated to Austin for the winter of 1898-1899. Bryan settled near the House and Hogg homes, and the colonel began to explore this new political relationship for his personal benefit.[51]

House seems to have admired the former presidential candidate initially. House, Hogg, and Bryan spent much time together discussing issues of the day. Upon closer examination, however, House found the Nebraskan wanting in several areas. He concluded that Bryan was the most opinionated man he knew. Bryan seemed to believe his own press and thought of himself as a prophet. His views, informed by God, could not be moved by the ordinary human. House thought Bryan unchanged when it came to his advocacy of the unlimited coinage of silver, a centerpiece of the former presidential candidate's 1896 campaign. House believed that Bryan deficient in "political sense" and lacking an instinctual understanding of the issues that would make the Democratic Party viable on the national scene.[52]

House knew that Bryan intended to run again for the presidency in 1900, and he later claimed that the Great Commoner wanted him to take a leading part in managing the campaign. Bryan apparently thought that House's expertise would mesh well with that of Arkansas Senator James K. Jones, who chaired the Democratic National Committee during the 1896 campaign. House considered Jones a failure, since Bryan

had lost in a landslide to the Republican nominee William McKinley that year. As House later told it, he warned the Nebraskan that a similar fate waited him in 1900. In the end, Bryan declared that he wanted no Mark Hannas, but House privately doubted that Bryan could cope with such a man as Hanna. House's memoirs remain the only source about his initial meetings with Bryan. The real circumstances of the failure to cement a political marriage between Bryan and House remain clouded in some mystery. Did House reject Bryan's overtures or did the Nebraskan turn aside the offers of advice and counsel from the colonel? This central question continues to present some problems for those that examine the Bryan-House relationship. It is clear that their personalities failed to mesh during the winter of 1898-1899. Bryan probably proved too independent minded and less than a malleable figure for the controlling political boss. While both men maintained an amicable public relationship through the first years of the Wilson administration no personal intimacy ever emerged. House seemed frustrated at his first foray into national politics and took no active role in the 1900 presidential campaign. The colonel waited for another opportunity to gain his entrance on the national stage.[53]

By 1904, House had moved away from the world of Texas politics. He had lost much of his old passion for the game as it played out in the state. Some believed the death of Joe Lee Jameson, House's political "right hand," led to his desire to move onto the national scene. Others thought that the passage of the Terrell laws, which reformed and standardized the primary system, negated House's organizational superiority. While others chalked it up to House's own naked ambition to move out onto a national stage. In any event, in 1905, House shifted his principal residence from Austin to New York City. The first phase of Colonel House's career closed but those years left an

indelible mark upon the mysterious Texan.[54]

House had learned many things in those formative years. He thought that great men like his father shaped events, and he tried to emulate the elder House. His early years, formed by the Civil War and Reconstruction, endowed him with the belief that order offered the main organizing principle for politics and society. The choices House made later, like the candidates he managed and helped elect to office, often defended the status quo from the challenges posed by the Populists and progressive Democrats. Additionally, House understood that politics provided the most available arena to achieve greatness. Early on, he concluded that in American politics the elites made policy. He wanted to gain entrance to this elite structure but knew that his poor public personality and health concerns would force him fashion a unique role for himself. House's position also allowed him to move into the public sphere and exhibit qualities of elite nineteenth century maleness that his constant infirmities would have otherwise limited. House constructed the role of the consummate political manager and insider always willing to give advice and counsel when called upon.

From an early age, then, the colonel developed a unique talent to attach himself to powerful patrons to gain access to the power that he craved. He displayed skills, early in his career, that he brought later to the diplomatic realm. House could work with individuals and build coalitions with people who held divergent views. He also could keep the friendship of people of all political ideologies, a talent that would serve him well until the Versailles Peace Treaty negotiations in 1919.

Character flaws also exhibited themselves during House's early years. He showed a penchant for secretiveness and duplicity which did not always serve the cause of

diplomacy well. House demonstrated this by publicly praising figures but questioning their judgment in private, a propensity that carried over into his years as Wilson's personal envoy. While House seemingly possessed no overarching ideology during his Texas years he perfected the techniques that he later employed in his pursuit of diplomacy.

Endnotes

1. Charles E. Neu, "In Search of Colonel Edward M. House: The Texas Years , 1858-1912," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly 93* (July 1989) : 26.

2. Colonel House even repeated this story about his father in his own unpublished remembrances that he wrote in 1916. Early biographers of House reproduced this story. See Arthur D. Howden Smith, *The Real Colonel House* (New York: George H. Doran Co. 1918) repeating the colonel's story. Later biographers refuted this statement see Rupert N. Richardson, *Colonel House: The Texas Years* (Abilene, TX: Hardin Simmons 1964) and Godfrey Hodgson, *Woodrow Wilson's Right Hand: The Life of Colonel Edward M. House* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006).

3. *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, ed. Charles Seymour (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company 1926), 1: 9; Edward M. House, "Reminiscences,"6. Typewritten copy in the Manuscript and Archives Division in the Edward M. House Papers at Yale University Library microfilm copy at Mary Couts Burnett Library at Texas Christian University.

4. *Intimate Papers of Colonel House,* 1: 9.

5. *Intimate Papers of Colonel House,* 1: 10.

6. *Intimate Papers of Colonel House,* 1 :10.

7. For the best discussion of Theodore Roosevelt and his youth see Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Ballantine 1979), 32-81.

8. Rupert Richardson, one of House's biographers, theorized that House contracted meningitis after his fall. He also probably suffered from bouts of malaria which explained his rather fragile health throughout his adulthood. See Richardson, *Colonel House: The Texas Years,* 11 for a full discussion.

9. For a discussion of male roles and the differences between the masculine and feminine spheres and qualities see E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books 1993), 191-192.

10. House, "Reminiscences," 6-7.

11. House, "Reminiscences," 9.

12. House, "Reminiscences," 9.

13. House, "Reminiscences," 9-10.

14. House, "Reminiscences," 10-11.

15. House, "Reminiscences," 12.

16. For a through discussion of James Hogg's leadership role in the passage and implementation of the Texas Railroad Commission act see Robert C. Cotner, *James S. Hogg: A Biography* (Austin, University of Texas Press 1959), 233-243.

17. The best discussion of how the Texas Democrats divided over the Railroad Commission can be found in Alywn Barr, *Reconstruction To Reform: Texas Politics 1876-1906* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 2000), 125-142.

18. The Populist discontent towards Governor Hogg and the Democrats is recounted in Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 152-153; also see generally Roscoe Martin, *The People's Party in Texas: A Study in Third-Party Politics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970); additionally consult Cotner, *James S. Hogg*, 293-295, 306, 310, 313-319.

19. *Intimate Papers*, 1: 28-29; Barr, *Reconstruction To Reform,* 136, 138. Much of House's activities during the 1892 governor's race remain a product of guess work most Texas daily newspapers identified House as being in Hogg's traveling party and as a supporter of the chief executive.

20. Barr, *Reconstruction To Reform*, 139.

21. For an enlightening exploration of the challenges posed to elite male domination of late nineteenth and early twentieth century politics see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 13. For a discussion of the idea of hierarchal society in Texas see Jacqueline M. Moore, *Cow Boys and Cattle Men: Class and Masculinities: on the Texas Frontier, 1865-1900* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 19-20.

22. Rupert Richardson interview with Ima Hogg June 26, 1958, Rupert Richardson Papers, Rupert and Mary Richardson Library Hardin-Simmons University Abilene, Texas hereafter cited as RRP.

23. Richardson, *Colonel House,* 69; House, "Reminiscences" 17. House actively wrote letters and took charge fully of the campaign. In future contests he allowed surrogates to fill the formal role of campaign manager while he planned overall strategy from afar.

24. House, "Reminiscences," 14; Richardson, *Colonel House,* 70 n 12; also see Cotner *James S. Hogg,* 399 for additional insight into Hogg and Reagan's fears as it pertained to House and Culberson on the silver question; the best public declaration of

House's position on silver and adherence to gold and sound money appears in the *Dallas Morning News,* July 4, 1896 edition. House, "Reminiscences," 14.

25. Charles Culberson to Edward M. House, May 21, 1894, Edward M. House Papers Yale University Library hereafter cited as EMHP; Ben H. Proctor, *Not Without Honor: The Life of John H. Reagan* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), 296-297.

26. Culberson to EMH May 21, 1894, EMHP; Culberson to EMH, May 22, 1894, EMHP; Culberson to EMH, May 26, 1894, EMHP; Culberson to EMH, May 27, 1894, EMHP; Culberson to EMH, May 31, 1894, EMHP; Culberson to EMH, June 15, 1894, EMHP. The Terrell Election laws attempted to reform the Texas electoral system by ending county conventions and primaries. A state-wide primary replaced the county-wide contests in the early twentieth century. Colonel House and his allies used the county system to secure the nomination for their selected candidate and to drive other potential contestants from the gubernatorial races throughout the 1890s and the early 1900s.

27. For a general discussion of the techniques used by House see Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform* and Richardson, *Colonel House: The Texas Years.* EMH to George D. Neal, May 16, 1894, RRP; EMH to E. P. Hill, May 16, 1894, RRP; EMH to John A. Bryan, May 17, 1894, RRP; EMH to D. A. T. Walton, May 25, 1894, RRP; Frank Andrews to W. H. Lassiter, May 25, 1894, RRP.

28. EMH to John Bookout, June 12, 1894, RRP; Richardson, *Colonel House: The Texas Years,* 71, 81.

29. EMH to Frank Keifer, July 19, 1894, RRP; EMH to W.L. Sargent, June 29, 1894, RRP; EMH to J. R. Brown, July 14, 1894, RRP; EMH to J. D. Cunningham, July 11, 1894, RRP.

30. EMH to John Bookout, July 12, 1894, RRP; *Intimate Papers,* 1: 29; Proctor, *Not Without Honor,* 293-294.

31. Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform,* 156; *Dallas Morning News,* August 16, 1894.

32. Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform,* 157.

33. Culberson to EMH, December 18, 1894, EMHP ; *Intimate Papers,* 1: 36.

34. Lewis Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists: Texas Democrats in the Wilson Era* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1992), 13.

35. Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform,* 170-171; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 289. The African American vote proved vital to Culberson's re-election chances. The Populists and the Republicans made numerous appeals for this bloc's support. The Democrats

usually identified as the party of white supremacy cynically made appeals for such support. House during the 1896 campaign either bribed African American bosses to get voters to the polls to pull the Democratic lever or used intimidation to suppress African American turnout in heavily Republican or Populist precincts. Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform,* 170. Also see Gregg Cantrell and D. Scott Barton, "Texas Populists and the Failure of Biracial Politics," *The Journal of Southern History* 55 (November 1989) 4: 659-692.

36. Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform,* 208; *Dallas Morning News,* July 4, 1896; Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform,* 211.

37. EMH to Joseph Sayers, August 14, 1898, Joseph Sayers Papers, Center for American History, Austin Texas; Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform,* 212.

38. *Dallas Morning News,* December 27, 1897.

39. Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform,* 212.

40. EMH to James B. Wells, May 3, 1898, RRP; EMH to Wells May 6, 1898, RRP; Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform,* 211-213. Texas dominated by the Democrats usually meant whoever secured the party's nomination for governor could be assured of victory in the general election.

41. Frank Andrews to EMH, April 28, 1898, EMHP; Andrews to EMH, May 12, 1898, EMHP; Andrews to EMH, July 12, 1898, EMHP; Andrews to EMH, July 24, 1898, EMHP; Andrews to EMH, August 10, 1898, EMHP.

42. Andrews to EMH, October 17, 1898, EMHP; Andrews to EMH, undated 1898, EMHP.

43. James A. Tinsley ed.,"Letters From The Colonel: Edward M. House to Frank Andrews 1899-1902," EMH to Andrews, July 12, 1899, *Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association* 4 (December 1960), 6; House, "Reminiscences," 23-24; "Letters From The Colonel," EMH to Andrews, October 13, 1901, 17.

44. "Letters from The Colonel," EMH to Andrews, September 14, 1901, 14-15.

45. "Letters From The Colonel," EMH to Andrews, June 11, 1901, 7; "Letters From The Colonel," EMH to Andrews, June 18, 1901, 9-10.

46. "Letters From The Colonel," EMH to Andrews, August 2, 1901, 10; "Letters From The Colonel," EMH to Andrews, September 4, 1901, 12.

47. In a southern state like Texas the religion of a candidate with a heavy Protestant population had to be taken into account. James Wells' adherence to Catholicism would make any state-wide race a tough one for House to manage. Religion also played a role

when Woodrow Wilson years later wanted to appoint Louis Brandeis as attorney general. House played a key role in denying Brandeis that appointment. See "Letters From The Colonel," EMH to Andrews, September 8, 1901, 13-14 for House's concerns of Wells and his wife's Catholicism and the struggle that would have had to be mounted to elect such a candidate

48. "Letters From The Colonel," EMH to Andrews, January 15, 1902, 18; "Letters From the Colonel," EMH to Andrews, January 16, 1902, 18-19.

49. Andrews to EMH, April 19, 1895, EMHP; *The Galveston Daily News*, February 28, 1897; Rupert Richardson Interview with Ima Hogg, June 26, 1956, RRP.

50. Rupert Richardson Interview with Ima Hogg, June 26, 1958, RRP.

51. Rupert Richardson Interview with Ima Hogg, June 26, 1958, RRP.

52. Rupert Richardson Interview with Ima Hogg, June 26, 1958, RRP; House, "Reminiscences," 28.

53. House, "Reminiscences," 27-28.

54. House, "Reminiscences," 16-17; *Intimate Papers*, 1: 38.

Chapter Two
The National Stage

Edward M. House spent a few years following his time in Texas politics in an era that the colonel called his "twilight." House, much like the national Democratic Party, expended the years from 1904 to 1910 wandering in the political wilderness. The colonel, in those years, wanted desperately to satisfy his great ambition by attaching himself to a national figure. His first flirtation with national politics had proven unrewarding when he initiated a relationship with William Jennings Bryan, the three-time presidential nominee and leader of the party. House thought the Nebraskan immune to his advice and an impractical dreamer. His second excursion into national politics proved no more satisfying with his brief interest in the candidacy of Alton B. Parker, the Democratic presidential nominee in 1904. Disappointed at his lack of national influence he turned to his numerous business investments and cultivated further his list of contacts in the Democratic Party. Additionally, House spent much of his spare time reading in the fields of biography, psychology, and international affairs. By 1910 he had embraced a new political ideology the emerging national Progressive Movement and moved away from his previous conservative leanings and parochial southern roots. In late 1911, House met the man who would restore the Democrats to national power and fulfill his own ambitions, Governor Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey. Both men shared many common traits and struck up a close relationship that would only end at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

House quickly moved out of his twilight phase into a position of national power. By early 1913, he occupied a position of great personal and political power. He served in many ways as Wilson's chief of staff, vetting and helping select cabinet officials for

the president-elect. In fact, though not occupying an official place in the incoming administration, House probably held the second most powerful position. This chapter will discuss how House emerged from his years in the political wilderness to take his place as a powerbroker on the national stage.

I

The first decade of the twentieth century seemed an inopportune time for Edward House to fashion a role for himself as a presidential kingmaker. The Democrats remained a distinctly minority party. The party had never recovered from the electoral landslide that William Jennings Bryan suffered at the hands of the Republicans and William McKinley in the presidential election of 1896. Democrats enjoyed solid support in the South but evinced little strength outside of the region. Additionally, the Democrats fell to infighting between their eastern conservative wing and the more progressive or liberal western and southern factions. The eastern Democratic Party epitomized by former President Grover Cleveland represented the interests of banking houses and Wall Street. Southern and western Democrats believed that the party's eastern wing ignored the concerns of farmers and small producers. While William Jennings Bryan and his western reform-minded faction of the party came to national prominence during the presidential elections of 1896 and 1900, the conservatives remained a potent political force.[1]

In 1904, the eastern pro-business wing of the Democratic Party reasserted its influence. Conservatives seized control of the national party and nominated Judge Alton B. Parker, a jurist from New York, to head the presidential ticket. Many of House's old Texas friends identified with sound money, and the gold wing of the party supported the

judge in his campaign to unseat Theodore Roosevelt in the 1904 presidential election. Some of Parker's campaign advisers, knowing of House's electoral success on the state level, asked the colonel for a substantial campaign contribution. Additionally, Parker's managers asked House to take a large role in directing the campaign. House refused and Roosevelt won in a landslide, running on the promise of a "Square Deal" for the American public. The Democrats still suffered from some of their old problems. Bryan and many of his followers including Texas governor James Hogg refused to support Parker. In fact, many found Roosevelt to be a more progressive choice and at least tacitly supported the Republican president. The Democrats obviously still faced many challenges in their quest to return to national prominence.[2]

In 1908, progressive Democrats regained control of the of the national party, nominating William Jennings Bryan for president for the third time in four elections. This time the opponent turned out to be William Howard Taft, Roosevelt's Secretary of War and handpicked successor. House convinced of Bryan's utter impracticality and unelectability to be president, sat out yet another presidential campaign. The Democrats loss that fall only further cemented their status as the minority party. But rays of hope appeared soon after the Taft Administration took office.[3]

II

House and others saw some opportunity for the Democrats on the national scene. This really had little to do with the actions of the divided minority but more with the infighting that broke out between the majority Republicans. Taft proved a disappointment for many progressives as the president sided with the conservative Old Guard of the Republican Party on many of the public issues of the day. President Taft

first backed attempts of progressive Republicans in the House of Representatives to rewrite seniority rules to aid the cause of the reformist members who sought leadership positions in that body. He then reversed himself and sided with conservative Republicans and their leader the powerful Speaker of the House Joe Cannon. In addition, Taft also fired the progressive head of the U. S. Forestry Service Gifford Pinchot over a dispute with the conservative Secretary of the Interior Richard Ballinger. Taft too many times represented the stand pat Republicanism of the last century and did little to further progressive causes. These actions overshadowed the fact that Taft actually pursued some policies that progressives applauded, such as the prosecution of trusts. Many progressives, disappointed by the Taft administration, turned to ex-president Roosevelt as an alternative.[4]

In 1910, Roosevelt returned from safari in Africa disappointed in his former protégé's conduct in the presidency. He made many statements that openly challenged Taft's leadership of the party and seemed set to challenge the president for the Republican nomination in 1912. Roosevelt effectively took upon himself the leadership of progressive Republicans. The broad and solid support that the Republicans enjoyed since 1896 cracked upon these internal strains. Many Democrats including Edward M. House began to think, especially after the success of the party in the 1910 mid-terms, that a strong Democratic presidential nominee might be able to win in 1912.[5]

During his so-called twilight years, House underwent some changes in his ideological framework. He abandoned the conservative stands he embraced in Texas and began to espouse a more progressive ideology. Explaining the reasons for the change in mindset requires a great deal of historical guesswork. House did not begin to keep his

diary until the presidential campaign of 1912 was well underway and it left few clues about when this transformation occurred. Perhaps House left his southern parochial views behind when he moved from Austin, Texas, to the north and spent more time in his New York City apartment and summer homes in Massachusetts. House always talked to many people and may have been exposed to progressive thinkers and writers who broadened his views. He certainly cultivated progressive intellectuals during a later period in his career when he struck up friendships with such figures as Walter Lippmann and Herbert Croly of *The New Republic.*[6]

Cynics may contend that perhaps House never changed his political ideology at all. As a political boss in Texas he had endorsed reformers and conservatives alike. Perhaps House, being the ultimate pragmatist and opportunist, saw that only a progressive Democrat could win the 1912 presidential election. The only way, in House's mind, to achieve the role of presidential kingmaker may have been to attach himself to a northeastern progressive. Accordingly House in 1911 began to look for such a figure to offer his counsel and advice.[7]

III

House considered two potential candidates before settling on Woodrow Wilson and embarking on his career in national politics. He first sounded out the progressive mayor of New York City William J. Gaynor. In 1911, the colonel joined with other prominent Texans to extend an invitation to Gaynor to address the Texas legislature. When Gaynor stated he had no intention of going to Texas, House, as he put it, "struck him from my slate." Gaynor probably proved too mercurial for the more controlled House, and he next considered the national prospects of his protégé Charles Culberson, the senior senator

from Texas. But Culberson's drinking posed a problem, and he was too much a southerner for House's taste. Finally, at the insistence of Thomas Watt Gregory, an Austin lawyer and old House confidant, the colonel began to gauge the electoral prospects of Governor Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey.[8]

Ironically, the first person who recommended House to Wilson was one of the governor's closest advisors and earliest advocates on the national stage. Colonel George Harvey, the publisher of *Harper's Weekly* and prominent national Democratic wise man, touted the nascent Wilson candidacy on the front cover of his magazine. After the article appeared Harvey wrote to Wilson. Harvey analyzed the Texas political scene and mentioned both Senator Joseph Bailey, the junior senator from the state, and Colonel House. Harvey noted that while Bailey would probably back the candidacy of Judson Harmon, the conservative governor of Ohio and a rival of Wilson, House was a man of sound judgment and might be counted on for support. Wilson eventually dropped Harvey as an advisor because of his close ties to Wall Street and the perception it created among progressives. In the end, House replaced Harvey as Wilson's closest advisor and confidant. Nevertheless, Wilson became well acquainted with the presence of Colonel House and the efforts made on his behalf long before the two men would meet.[9]

House quickly though unofficially enlisted in the Wilson movement. Many colleagues like Thomas W. Gregory had already joined the campaign and encouraged House to aid the effort. In October 1911, House had written to Wilson to introduce himself to the governor and offered to combat rumors that dogged the candidate and the campaign. These stories dealt with Wilson's party loyalty. Wilson, during the 1896 presidential campaign, voted for the Gold Democrat ticket in response to William

Jennings Bryan and his stance on silver and the money issue. The story grew that Wilson failed to support Bryan in either the 1900 and 1908 campaigns when the Nebraskan again headed the national ticket. Additionally, questions arose whether Wilson even supported Alton B. Parker in 1904. Some people questioned Wilson's credentials as a Democrat and wondered if he had supported the Republicans in past national campaigns. House urged Wilson and his advisors to immediately confront this issue. The colonel stressed the importance of putting these stories to rest. At House's behest his old protégé Senator Charles Culberson issued a public statement reinforcing Wilson's Democratic credentials. House wanted these stories refuted before Wilson made a major speech at the State Fair of Texas at the end of October of 1911. Some officials in the Wilson campaign assured House that the stories amounted to old news and outright lies. House got reassurances that Wilson in fact supported Bryan and Parker in the past. Finally, Wilson personally guaranteed to House that he never failed to vote the Democratic ticket. Obviously impressed by the colonel's efforts, Wilson thanked House for his work. While House had not joined the Texans that invited Wilson to speak in the state and a latecomer to the campaign he quickly made his presence felt. [10]

Nonetheless, some scholars contend that House contributed little to the governor's victory in the 1912 presidential race. House only made a small donation to the campaign and served in an advisory capacity. In fact, House did not even organize the state of Texas for the Wilson campaign. Thomas Love, a Dallas attorney and former speaker of the state House of Representatives, actually secured the state for the Wilson forces during the pre-nomination contest. He organized the Wilson for president clubs and persuaded the governor to make a major speech in Dallas in October 1911. These events occurred

several weeks before the colonel and the governor held their first face to face meeting in New York City in November of the same year. Love, not House, delivered the Texas delegation safely into the Wilson column. Texas helped to secure the nomination for Wilson, acting as cushion against defeat after the governor lost a number of presidential primaries.[11]

Despite House's late embrace of the Wilson campaign the two men began to forge a bond that only deepened over time. The two men first met in New York City in November 1911. Aware of House's efforts to prove his party loyalty, Wilson seemingly took an instant liking to the colonel. The two men shared many things in common. Both were southerners who had moved to the northeast. Both had started out as conservative Gold Democrats during the 1890s only to embrace progressivism at a later date. The two men also fulfilled needs in each other as they sought to achieve national power. Wilson provided the path for House's ambition to attain access to the national stage. House possessed many contacts within the Democratic Party that Wilson lacked. The governor, elected to his first statewide office in 1910 had little or no connections with the national Democratic electoral apparatus but he proved a fresh face on the national scene and offered a viable alternative to the three-time presidential loser William Jennings Bryan.[12]

Additionally, House and the governor shared a common personal bond in the bouts of ill health from which both suffered. Wilson suffered from neurasthenia, a nervous disease, which removed him at various times from the public sphere. As a young man he had given up a career in the male dominated field of law and retired to the less masculine sphere of school-teaching. Furthermore, Wilson had few male friends and preferred the company of women. House also shared these experiences and made him a

compatible companion . Wilson could discuss with House various subjects like public affairs that he could not talk about with women. In turn, House provided a non-threatening presence to Wilson who needed his own masculinity reinforced after leaving his occupation as an attorney. House possessed a true gift in flattery and may have built up the confidence of the insecure Wilson who seemingly struggled with his own conception of male virility.[13]

After their initial meeting, House began to provide key services to the Wilson campaign. Wilson had risen to political prominence so quickly that he possessed few connections on the national scene. Never particularly gregarious, he cultivated few friends outside of his family circle. By contrast, House always maintained a vast network of friends and contacts. In particular, he worked to construct a relationship between Wilson and Bryan, the virtual leader of the Democrats. The colonel used his old friendship with the Nebraskan to build at least a tentative connection between the two men. At first any kind of alliance between the two seemed far-fetched. Wilson had never been an enthusiastic support of Bryan. Additionally, Wilson had written an intemperate letter during the 1890s that suggested that conservative Democrats should "knock" Bryan "into a cocked hat." House worked to smooth relations between the two. He passed along clippings of articles to Bryan about Wilson that showed the transformation of the governor from a conservative to a progressive. House also regularly corresponded with Bryan and visited the Nebraskan at his Rio Grande Valley farm. In the course of these interactions, House gauged the mood of Bryan and passed on vital information to Wilson.[14]

While House's labors to cultivate this Wilson-Bryan relationship remained unclear

the Great Commoner's actions during the pre-nomination race during the spring of 1912 showed that the colonel may have had some influence. Bryan stayed neutral during this period and did not endorse a candidate. The Nebraskan's sought-after support could have gone to Speaker of the House Champ Clark, Wilson's chief rival for progressive Democratic support. In the end, Bryan threw his support to Wilson when the Baltimore convention deadlocked between the governor and Clark. House probably swayed Bryan at the least to stay on the sidelines until a critical juncture of the campaign.[15]

Even though House provided some key services and began to construct a personal relationship with Wilson personal ambition trumped all other considerations. The late spring of 1912 did not provide much comfort for a Wilson backer. With mounting losses in primaries the campaign went bankrupt. House considered that perhaps Bryan might gain the nomination and even wrote Mrs. Bryan in some attempt to gain a position in a possible campaign if the Great Commoner was chosen again as the nominee. House also reassessed the chances of Senator Charles Culberson if the Democratic convention at Baltimore deadlocked but found his former protégé still wanting as a national candidate. In any event, House departed for a vacation in Europe before a nominee could be chosen and he be too closely identified with the losing Wilson movement.[16]

House's actions repeated the patterns that the colonel had followed during his career in Texas. While he was absent from the Democrats' national convention at Baltimore, allies such as Congressman Albert Sidney Burleson and Colonel Tom Ball probably served as the eyes and ears for him. Wilson also believed that House still possessed confidence in his candidacy as the Democrats met to select a nominee.[17]

Some Wilson campaign officials charged that House's role during the presidential

contest remained insignificant. William McCombs, Wilson's campaign manager and chairman of the Democratic Party, stated that House did little during the 1912 election. McCombs went to House for a campaign contribution and facilitated the meeting between the colonel and Wilson in November of 1911. He also noted that House only visited Wilson headquarters a few times when he returned from his European vacation after Wilson secured the nomination. In turn, McCombs maintained that House gave only minor assistance to the general election campaign. However, William McAdoo, Wilson's other campaign manager and future secretary of the treasury, challenged the accuracy of McCombs's account. Bitterness tinged McCombs's memoirs. House and McAdoo replaced McCombs in Wilson's inner circle and probably led to the angry tone of the campaign manager's book. Wilson also decided that he would not reward McCombs with a cabinet position or ambassadorship, which only deepened the former advisor's hard feelings toward the governor and his closest associate. These debates further cloud the issue of House's role.[18]

While the colonel did not act alone in playing the role of presidential maker House continued to render important services as the governor embarked upon his general election campaign. He acted to quell infighting that plagued the campaign. Wilson's two campaign managers, McCombs and McAdoo, disagreed violently about the general direction of the enterprise. McCombs, ill during the fall, seemingly grew jealous that more public acclaim came McAdoo's way. Wilson, disturbed by these reports at his national headquarters, dispatched House to investigate the stories of the feud. The two men disagreed over issues ranging from the staffing of campaign personnel at headquarters to the assignment of specific office space. Wilson hated direct

confrontations, and House acted to smooth the relationship over. The colonel moved to cool the ardor of McCombs who threatened to resign numerous times during the fall campaign. McCombs's instability finally moved House to back McAdoo in these internal disputes. In the end, House built a close relationship with McAdoo whom Wilson later tapped to serve as secretary of the treasury. Additionally, House worked to repair relations between the Wilson campaign and Tammany Hall, the New York state Democratic machine. House's political acumen gained him the governor's confidence, and when Wilson entered the White House, the Texan performed another service by producing a governing blueprint for the new administration.[19]

IV

As the 1912 election campaign took shape House began the writing of his utopian novel *Philip Dru: Administrator.* The book itself is a piece of badly constructed fiction. The colonel seemed conflicted over what kind of work he wanted to produce. David Houston, president of Washington University in St. Louis and a confident of House, suggested he write a straightforward treatise on economics. House wanted to reach as wide a audience as possible and produced a political romance instead. Nevertheless, the novel contained more of the essence of a political manifesto than a romance of the age.[20]

The fictional America of House's work bordered on the verge of a great revolutionary clash. This anticipated conflagration rested on the great differences that existed between the poor and the rich. Revolutionary ferment seemingly bubbled up in the slums of the great cities of America as the plutocracy of the country tightened its grip on the political and economic system. Visions of armed conflict between the classes seemed a real possibility to some Americans of the age. Many of the laboring classes

abandoned the mainstream political and economic philosophies of the era in favor of the Socialist Party. House thought that fundamental reforms of American society had to occur or conflict and radical ideologies would triumph.[21]

The colonel had written the novel anonymously and had it published by a small New York press. It enjoyed little popular circulation or notice. Nevertheless, some in the American political class read House's work. Some even thought that Theodore Roosevelt had produced the novel. The many scenes of martial violence and House's apocalyptic view of a ensuing conflict that would engulf American society matched much of Roosevelt's public statements and predictions of what America faced in 1912. While the novel did not have the impact that House hoped the book probably profoundly influenced the colonel's new patron Woodrow Wilson.[22]

House advocated, in his novel, a corporatization of American society. This vision entailed cooperation between the laboring classes and the propertied classes. House thought that progressive reforms could happen from above. In his piece of fiction Philip Dru, a former army officer who had to resign from the military due to illness, seized control of the federal government and set out to impose basic reforms upon American society. Dru, by fiat, imposed these reforms to reconcile the disparity of wealth between the haves and have nots. Part of this program involved the enactment of income and inheritance taxes that many progressives thought would relieve these great differences in wealth.[23]

In the novel, House also offered a blueprint as to the direction of Wilsonian foreign policy. Dru intervened in the Mexican Revolution much like Wilson did after he ascended to the presidency. Dru, like Wilson and House, considered the Mexicans to be

a mongrelized race incapable of maintaining a stable government. House's novel foreshadowed Wilsonian policy with its assertion that the United States would have to tutor the Mexicans in the finer points of democracy. Dru ended the Mexican Revolution after a climactic battle with Mexican forces. The administrator then constructed a rudimentary collective security alliance with the rest of the Latin American states, anticipating the proposal that House made later to the countries of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile to join with the United States in a pact that looked like the fictional agreement.[24]

House also had a distinctive vision when it came to other regions of the globe. The book betrayed the colonel's pronounced Anglophila, a characteristic that House may have owed to his father's British birth. Many prominent Americans like Theodore Roosevelt admired the British Empire because it represented global security and assured world peace. Additionally, some thought that the United States and Great Britain shared much in the ways of culture and language and represented the high water mark of Western civilization. The two countries moved toward a rapprochement during the late 1890s. Warmer relations continued during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, Colonel House embraced this closer Anglo-American relationship, and this thinking was reflected in *Philip Dru.*[25]

The British government, in House's fiction, entered into an alliance with Germany. These two countries possessed an interest in the Western Hemisphere. The American government, under Dru's direction, fomented an overthrow of a conservative British ministry. After this occurred a liberal government emerged, and Dru entered into an alliance with this new government. With an Anglo-American rapprochement

accomplished Dru attempted to remake the world into a place of orderly progress. Dru along with the other Great Powers of the globe entered into an international coalition to eliminate competition that led to war. This coalition, based upon free trade principles with guaranteed territorial integrity, foreshadowed some of the principles enunciated in the League of Nations Covenant created by House and Wilson. Furthermore, House wrote that the industrially advanced nations of Europe and Asia would economically exploit undeveloped portions of the world in carefully defined spheres of influence. Russia, considered medieval in its political and social structure, remained contained within its own borders. These fictional events predicted some of the actions of the Wilson administration. President Wilson along with allied leaders when they redrew the map of Europe attempted to contain the Russian Revolution within the boundaries of that country with the construction of the cordon sanitaire.[26]

The impact of *Philip Dru* upon Woodrow Wilson remains an open question. House gave Wilson a copy of his book before the president-elect departed on a vacation for Bermuda after the presidential election. By late 1912, the two men enjoyed a close relationship. The colonel, by all accounts, entered the Wilson circle and quickly assumed a role of great influence. Wilson had done little deep or systematic thinking about foreign policy. The 1912 presidential campaign centered exclusively on questions of domestic affairs. House seemingly put forward in his novel a coherent Wilsonian foreign policy vision. Wilson remained an isolated figure and did not move in the American diplomatic circles that included such men as Henry Cabot Lodge and Elihu Root. House's close proximity to the president-elect suggested that the colonel brought the issue of foreign policy to Wilson's attention.[27]

V

In 1912 the Democrats captured the White House because of fractures in the Republican Party. Theodore Roosevelt, running under the guise of the Bull Moose Party, siphoned off critical progressive votes from the majority Republican Party. Wilson and the minority Democrats only carried the presidential election with 42% of the popular vote. House, in his familiar role as political confident, began the process of helping to pick a cabinet and also settling into the role of presidential spokesman.[28]

House scouted for talent to include in the cabinet as soon as the election ended. The colonel knew many Democrats and again provided President-elect Wilson with a needed bridge to the national party. Job seekers knew that House had become the most important figure in the Wilson circle. Potential candidates for a cabinet or sub-cabinet position in the emerging Wilson administration appreciated the fact that they needed the colonel's seal of approval to gain a position. The cabinet quickly showed House's imprint. A number of Texans including Albert Sidney Burleson, appointed as postmaster general, joined the president's cabinet. Additionally, David Houston, another of the colonel's intimates from his Texas days, accepted the position of secretary of agriculture. Thomas W. Gregory, an Austin lawyer who brought House into the Wilson presidential movement, also found himself quickly placed in the cabinet as attorney general. House's closest allies in the Wilson campaign also found themselves in the cabinet. William McAdoo, one of Wilson's campaign managers, and with whom the colonel forged a close relationship, received the plum appointment of secretary of the treasury. Others like William McCombs, Wilson's other campaign manager, who House found impossible to work with, found themselves excluded from the cabinet.[29]

House reported that Wilson offered him any position in the cabinet except secretary of state. Political expediency forced Wilson to include William Jennings Bryan, the three-time presidential nominee and former titular head of the party, in the cabinet. House refused any official position with the incoming administration. He preferred to maintain his position as an unofficial advisor with no portfolio who could offer counsel over a wide range of issues. House reverted to his familiar role of friend and confidant. The colonel only intended to come to Washington to confer with Wilson or offer advice when called upon.[30]

House also served in the role of presidential spokesman. During the transition period he served as a liaison with the Democratic congress. Speaker of the House Champ Clark stated, after the election, that he had no idea as to what kind of program the president-elect planned to pursue after his inauguration. Wilson departed for a vacation to Bermuda immediately after the election. The speaker met with House to discuss some of the finer points of Wilson's legislative program known as the New Freedom. During the years of House's association with Wilson domestic and foreign leaders would consult the colonel to gain insight into the enigmatic plans and personality of the president. House possessed a talent to talk practically and realistically to individuals that Wilson lacked. The colonel quickly emerged as the public and private alter ego of the president.[31]

House also continued to serve as a conduit between Wilson and William Jennings Bryan. The colonel journeyed to Bryan's Florida home after the election to consult on potential cabinet members. House made it clear that while Wilson invited opinions on candidates for the positions the Nebraskan would possess no veto power over the

president-elect's choices. Again House served as Wilson's primary emissary to important leaders. By the time Wilson took office in March 1913, the colonel had assumed the roles as the president's chief spokesman and closest advisor. Colonel House now enjoyed the unfettered power he always craved. While he continued to advise Wilson on key domestic issues like the Federal Reserve Act, he was now poised to enter the larger arena of global politics.[32]

Endnotes

1. J. Rogers Hollingsworth, *The Whirligig of Politics: The Democracy of Cleveland and Bryan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 62-63, 182-183.

2. Hollingsworth, 211; Edward M. House, "Reminiscences," 29-31, Edward M. House Papers hereafter cited as EMHP typewritten copy in Manuscripts and Archives Division Yale University Library microfilm copy in Mary Couts Burnett Library Texas Christian University Library; Robert C. Cotner, *James Stephen Hogg: A Biography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1959), 558; Nathan Miller, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Life* (New York: Quill, 1992), 435.

3. *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House,* ed. Charles Seymour (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926), 1: 40.

4. For a good discussion of the dissolution of the Republican Party as the 1912 presidential election approached see Miller, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 496-531; also see John Milton Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), 143-163.

5. Miller, 496-531; *Intimate Papers,* 1: 40.

6. For a thorough examination of House's relationship with the intellectuals at the preeminent progressive journal *The New Republic* see Christopher Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America 1889-1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type* (New York: Knopf, 1965).

7. *Intimate Papers,* 1: 40.

8. *Intimate Papers,* 1: 40-42.

9. George Harvey to Woodrow Wilson, 1 March 1911, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 22: 466; George Harvey to Woodrow Wilson, 2 March 1911, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 22: 467; *Intimate Papers,* 1: 53.

10. Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 16 October 1911, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 23: 458; Walter Measday to Edward M. House, 17 October 1911, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 23: 463; Woodrow Wilson to Edward M. House, 14 February 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 24: 163.

11. Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 333-335.

12. Frances Denton to Woodrow Wilson, 30 December 1911, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 23: 631-632.

13. For a discussion of neurasthenia and its impact on late nineteenth and early twentieth century gender roles see E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 186-187, 189, 191-192; for a fuller explanation of House's appeals to Wilson's vanity and insecurities see John Milton Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 2009), 193.

14. *Intimate Papers* 1: 55; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson 2 February 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 24: 131; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson 14 April 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 24: 332; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 8 February 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* 24: 140.

15. Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 7 June 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 24: 464-465; Link, 431.

16. Link, 344.

17. Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 9 June 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 24: 489-490; Woodrow Wilson to Edward M. House, 24 June 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 24: 498.

18. William F. McCombs, *Making Woodrow Wilson President* (New York: Fairview Publishing Company, 1921), 75-77; William McAdoo, *Crowded Years: The Reminiscences of William McAdoo* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), 127-128.

19. Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 31 July 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 25: 198; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 21 September 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 25: 213; Diary of Edward M. House, 12 October 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 25: 415; *Intimate Papers,* 1: 72-73; Diary of Edward M. House, 2 November 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 25: 507.

20. *Intimate Papers,* 1: 154.

21. Edward M. House, *Philip Dru: Administrator* (Boston: Indpublish, 2000), 66-69, 56-57; *Intimate Papers,* 1: 155-156; Rupert Richardson, *Colonel House: The Texas Years* (Abilene TX: Hardin-Simmons, 1964), 268-269.

22. Richardson, 262; *Intimate Papers,* 1: 157.

23. *Philip Dru,* 89-90.

24. *Philip Dru,* 163-165.

25. *Philip Dru,* 158-159.

26. *Philip Dru,* 158-159.

27. House describes giving Wilson a copy of *Philip Dru* as the president-elect left on a vacation to Bermuda after the election. Edward M. House "Diary," 16 November 1912, EMHP, typewritten copy in the Manuscript and Archives Division of Yale University Library microfilm copy in Mary Couts Burnett Library Texas Christian University.

28. Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest,* 204; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 22 November 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 25: 559; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 28 November 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* 25: 563-566.

29. *Intimate Papers,* 1: 101; Diary of Edward M. House, 8 January 1913, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 27: 21-22; Edward M. House "Diary," 17 January 1913, EMHP; Diary of Edward M. House, 2 November 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 25: 207.

30. Diary of Edward M. House, 8 January 1913, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 27: 23.

31. Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 28 November 1912, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 25: 563-566.

32. *Intimate Papers,* 1: 101.

Chapter Three
A Man of the World

By March of 1913, Colonel Edward M. House, occupied a unique position in American history. He enjoyed the confidence and close friendship of the newly inaugurated president, Woodrow Wilson. He decided that he could best serve Wilson as his confidential advisor without a permanent portfolio. The colonel helped the president to construct a cabinet and offered counsel on several domestic programs that arose out of Wilson's campaign platform "the New Freedom." For example, House helped to flesh out legislation that created the Federal Reserve System. Domestic issues took precedence during the early weeks and months of the Wilson administration. Foreign affairs weighed little in the minds of the American people or their president. Wilson expected domestic issues would define his presidency. Nevertheless, the Wilson administration, chiefly through the vision and ambition of his confidential advisor, quickly turned to the international arena.[1]

House possessed a unique view of the world. His vision of foreign policy appeared in a novel published in 1912 and entitled *Philip Dru: Administrator*. The colonel, in his fictional world, outlined a policy that ensured a lasting world peace. The book advocated an international coalition supported by an Anglo-American alliance. He foresaw a system created by Dru that would lessen international tension and emphasize cooperation. House thought that perhaps his newly minted position as the president's closest adviser could help put his fictional plans into concrete form.[2]

Wilson's personality and methods of operation helped House in his attempts to put his vision into action. The president kept his circle of friends small. Wilson rarely consulted his cabinet and members of the administration remained in the dark over his

policy formulations and goals. Some in fact complained to House about the president's secretive nature. House noted that Wilson called upon him for advice and counsel often, and he enjoyed unfettered access to the chief executive. House and Wilson's close informal relationship contrasted sharply with the first two secretaries of states who served the chief executive.[3]

William Jennings Bryan, Wilson's first secretary of state, gained his position because of political expediency. Bryan's role as the leading Democrat in the country required the president to place the Great Commoner in the cabinet. Bryan took the plum job as secretary of state despite total inexperience in the fields of foreign affairs and diplomacy. House gave Bryan scant thought as he met with world leaders and attempted to reorder global politics. In 1913, House's early impressions of Bryan gained credence when he visited several European officials who dismissed the secretary as too "visionary" and too naïve to conduct important international negotiations. Even after the Great War started House still kept Bryan ignorant of important foreign policy initiatives, such as Wilson's offers to mediate an end to the First World War. In 1915, House journeyed to Europe on just such a mission. Bryan remained on the sidelines until he resigned from his post in the wake of the *Lusitainia* incident. Bryan bitterly complained that Wilson had never taken him into his confidence. In fact, at the time Bryan publicly suggested that House usurped the role of secretary of state in almost every capacity.[4]

House continued in his role as Wilson's chief foreign policy advisor when Robert Lansing succeeded Bryan as Wilson's second secretary of state. Both Wilson and House doubted the Lansing's abilities as a diplomat. House dismissed Lansing "as not a big man" and felt that Wilson acting as his own secretary of state did not need unwanted

advice from the head of the State Department. Wilson went even further and considered Lansing a mere clerk. The president only wanted his secretary of state to compose diplomatic notes while most important questions of diplomacy remained in the hands of Wilson and House. Additionally, Wilson denigrated the intelligence of Lansing and House at times felt he had to defend the secretary. In early 1916, Lansing remained on the outside as House planned yet another shuttle mission to Europe to explore peace possibilites.[5]

House displayed in his efforts as Wilson's chief diplomat many of the traits that surfaced during his years in Texas and national politics. His penchant for manipulation and secretiveness clearly came to the fore during his years as Wilson's primary foreign policy advisor. The colonel undermined the positions of both Bryan and Lansing and made sure few advisors interfered with his access to the president. House also demonstrated a pro-British and pro-Allied bias in his various shuttle missions to Europe. In fact, the colonel attempted to manipulate the president to drop America's traditional policy of neutrality in European wars by agreeing to the infamous House-Grey Memorandum, which guaranteed American intervention in the war, with the help of the British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey.[6]

Nevertheless, House's efforts also hastened the process of modernizing American foreign policy. The colonel, with the aid of his friend Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, realized that the world would grow more interconnected and interdependent. House thought that the United States could no longer stand aloof from international affairs. He reasoned that events in Europe and elsewhere could impact the economic and political stability of the United States. He embarked on his various shuttle

missions to stave off the First World War and then to bring about an early end to the conflict. House blazed an important trail in which the United States sent special envoys to regions throughout the world to promote global peace. In the modern era House filled this role and set America down the road to internationalism.

Additionally, House also saw a threat posed to the United States by German militarism. Germany's system of government and its seeming determination to dominate the world made America's mission clear. House thought that the United States must stand with the Allies to preserve democracy and freedom across the globe. House began the process of aligning America against ideologies that threatened world peace and security. Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries the U.S. attempted to spread democracy and protect it from such movements as fascism, communism, and later terrorism. This commitment to the defense of democratic ideals began through the diplomatic efforts of House in the years before America's entrance into World War I.

House's commitment to democracy not only promoted political but also economic stability. Many American foreign policy elites believed that democracies would not engage in competition for markets and resources like empires. Rather democracies would cooperate in a reformed international system that eliminated such rivalries. With economic struggles lessened this would reinforce the Open Door policy of the United States. America could conduct business free of the old imperial rivalries and have free access to markets and resources in House's grand scheme to democratize the world.

The origins of collective security can also be seen in House's labors. His proposal that America negotiate the ABC pact with three South American countries contained the seeds of the ideas that brought the League of Nations to fruition. House also

proposed meetings among the Great Powers of Europe in a forum to discuss and arbitrate disagreements. These discussions at least in rudimentary form held the origins of the League idea. This chapter will assess these aspects of House's diplomacy as well as the more negative aspects of the colonel's efforts.

I

Colonel House came into the Wilson Administration with a distinctive vision of American foreign policy. In his utopian novel *Philip Dru: Administrator* his fictional benevolent dictator after solving numerous internal problems turned to international issues. House contended that a few men should and could shape events. In many ways House saw himself in Dru's role. His close proximity and access to Wilson allowed him to attempt to pursue a policy that anticipated a long and lasting peace. House disdained William Jennings Bryan and the State Department. He felt that Bryan's appointees lacked the appropriate professional skills necessary to bring about his broader vision of a durable peace. House's plunge into diplomacy only reinforced his earlier perceptions of the utter impracticability of the secretary of state. In 1913, on a trip to Europe, House noted that several individuals denigrated Bryan's abilities. In fact, House thought his labors constituted the serious work of the Wilson Administration. Bryan, in the midst of negotiating his arbitration treaties, provided a needed distraction for the intrusive secretary of state. Bryan hoped to make warfare an unpalatable policy choice among the international community. He secured agreements among several nations that committed them to present areas of potential conflicts to mediation and called for a "cooling off" period of a year before a country could resort to an armed response to any area of contention. Meanwhile House consulted with various

ambassadors in the hope of securing the basis of a better understanding between the Great Powers. House even defended the president to Sir Edward Grey. Grey believed that both Wilson and Bryan held pacifistic views. House countered this claim and asserted that the President would not hesitate to defend American interests. Wilson also talked early and often of ways to remove Bryan from the cabinet. House and Wilson both thought that even early in the president's term that foreign policy initiatives should originate with them. Ironically, House and Bryan held utopian views when it came to diplomatic relations and both in different ways hoped to promote global peace.[7]

House formulated plans to ensure a better and more stable relationship among the Great European Powers. The colonel identified as a cause for these tensions the naval arms race between England and Germany and the problems that grew out of this rivalry for oceanic superiority. Germany possessed Europe's largest and most modern army. While Great Britain built the world's greatest navy. The German Kaiser Wilhelm II felt Germany's economic and military security threatened authorized a massive building program to keep pace with Britain's navy. This naval race put in jeopardy a century of nearly uninterrupted peace with chilly relations ensuing between these two powers. The competition then extended into the building of armaments as both countries attempted to maintain parity with the other.[8]

House thought that the United States could play a constructive role in bringing about some sort of agreement between Germany and Britain to limit the naval race and the building of armaments. He also wanted a broader agreement in place brokered by America to quell international competition, among the Great Powers, for resources and markets much as put forth in *Philip Dru.* The colonel first sounded out various European

ambassadors in Washington. He thought that England, Germany, and Japan could do great things with the cooperation of the United States to promote international peace. House imagined himself as his fictional administrator and sought to keep his efforts a secret from the State Department and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. This approach fit in which negotiations would take place in private and once decided made public fit with his penchant for intrigue. House only confided in his diary and at times to Woodrow Wilson his desire to reshape the world. The colonel continued to work behind the scenes as he had done during his years in Texas and in national politics. House maintained the outward appearance of the concerned friend and private citizen who only offered counsel and advice when called upon. But he soon constructed a niche for himself as the president's chief diplomatic advisor and personal envoy to the European capitals.[9]

House first went to Europe as a private citizen to put his plans into action. In the summer of 1913 the colonel met Sir Edward Grey on a trip to England. He outlined a plan that would lead as he termed it a better understanding between the European powers. House laid the ground work for a return trip to Europe in the spring and summer of 1914. During this mission House made more concrete proposals in the hopes of furthering a durable peace.[10]

II

House went on his first shuttle mission to Europe with the intention of fostering a new international system that lessened the threat of armed conflict. The colonel decided to journey to Germany in an unofficial capacity. House's role as a private agent conducting diplomacy closely resembled the process that Wilson followed by sending

individuals to Mexico, including former Governor John Lind of Minnesota. Lind and House found their jobs difficult or impossible because of their ignorance of foreign cultures and political systems. In many instances, Wilsonian diplomacy suffered, for both men either ended up sending overly optimistic or wrong assessments of the situations they witnessed.[11]

Nevertheless, at House's suggestion Wilson agreed to the colonel's diplomatic mission. Both Wilson and House thought naively that the United States could negotiate some understanding among the European powers that vaguely contemplated some sort of peace. This contention overlooked the fact that Edward Grey and continental foreign ministers tried and failed to alleviate centuries old European rivalries and regional conflicts. The president and his advisor manifested great hubris in thinking they could bring about a permanent European peace despite the fact that both men possessed no foreign policy expertise. While European statesmen who held far greater insight into the relationship between the Great Powers had failed to achieve this goal.[12]

In 1914, House embarked on his trip to Germany with a belief that he could reorder global politics. He heard that the German government would resist any suggestions that hinted at disarmament. House hoped to press upon the Kaiser a need for a "naval holiday." Arriving in Germany, he found that many German officials like Arthur Zimmermann, the deputy German foreign minister, looked on with some favor a need for disarmament and better relations with Great Britain. Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, the architect of the German Imperial Navy, displayed a noted dislike of the British and rejected any talk of a naval holiday. Additionally, House conferred with Gottlieb von Jagow, Germany's foreign minister, who rebuffed the colonel's proposal for disarmament

talks. House confided to his diary that he saw the situation as "jingoism run stark mad" and predicted a great cataclysm if he could not get the principal countries into disarmament discussions. After consulting with these German officials House concluded his mission would accomplish little as he met the Kaiser at Potsdam, Germany on 1 June 1914.[13]

House and the Kaiser spoke of common areas of concern the United States and Germany shared. The colonel made the point that America, Britain, and Germany possessed a community of interest when it came to maintaining peace. He pointedly suggested that if the three nations stood together they could ensure the avoidance of war. House again reiterated the need for Germany to declare a naval holiday before better relations with the British could occur. The rivalry for military dominance on the high seas and an arms race still precluded a new understanding, as House put it, between England and Germany. The Kaiser despite his frosty relationship with the British government still professed his fondness for the English people. Wilhelm II also emphasized that the "Anglo-Saxon" race as composed in England, America, and Germany should stand together. The Kaiser questioned why Great Britain would remain allied with the "Latins" (French) and the "Slavs" (Russians). He found them "semi-barbarous" and that only the Anglo-Saxons could advance the cause of "Christian civilization." Nevertheless, the Kaiser remained silent about his willingness in his conversation with House when it came to the central question of curtailing naval building or limiting armaments. House then suggested to the Kaiser that perhaps due to America's distance and the dislike that existed among the European powers the United States could rectify any difficulties that arose on the continent. The Kaiser seemed to agree with

House's view. This taken with Wilhelm II's silence on a naval holiday encouraged House to continue his mission to England in order to undertake an agreement that contemplated disarmament.[14]

House then met with Sir Edward Grey. They talked of the difficulty of reaching any kind of agreement with Germany that looked towards disarmament and restraining the naval race that existed between the two powers. While in England, during the spring of 1914, House unveiled a plan that he had suggested in *Philip Dru.* House hoped to suggest a cooperative plan among the European powers that would end potential conflicts over colonies. The colonel proposed in the midst of conversations with Grey and Sir William Tyrell, the personal secretary of Grey, a program in which the industrialized countries of the world would develop as House put it the more "backward" areas of the world. Each country, which included the United States, Great Britain, France, and Germany would join together in an international consortium and make money available for investment in underdeveloped countries. Each of the industrialized nations then could without competition possess a sphere of influence in a particular area of the world. In return, the Great Powers accessed raw resources that each country needed to fuel its industrial base. House spoke of investment in such areas like South America and giving Germany an entry into the development of Persia. This pleased Grey as it would lessen Russian influence in the region which Britain had long feared. House suggested that these general outlines be put into some sort of concrete proposal that he could present to President Wilson. Grey, Tyrell, Walter Hines Page, the American ambassador to Britain, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, the British ambassador to America, and House sat down to address this task as the colonel continued his talks with British officials.[15]

Grey and House also discussed other areas in which the Great Powers could address areas of international conflict. Both men thought that freer and more frequent conversations should occur between the leaders of countries like Germany and Britain. The colonel and the foreign secretary found that the emerging Anglo-American friendship benefited from the talks that House held with British officials. House and Grey also thought special ambassadors with broad portfolios could open up avenues of useful dialogue between countries that faced potential conflicts. House hoped to return to Germany and hold further talks with the Kaiser. This ambition ended when Grey and his colleagues in the British cabinet remained slow to respond to any proposals that House put forward.[16]

In concrete terms House accomplished little in his first attempt at shuttle diplomacy. During the spring and summer of 1914, neither the Germans nor the British evidenced great interest in finding areas of common interest to promote a permanent peace. The great cataclysm that House predicted occurred in August of that year. Europe racked by arms races and conflicting alliances between the Central Powers and the Entente only needed a spark to touch off a conflagration. The assassination of the heir to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire provided the provocation that ignited the Great War. House believed he had done all he could do and by extension reassured President Wilson that the administration had explored all avenues to avoid a possible conflict.[17]

Wilson immediately followed the traditional American policy of declaring the United States neutral in any European war. The president asked House's advice about the possibility of making offers of peace mediation between the Central Powers and the Allies. Colonel House thought that the president should do nothing late in the summer

of 1914. House knew that Wilson, distracted by the fatal illness of his first wife, could provide no constructive plan for peace. Additionally, the colonel counseled the president to prevent Bryan from offering any program for peace. Secretary Bryan remained lightly regarded as a public figure among European leaders, and any peace proposal generated by the Nebraskan would only lead to outright rejection by the warring nations . A major diplomatic move by Bryan, in House's opinion, would only weaken Wilson's position as head of the most powerful neutral to initiate peace talks.[18]

Nonetheless, House even as early as August and September of 1914 feared a German victory over the Allies. He thought if the Western democracies fell to militarism that at some point the United States would have to fight Germany. A threat of a future war made House and many Americans of the era ponder the fate of their own democratic institutions. The United States always maintained a distrust of a large standing army and big military establishment. If German militarism won out over European democracy then many believed that this American tradition would end. Increased military budgets and larger armed forces would undermine civilian control of the country. House stated that America might even become a "military nation." After hostilities broke out the colonel showed a definite penchant for the Allies and England.[19]

Several factors weighed in House's mind to favor the Allies even in the opening days of the First World War. The colonel's British heritage probably played a role; House's father immigrated from Britain and like many first generation Americans familial identifications still remained strong. Additionally, House remained a staunch Anglophile. He thought that America and Britain shared a "special relationship" based on many traditions like language, culture, and an adherence to democracy. British

propaganda also probably shaped House's views especially after Germany invaded Belgium. The British entered the Great War when Germany violated the borders of that country as it pushed into France. The so-called "rape" of that country moved many Americans onto the Allied side. In particular, House enjoyed a friendship with Sir Edward Grey with whom he conferred many times during 1913 and 1914. The foreign secretary influenced many of House's ideas when it came to diplomatic initiatives like collective security and suggesting that a postwar league of nations. Finally, House believed, like many Americans of the era, that if Germany upset the century old European balance of power it might next direct its ambitions toward Western Hemisphere. Germany might look to undermine the Monroe Doctrine and dominate South America. House certainly maintained these views throughout the years of American neutrality and would try to maneuver the United States into a closer relationship with the Allies.[20]

Despite House's biased views, he pushed Wilson into making an offer, after a period of inactivity at the beginning of the war, to mediate a peace. The colonel even offered to go to Europe when called upon by the president. House extracted from the British government a series of terms as a basis to begin peace parleys with the Germans. These included a plan for disarmament, a guaranty of peace, and an indemnity to Belgium. House thought, as the year dragged on, that the war had to settle into a draw before peace talks could commence. Spring-Rice advised House to do nothing unless he wanted to upset the budding relationship between Great Britain and America. Both the Allies and the Central Powers continued to rebuff any offers of peace mediation. House stymied at his efforts to play the peacemaker and failing to bend world events to his will turned his attention closer to home.[21]

House suggested to Wilson that perhaps the New World could teach the Old World something about maintaining international peace and security. The colonel wanted a closer relationship between North and South America. He proposed a mutual security treaty between Argentina, Brazil, and Chile and the U. S. to further his idea. The pact obligated each signatory to protect the others from outside attack. The agreement also promised to preserve the republican institutions of each government which saw the U.S. endorsing the idea of protecting and promoting international democracy. Additionally, the pact anticipated a system where conflicting nations could settle disputes by arbitration. It also contemplated that only governments would manufacture armaments. This eliminated, in House's mind, the business motive that initiated the arms race that had started the First World War. In the colonel's opinion private munitions owners sold arms to the military to pad their profit margins and welcomed conflict. Government ownership eliminated this condition and ensured policies that avoided war. House hoped to provide an example to Europe and a path to ensure global peace after the war ended. Wilson approved of House's initiative and the colonel set to contact the three principal ambassadors of the ABC countries to get discussions underway. In the end, the so-called ABC pact negotiations floundered as Chile did not wish to submit old issues with its neighbor Peru to international arbitration. The South American republics also distrusted the United States' Latin American policy because of Wilson's various military interventions in the region.[22]

Again House's grand plans failed to reach fruition. Nevertheless, the colonel's actions and ideas worked to modernize American foreign policy during the first and second years of the Wilson Administration. He involved the United States in the affairs

of Europe for the first time during the modern era with his first shuttle mission to Europe. House recognized that due to the interconnected nature of the world America could no longer stand apart from European developments. America's growing economic and political influence led the colonel to fear that if war broke out on the continent it might soon engulf America. House sought to bring about a better understanding between the Great Powers of Europe brokered by the United States. He began to usher in an era of American internationalism. Additionally, after the war broke out House planted the seeds of collective security in the ABC Treaty negotiations which came to the fore with the creation of the League of Nations. In the third year of the Wilson Administration House continued his efforts to modernize American foreign policy despite the flaws in his views and methods

III

In early 1915, despite House's pro-British bias, he still posed as an honest broker who wanted to bring about an early end to the First World War. Colonel House thought that, in spite of his pre-war failures at European shuttle diplomacy, he could still bring the warring parties to the peace table. He proposed to Cecil Spring-Rice a plan to open talks with Germany in anticipation of a permanent peace. House believed he could settle not only the issues between the Central Powers and the Allies against each other but also craft a new international system that maintained order and harmony.[23]

House again contemplated that any such mission should rest in his hands. The colonel remained convinced that Secretary Bryan's reputation in Europe as an impractical dreamer would hamper the real work of bringing the warring parties to the peace table. Additionally, House proposed to Wilson and the president agreed that he should approach

the Central Powers and the Allies in an unofficial capacity. House thought he could travel to Europe unhampered by public and press attention. The president felt that House could offer helpful suggestions to the warring nations that could facilitate peace talks. The colonel imagined himself as some sort of secret agent and devised a code to communicate with the president through their correspondence. Conversely, House received a good deal of public attention due to his rising profile and statements by Wilson that the colonel spoke for him and that in all matters represented his "second self." In House's mind this probably meant that he spoke for the president in all matters. There appeared no space between the two men when it came to formulating diplomatic initiatives.[24]

Nevertheless, House bolstered by Wilson's intimations, went further than the chief executive anticipated. The colonel concocted a grand plan to bring the Central Powers and the Allies into a conference with specific plans to bring the war to an end and to settle old continental issues. House believed that he possessed wide latitude in making American foreign policy. However, Wilson likely only wanted his personal envoy to listen and make helpful suggestions that might foster peace talks. In turn, European statesmen like Sir Edward Grey, assumed that House represented the official position of the Wilson administration. This understanding affected future attempts at diplomacy by House. Nonetheless, in January of 1915, House departed America for England with a grand idea that he could achieve an end to the war and bring about universal peace.[25]

House's plan envisioned a Versailles type peace conference. In fact he foresaw the commencement of two conventions. In the first, the belligerents would assemble and construct a peace agreement settling old continental issues like the fate of Alsace-

Lorraine, the disputed province that marked the border between Germany and France. A second convention convened by the neutrals with the United States presiding, contemplated to reform warfare. This called for a covenant drafted by the convention that forbade the killing of non-combatants by aircraft, the violation of neutral territory by a warring nation suggesting how Germany treated Belgium in attempting to implement the Schlieffen Plan on the Western Front, and setting forth certain lanes of safety at seas in order that shipping of all countries belligerents and neutral would not face attacks in those areas. This last proposal related to the maritime situation that existed at the time House went to Europe on his mission. Great Britain imposed a naval blockade on Germany when the war began with the hope of starving the latter into submission. In February 1915 the German navy, undermanned on the high seas declared the North Sea and other regions around the British Isles a war zone. The German naval high command promised to attack commercial vessels entering this area with its newly commissioned U-boats. German officials like Von Tirpitz hoped that the submarine would do what the British blockade aimed by cutting off vital munitions and foodstuffs bound to English ports. This declaration impacted U.S. interests when it came to the travel of neutrals, whether on ocean liners or on merchant ships, into the war zone. German policy threatened American property and lives traveling on those vessels. While many Americans decried the British practice of seizing neutral cargos bound to German ports, the use of the submarine challenged the basic notions of humanity embodied in international law. Sir William Tyrell noted that if Wilson, House, and Grey stood together that in fact war could be made more "humane." This bloc could withstand the objections that Tyrell predicted would come from Germany, Russia, and France.

Nonetheless, English officials such as Sir Edward Grey wanted more from the United States.[26]

Grey wanted direct American involvement in the shaping of any peace agreement. At first House demurred based upon the settled foreign policy of the United States. American diplomacy since the time of the Monroe Doctrine had specifically forbidden participation in European affairs. The colonel felt comfortable in determining the fate of Latin America with his proposal of the ABC treaty and told Grey of his efforts to bring about a better understanding between North America and South America. The foreign secretary approved of House's efforts perhaps looking to reinforce the colonel's fear that the Germans intended to extend their influence into the Western Hemisphere. A question remained about whether an American diplomat could involve his country in a European war. This went back to the time of George Washington who decried any foreign entanglements. Nevertheless, thanks to Theodore Roosevelt's mediation of the Russo-Japanese War and House's own pre-war attempts at shuttle diplomacy the old traditions that underpinned American diplomacy fell away. House plunged deeper into the morass of European politics as his mission continued.[27]

The colonel wanted to get to Germany as soon as possible. He feared a break with the Germans over some sort of incident on the high seas with its February declaration on submarine warfare. German-American relations suffered already with the United States government favoring the Allies. Wilson's August 1914 proclamation of neutrality rang hollow to the German government with its loans and sales of munitions to the Allied countries. Grey and British officials urged House to delay the German leg of his shuttle mission. Perhaps they wanted to work on the impressionable colonel more

and deliver the United States firmly into the allied camp. Despite the delay of his trip to the continent House began to flesh out a plan that he hoped he could present to the Germans as a basis for peace negotiations.[28]

House thought that armed with specific terms that he hoped to broker some sort of end to the war. The colonel, possessing scant knowledge of European politics but endowed with his own inflated sense of his diplomatic skills, went to Germany with the thought he could bring the combatants into peace talks. The British and their allies insisted that any peace agreement contain certain terms. The German army must evacuate occupied Belgium and northern France. Additionally, the German Empire had to indemnify Belgium for the 1914 invasion and the damages inflicted upon that country. House rather naively thought the Germans would agree to peace talks on this basis. In March 1915, with this belief in place, House proceeded to Germany to see if he could get peace talks off the ground. He began his diplomatic efforts by meeting with Arthur Zimmerman, the deputy foreign minister. House outlined his program of convening a peace convention that not only looked at ending the war but also at reforming the international system that would make global conflict unthinkable. Colonel House thought that President Wilson could help broker an end to the war.[29]

Persuaded by Sir Edward Grey the colonel moved from staying aloof when it came to forging a peace settlement to proposing terms upon which the Central Powers and Allies might find a basis for a truce. House also altered his previous stance by insisting to Zimmermann that he had always held "pro-German" views. This suggested that House believed that the art of diplomacy allowed him to make representations that a certain official wanted to hear though the colonel might not have truly believed what he said.

House hinted that America would defend Germany's position at any peace conference and help broker a truce favorable to the Central Powers. Additionally, House met with the German Chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, where the issue of "freedom of the seas" arose.[30]

German officials appeared especially interested in this idea. Britain, with its powerful navy, controlled the sea lanes going into and out of Germany. The British blockade held Germany in a death grip as it struggled to import important foodstuffs and munitions to fight the war. The Germans wanted their commerce unmolested by the English navy. This meant a lifting of the blockade and perhaps a limitation on British naval construction House thought that perhaps he could present this German idea to the British as a way to initiate peace and disarmament talks. He thought that "freedom of the seas" potentially constituted a major concession by the English but House also expected Germany to accede to Allied demands. German officials remained fixated on the idea of "freedom of the seas" and reluctant to discuss peace terms that contemplated an evacuation of northern France and Belgium. House, even though he possessed little diplomatic experience, took the proposal for "freedom of the seas" back to the English. In turn, Grey and the British rejected any talk of "freedom of the seas" as long as the war continued. The foreign secretary countered that if Germany guaranteed "freedom of the land," in the context of occupied Belgium and France, England might discuss a "freedom of the seas." The British would not abandon its blockade or naval building as long as the conflict progressed. Discouraged by his lack of progress in the furtherance of peace talks, House left Berlin after only a short time and returned to London.[31]

A central question remains. Was peace possible during House's second shuttle trip?

It seems unlikely. House found no common ground to initiate peace talks between the Central Powers and the Allies as the war dragged on into its second year. English officials refused to discuss the lifting of the naval blockade of Germany. The German government which had just announced its submarine offensive seemed unwilling to seriously consider the evacuation of France and Belgium. Neither side appeared exhausted enough to even enter into serious discussions that contemplated a cease-fire. Despite the roadblocks, House's correspondence suggested he harbored hopes of a negotiated peace. He took at face value the public pronouncements that the British and Germans made that looked to end the war early. In turn, Wilson shared House's opinions and clung to the dream of brokering an end to the conflict. House also continued to think he could reshape global politics and wandered deeper into European wartime politics.[32]

In the course of House's conversations with Grey, the foreign secretary kept after the confidential advisor to more deeply immerse the United States in Europe's present and future. Grey, upon House's return to England, reinforced his contention that America must take a central role in brokering a peace agreement that would end the First World War. Additionally, he suggested that the United States should join a proposed League of Nations. The United States as the most powerful neutral country in the world could not stand aloof from international politics. Grey emphasized that advances in technology and communications made the world a more interdependent place and that America's international isolation had come to an end. House held many such conversations with the foreign secretary, and his correspondence with Grey reveals his belief that the only way to ensure a future global peace depended upon American participation in such a

league. With his close relationship with the president, House surely impressed these points upon Wilson. President Wilson possessed no formal relationship with other league advocates like William Howard Taft, the former president and head of the League to Enforce Peace, and his closest advisor held a powerful position of influence. House also looked for other ways to bridge the differences that divided the Central Powers and Allies.[33]

The naval blockade remained a major stumbling block in alleviating tensions between the warring nations. House and Wilson attempted to redraw their objectives by finding common ground among the belligerents that might lead to peace negotiations. One major issue centered on seizing foodstuffs bound to German ports by the British navy. Grey told House he would open talks on this issue if the Germans abandoned the use of the submarine and stopped the use of poisonous gas. House hoped to lay the foundation for broader peace talks until the torpedoing of the ocean liner the *Lusitania* by the Germans on 7 May 1915.[34]

At the time of the *Lusitania* crisis House continued his talks with British officials that looked to bring about an early end to the war. Ironically, the colonel and King George V, the English monarch, spoke about the tragedy that could occur if the Germans sank an ocean liner in the days before the *Lusitania* crisis. The sinking of the ship only reinforced House's pro-British stance. While the British seized cargo bound for German ports they never stooped to kill innocent non-combatants. House thought the German government had committed a barbarous act and its action would lead to American retribution. The *Lusitania* incident violated Victorian conceptions of warfare. The U-boat commander neither warned the ship of its presence nor offered to pick up

survivors in the chilly waters off the coast of Ireland. House thought that the sinking of the *Lusitania* would lead to a break with Germany and America entering the conflict on the side of the Allies. The colonel and Walter Hines Page, the American ambassador to Great Britain, quickly thought it was only a matter of time before the United States would be at war. Additionally, the *Lusitania* incident challenged the official position of American foreign policy.[35]

President Wilson emphasized that neutrals possessed the right to travel to the war zone unmolested. He emphasized the idea of neutral rights in his note to the German government in which he protested the sinking of the *Lusitania.* House agreed with Wilson and applauded the president's first note that forcefully pleaded the case for the rights of neutrals and wanted the Germans to abandon submarine warfare. Secretary Bryan disagreed with both men and thought that Americans traveling into the war zone should do so at their own risk. The German government published on 1 May 1915 a warning, in the *New York Times,* to the American public that warned of the dangers that passengers on the *Lusitania* faced. Bryan possessed the more realistic view when it came to the issue of neutral rights. He believed that logically the United States could not protect American citizens traveling on British ships and wanted the State Department to issue directives that barred neutrals from traveling to the war zone. The secretary wanted desperately to keep America out of the war and willing to sacrifice the rights of neutrals in order to accomplish this aim. Wilson, while concerned with the lives and safety of American citizens, also wanted to refrain from entering the conflict. Nonetheless, the president stubbornly insisted that the Germans respect neutral rights and give up unrestricted submarine warfare.[36]

House diverged from the president and thought that the United States should respond in a forceful manner. He joined many Americans living in Britain who after recovering from the shock of the sinking of the *Lusitania* thought war inevitable. House evidenced some dismay when the president in an address in Philadelphia stated that "some countries are too proud to fight." He thought Wilson's rhetoric weak-willed and informed Grey and his British friends that he intended to go back to America. House apparently undercut the Wilson's administration official position of neutrality with his promises that America would soon intervene in the Great War. He had to strengthen the president's back and as he put it, make sure the U.S. did not fight a "milk and water war." Many British and French officials knew they had a true friend in House and thought that perhaps he could push Wilson and America onto the Allied side. Nevertheless, House's second diplomatic shuttle mission bore no fruit, and in June of 1915 he returned to the United States on board the *U. S. S. St. Paul.*[37]

While at sea House received some startling news. He learned that Bryan resigned from the cabinet over the forceful and unrealistic tone of the first *Lusitania* note. The secretary of state thought that the tenor of Wilson's initial communique threatened war. Later House learned that Bryan challenged Wilson over the note, and stated that the president had never taken him into his "confidence." Bryan also complained to the president that House really occupied the position of secretary of state. The colonel confided in his diary that some entertained the idea of making House secretary. He even went so far as to allege that several of his Texas allies that he installed in the cabinet offered their resignations to pave the way for House's assent. Texans like Albert Sidney Burleson, the Postmaster General, did not want their home state overrepresented in the

cabinet. House's story, however, remains somewhat suspect as the colonel possessed a fertile imagination and no independent verification exists that Wilson ever considered tapping his advisor to succeed Bryan. Nonetheless, House continued to pose as the concerned private citizen and presidential friend while turning away any talk of his accepting Bryan's former position. In the end, Wilson, who had long thought about removing his secretary of state from office, got his way after the first *Lusitania* note.[38]

Wilson asked for House's assessment of the new secretary of state Robert Lansing . House considered Lansing, the former State Department counselor, as someone whom Wilson could work with. House barely knew the man but opined that Wilson would find dealing with Lansing an easier task than the "obdurate" Bryan. In most circumstances Lansing would allow Wilson to conduct diplomacy without interference since he understood the president generally acted as his own secretary of state. House also believed that Lansing did not challenge his own position as Wilson's personal envoy. In conferring with Wilson House asked the president if he should tell Lansing the details of his European mission. Wilson thought not and told House to relate only enough information so that the secretary could work in "harmony" with them. House correctly assumed that Lansing, like his predecessor Bryan, would figure little in many aspects of Wilsonian foreign policy.[39]

Nevertheless, House found the new secretary of state a more agreeable colleague than Bryan. House described Lansing as not "a peace at any price" man unlike Bryan who he saw as a weak-willed pacifist. Lansing also shared House's views when it came to the war. Both men thought the conflict came down to a contest between German militarism and democracy. The Allies, to Lansing and House, represented democratic ideals, and

the two men feared a German victory. Lansing and House attempted to push Wilson onto the Allied side and thought the *Lusitania* crisis presented an opportunity to enter the conflict. Since House and Lansing shared a similar worldview, the colonel found himself defending the secretary against verbal assaults by the president. At various times Wilson referred to Lansing as not much more than a clerk only good at drafting correspondence. In fact, President Wilson referred to Secretary Lansing as "stupid" and left the colonel in the difficult position of espousing the virtues of his ally in the State Department.[40]

In 1915, House, upon returning from his second shuttle mission, did not rush to the president's side, but remained at his New York apartment. The colonel gauged public opinion by receiving visitors, and he learned that while Americans displayed shock at the *Lusitania* sinking most people reflected Wilson's thought. Although the president wanted the rights of neutrals traveling into the war zone on British ships respected by the German government he and the American people wanted to stay out of any European war. House apparently changed his mind about advising the president to end American neutrality, as he had assured Grey and others that he would do. The colonel outwardly backed Wilson's decision to keep the United States out of the war.[41]

The British were disappointed that America would not enter the Great War. Sir Edward Grey thought that America could break the stalemate on land and sea between the Central Powers and the Allies. He made it clear to House that U. S. military intervention was the only way to ensure peace under American leadership. America, he argued could only dictate peace terms if they took part in the war. This logic suggested that the prospects of durable peace rested upon American involvement in not only the war but as a party to a settlement that reshaped global politics. House backed intervention

and he probably used Grey's arguments to influence the president. These reasons apparently weighed on Wilson's decision to declare war, on Germany, in April of 1917. Nonetheless, did Wilson know of House's pro-British disposition?[42]

Wilson, in his correspondence with House, showed some frustration with his personal envoy for taking on too much of the British view about the war. During his second shuttle mission, House's reasons for delaying his trip to Germany irritated the president. Wilson asked House if he represented American interests or British. He also noted in a letter to his second wife Edith Boling Galt that House's return to America worked to good effect. House could detach himself from pro-British sympathy and see the bigger picture. The president discerned that House had gotten too far in front of administration policy and lost perspective when it came to maintaining America's official policy of neutrality. He found that perhaps House had taken on the allied position too much in his attempts to broker peace. The chief executive in the end considered it a good idea to immerse his primary foreign policy advisor in American opinion to bring House back into line with his stated goal of acting as a detached mediator. In particular, Wilson understood the intense feelings of his ambassador Walter Hines Page. Page, the American ambassador to Great Britain who got his position thanks to the patronage of House, evidenced an unwavering support for Britain and its war aims. As the war progressed, Wilson found Page's missives so useless that he refused to read them. Wilson tolerated House because he largely kept his true opinions to himself. House calibrated his advice to match the president's viewpoint and never made public statements that openly put the United States on the side of the British. The colonel possessed a true talent for giving counsel in conformity with the situation. He carefully

assessed public and presidential opinion before imparting advice. The president also knew his advisor possessed a good working relationship with the British foreign ministry with the perceived inadequate representation of Page in London and Spring-Rice in Washington. Wilson figured that House could still prove effective in furthering his central diplomatic aim which remained mediating an end to the First World War.[43]

By the late summer of 1915, House privately was lamenting missed opportunities. He still thought that eventually the United States might drift into war with Germany, especially after the sinking of the merchant ship *Arabic* a German submarine. The colonel confided to his diary that if another such incident occurred than war would come. Privately, House thought that the war between the United States and Germany inevitable. Nevertheless, he continued to pose as a supporter of the president in Wilson's efforts to mediate an end to the conflict. In House's meetings with Johann von Bernstorff, the German ambassador to America, and in conferences with Lord Reading, England's chief jurist, he still maintained a need to bring about an end to the war. Despite these public pronouncements the colonel thought that America's days as a neutral were numbered.[44]

House tried to impress upon the president a need for American preparedness. He suggested that perhaps Germany would hesitate to challenge the interests of the United States if America undertook a program of military readiness. If America appeared ready to fight then Germany, in House's estimation, might have more respect for neutral rights and refrain from threatening the security of the United States on the high seas. House also questioned the abilities of Wilson's chief civilian military advisors. He found that while Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels and Secretary of War Lindley Garrison adequate during peace time they would prove disastrous in the event that the United

States entered the conflict. Despite House's efforts to convince the president to pursue a a plan of military preparedness Wilson remained unmoved.[45]

In late 1915, Wilson still thought that the U.S. must stay out of the war. He further believed that even if America entered the war, the Allies could not defeat Germany. The president stated to House that it would take so long for the United States to achieve military preparedness that it could not possibly affect the outcome of the war. House believed that the president paid undue attention to certain blocs of senators and congressmen. House found that such men as Senator Gilbert Hitchcock, the senate majority leader, who remained committed to neutrality maintained the ear of the president. In the end, he dismissed congressional concerns, believing that they only represented local and narrow interests. House, after traveling to Europe and meeting the heads of those governments, thought that he possessed the global view. House's perception fit with his long-held belief that congressmen merely functioned as figureheads. House presumed that real decisions like foreign policy rested in a few hands. The president and his advisors dictated to Congress any arrangements that decided the diplomatic fate of America. While Congress and their leaders, according to House, made domestic policy.[46]

House despaired of any decisive action by the president as the country dangled between war and peace. By December 1915, Wilson wanted House to return to Europe. The president knew that his counselor possessed a good working relationship with the English foreign ministry and wanted once again to explore the possibility of peace talks among the warring nations. In the midst of preparing for House's third shuttle trip the colonel offered up a bold stroke to bring the war to an end. The colonel

suggested to the president that the United States insist that the Central Powers and the Allies immediately cease hostilities. He then proposed to alleviate circumstances that made the Great War possible and could lead to future conflicts. House presented a plan that anticipated military and naval disarmament. The Allies possessed the option to either accept or decline American terms. If the Allies refused then the U.S. government could deal with them in the same severe manner that America had treated Germany over the U-boat controversy. Additionally, the Central Powers could do the same and if they accepted House's peace proposal then the U.S. achieved a major diplomatic stroke. This meant a cessation of combat and an early end to the war with credit accruing to the United States. If Germany and her allies rejected the U. S. proposal then America would break with the Central Powers and bring all her resources against the former. In the abstract, House suggested with the latter part of his scheme American intervention in the war. This proposal contemplated a major break with American diplomatic tradition by entangling the United States in Great Power rivalries. House asked the Allies to do little while most of the pressure fell onto Germany. The president, House noted, appeared stunned and remained silent in response to House's plan. Lansing and Frank Polk, the State Department counselor, approved of the colonel's grand plan. With these assurances and the president's silent acceptance House departed for Europe on his third diplomatic mission in an attempt to broker an end to the Great War.[47]

IV

In early 1916, House arrived in Europe armed with his bold program. The colonel thought that he could either end the war by calling a peace conference or force the United States into the conflict on the allied side. He again posed as an honest broker eager to

deal with the Central Powers and the Allies equally. Nevertheless, his thoughts and actions only betrayed House's pro-British and pro-Allied bias.[48]

House 's plan found its origins rooted in *Philip Dru.* He thought the United States would move into a closer relationship with the European democracies. House saw German militarism as not only a threat to freedom in Europe but perhaps as a potential source of conflict in the Western Hemisphere. He thought that America, acting in concert with the European democracies through either peace or war might contain militarism. If the Central Powers accepted House's proposal to cease hostilities and accepted a negotiated peace based upon disarmament then German ambitions remained checked. In the event Germany rejected the proposal for peace talks then the United States would help the Allies crush the militarist threat to not only European democracy but to American security. House thought that America at some time would confront Germany, if not in January 1916, then in the future. House agreed with British officials like Arthur Balfour, First Lord of the Admiralty and future British foreign secretary, that German promises of peace rang hollow. Balfour noted his own distrust of German diplomatic initiatives, and House echoed this view. The colonel also reinforced Balfour's forecast that America and England, acting together, had to ensure any future peace and make sure Germany did its part in maintaining a contemplated truce.[49]

House's actions showed a distinct movement towards the Allies. Once again House went to Germany to open peace discussions with the government. He met once more with the German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg but showed little desire to hold a conference with the Kaiser. If House seriously wanted to broker an equitable peace he should have welcomed an audience with the head of the German government. Once

again House took the British viewpoint and felt them fully justified in prosecuting the war. He remained convinced that Germany, bent only on conquest and with its endorsement of atrocities like U-boat warfare, continued to violate international law.[50]

In other circumstances, the colonel tied American interests to those of the Allies. House mused on how to redraw the map of Europe. He endorsed a plan that anticipated a French annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. The colonel also thought that Russia, one of the Allies, should receive territory in Asia Minor. French officials, with whom the colonel met, replied that such a move made Turkey, one of the Central Powers, disappear from the map, House supported the view that the Ottoman Empire should cease to exist. Nonetheless, House, at least officially, stressed to Grey and others the importance of maintaining American neutrality.[51]

The colonel insisted that hostilities should cease and the English commit to a peace conference. Grey and British officials countered that the United States must immediately intervene in the conflict. House publicly insisted that America should remain neutral or it would lose any moral authority to preside over a peace conference. The colonel also reiterated that President Wilson wanted to smooth over the *Lusitania* controversy so America could continue to deal equitably with Germany. Consequently, while House continued to reflect settled American policy towards the European war, privately he kept moving ever so subtly into the Allied camp.[52]

House, in his meetings with British officials, kept trying to answer questions about how America would conduct itself in any proposed peace conference. Herbert Asquith, the British prime minister, asked House that if the Allies proposed anything "unfair" what would the U.S. do? The colonel replied that if they did this America would simply

withdraw and allow the warring nations to deal with each other. The prime minister then queried what if the Central Powers made an "unfair" proposal. He said that the United States might break with Germany and hinted at a state of war existing between the two nations. House attempted to put his plan into some concrete form within the framework of his numerous meetings with Sir Edward Grey.[53]

The House-Grey Memorandum agreed to by both men provided a path to bring the United States into the war on the Allied side. The document reflected the way House's mind worked in late 1915. Most Americans living in England, especially those who staffed the American embassy in London, along with the British and French considered the time ripe for the United States to enter the First World War. House, caught up in public opinion, evidenced a real desire to engineer a major departure in American foreign policy. The colonel attempted to maneuver the United States into a closer relationship with the Allies. This meant leaving neutrality and isolationism behind and considering some sort of durable alliance between America and its fellow democracies. Nonetheless, House could not accomplish his aims in a straightforward manner and relied on his old methods of manipulation.[54]

House and Grey couched the language in the memorandum in such a way that appealed to Wilson's vanity. The document suggested a course to arrive at a mediated peace. A grand conference convened by the Great Powers and presided over by Wilson fulfilled many of the president's aspirations. It meant an end to the war and maybe a reordering of the old international system. The president sought a negotiated settlement since the inception of the conflict. The war option only took effect after the conference failed to reach a reasonable peace agreement with the U. S. leaving the meeting on the

Allied side as a belligerent. House thought he could finally get the president to commit to the Allies in the event that the Central Powers proved uncooperative in setting or accepting peace terms. In any event, the colonel believed that American involvement, through either a negotiated peace or war, signaled an early end to the conflagration.[55]

The president accepted his advisor's efforts with some changes. He liked the idea of a peace conference that looked to end the war. Nevertheless, after meeting with House in early March 1916 he made a key alteration to the document. He inserted the word "probably" to a key clause that promised the United States would leave any proposed conference if the Central Powers proved uncooperative in settling upon peace terms. While House saw little difference in the document but the British and the French considered that the word held greater power. To them "probably" meant the U.S. would not enter the war and rendered the document worthless. House kept his fantasies alive about planning a grand style conference with Wilson at its head while the proposal died stillborn among the Triple Entente. How seriously the English and the French take House's proposal remains an open question.[56]

When the British met with the French at an inter-allied meeting Grey admitted that the document never came up for discussion. The House-Grey Memorandum also failed to reach the agenda of the War Cabinet. The War Cabinet contained the British officials that directly made war policy. Grey insisted that he drafted the document at the behest of House. Many members of the British cabinet considered the memorandum a cynical move by House to influence American public opinion. In 1916 President Wilson, running for re-election, wanted to burnish his peace credentials. The chief executive faced a tough campaign against Charles Evans Hughes, the former Supreme Court Justice

and Republican nominee. The Wilson campaign wanted to draw sharp differences between Democratic and Republican positions when it came to the issue of entering the war. Theodore Roosevelt, who returned to the Republican fold after his foray into third party politics in 1912, acted as chief proponent of the Hughes campaign. The former president, since the sinking of the *Lusitania*, advocated for immediate intervention on the side of the Allies. By extension Roosevelt during his campaigning for Hughes led many Americans to think that the Republicans favored a more combative stance against the continued challenge posed by Germany's U-boat offensive. Wilson reflected the peace position that a majority of voters harbored and even ran on the slogan "He Kept Us Out of War." House's position as Wilson's closest advisor led some Entente leaders to think that the proposal for a conference only provided the means to position the president as the peace candidate during the general election. Nevertheless, the colonel continued to think that his attempts at diplomacy might provide dividends.[57]

House privately and publicly lamented the allied response to the House-Grey Memorandum. He thought his idea offered a path to end the war. The colonel displayed real frustration with his good friend Sir Edward Grey. House described how the foreign secretary pressured him into taking the position that the United States must play a part in any peace settlement. In the wake of the chilly response to the House-Grey Memorandum in allied circles he found that Grey "halts" and that he "stammers." He also complained to Jules Jusserand, the French ambassador to Washington, of the missed opportunity to bring the war to a close. But as the year wore on and the French and British enjoyed greater success on the Western Front with the Battle of Verdun, the Allies seemed reluctant to make requests to convene a peace conference. In 1916 a series of

incidents, jeopardized the colonel's attempts to further an American-Allied alliance.[58]

These reverses centered on the positions and actions taken by the president. Relations between the United States and Germany improved after almost a year of bordering on the brink of war. The German government proved stubborn in its dealings with the Wilson Administration with its refusal to abandon submarine warfare despite the exchange of numerous diplomatic notes over the issue. A break between America and Germany appeared certain after a U-boat torpedoed the ocean liner *Sussex*. The German government agreed to instruct submarine commanders to warn liners and merchant ships of an impending attack. Additionally, the German navy promised to pick up survivors fleeing from torpedoed vessels. The *Sussex* Pledge, arrived at in May 1916, temporarily calmed the troubled waters. German officials like Bethmann-Hollweg feared a break with the United States and its potential impact upon the war. American intervention, in the minds of German officials, signaled a distinct turning point in favor of the Entente. With German-American relations improved for the moment Wilson turned to issues that divided the United States and the Allies.[59]

The main area of conflict entailed the so-called "blacklist" that the British promulgated during the war. The English navy seized certain cargos bound for German ports as part of its blockade policy. British naval officials broadened the reach of the blacklist which included American exports that competed with British goods and mail carried on neutral ships. Wilson thought this policy posed a threat to American business interests and enhanced censorship. The president found the blacklist intolerable and wanted Congress to punish the Allies by restricting loans and exportations. In his note to the British and French, Wilson intended to employ the same sharp language protesting

the blacklist that he used with the Germans over the submarine issue. House feared a break with the Entente and advised Wilson to consult with the French and British ambassadors before taking such harsh steps. The president grew increasingly frustrated by British actions and considered ways to separate American interests from those of the Allies.[60]

Events in England also further divided the Allies from America. The Asquith government fell due to the ongoing military stalemate. In its place arose a coalition headed by David Lloyd George, the former chancellor of the exechequer and minister of munitions, who rejected American offers of mediation and whom House labeled as a "reactionary." Lloyd George, before ascending to the premiership, rejected any talk of a negotiated peace and wanted a clear military victory. Additionally, House lost his closest friend in British official circles when Grey left office in the wake of the governmental shakeup. English public opinion also reflected British frustration with America and its chief executive. Many thought the president a coward for his reluctance to fight after Germany threatened American security interests. British soldiers fighting on the Western Front called unexploded shells "Wilsons" in response to the chief executive's hesitancy to declare war. House saw his work to further Anglo-American understanding at a low ebb.[61]

By late 1916, Wilson pondered the possibility of going to war with the Allies. Wilson thought that myriad problems existed between the United States and Great Britain. These issues ran the gamut from the continued blockade to the naval building program which placed America into direct competition with the British. The naval race between Germany and Great Britain had created an atmosphere that started the First

World War. House evinced consternation at Wilson's ruminations. The colonel thought the president utterly ignorant in the field of foreign affairs. Wilson, according to House, never grasped the importance of the European situation. The colonel maintained that he and Lansing provided needed guidance. In fact, House found that the language the president employed in a peace note to the warring powers as unacceptable. Wilson asked the Central Powers and the Allies to state their respective aims for making war. In the body of the note the president stated that the reasons for the war remained "obscure." House, taking the Allied view, thought Wilson's approach as "offensive" to the Entente. The president's efforts at peace-making only ensured a deeper gulf, in House's estimation, between the Entente and America. In the end, House felt that if America went to war it must occur against Germany. The colonel worried that the Germans would not stand by the *Sussex* Pledge. House anticipated a resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare by the Germans in order to combat the blockade. By December of 1916, the colonel again thought America would drift into war with Germany.[62]

House's diplomatic efforts largely failed. In 1914, House's plan to prevent a general European war, first suggested in *Philip Dru,* never received serious consideration. In 1915, House, during his second shuttle mission to Europe, found little common ground for peace talks between the Central Powers and the Allies. In fact when the colonel left Europe, after the *Lusitania* sinking, thought the United States would enter the conflict. In 1916, House attempted to manipulate the president to enter the war on the side of the Triple Entente or end the conflict early through a negotiated peace. The president watered down the impact of the House-Grey Memorandum when he inserted the word "probably" that committed the United States to enter the conflict on the side of

the Allies if a proposed peace conference among the warring nations failed. Additionally, Entente leaders like Sir Edward Grey never took the colonel's proposal seriously and only saw it as an attempt to enhance the peace credentials of the president in the upcoming American election. In any case, with the Allied success at Verdun neither the French or British wanted a negotiated peace but preferred outright military victory.

By late 1916, all of House's labors to cement a close relationship with the Allies appeared in jeopardy. Positions taken by President Wilson relative to the British blockade and the "blacklist" coupled with a change in the English government severely impaired Anglo-American relations. Despite House's failures he impacted American foreign policy greatly.

The colonel created a unique role, during the modern era, for future American diplomats. The role of the American shuttle diplomat emerged through House's labors. Other men like Robert Anderson, Eisenhower's secretary of the navy, and Henry Kissinger filled this position during later decades of the twentieth century. House understood that events in one part of the globe, due to advancements in technology, impacted the security of the United States. President Wilson made this point clear in his May 1916 address to the League to Enforce Peace. House helped to usher in this era of internationalism. The colonel also helped to bring the concept of collective security to Wilson through his advocacy of the ABC Treaty and his discussions of a league of nations with his close friend Sir Edward Grey.

House also set American foreign policy off onto another course. He saw the First World War as a clash between democracy and German militarism. During the course of

American neutrality House worked to align the interests of the United States with the Allies. He thought that the Entente fought for democracy. House believed that America had to support democracy overseas or see it ended at home. House's ideas that looked to defend and promote global democracy began the process of establishing America's mission in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While House's influence over Wilson tended to wane in the winter of 1916, he re-emerged during America's late neutrality and entrance into World War I.

Endnotes

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2. Edward M. House, *Philip Dru: Administrator* (Boston: Indypublish, 2000), 93-95, 157-159.

3. Edward M. House "Diary," 3 August 1913, Edward M. House Papers hereinafter cited as EMHP typewritten copies in Manuscripts and Archives Division of Yale University Library microfilm copies in Mary Couts Burnett Library Texas Christian University.

4. Edward M. House "Diary," 3 July 1913, EMHP. For good discussion of House's undercutting Bryan's position as secretary of state see Robert W. Cherney, *A Righteous Cause: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 147. Edward M. House "Diary," 24 June 1915, EMHP.

5. Edward M. House "Diary," 24 June 1915, EMHP.

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11. For a further exploration of the limited effectiveness of Wilson's private diplomatic agents in Mexico see Mark T. Gilderhus, *Diplomacy and Revolution: U.S.-Mexican Relations Under Wilson and Carranza* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977); and Larry D. Hill *Emissaries to a Revolution: Woodrow Wilson's Executive Agents in Mexico* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973).

12. A nice exploration of Wilson's foreign policy ideology and its naiveté is found in Lloyd Ambrosius's *Wilsonian Statecraft: Theory and Practice of Liberal Internationalism during World War I* (Wilmington: SR Books 1991), 1-28.

13. Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 29 May, 1914, 3 June 1914, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 30: 139-140; Edward M. House "Diary," 26 May 1914.

14. Edward M. House "Diary," 1 June 1914, EMHP.

15. Edward M. House "Diary," 17 June 1914, EMHP; *Philip Dru,* 157-159; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 26 June 1914, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 30: 256-257; Edward M. House "Diary," 17 June 1914, 24 June 1914, EMHP.

16. Edward M. House "Diary," 24 June 1914, EMHP; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 30: 247-248.

17. Edward M. House "Diary," 6 August 1914, EMHP.

18. Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: The Struggle For Neutrality, 1914-1915* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 57; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 25 August 1914, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 30: 450; Link, *The Struggle for Neutrality,* 57; Cherny, *A Righteous Cause,* 146-147.

19. For an enlightening work on the fear that German militarism might undermine American democratic institutions and its impact on civilian control of the government see Ross A. Kennedy, *The Will to Believe: Woodrow Wilson, World War I, and America's Strategy for Peace and Security* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2009).

20. For an examination of America and House's pro-allied attitudes at the beginning of the Great War see Link, *The Struggle for Neutrality,* 1-55. Additionally, for a further a further examination on the House-Grey relationship and how it further cemented Anglo-American relations just before and during the first months of the war see Williams, *Colonel House and Sir Edward Grey,* 17-29, 35-49.

21. Edward M. House "Diary," 9 September 1914, EMHP; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 20 September 1914, 28 September 1914, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 31: 60-61, 94.

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23. Diary of Edward M. House, 13 January 1915, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 32: 61.

24. Edward M. House "Diary," 13 January 1915, EMHP; Woodrow Wilson to Edward M. House, 18 January 1915, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 32: 84-85; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 9 February 1915, 11 February 1915, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 32: 205, 220-221; Edward M. House "Diary," 16 August 1913, EMHP.

25. Williams, *Colonel House and Sir Edward Grey,* 60.

26. Edward M. House "Diary," 10 February 1915, EMHP; Robert W Tucker, *Woodrow Wilson and The Great War: Reconsidering America's Neutrality, 1914-1917* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 93-94; Edward M. House, "Diary," 11 February 1915, EMHP.

27. Edward M. House "Diary," 10 February 1915, EMHP; Edward M. House "Diary," 20 February 1915, EMHP.

28. Edward M. House "Diary," 13 February 1915, EMHP; James W. Gerard to Edward M. House, 15 February 1915, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 32: 256; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 18 February 1915, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 32: 253.

29. Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 18 February 1915, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 32: 253.

30. Edward M. House "Diary," 19 March 1915, 27 March 1915, EMHP.

31. Tucker, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great War,* 101; Edward M. House "Diary," 27 March 1915, EMHP; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 26 March 1915, 27 March 1915, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 32: 438, 441-442; Edward M. House "Diary," 30 April 1915, EMHP; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 12 April 1915, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 32: 513-514.

32. Edward M. House "Diary," 7 May 1915, EMHP. For an example of House's optimism see Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 29 March 1915, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 32: 455.

33. Edward Grey to Edward M. House, 16 April 1915, 2 June 1915, 6 June 1915, 14 July 1915, 10 August 1915, EMHP Division of Manuscripts and Archives Yale University Library.

34. Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 19 May 1915, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 33: 222; Edward M. Grey to Edward M. House 19 May 1915 EMHP.

35. Edward M. House "Diary," 8 May 1915, EMHP; Tucker, *Woodrow Wilson and*

the Great War, 108.

36. Cherny, *A Righteous Cause,* 147-149; Tucker, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great War,* 115.

37. Edward M. House "Diary," 8 May 1915, 11 May 1915, 1 June 1915, 4 June 1915 EMHP.

38. Edward M. House "Diary," 13 June 1915, EMHP; Tucker, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great War,* 115; Edward M. House "Diary," 24 June 1915, 13 June 1915, 14 June 1915 EMHP.

39. Edward M. House "Diary," 24 June 1915, EMHP.

40. Edward M. House "Diary," 13 October 1915, EMHP. For an exploration of the similarities in the thinking of Lansing and House in regard to respective positions of the Allies and Germany see Tucker, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great War,* 17-52. Edward M. House "Diary," March 28, 1917, EMHP.

41. Edward M. House "Diary," 14 June 1915, EMHP.

42. Edward Grey to Edward M. House, 6 June 1915, 14 July 1915, 26 August 1915, EMHP.

43. Woodrow Wilson to Edward M. House, 20 February 1915, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 32: 265; Woodrow Wilson to Edith Boling Galt, 9 August 1915, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 34: 151. For a good discussion of Walter Hines Page's career as Wilson's ambassador to Great Britain and the growing rift between the two men see John Milton Cooper, *Walter Hines Page: The Southerner as American 1855-1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1977).

44. Edward M. House "Diary," 28 September 1915, 7 October 1915, EMHP.

45. Edward M. House "Diary," 8 December 1915, EMHP.

46. Edward M. House "Diary," 15 December 1915, EMHP.

47. Edward M. House "Diary," 8 October 1915, 11 October 1915, 13 October 1915, EMHP.

48. Edward M. House to Edward Grey, 17 October 1915, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 35: 81.

49. *Philip Dru,* 157-159; Edward M. House "Diary," 8 January 1916, 15 January 1916, 11 February 1916, EMHP.

50. Edward M. House "Diary," 27 January 1916, EMHP.

51. Edward M. House "Diary," 7 February 1916, EMHP.

52. Edward M. House "Diary," 10 February 1916, EMHP.

53. Edward M. House "Diary," 14 February 1916, EMHP.

54. Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 16 January 1916, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 35: 487-488.

55. House-Grey Memorandum, 22 February 1916, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 36: 180, n. 2.

56. Edward M. House "Diary," 6 March 1916, 7 March 1916, EMHP; Edward M. House to Edward Grey, 12 March 1916, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 36: 266; Tucker, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great War,* 171-172.

57. Edward Grey to Edward M. House, 24 March 1916, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 36: 443-444; Tucker, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great War,* 172-173; John Milton Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), 306-308.

58. Edward M. House "Diary," 13 May 1916 EMHP; Edward Grey to Edward M. House, 24 March 1916, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 36: 443-444.

59. Diary of Edward M. House, 6 April 1916, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 36: 421-422; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 24 April 1916, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 36: 451; Tucker, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great War,* 131-132.

60. Ernest May, *The World War and American Isolation 1914-1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 329-339; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 25 July 1916, Woodrow Wilson to Edward M. House, 27 July 1916, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 37: 475, 480.

61. Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 3 December 1916, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 40: 172; Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 6 November 1916, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton Press University, 1982), 38: 619; Edward M. House "Diary," 17 November 1916, EMHP.

62. Edward M. House "Diary," 24 September 1916, 17 November 1916, 18 November 1916, EMHP.

Chapter Four
The Indispensable Man

In late 1916, Edward M. House found his position as Woodrow Wilson's primary foreign policy advisor at its lowest ebb. The third year of the Great War increasingly frustrated House. His grand plan to end the war resulted in failure when the Allies rejected any call for a mediated peace and instead wanted a clear military victory over Germany and the other Central Powers. Additionally, House's efforts to gain America's entrance into the war if it continued also ended unsuccessfully. President Wilson limited the importance of the infamous House-Grey Memorandum when he inserted the word "probably" into the document which guaranteed American intervention if truce talks failed. The British and French considered the document as a cynical ploy by House to shape American domestic opinion as the 1916 presidential election approached. Wilson also seemed to recognize that House had overstepped his bounds as a presidential envoy and discounted some of the colonel's advice.[1]

House's efforts to cement a closer American-Allied relationship also appeared on the verge of failure. Wilson worked to improve relations with the Central Powers when he extracted the *Sussex* Pledge from the German government to temporarily cease submarine warfare. Moreover, the president found that American interests diverged with those of the Allies over issues like the blockade and "blacklist." House labored hard to calm Wilson's anger and limit any insistence that American supplies and loans be kept out of Allied hands over those points of contention. House also lost his closest friend and entree into the British government when Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, left office after the fall of the premiership of Herbert Asquith.[2]

House attempted to enhance his position with Wilson by outwardly supporting the

president's continuing efforts to get the Central Powers and the Allies to the peace table. House, in a series of conversations with Johann von Bernstorff, the German ambassador to the United States, tried to get the German government publicly to state terms to initiate truce talks. Meanwhile, House privately worried that the Germans would violate the *Sussex* Pledge. The sinking of the merchant ship *Marina* only seemed to reinforce his opinion that America might enter the war against Germany. He also continued to lament the unpreparedness of American armed forces and the civilian leadership of the military.[3]

House even gave Wilson misleading and bad advice as to the ultimate success of Wilson's continuing efforts to broker a peace. The colonel after conferring with Bernstorff imparted to the president that liberal elements had strengthened their position in the German government. In turn, this meant that Germany would look favorably upon any peace proposals that Wilson might suggest with sympathy. This proved absolutely wrong as the military actually gained effective control of the government and wanted no talk of a negotiated settlement. House supported Wilson's continued fantasies instead of imparting his true assessment of the situation all in the cause of regaining the president's favor. In the latter part of 1916, House's influence appeared to wax and wane. Nonetheless, circumstances would soon thrust him back into the center of power as America entered the war.[4]

I

House's secret predictions that America would drift into war came true in early 1917. The rise of the military as a power in German politics crystallized House's long held belief that the Great War basically involved a contest between militarism and democracy. General Erich Ludendorff and Field Marshall Paul von Hindenburg assumed greater roles in promulgating German military and civil policy which made House's private fears a

reality. It appeared that Germany did not want a negotiated peace but instead intended to put Europe under military rule. The German government's repudiation of the *Sussex* Pledge and resumption of submarine warfare only reinforced House's opinion of German untrustworthiness. The German General Staff thought that the U-boat would bring Great Britain to its knees before the United States could enter the war and tip the balance in favor of the Allies. The coming of war led Wilson back to his old friend and confidant.[5]

Additionally, House regained access to the British government. Sir William Wiseman, head of British intelligence in North America, sought out House and cemented an important wartime relationship with him. Wiseman acted as the main conduit of communications between the two governments. House used Wiseman to repair the strained relationship between the United States and England. The House-Wiseman connection helped the colonel to once again attempt to tie American interests with those of the British.[6]

President Wilson also continued to hold his secretary of state Robert Lansing at arm's length. The president complained that Lansing possessed a "wooden mind" and found it a laborious process to meet with his secretary of state. Moreover, Lansing told House that the president refused to consult with him. The State Department remained in Lansing's words "a ship without a chart." The president kept his own counsel when it came to decisions of foreign policy as the country inched ever closer to war. The only person he confided in besides his wife was House.[7]

In January 1917, Germany announced that unrestricted submarine warfare would resume on 1 February of that year. Despite this perceived threat to American shipping and lives Wilson still hoped to bring the warring nations into peace talks. The president

refused to rush into war and refrained from immediately expelling the German ambassador Bernstorff from the country. Instead, Wilson kept his hopes alive that he could continue to hold America out of the conflict and broker an end to the Great War. House persisted in his support of the president's efforts. He also praised Wilson's "Peace Without Victory" speech to the U. S. Senate. In this address Wilson asked that the Allies and the Central Powers submit their conflicts to international arbitration. House supported this position while Lansing openly questioned the direction of the president's policy. Both men believed that Wilson's diplomatic initiatives unrealistic and drifting in the face of the German threat to American lives and property. Nevertheless, House learned his lesson and imparted advice that comported with the president's wishes. He again displayed an ability to only state things that Wilson wanted to hear.[8]

While supporting Wilson's attempts to keep America neutral he looked forward to United States belligerency. He wanted an even closer relationship with Wilson than he enjoyed during American neutrality. House suggested that Wilson find a place for him on the presidential staff. The colonel even went further and offered to relocate to Washington for the duration. House recommended the creation of a bureau where he would oversee wartime needs like supplies and manpower. House offered the services of his son-in-law Gordon Auchincloss to help staff the suggested bureau. The colonel departed from his previous stance that he must maintain an unofficial position in the administration. This meant some distance had arisen between the two men. House told Wilson that he dreaded the prospect of war but saw the conflict as a chance to repair any potential cracks in their personal relationship.[9]

II

Wilson, faced with the gravity of Germany resuming unrestricted submarine warfare finally expelled Bernstorff in February of 1917. House confided to his diary that he had for months thought that America seemed adrift. Frank Polk, the State Department Counselor, and Lansing asked House several times to come down from his New York apartment to Washington to ask Wilson to take more decisive action. The president refused to take the final step in asking for a declaration of war. House cautioned foreign newspaper writers that even though Bernstorff went home not to expect that war would follow between the United States and Germany. American domestic opinion remained ambivalent when it came to the question of peace or war. House conveyed to English friends that the western states lingered as a concern for the president. Wilson had that section to thank for his re-election and did not want to upset that source of political support. Only with the West satisfied would the president go to Congress and ask for a declaration of war.[10]

Nonetheless, events pushed America closer to the brink of war with Germany. In February the Zimmermann Telegram leaked to the American public. British intelligence intercepted the message transmitted by the German Deputy Foreign Secretary Arthur Zimmermann to the German embassy in Mexico City. The message contained a plan for a proposed alliance between Germany, Mexico, and Japan. In the event that the United States entered the war Mexico would join the conflict on the side of Germany. In the case of a German victory Mexico would recover much of the territory lost in the Mexican War. This included the southwestern states of California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas. Zimmermann thought Mexico could keep America preoccupied on its southern border and unable to provide needed help on the Western Front. The Mexican

government denied ever receiving the proposal and disavowed the communication.[11]

The effect of the Zimmermann Telegram profoundly impacted American public opinion. Many Americans before the publication of the communication found the issue of going to war against Germany troubling. Germany posed no concrete hazard to American security interests. Yet, the Zimmermann Telegram brought this question home to many Americans. The Germans now seemed to pose an immediate threat to American domestic security and demonstrated their treachery. Many now wanted a strong response to this danger.[12]

Another event also made it easier for Wilson to declare war. Revolutionaries overthrew the autocratic government of Czar Nicholas II. The issue of fighting for democracy always looked unclear as long as the Romanoff dynasty remained aligned with the Allies. The rise of the Provisional Government under Alexander Kerensky who appeared committed to democracy made the grand struggle underpinning the war clearer. The Allied democracies fighting the autocratic Central Powers brought the conflict into sharper focus.[13]

House made the defense of global democracy a key point as he advised Wilson on a course of action. Wilson appeared reluctant to go to war over a few American lives and ships. A grander mission awaited the United States as it hovered between war and peace. House stressed that the president must separate the German people from their government. The Prussian ruling class brought chaos into the world. House thought that a war message must emphasize the defeat of militarism and autocracy. With those twin evils eliminated democracy and peace would reign. House believed as did many that democracies simply would not wage war against one other but rather might cooperate

with each other through a league of peace.[14]

Wilson finally exhausted all avenues. He had attempted to keep America neutral and to mediate an end to World War I. On 2 April 1917 the president went before a joint session of Congress to ask for a declaration of war. With House's encouragement Wilson asked the American people to fight a war to make the world safe for democracy and peace.[15]

III

Nevertheless, as America entered the war the diplomatic goals of Wilson and House diverged. The president wanted to maintain a certain distance from his new Associates. He only entered the war to save global democracy and to shape the post-war peace. Wilson maintained that America would fight as an Associated Power and harbored no selfish motives in entering the conflict. He made it clear that unlike the other European powers the United States wanted no territorial acquisitions.[16]

Wilson even went so far as to refuse to receive Allied missions that the French and the British intended to send to America. He wanted to make it clear he would not enter into any secret alliances with either the French or British. House advised Wilson to abandon this position as their new Associates desperately needed to consult with the Americans and tell them of their needs. Additionally, House told Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, to downplay the importance of his planned diplomatic mission to the U. S. in order to alleviate concerns that some covert pact would ensue.[17]

Nonetheless, House saw the presence of Balfour in America as an opportunity to maneuver America into closer relationship with Britain. The colonel paid little attention to the French mission headed by former French Premier Rene Vivani and Marshall

Joseph Joffre, the former commander of the French Army. House dismissed the two men as mere figureheads. The French government sent the two on a goodwill mission with no significant authority. House recognized that Balfour wielded great power and that consultation with the foreign secretary would produce important wartime decisions. House saw that Britain remained America's most powerful and reliable Ally.[18]

House sat in on the meetings that Wilson held with Balfour during the spring of 1917. The president thought that communications between the two men flowed better with the colonel's presence. House knew each man on a intimate basis and felt free to impart advice where necessary. Wilson found that the presence of Secretary Lansing in these conferences only impeded the consultations. He found that Lansing did not grasp the important questions that Wilson and Balfour considered and kept the State Department largely in the dark about the decisions reached in these sessions. House regained the full confidence of the president due to his presence in these first official encounters between American and British representatives.[19]

House also used the talks to further his own agenda of cementing an Anglo-American alliance. He cautioned both Wilson and Balfour not to bring up the issue of possible peace terms. House insisted that America and Great Britain should concentrate on defeating Germany. The colonel believed that any discussion of a possible peace would illuminate differences between the two countries and House wanted time to bring the British Empire and the United States closer together due to their wartime partnership.[20]

House also got to indulge in his fantasies of fulfilling the role of a great man through his conversations with Balfour he enjoyed playing the great game of diplomacy like his

fictional creation Philip Dru. House and Balfour looked at a world map and agreed that France should receive Alsace Lorraine They also decided that Belgium and Serbia, both occupied by the Central Powers, must have their independence restored. Balfour admitted that partitioning the world as the war raged seemed like "dividing the bearskin before the bear was killed." With a hint of megalomania House thought that the war allowed America to take its rightful position as a Great Power deciding the fate of the world with himself in the forefront of that movement.[21]

House also thought that if America and Britain stood together that a "just and right peace" would ensue, one fair to both large and small nations. House believed that England and the United States would dictate terms at any peace conference. House noted, during the Anglo-American consultations in Washington, that the war aims of other allies like the Italians and Japanese did not receive consideration in these meetings. In House's estimation the real power to shape wartime policy and the post-war world rested with the British and Americans.[22]

One of the major stumbling blocks to improving Anglo-American relations involved the official diplomatic channels that House and others had to work through. Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, the British ambassador to America, proved an inadequate representative in the opinions of both Wilson and House. Spring-Rice enjoyed an intimate friendship with Theodore Roosevelt. The former president and the ambassador often found themselves in agreement as both men critiqued the Wilson administration and its foreign policy. Additionally, Spring-Rice battled illness during much of his tenure in Washington. House wanted the ambassador recalled and replaced with his young friend Sir William Wiseman. Nevertheless, because of Wiseman's relative youth the Foreign Office

refused to consider this option. House also suggested that his old friend Sir Edward Grey take over as a permanent envoy to make the exchange of information and views between the two governments easier. Due to Grey's failing eyesight Lloyd George rejected this proposal and instead sent the English publisher Lord Northcliffe as a special representative. This arrangement only caused further friction because of jealousy between Spring-Rice and Northcliffe, who competed for access to both Wilson and House. In turn each man submitted often contradictory and confusing reports to the British government. House decided that the most efficient way to conduct diplomacy remained his backchannel communications with Wiseman. Wiseman, as head of British intelligence in North America, probably functioned as the most reliable emissary to the English government and helped to smooth the difficult diplomatic relationship between the two countries.[23]

The foreign secretary knew that the colonel possessed access and influence over the president. Balfour therefore used House to address problems that arose during the course of the war. For example, Balfour wrote to House that Great Britain faced a credit crisis. The British government had run up massive debts to American banks and might not pay back those obligations. The credit rating of Britain fell and government officials feared they could not arrange additional loans. If the English could not get additional loans then the entire war effort would grind to a halt. House briefed Wilson on the predicament and urged immediate action. The Wilson administration under the leadership of Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo arranged a round of new loans that enabled the British government to continue its wartime purchasing. Balfour recognized that any action affecting Anglo-American relations had to go through House

since the colonel possessed an interest in tying the fortunes of the British Empire to those of the United States.[24]

The issue of naval power also underpinned British and American relations. Balfour wanted the United States to coordinate its wartime ship building program with British needs. The foreign secretary wrote House that the United States should concentrate on constructing destroyers, cruisers, and anti-submarine craft. He thought that the U.S. should eschew the manufacturing of capital vessels like dreadnoughts. Dreadnoughts proved ineffective in combating the U-boat menace since these ships ran slow and could not keep pace with the Allied supply convoys that crossed the North Atlantic. Again Balfour knew that House occupied a place of great power and could induce Wilson to endorse such a plan.[25]

Yet, Anglo and American naval cooperation posed some difficulties. While Balfour wanted a closer relationship with the United States he also had other allies he had to take into account. Balfour made House aware that the Japanese, a British ally, might look on an enlarged American navy with some suspicion. Balfour predicted that the Japanese government might think that the Americans could use a large navy to block their ambitions in Asia and the eastern Pacific. Balfour suggested a collective security arrangement in which the great maritime powers consisting of Great Britain, the United States, Italy, Russia, and Japan would aid one another if attacked by an outside aggressor. This proposal fit with House's idea of an alliance that he had outlined in *Philip Dru*. Balfour knew this would meet with favor as House advocated some sort of peacetime international coalition based upon a British-American association.[26]

IV

While House attempted to strengthen Anglo-American ties he also turned his attention to other endeavors. He sought an early peace by fomenting a revolution in Germany. After all, the example of the February Russian Revolution in which autocracy gave way to democracy raised hopes in allied countries that a similar event could occur in Germany. House formulated a plan that he believed would fortify the position of German liberals and socialists. These groups advocated democratic reforms within Germany. House believed that a democratized Germany would accept a negotiated peace. The colonel, as a part of his program, advocated a statement of liberal war aims. These plans ran counter to calls for German dismemberment. Additionally, Germany might not have to pay for the costs of the war in contrast with the wishes of Entente conservatives who wanted to impose large indemnities and reparations as a form of punishment. House reasoned that as long as the Entente governments insisted on a punitive peace German liberals would remain weak. Throughout the spring of 1917, the German people rallied to the side of the military who advocated victory in the war as the best way to avoid the imposition of harsh peace terms.[27]

House, as a former Texas political boss, reasoned that he could bring about a German revolution through some of the devices he had employed in the past. The colonel assumed he could use the media like newspapers to advance the Allied cause within Germany. He thought he could package the Allied case much like he had for candidates during his years in Texas politics. House chose Frank Cobb, the publisher of the *New York World,* to offer a forum for the German government to present a case for why the the war should continue. This idea showed House's fantasy life conflicting with reality as American censors would never allow the publication of articles authorized by the

German government. He envisioned a debate ensuing between the Allies and the Central Powers reminiscent of American political campaigns. The colonel thought the *Berliner Tageblatt*, a liberal German newspaper, could carry the American position to Germans. He believed that a thorough discussion of the two sides' stances would strengthen the Allied cause. House thought that a statement of war aims presented to the German people would embolden the liberals and revolution might occur. The colonel thought that a public discussion of war aims would further Wilson's desire to air foreign policy debates openly and show the contrast with the closed, more secretive European diplomatic system.[28]

When House brought in his plan to President Wilson for his approval, the president saw several problems with it. Wilson thought that a statement of war aims would not accomplish much. America and the Allies did not agree, during the summer of 1917, on such positions. Wilson assumed that he could get France and Britain to agree on a peace program later since the U.S would possess needed economic leverage over them. Additionally, in his view the Germans would see these expressions of American opinion as propaganda, and they would not get by German censorship. House's efforts to publicize Allied war aims and foment a German revolution using the media suggested high levels of naiveté in questions of wartime foreign policy.[29]

While House worked on his impractical scheme to shape German public opinion and stimulate a revolution other events overtook the administration. On 1 August 1917 Pope Benedict XV addressed a plea to all the belligerent countries engaged in fighting to accept a peace plan to end the Great War. Benedict urged a cease fire based on the military status quo, followed by programs leading to general disarmament. This proposal

posed several problems for the Allies since it sounded vaguely Wilsonian in substance. Indeed Wilson had advised a similar approach in his famous "Peace Without Victory" speech in January 1917. In the French and British view, Wilson might chart his own diplomatic course by accepting Benedict's offer. The European allies wanted no negotiated peace agreement in the summer of 1917. They still envisioned a clear military victory over Germany. House also worried that the pope's plan would undo his efforts to tie America more closely to the Allies.[30]

House received many visitors and corresponded with Entente leaders who wanted to reject the pope's suggestion. These consultations reinforced House's opinion that the war could not end on the basis of the status quo. The German government, still controlled by Prussian militarists, made the Allies pause. The Entente leaders thought they could not trust any proposals that came from Germany that might contemplate peace. Boris Bakhmeteff, the Russian ambassador to the United States, told House that any truce based on the status quo would endanger his new republic. Russian officials feared that the German military might at some future date crush the nascent government and would forcibly "dominate" the country diplomatically and economically. The French also dreaded the prospect of leaving the German military intact and on their border. Any future war would leave France vulnerable to invasion and occupation.[31]

House also favored significant changes and opposed peace terms restoring pre-war conditions. He wanted to emancipate Austria from domination of its German ally. In his view, the Austro-German association counted as one of the key components that ignited the Great War. House also wanted Constantinople and the Dardanelles Straits placed under international control. Such a move would provide Russia access to a long

sought after warm water port on the Mediterranean. House probably thought that Constantinople would give the Russians admission to additional European and Asian markets bolstering the position of the struggling Provisional Government in Petrograd. Furthermore, he believed that any peace talks would have to include German liberals who he believed represented the true opinion of the German people.[32]

House and the Allies wanted to portray the pope's proposal as a plan to drive a wedge between America and the Entente. The British and the French dismissed the peace overtures by the Vatican. House wanted the president to welcome the pope's efforts but advised him to respond cautiously. According to the colonel the world already stood with the Allies and Associated Powers and would support them in the peacemaking. He wanted the president to throw back the blame for the war on the German government. His position implied the need for a statement by German officials on what terms they would accept as a basis for peace. If they refused then Wilson could reject the peace proposal and wait for a more opportune time to talk about a truce. House also flattered Wilson with appeals to his vanity. The United States entered the war primarily to shape the peace. As House put it the president "could take the cause of peace out of the hands of the pope." This meant that Wilson would receive the lion's share of credit for bringing an end to the war and not Benedict XV.[33]

Wilson agreed with House's observations. He found that the pope's suggestions did not "meet the views of any of the belligerents." The president also told House that any discussion of peace at the present time would only constitute a "blind adventure." In his view ending the war in a state of status quo ante "would leave affairs in the same attitude that furnished a pretext for the war." In the end, Wilson found that the world could not

trust the German government. The leaders had in his words disregarded "formal obligations of treaty and all accepted principles of international law." Wilson thought he could not in good faith carry on peace discussions with the "autocratic regime" still dominant in Germany. Wilson regarded the German Imperial Government as morally "bankrupt" and could not believe any future pledges to preserve the peace. He described them as potential "quicksand." Wilson and House agreed that a fundamental change had to occur within the German government before any peace talks could commence. The Kaiser would have to go.[34]

Nevertheless, the pope's peace plan had an impact on Wilson's thinking. The main reason for the decision to declare war emanated from his desire to influence the peace. Wilson recognized that the Entente nations, anticipating the end of the war, had begun to gather data for a peace conference. On 2 September 1917, Wilson wrote a letter to House that suggested that he convene a commission of experts to draw up a peace plan. He asked that the colonel to put together the group privately. Wilson considered House loyal enough to carry out his wishes while he harbored many reservations about his secretary of state. This meant that once again in diplomatic matters the president wanted to circumvent the State Department. Secretary of State Robert Lansing presumed he would take a leading role in peace planning. In preparation, he enlisted Chandler Anderson, the well connected former Counselor of the State Department during the Taft Administration, asking him to begin the planning process. Wilson held Lansing in low regard and by September of 1917 actually discussed with House ways to remove him because of his conservative views and frequent illnesses.[35]

House accepted the president's offer, even though he expected a huge volume of work. For once House felt humility when he accepted the job. This assignment also fed House's massive ego. The colonel would have a direct and powerful role in shaping the post-war world. He had fantasized ever since writing *Philip Dru* about leaving his mark on global politics. The Inquiry, as the board became known, allowed him to make his dreams come true. House possessed little practical knowledge about how to accomplish his assignment. Still, he at least expected that he would need experts to construct a peace program. He placed his brother-in-law Sidney Mezes, the president of City College of New York, in charge of assembling the group. Meanwhile, Lansing thought he would work with the Inquiry. He offered to make State Department officials available, but House, ever jealous of his new responsibilities, refused all offers of Lansing's assistance. The Inquiry and peace preparations remained the province of House and his experts.[36]

V

As House worked on a American peace program wartime exigencies pressed upon him. The year of 1917 had proven difficult for the Allies. The Russian Provisional Government struggled to stay in power and in the war. In October the Kerensky government fell to Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks. The Italians encountered a series of military defeats on their front. The English and the French also faced several reverses on the Western Front. David Lloyd George, the British prime minister, saw that the Allied war effort lacked coordination. He suggested that an inter-Allied council convene to discuss the deteriorating Russian and Italian situations. Another concern centered on the lack of cooperation among the Allies on the Western Front. Lloyd George and his French counterparts wanted the United States to attend the

proposed conference.[37]

Wilson demurred at first in response to hints he should send a representative to the meeting. Wilson wanted to chart his own diplomatic course and hesitated to entangle America in European political affairs at this point. Using material supplied by Wiseman, House advised the president to send a mission to Europe to address military and financial issues among the Entente but not diplomatic questions.[38]

Lloyd George wanted House act as head of the American mission so that the British could manipulate his Anglophilia. In turn, Lloyd George knew that House might use his position of influence with the president to steer U. S. diplomacy in ways favoring the British. The prime minister wanted to build a special relationship and knew that House shared this aspiration. Wilson kept the British at arm's length and would not endorse English preferences. For example, he opposed Lloyd George 's suggested diversion of resources from the Western Front to other theaters in an effort to encircle Germany. Moreover, he insisted on preserving the whole British Empire, a goal for which the president had less than wholehearted enthusiasm. Lloyd George hoped for House's support while playing on the colonel's desire for an American-Anglo alliance.[39]

At first House refused any offer from the president to lead the American mission to Europe and suggested that Secretary of State Lansing or Secretary of War Newton Baker assume the position. In Wiseman's view, House's reluctance followed from the amount of work required in his other roles. As the colonel intimated, he previously had served as a peace envoy and now headed the commission preparing plans for a post-war settlement. Consequently, the Central Powers might misconstrue his part. In Wiseman's opinion House thought that he could not effectively function as both an advocate for

peace and war. In reality, House feared the possibility of spending the entire war in Europe. He did not want a prolonged separation from Wilson and risk the loss of his influence as in the previous year. Nevertheless, Wilson insisted that House go as his personal representative to the Supreme War Council. The Allies and the Associated Powers anticipated using the Council to coordinate diplomatic initiatives and plan military operations. The president stated that "no one knew his mind" like House. House agreed to head the American mission after extracting a promise from Wilson that he could return to the United States following the meeting.[40]

House not only brought military advisors like General Tasker Bliss but also economic counselors on the mission. The delegates arrived in London in November 1917 and met immediately with their British counterparts. The appearance of the Americans brightened the British spirits after the twin disasters in Russia and Italy. The Bolsheviks headed by Lenin came to power and immediately sought to extricate Russia from the war. The Italian front collapsed at Capporetto, and only the introduction of French and British troops stabilized the situation. House waited several days to confer with Lloyd George who had gone to Italy where the first meeting of the Supreme War Council convened. When the prime minister returned, the colonel found him impossible to deal with. The Welshman had charm and poise but also appeared devious and unstable. They disagreed on various issues, including the nature and purpose of the Supreme War Council. The British premier wanted to make it a political as well as a military body with each head of state represented along with a military advisor. House wanted a closer relationship with the Allies but knew he could not go beyond the broad parameters already set out by Wilson. These included his insistence that the Supreme

War Council concentrate on planning grand military strategy for the anticipated offensives in the spring of 1918. House turned back any suggestions that the council should include a permanent American political representative. House hoped to support Wilson's position that while the U.S. appeared willing to jointly plan military operations it would maintain their independence from Allied diplomacy. Lloyd George at first accepted House's position but then changed his mind and insisted he might not even attend the scheduled November meeting in Versailles. House then threatened to stay away and urged the French to follow the American lead. House complained in his diary about Lloyd George's impulsive readiness first to attend and then not. Nonetheless, after reconsideration Lloyd George relented and the conference convened on 29 November 1917.[41]

Despite House's insistence that the Supreme War Council remain primarily a military planning body he tried to use the gathering to engage in some diplomacy. House thought he could begin the process of asserting American primacy in its relationship with the Entente. He proposed to offer a resolution that clarified Allied war aims. The American declaration stated that the Allies and the Associated Powers did not fight for the purposes of "aggression" or "indemnity." Instead it called for action until "militarism shall not continue to cast its shadow over the world." The motion continued with a statement that "nations shall have the right to lead their lives in the way that seems (best) for the development of their general welfare." House submitted the decree to the president before offering it and Wilson approved. The chief executive wanted nothing to contradict the address he planned to give before Congress in January 1918. He stated the Americans would not fight for any "selfish" aims on the part of any belligerents.[42]

House hoped to accomplish several things with the introduction of his declaration at the Supreme War Council. He wanted the Entente to issue a statement that would unite European liberal and socialist opinion behind the Allied war effort. This meant differentiating the war aims of the Allies from those of the Central Powers. House foolishly maintained hopes that if the Allies would abandon harsh peace terms that German liberals would come to power and negotiate a truce. Additionally, he wanted to draw sharp distinctions between the aims of Germany with those of the Allies and the Associated Powers for the benefit of the Bolsheviks. Lenin saw the war as an imperialist struggle and allowed for no differences between the two sides. House hoped if he could convince the Bolsheviks of the democratic nature of his side, then they might remain in the war and sustain the Eastern Front which constituted a delusional illusion at best.[43]

House failed in his efforts despite numerous attempts to get the Council to adopt his resolution. He conferred with numerous members of the English delegation including Balfour, Lloyd George, and Lord Reading, England's chief jurist and future British Ambassador to the United States, but could not get them to commit. Lloyd George thought that liberal war pronouncements would only embolden Germany. The prime minister hoped to achieve a clear military victory over the Central Powers. With England's hesitancy to approve such a joint statement Wilson and House thought they could issue their own statement of war aims and a peace program.[44]

House evinced disappointment with the Supreme War Council after his resolution failed. He remained silent as the other representatives discussed military strategy because the U. S. had not arrived on the Western Front in significant numbers. He

found the sessions long and boring as the Entente political leaders made lengthy and meandering speeches. House recorded in his diary a disappointment at the lack of cooperation and coordination between the Allies and the Associated Powers. He lauded the efforts of the military and the armies fighting in the field but found fault with Lloyd George and French premier Georges Clemenceau. House thought that the Supreme War Council provided an opportunity to announce a grand statement of goals uniting the efforts of the Allies and the Associated Powers. House, frustrated at the lack of diplomatic success returned to the United States to help Wilson write the Fourteen Points.[45]

VI

House wanted Wilson to wait until he came back from his mission before he started working on the speech because he wanted to help shape the address. In January 1918 House arrived in Washington with extensive material from the Inquiry to aid in the writing process. House faced several cross pressures as he helped Wilson draft the Fourteen Points. He wanted to satisfy Wilson's desire to make U.S. war aims clear and a peace program the president hoped to institute at any future peace conference. House sought to fulfill Wilson's ambition to shape and lead American and European liberal opinion where he headed a crusade to rid international politics of secret diplomacy and imperialism. Wilson also wanted to ensure that the conditions which led to the Great War did not occur again. The president worried that Lloyd George or Clemenceau would announce their war aims and circumvent his attempts to shape liberal opinion. House and Wilson kept their efforts secret as they worked on the speech and consulted almost no one about the final product. House also felt some pressure emanating from the Allies.

The Fourteen Points remained vague enough so as not to indicate an open rupture between the United States and the Entente. House made sure that while the speech fulfilled Wilson's wishes to publicize America's peace program it remained in reality a list of aspirations left open to wide interpretation by the Allies.[46]

House outlined the general terms of the Fourteen Points first in a rough draft of the speech. He laid out terms that embraced open diplomacy and freedom of the seas. House next incorporated some ideas from *Philip Dru* that called for the lifting of trade barriers and the opening of international markets. House also integrated some of the items he advocated when he served as a peace envoy which called for programs that encouraged disarmament. Furthermore, House set out a list of territorial readjustments which entailed a German evacuation of Belgian and French territories. He also included a provision to form a general association of nations to settle international disputes. House thought the Fourteen Points accomplished many of the things Wilson wanted. The address provided a comprehensive peace plan that the president could stand behind. Furthermore, the draft contained enough vague ideas that the Allies might endorse. Wilson accepted House's draft of the speech and only rearranged one point of the address by placing the provision for a proposed League of Nations last. House expressed pride in the role he played in writing the speech and declared in his diary that Wilson referred to the Fourteen Points as "our message." House flattered Wilson, telling the president the speech would capture the imagination of the world and make the president a powerful voice for peace and liberty.[47]

As Wilson and House prepared the Fourteen Points Lloyd George gave a major address that echoed many of the ideas that the president planned to put forward in his

own speech. Wilson and House could have written Lloyd George's message. The British prime minister spoke of a peace based on "reason" and "justice." He also mentioned the "sanctity of treaties" and territorial settlements based on the "right of self-determination." Additionally, Lloyd George proposed the creation of an "international organization" to limit the "burden of armaments" and "diminish the probability of war." Wilson appreciated Lloyd George's speech since it did not conflict with the Fourteen Points. Nonetheless, the publication of the message occurred in Washington on 5 January 1918, three days before Wilson's scheduled speech. Lloyd George's address depressed the president. Wilson confided to House that the British prime minister preempted his effort to shape liberal opinion. The president feared the world would quickly forget his own Fourteen Points. House labored to lift the spirits of Wilson and stated that the Fourteen Points would quickly "smother" any statements made by the British prime minister.[48]

While House welcomed Lloyd George's message he doubted the sincerity of the British premier. House probably thought that Lloyd George's coalition government, dominated by British conservatives, would not abandon its imperialistic foreign policy. Lloyd George wanted to build a special relationship between London and Washington and knowing Wilson's mind after his numerous meetings with House anticipated the president's speech. House despite his own pronounced Anglophilia found the British prime minister hard to predict.[49]

Wilson gave his Fourteen Points address on 8 January 1918. The speech contained much of the colonel's vision. It fulfilled House's dream of reordering global politics. The first point called for open diplomacy which House advised the president to make a

central part of his message. The Fourteen Points also called for the establishment of a League of Nations which House called for in *Philip Dru.* This idea, refined through House's numerous meetings with Sir Edward Grey, provided the most important and dramatic part of the address. The Fourteen Points also indicated America's abandonment of isolation. The United States joined the roster of Great Powers deciding the world's fate. Furthermore, the Fourteen Points proposed a cooperative world order that eliminated future conflicts. Many of House's private fantasies found concrete form in the Fourteen Points.[50]

VII

As House helped Wilson draft the Fourteen Points he became involved in the complicated tangle of U.S. and Russian diplomacy. The Japanese proposed to the Supreme War Council a plan to occupy eastern Siberia which it quickly endorsed. The Allies wanted to keep Russia in the war as the Bolshevik government looked to withdraw from the conflict so they could consolidate their control over the country. Allied leaders already suspicious of Bolshevik motives had their doubts about the Russians ratified when they entered peace talks with the Central Powers. Many considered Lenin, the Bolshevik leader, a German agent. The Entente wanted to send the Japanese into Siberia as an occupying force that would link up with White Russian armies that opposed the Bolsheviks and reestablish the Eastern Front.[51]

The Supreme War Council expanded upon the Japanese plan. It suggested a large Japanese force disembark at the Pacific port of Vladivostok buttressed by small detachments of American and British troops. The Allies wanted American support and approached President Wilson and Secretary of State Lansing to gain their endorsement of

the plan. Both men rejected the scheme as unworkable. The British rebuffed officially by the American government explored other means. Balfour and Wiseman tried to enlist House in a backchannel effort to gain Wilson's approval. The Foreign Secretary stressed that the Siberian intervention would cement Japan's allegiance to the Allies and Associated Powers. Balfour emphasized that the Germans might penetrate far into Siberia and threaten U. S. interests in Asia and the Pacific. The Germans, in Balfour's estimation, might establish a submarine base in the Pacific and menace American merchant shipping throughout Asia. Furthermore, Balfour suggested that the Germans might undermine the United States' position in the Philippines.[52]

House rejected all pleas made by both Wiseman and Balfour. The colonel advised Wilson to reject the Council's plan. He believed that if the Japanese occupied Siberia the Russians might side with the Germans. House thought that many Russians infused with racial fears would dread the "Yellow Peril" and look to the Germans as potential protectors against a foreign occupier. Moreover, House reasoned that intervention would undermine the spirit of the Fourteen Points. The war aims of the United States endorsed the idea of self-determination and rejected the policy of conquest. A proposed intervention and occupation of Russia where the people struggled to establish a viable government would look terrible in the court of world opinion. In House's opinion this policy made America no better than Germany. Finally, House saw no military advantage with an occupation of Siberia. Any slim hopes of restoring the Eastern Front rested in an army marching across Siberia and reaching European Russia.[53]

House, throughout the spring of 1918, adamantly opposed any intervention in Russia. House switched his stance as events shifted. While Wilson and House resisted the

Japanese occupation of Siberia they endorsed a proposed Allied incursion into northern Russia. They accepted this limited intervention since it entailed protecting military supplies, housed at the port of Murmansk, from falling into the hands of the Germans. Moreover, the Japanese would not be included in that expedition. House's resistance to the Siberian intervention changed when Czech troops trapped in Siberia requested that the Allies and Associated Powers evacuate them. The Czech Legion wanted to fight the Germans on the Western Front. The humanitarian nature of such a mission appealed to House, and he favored a limited intervention. Furthermore, the Japanese government promised to limit its occupation of Siberia in both distance and duration. The State Department followed House's lead and persuaded Wilson to approve a limited invasion of Russia. The Wilson administration decided to send troops to act as a restraining force on the Japanese. Wilson and House feared the Japanese government planned to close the Open Door on the Asian mainland. The Bolsheviks grew distrustful of the West with this haphazard approach to Russian policy which sowed the seeds of the Cold War. House bore some of the responsibility for these vacillating decisions and its long term damage to American foreign policy.[54]

As Wilson and House plunged deeper into the morass of Russian policy they also turned their attention to other aspects of diplomacy. The colonel urged the president to give some thought to the establishment of a League of Nations. Appealing to Wilson's vanity, House declared that the if the president took the initiative in constructing the League it would mark a "glorious culmination of your achievements." Nevertheless, the Allies and the Associated Powers did not agree on how to organize such a league. The French wanted to start an association of nations before the war ended and bar the Central

Powers. House agreed with his good friend Sir Edward Grey stated that a league which excluded Germany seemed incomplete. House thought a wartime league possible but wanted the inclusion of a democratized Germany. Any league, he believed, should be underpinned by a strong Anglo-American alliance. At Wilson's insistence House took up the task of drafting a covenant for the League of Nations.[55]

House prepared the document with material supplied by the Inquiry. House conceived of the League of Nations as a forum for the Great Powers. Switzerland agreed to enter the organization on the condition that each country possess equal voting privileges. The colonel rejected this and thought that only the large powers of Germany, England, France, Italy, Japan, and the United States should possess the right to vote. He feared that "backward nations" like Mexico and the Central American states might with equal voting rights block an initiative introduced by a large member like the United States. House thought there remained a clear hierarchy of nations with the Great Powers at the top and other countries further down the chain. House's plan much like the vision he put forward in *Philip Dru* contemplated a cooperative global system through a league but still embraced the old style diplomacy where the Great Powers decided the fortunes of the world.[56]

House's covenant also showed the utopian worldview that infused Wilsonian diplomacy. The colonel's draft called for nations to conduct diplomacy in a moral fashion. This meant a commitment to open diplomacy and a renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy. House also wanted espionage outlawed because it violated his personal views of fair play. Nonetheless, while House provided specifics about aspirations he remained vague about enforcement of the resolutions promulgated

by a proposed league. He thought world opinion marshaled by the League of Nations would make nations bend to the will of the organization. Lord Robert Cecil, the British Deputy Foreign Secretary and future architect of the League of Nations, doubted that only professions of international good will and a code of moral conduct would work. He offered the example of pre-war Germany as an object lesson that intimations of peace meant nothing. Cecil advocated the imposition of economic and commercial sanctions as the best solution to enforce resolutions of the League. In August 1918, Wilson accepted Cecil's suggestion when he included a provision for sanctions in the latest version of the covenant that he and House drafted.[57]

House also wanted to put an international court at the center of his conception of a league. Influenced by Elihu Root, Roosevelt's former secretary of state, House proposed the establishment of an effective international court with judges from member nations empowered to arbitrate disputes between countries where other mechanisms like treaties did not exist. House and Wilson diverged on this question as the president did not like the idea of international tribunals.[58]

As House worked on the draft covenant he urged the president to initiate a public discussion that would build needed domestic support for the League. Nevertheless, no consensus emerged among Americans about how to establish a League of Nations. Some wanted to form it as the war continued composed exclusively of the Allies and the Associated Powers. The issue of German membership remained an open question. This group contemplated a system that committed member nations to contribute full naval, military, and economic forces as sanctions against any power that disturbed the peace of the world. House probably sided with this first group because he wanted the

League to ensure both a strong wartime and post-war alliance system with the European democracies. A second contingent wanted to wait until the Great War ended and add Germany to the proposed League. Then each member nation would help create an international police force that enforced the decisions of the League. A third group doubted that a league could work at all.[59]

House also wanted Wilson to work with the British to establish the League. During the summer of 1918 the British government planned to issue the Phillimore Report that laid out a comprehensive plan for such a league. House wanted closer cooperation between the Americans and the British. He wished that the president would move beyond the vague promises of the Fourteen Points and put his plans for a league into concrete form. Wilson refused and made it clear to House that he would not appoint a committee similar to the British commission. Furthermore, he would not release any findings of the Inquiry that dealt with a potential league. The president also requested that the British keep the Phillimore Report secret. House and the British indicated disappointment at Wilson's inaction in laying out a comprehensive American vision for a League of Nations. Both admitted that Wilson possessed a "single track mind" and wanted to devote all of his energy to managing the war effort.[60]

Other reasons also underpinned Wilson's reasons for keeping his plans for the league vague. The president apparently feared that the Republicans would pick apart a plan if he announced anything definitive before the end of the war and wanted to keep his options open. Additionally, opinion remained divided about the structure and function of the proposed international organization. Even the president and his confidential advisor could not agree. After House submitted his draft covenant to Wilson the president

displayed dissatisfaction with the document. Wilson and House met at the colonel's summer home at Magnolia, Massachusetts and drafted another covenant. The president disagreed with House's basic premise that only the Great Powers should possess voting power and wrote a document where all nations that joined the league held that right. Wilson also eliminated the international court as a feature in his outline of the league covenant. He distrusted lawyers and purely legalistic arguments to settle disputes due to his disdain of attorneys in general and Secretary of State Lansing in particular. Wilson thought that a reformed global system should place more emphasis on a code of morality than a code of law. Wilson and House reflected American opinion about a proposed league of nations. While both men believed in the hope that such an organization offered a chance for a durable peace they remained divided upon the specifics of such a league. In the end, Wilson disregarded House's advice to educate the public and largely kept his plans for a league vague and secret. Wilson missed the opportunity to hold an open debate on the organization before the American people, overburdened by international obligations, rejected his vision. While House's conception of the League of Nations went unrealized his desire to shape domestic political opinion was vindicated with its rejection by Congress.[61]

VIII

In September of 1918, the Germans, with the arrival of American troops in great numbers on the Western Front, decided to sue for an armistice. Prince Max of Baden, a German moderate, ascended to the chancellorship and began to exchange diplomatic notes with President Wilson about a negotiated cease-fire. Prince Max wanted any armistice and peace treaty based upon the non-punitive terms found in the Fourteen

Points. Wilson showed interest in opening negotiations on that basis with some reforms to be enacted by the German government. He demanded the expansion of the electoral franchise and giving the Reichstag, the German parliament, more of a voice in formulating governmental policy. He also insisted that the German Kaiser must abdicate and certain conservative members of the government should resign.[62]

Wilson believed that the Fourteen Points could provide a basis for both a cease-fire and peace treaty. The Allied governments knew that Wilson preferred to chart his own diplomatic course and wanted the U. S. represented at any pre-armistice negotiations. The Allies asked that House represent the administration at the proposed conference. Entente leaders like Lloyd George believed that House, who favored close cooperation with Britain and France, might not press the Fourteen Points too hard upon the Allies. Conversely, Wilson thought his closest advisor would leverage the Entente into accepting an armistice based upon his plan.[63]

In October 1918 House, who harbored conflicting loyalties departed for Europe to attend the pre-armistice conference. House officially represented the interests of the Americans but he also wanted to placate the Allies. The armistice contained both military and political components. House stood aside and allowed the British and French to dictate the military terms of the armistice. These carried a heavy burden that contained little of the letter or spirit of the Fourteen Points. The British insisted that the Germans surrender their fleet and Heglioland, the chief German naval port. The French, led by Clemenceau and Ferdinand Foch, the Supreme Allied Commander, asserted that the Germans must evacuate Alsace-Lorraine and withdraw their troops from the left bank of the Rhine so that Allied and Associated Power forces could occupy the region. The

victors maintained they would remain on the Rhine to ensure that Germany honored contemplated reparation payments. House stayed silent as the Allies dictated these severe conditions. He did not want to raise issues that might lead to divides between the Entente and America at a critical time of victory.[64]

Nonetheless, while House worked to conciliate the Allies when it came to the military terms of the armistice he attempted to put the American stamp on the political settlement. In his conferences with Clemenceau and Lloyd George House stressed that the two men needed to embrace the Fourteen Points. Clemenceau objected to point one because it encompassed the principal of open diplomacy and covenants. Lloyd George voiced reservations about point two that called for freedom of the seas. British officials thought this point advocated the limitation of naval armaments eliminating the advantage that Great Britain enjoyed on the high seas. Lloyd George insisted that Britain retain complete discretion in interpreting freedom of the seas. The British prime minister remained inflexible over that issue but evinced an inclination to accept the other Fourteen Points. House persuaded the president to defer the question of freedom of the seas until the peace conference. House thought that Lloyd George might join the Americans in favoring a non-punitive political settlement as opposed to Clemenceau who wanted to inflict additional heavy penalties against Germany.[65]

As House continued his negotiations with the Allies he found them increasingly difficult. Clemenceau and Italian Foreign Secretary Sidney Sonnino wanted to add a list of reservations and qualifications to the Fourteen Points. House, frustrated by the obstacles, thrown up by the Allies decided to follow Wilson's entreaty to "leverage" the Entente. The colonel made it clear that if the Allies did not accept the Fourteen

Points he would recommend that the United States leave the war. He even suggested America might negotiate a separate peace agreement with Germany. Moreover, House proposed that the U.S. would withhold needed economic support from the Entente. House reported that Lloyd George and Clemenceau expressed shock at these threats, and after some consternation the Allies adopted a more cooperative stance. House seemed satisfied that the Entente accepted the Fourteen Points as a basis for the armistice.[66]

House was convinced that he had effectively shaped the armistice. He reassured Wilson that the cease-fire carried the imprint of the Fourteen Points. Wilson, armed with House's representations thought that the Fourteen Points would not only serve as a basis for the end of the war but affect the peace. As the president departed for Europe, House's misleading reports led him to believe that he would succeed in constructing a liberal new world order. In fact, House had failed to significantly influence the terms of the armistice. The military and naval provisions of the cease-fire predicted a vengeful and heavy peace falling upon Germany. House, in his desire to please the Allies, acquiesced as the French and the British laid the groundwork for the peace treaty that would require Germany to unilaterally disarm and pay large reparations. Wilson, deceived by House's accounts, soon confronted reality and found his desire to reform global politics defeated.[67]

During the year and half of American belligerency House regained the position of influence he had lost during the latter part of 1916. Wilson confided in his closest advisor and entrusted him with numerous tasks. The president charged the colonel with everything to heading the Inquiry, the group that constructed an American peace plan, to helping Wilson write the Fourteen Points and representing the United States at the pre-

armistice conference. In Wilson's opinion House remained the indispensable man when it came to wartime diplomacy. Nonetheless, House at times displayed naiveté in his approach to foreign policy. House's belief that a concerted debate over Allied and Associated Power war aims and the goals of the Central Powers carried on through the press showed his unsophisticated worldview when it came to diplomacy. House also undermined the independence of Wilsonian foreign policy in his efforts to build a lasting alliance with the Entente. He even sent misleading reports to the president that assured Wilson that the armistice contained the spirit of the Fourteen Points. In the end, House misled the president during the pre-armistice conference and undercut Wilson's mission to initiate an era of new diplomacy.

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46. Edward M. House "Diary," 18 December 1917.

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53. Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 2 February 1918, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 46: 214-215; Unterberger, *America's Siberian Expedition,* 25-26.

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63. Trask, *The United States in the Supreme War Council,* 156.

64. Inga Floto, *Colonel House in Paris: A Study of American Policy at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 45-47.

65. Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 30 October 1918, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 51: 511.

66. Edward M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 30 October 1918, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 51: 515-517; Edward M. House "Diary," 4 November 1918, EMHP.

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Conclusion

In 1919, the relationship between Edward House and Woodrow Wilson broke apart during the peace conference at Versailles. The origins and exact time of the end of the friendship remains clouded in mystery. Both men never publicly acknowledged the split. House hinted privately about the estrangement but always evidenced some puzzlement at the divide. In fact, House's ego that drove him to achieve great things eventually caused his downfall. He finally lost the confidence and trust of the president. House found his influence diminished during the year that led up to America's entrance into the war. He failed to learn anything from this experience and went against the president's orders at the peace conference, forever fracturing their relationship. Afterwards, House found himself far removed from the corridors of powers.

The break left House's legacy largely buried by the larger drama that followed with the advent of World War II and the Cold War. Nonetheless, House profoundly influenced the direction of Wilsonian diplomacy which in turn impacted the course of American foreign policy. Despite House's flawed personality and approach to diplomacy his sway over international relations continues into the present.

I

In 1918, House worried about his position with the president. He attempted to temper the most laudatory passages in a pro-House biography produced by the author Arthur Howden Smith. The biography credited House with every major success of the Wilson administration. House probably feared that Wilson's ego would not stand for the colonel receiving such undue attention. He knew that Wilson had lost some confidence in him over the infamous House-Grey Memorandum incident and did not

want his position undermined as the president's chief confidant. Nevertheless, continual adoring attention by the press and flattery provided by European leaders seemingly clouded House's judgment. House lost sight of the fact that he relied on the confidence and patronage of the president to maintain his access to power. House, blinded by his megalomania destroyed everything that he spent years building.[1]

The split primarily came over who should shape the peace agreement. House wanted to put his stamp on the peace treaty. With his experience as a wartime envoy, House thought he possessed more knowledge about foreign policy than Wilson. At different times House confided to his diary that Wilson did not really grasp the importance of international events. House thought he could negotiate a better agreement than Wilson. House believed he had an opportunity to influence the deliberations when the president returned to America during the conference when Congress went into session.[2]

House stepped in as head of the American Peace Commission upon Wilson's absence. He ignored Wilson's express wishes and set out to pursue his own agenda. He agreed with a French proposal to separate the finished League of Nations Covenant and the peace treaty. Wilson expressly disagreed with this proposal and wanted the peace agreement and the covenant adopted by the conference as an organic whole.[3]

When Wilson returned to Paris he learned about House's disloyalty. Wilson probably thought back to how House had undermined his position with the infamous House-Grey Memorandum. The president also must have known about the misleading information House provided about the pre-armistice negotiations. House informed the president that the armistice carried the imprint of the Fourteen Points, but in fact the cease-fire carried little of the spirit of the document.[4]

This information weakened Wilson's bargaining position as he arrived at Versailles to hammer out a peace agreement. Instead of leading the peace negotiations the president found himself compromising on almost all of the Fourteen Points. Wilson extracted promises from the Allies that they would join a newly constructed league of nations but in return he agreed to impose harsh peace terms upon Germany.[5]

House's latest display of disloyalty did not please the president. After Wilson's return from the United States House found himself excluded from the important meetings that concerned the Allied and Associated Power leaders. House lost sight of the fact that the president's confidence in him was the only reason he enjoyed his position of power. . A definite split occurred between the two men though neither ever publicly acknowledged it. A mystery remains about when the divide occurred but seemingly one moment House had the trust of the president and then he lost it. Whether it was a process or a sudden event remains a source of speculation. After the peace conference ended House returned to the United States but took no active role in the debates over American membership in the League of Nations that gripped the country.[6]

House and Wilson never reconciled, and the colonel spent the last years of his life wandering in the political wilderness. House spent the 1920s and 1930s working on his memoirs and traveling to Europe with his wife. He flirted with some Democratic candidates for president but never formed the intimate relationship that he had with Wilson. In 1932, House served as one of many advisors to the first presidential campaign of Franklin Roosevelt but it did not mark a return to political prominence. In 1938, House died at his apartment in New York City still largely an enigma.[7]

II

Edward M. House possessed a massive ego. He wanted to join the ranks of great men in history who shaped events. House understood early in his life that he had to gain access to power in order to join this class. House began his ascension when he arose as as a force in Texas politics. House's ego could not limit him to state politics, and he soon departed for the national and international stages when he attached himself to Woodrow Wilson. Despite House's fall from power he left an enduring impact when it came to international affairs. He helped to usher in an era of internationalism that America has not yet abandoned. House modernized U. S. foreign policy when he served as a peace envoy when he attempted to broker an end to the Great War. No American had served in that capacity in modern times until House's shuttle missions to Europe. He blazed an important trail in that endeavor as the U. S. now sends representatives to different places across the globe to mediate the end of conflicts. House offered the template for that aspect of American foreign policy.

Furthermore, House helped to construct the Wilsonian view of the world which still influences American foreign policymakers today. Wilson and House believed that democracy promoted order and stability. Democracies, according to Wilsonian thought, did not make war upon one another. This meant that if democracy could be exported to other countries peace would follow. America's mission during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries followed the pattern established during the Great War where the United States attempted to spread democracy. This belief has not changed much as is evident in the U. S. attempts at nation building in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Bush and Obama administrations have shown a tendency to embrace the Wilsonian view of the world as each attempted to introduce democracy into the Middle East and Central Asia.

House also helped to cement America's commitment to collective security. He committed the U. S. to the endorsement of this policy with his work on the proposed Pan American Pact and his drafting of an early covenant of the League of Nations. House believed that the international community had to act cooperatively to prevent future wars. He even went further than Wilson in wanting the League of Nations to serve as the basis for a durable alliance with the European democracies to ensure that conflicts like World War I did not occur again. House's ideas influenced policymakers in the Roosevelt and Truman administrations as they set about to found the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

In 1948, NATO was created in the midst of the early Cold War to act as a deterrent against perceived Soviet aggression in western Europe. Moreover, the alliance contained many of House's ideas that he espoused thirty years earlier. The organization ensured a permanent coalition between the United States and the western European democracies. House had long envisioned such an arrangement that promoted global security. The NATO alliance more than any other international organization that the U. S. belonged to encapsulated House's vision. NATO tied the United States firmly to their European allies into a international security system that ensured order and peace.

House at times during his diplomatic career engaged in misdirection and outright deception. The colonel even lived in a fantasy world and over exaggerated his own influence and power. Nevertheless, despite these flaws House left an impact on American diplomacy. During the years between 1914-1918 House exercised great power and contributed significantly to changing America's role in global politics. His impact was generally positive in those years in contrast to the role he played at the

Versailles Peace Conference. Moreover, House outlined the contours of collective security and laid the foundations for America's dedication to this principle. House's blemishes were many but he profoundly shaped U. S. foreign policy.

Endnotes

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3. Floto, 240.

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5. Arno Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolutiion at Versailles,* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 879.

6. Floto, 240; Godfrey Hodgson, *Woodrow Wilson's Right Hand: The Life of Colonel Edward M. House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 255.

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VITA

Robert Howell Butts was born March 29, 1966, in Clarksville Texas. He is the son of Thomas Butts and Lois White Butts. A 1984 graduate of Mirabeau B. Lamar High School, Arlington, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in History from the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, in 1989.

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ABSTRACT

AN ARCHITECT OF THE AMERICAN CENTURY:
COLONEL EDWARD M. HOUSE AND THE MODERNIZATION OF UNITED STATES DIPLOMACY

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This dissertation examines the impact and influence of Colonel Edward House. House occupied a unique position in American history. The Texan wielded great power for most of Woodrow Wilson's presidency. House left an enduring impact on U. S. foreign policy while he served as the president's closest advisor.

The project covers House's early life because it offers valuable clues as to how the colonel constructed his latter role as a presidential advisor and international figure. House believed in the idea of great men shaping history and bending events to their will. He also thought that the political arena provided the best avenue to achieve greatness. Moreover, House knew due to his poor public persona and persistent illnesses had to construct a distinctive position for himself. House found that his path to greatness rested in exerting power behind the scenes. During his early years in politics he served as a confidential advisor to a series of Texas governors, a position House later filled in the Wilson administration.

House found his chance to move onto the national stage through the presidential candidacy of Woodrow Wilson. He provided some key services for Wilson during the

course of the 1912 campaign and quickly gained the confidence of the candidate. After Wilson's election House acted as a de facto chief of state as he helped fill administration jobs. When the president-elect assumed office on March 4, 1913 House offered some advice on domestic policy but his ambition soon turned towards diplomacy.

House believed that global politics provided the best way to achieve prominence. Though driven by ambition and ego House helped to usher in an era of American internationalism. His role as peace envoy, during American neutrality, marked the first time in the modern era that the U.S. involved itself in a European war. House continued his internationalist stance when American entered the war when he helped draft the Fourteen Points and an early covenant of the Fourteen Points. House was an important figure in bringing America of its era of isolationism onto the world stage.