

“The Council has been your Creation”: Hamilton Fish Armstrong, Paradigm of the American Foreign Policy Establishment?

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He was born in 1893 in the New York brownstone house near Washington Square where he lived all his adult life, a member of Edith Wharton's settled, circumscribed world of ordered privilege whose affluent, well-travelled, and sophisticated men and women traced their lineage back to the Founding Fathers and their principles to the American Revolution. His father was an artist who served as Consul General to Italy, and Armstrong was brought up in a milieu which took for granted the fact that there existed a world outside the United States.¹ He died in 1973, as the United States finally withdrew from the Vietnam War, a conflict which deeply distressed him and shattered the foreign policy elite and its controlling consensus, whose creation had been a major part of his life's work. In an obituary notice Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., described him as “a New York gentleman of a vanishing school,” who “treated every one, old or young, famous or unknown, with the same generous courtesy and concern.”²

The career of Hamilton Fish Armstrong, a founder and mainstay of the Council on Foreign Relations and of its influential journal *Foreign Affairs*, which he edited for fifty years, for all but six serving as its most senior editor, spanned the development, apogee, and disintegration of the

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¹ Hamilton Fish Armstrong, *Those Days* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

² Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., obituary notice, *Foreign Affairs*, 51 (1973).

United States foreign policy Establishment. Armstrong's career as editor and Council official is enlightening as to the manner in which the supposedly private and nongovernmental Council was instrumental in developing the foreign policy of the United States between the wars and even more during and after the Second World War. Rarely in the public eye, during his long life Armstrong nonetheless unobtrusively participated in an impressive number of key moments in the formulation of official United States foreign policy. For decades he habitually travelled abroad for several months of the year, meeting the political and intellectual elite of numerous countries and keeping detailed diary-notes of his experiences, as he usually did of those many other significant occasions when he was at least an interested bystander and often much more. A Democrat who worked easily with numerous Republicans, he had the knack of being present when key decisions were under consideration. His career in many ways epitomized the style and outlook of the elite which to a large degree took such decisions.³

Armstrong's real introduction to American politics came in 1912 as a freshman at Princeton, when the University's former president, Woodrow Wilson, ran a successful campaign as the Democratic candidate for President of the United States. Although still too young to vote, Armstrong supported Wilson, whose inspiration would to a considerable degree inform the remainder of his career, and marched exuberantly in the President-elect's victory parade. Even at this time Armstrong displayed a precocious interest in international affairs. In spring 1913 he planned to help organize a "conference of college men at Washington ... to promote World peace."⁴ At Princeton he arranged meetings featuring a variety of speakers of all nationalities. As a youthful undergraduate editor of the *Daily Princetonian*, in February 1916 Armstrong publicly though unsuccessfully opposed the pro-Allied Princeton president John Grier Hibben's proposal to introduce military training as a credit-bearing course for undergraduates, and his letter on the subject was reprinted in the *New York Evening Post* and discussed in other leading publications.⁵ While

³ Armstrong's autobiography of his public years, *Peace and Counter-Peace from Wilson to Hitler: Memoirs of Hamilton Fish Armstrong* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), only covers the period to 1933. Shortly before his death in 1973 he began a second volume, never completed, whose three draft chapters deal with the mid-1930s. Hamilton Fish Armstrong Papers, Mudd Manuscripts Library, Princeton University, box 120, file Manuscript: Unpublished continuation of *Peace and Counterpeace*, 1972.

⁴ Edwin P. Mead to Armstrong, 18 Mar. 1913, *ibid.*, box 43, file Edwin P. Mead.

⁵ Armstrong, diary, 29 Feb., 1, 3, 6, 10, 30 Mar., 5, 22 May 1916, *ibid.*, box 128; Armstrong, *Peace and Counter-Peace*, 26–27.

opposing selective military training, an attitude he later described in his memoirs as “naive at the time and ... more so in light of later events,” in mid-June 1916 Armstrong also published a letter in the *New York Times* favouring universal military conscription as a means of preventing the disproportionate sacrifice of “the better sort ... representatives of leading families with traditions, of service of university graduates and undergraduates and other educated men,” while the “great lower middle class ... refused to be stirred” and the “laboring class” took advantage of the opportunity of war “to make demand after demand.”⁶ Moreover, he already supported proposals that after the war the United States should assume a much more active world role. In May 1916 he served as the Princeton delegate at a meeting of the League to Enforce Peace, where Woodrow Wilson endorsed the creation of a post-war international organization to maintain peace.⁷

After American intervention Armstrong, like most of his classmates, made strenuous efforts to join the army, and was quickly accepted into an officers’ training camp. A lifelong special interest in the Balkans, begun at Princeton when he helped the good-looking, American-born Madame Slavko Grouich raise funds for the Serbian Red Cross, was cemented in late 1917, when he was seconded as an aide to the Serbian War Mission’s General Rashich. Armstrong spent much of the next eighteen months in Belgrade and travelled all over the Balkans, developing a particularly close friendship with the future King Alexander of Yugoslavia, which lasted until the latter’s assassination in October 1934. Over time Armstrong would write numerous articles and several books on Southeastern Europe, visiting the area frequently and winning many good friends there, to some of whom he remained close until his death.⁸

Armstrong’s Balkan interests, however close to his heart, were only one aspect of a broader passion for international affairs which in summer 1919 led him to apply for a position on the League of Nations secretariat. Raymond B. Fosdick, the American nominee for Under Secretary to the League, accepted him as an assistant, but early in 1920 Fosdick himself resigned his position, fearing that to continue in it might adversely affect

⁶ Armstrong, diary, 22 June 1916, Armstrong papers, box 128; clipping, *New York Times*, 21 June 1916, *ibid.*, box 105.

⁷ Armstrong, diary, 28, 29 May 1916, Armstrong papers, box 128.

⁸ Armstrong’s books on the area included *The New Balkans* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1926); *Where the East Begins* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1929); and *Tito and Goliath* (New York: Macmillan, 1971). He also wrote numerous articles on the Balkans, most of which were published in *Foreign Affairs*.

the continuing League fight in the United States Senate.⁹ Armstrong, who had since his Princeton days been attracted to the world of journalism, joined the staff of the *New York Evening Post*, a newspaper which had just been bought by the pro-League of Nations Thomas W. Lamont, a partner in the famous banking firm of J. P. Morgan & Company and an economic adviser to Woodrow Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference. The new proprietor, a former journalist who liquidated his enticing but expensive investment a few years later, was at this time “determined to restore it as a voice of liberal conservatism.”¹⁰ The paper took a firmly pro-League stance, and the apprentice Armstrong found himself reporting on a wide variety of topics, both foreign and domestic. Perhaps even more important, his position gave him the opportunity to meet numerous prominent international figures, such as Lord Bryce, the former British Ambassador to the United States, and the South African leader General Jan Christian Smuts.¹¹

In March 1922 Armstrong, then visiting Europe for his wife’s health, was offered the position of assistant or managing editor of the quarterly journal, *Foreign Affairs*, which the newly created Council on Foreign Relations wished to establish. In the most crucial decision of his career, he accepted the job and proceeded to spend the next several months travelling around Europe, observing the political scene and persuading prominent European figures to contribute to the new periodical. Initially the managing editor of *Foreign Affairs*, Armstrong soon assumed increased responsibility for it as the health of Archibald Cary Coolidge, the Harvard professor of history who had been one of the American experts at Paris and who served as chief editor, deteriorated during the 1920s.¹² When Coolidge died in 1928 Armstrong took over his position, having already acquired additional and much-needed help with his more general duties on the Council when Walter T. Mallory took over from him as executive director in 1927. Even before Mallory took this position, Armstrong had initiated an extensive programme of dinner talks, discussion meetings, and study groups, and he continued to be heavily involved in setting the Council’s agenda. Many years later Mallory, on his retirement, would tell

⁹ Armstrong, *Peace and Counter-Peace*, 99–100.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹¹ See *ibid.*, chapters 8 and 9.

¹² See the extensive correspondence between Coolidge and Armstrong in the Armstrong Papers; also Robert F. Byrnes, *Awakening American Education to the World: The Role of Archibald Cary Coolidge, 1866–1928* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 180–202.

Armstrong quite simply: “[T]he Council has been your creation.”¹³ In *Foreign Affairs*, his influence was paramount. “The chief function of the [*Foreign Affairs* advisory] board in my experience,” one member said upon his retirement, “has been to admire Ham.” Another added that “none of us was under the illusion that we were anything but a group of people Ham likes to talk to.”¹⁴

In 1922 the Council on Foreign Relations was still a fledgling organization, not the imposing and prestigious body it would later become. Much of its later success would indeed be the fruit of the effort that the young and enthusiastic Armstrong devoted not only to its publications but to building up the parent institution, an endeavour which was to be his life’s work. When accepting the position of editor, Armstrong recalled, “I did not know that I also would take over running the Council on Foreign Relations, which meant seeing to its financing, membership and meetings.”¹⁵ In early 1922 the Council was in serious difficulties. It represented two separate organizations which had merged in 1920. One, the original Council on Foreign Relations, “a group organized in 1918 by leading lawyers, bankers and other men of affairs in New York to discuss wartime problems and entertain foreign visitors”, was by mid-1920 “languishing” and “old and waning.” The second, more academic in its emphasis, was the American Institute of International Affairs, one of two “separate but associated” organizations, the other being the British Royal Institute of International Affairs, founded by the respective American and British experts who came together at the Paris Peace Conference. The two American organizations amalgamated in early 1921, appointing a prominent and well-connected board of directors, carefully setting fees that academics as well as businessmen could afford, and launching a successful fundraising drive targeted at those in the New York financial community – Lamont, for instance, and the German-Jewish banker Otto H. Kahn – who had shown strong support for an enhanced United States international role.¹⁶

¹³ Mallory to Armstrong, 11 June 1959, Armstrong papers, box 42, file Walter H. Mallory.

¹⁴ Clipping from *Newsweek*, 2 Oct. 1972, in *ibid.*, box 52, file Retirement.

¹⁵ Armstrong, *Peace and Counter-Peace*, 162.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4–6, 181–85; Robert D. Schulzinger, *The Wise Men of Foreign Affairs: The History of the Council on Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 3–10; Michael Wala, *The Council on Foreign Relations and American Policy in the Early Cold War* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1994), 1–9; Peter Grose, *Continuing the Inquiry: The Council on Foreign Relations from 1921 to 1996* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1996), 1–9.

Ironically, in 1920 Armstrong opposed the merger of the two organizations, writing to his friend Whitney Shepardson:

You ask my views on the proposal to discontinue the Institute, in view of the fact that the Council on Foreign Relations is planning to enlarge its membership and expand its activities. It does not appear to me that this fact has any bearing on the policy of the Institute. The Council on Foreign Relations will merely become more unwieldy, more conservative, more generally useless, if it takes in a large number of new members on top of its present assortment. My understanding of the Institute was that it planned to secure a small membership among men interested in day by day developments of international affairs, and acquainted to some measure with conditions existing in certain foreign countries. I thought that such a group, consisting of younger men and older and more experienced men alike, had a very useful function to perform, and that one of its advantages would be that, being a small group, it could not embark on the usual round of publishing useless bulletins and calling dull dinners to listen to the stereotyped speeches of professional publicists. I do not say that this is what the Council on Foreign Relations is going to do. I only say that I don't see how it can fail to do that, given its present organization and membership. The fact that it is on a "sound financial basis" seems to me like a distinct disadvantage. Most of the members of it are on a far too "sound financial basis" to care much about any facts in conflict with their usual outlook. This sounds like an unbalanced statement. I know many of the members of the Council, respect them heartily, and consider that it is a great honor to meet them and talk to them. But I think they represent one set of ideas, the ideas of New York business men, very prosperous ones, and I don't see how the aims of the Institute can be carried out under their auspices. If the majority of the members of the Institute think it wise to discontinue the organization of course there is nothing further to say, and I, as a recently elected member, shall accept the decision as final. But if the matter is still pending, as I understand it is, I should consider it my duty to vote emphatically against the proposal. This, as you will have gathered, is what I am doing by this long letter!¹⁷

Now Armstrong had the opportunity to avoid these pitfalls and create a unique role for the outcome of this shotgun marriage between the intellectual and business worlds. He was an editor who had a vision of what *Foreign Affairs* could be and rarely faltered in its pursuit. From the beginning the emphasis was on the influential rather than simple mass appeal: early speakers included Georges Clémenceau, the French President, Édouard Herriot, the French Premier, J. Ramsay MacDonald, the British Prime Minister, his compatriot Lord Robert Cecil, and similar luminaries. Most were given the opportunity to speak confidentially off the record, though particularly prestigious addresses were sometimes

¹⁷ Armstrong to Shepardson, 6 Dec. 1920, Armstrong papers, box 57, file Whitney H. Shepardson.

open to the general public. Likewise, the editors deliberately solicited articles not only from political and academic commentators but from leading statesmen, financiers, and economists: just a few examples of the early contributors include V. I. Lenin, Hjalmar Schacht, Heinrich Brüning, Raymond Poincaré, Leon Trotsky, and Thomas W. Lamont, all writing on issues then much in the news which they themselves were in a position to affect. It quickly became a tradition that before each presidential election representatives of the major political parties should publish pieces on their party's foreign policy achievements and outlook, and that Secretaries of State should give at least one address before the Council. "Our circulation is not large (only 15,000)," Armstrong rather smugly told President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1944, "but as you know, it includes the most influential people all over the country, as well as many key people in foreign governments."¹⁸ The Council sponsored study groups which considered such topical issues as Anglo-American relations, disarmament policy, Latin American affairs, Far Eastern affairs, economics, and raw materials policy, groups which generally attracted at least some participants from the Department of State. The organization's emphasis and activities in turn succeeded in winning it further memberships and financial support from the influential internationalist New York business community, always the Council's economic mainstay, and from the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation.¹⁹

Armstrong's duties were not so onerous as to prevent him from travelling extensively in Europe between the wars, and many of the most interesting entries in his diaries relate to these itineraries. To give only one example, in 1928 he visited Soviet Russia, where he had lengthy talks with Maxim Litvinov, the Acting Commissar for Foreign Affairs, in which the latter suggested that the Soviet Union expected little from either American presidential candidate that year.²⁰ As editor of *Foreign Affairs*, Armstrong not only solicited articles from leading American and foreign figures, he also had the entrée into top American political circles. His diaries for the early 1930s contain numerous entries relating to the international financial crisis, the Manchurian crisis, and disarmament negotiations, and he was in the confidence of leading American

¹⁸ Armstrong to Roosevelt, 10 July 1944, *ibid.*, box 53, file Franklin D. Roosevelt.

¹⁹ Schulzinger, 10–57; Wala, 15–29; Grose, 9–20.

²⁰ Armstrong, *Peace and Counter-Peace*, 413–14; this account is based on Armstrong's notes on this meeting, Armstrong papers, box 99, file Hamilton Fish Armstrong-Memoranda 1928.

government officials and bankers.²¹ The selection and timing of *Foreign Affairs* articles was on occasions deliberately designed to exercise the maximum effect on public issues.

This should not be taken as implying that the journal served simply as the American government's mouthpiece. Rather, despite the Council's own disclaimers, as stated in *Foreign Affairs*, that it "[did] not represent any consensus of beliefs," which was at least to some degree true of the journal's editorial policy, in practice the organization attracted and represented primarily those elite Americans who had supported American intervention in the First World War and strongly believed that the United States should have been more involved in world affairs after 1920 than was in fact the case. Such Americans were, for example, disturbed by the literature of the 1930s which suggested that American intervention had been mistaken, that the Allies bore as much responsibility for the war as had the Central powers, and that the United States had been drawn into the war either by the machinations of international bankers and arms merchants or by the Allies' skilful propaganda.²² Armstrong almost obsessively attacked the writings of Harry Elmer Barnes, who wrote extensively on these themes, and his youthful criticism of university military training now far behind him, he had no doubt that American intervention in the First World War had been fully justified.²³

Armstrong's position brought him close to others of his generation who held this viewpoint. His first such friend was the rising young journalist Walter Lippmann, who shared his passion for foreign affairs. In the early 1930s Lippmann co-edited several volumes of the Council's annual publication, *The United States in World Affairs*. The two men discussed their views and writings with each other and Armstrong frequently solicited Lippmann's articles for his journal. Both were alarmed by United States withdrawal from the London Economic Conference of 1933 and disappointed by the failure of disarmament negotiations, though in the mid-1930s Lippmann tended to acquiesce in American withdrawal from European affairs, policies Armstrong de-

²¹ See *ibid.*, box 99, files Hamilton Fish Armstrong-Memoranda and boxes 120-23, files Travels for the relevant years.

²² For further discussion of this literature, see Warren I. Cohen, *The American Revisionists: The Lessons of Intervention in World War I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

²³ E.g., R. W. Seton-Watson to Armstrong, 3 Dec. 1926, Armstrong to Seton-Watson, 27 Dec. 1926, 13, 25 July 1927. Armstrong papers, box 56, file R. W. Seton-Watson; Armstrong to Simeon Strunsky, 15 Oct. 1926, *ibid.*, box 60, file Simeon Strunsky; Armstrong to George W. Wickersham, 15 Aug. 1927, *ibid.*, box 65, file George W. Wickersham.

plored. After almost a decade the friendship came to a bitter and permanent end in 1937, when the married Lippmann eloped with Armstrong's wife, Helen Byrne Armstrong, the charming, witty, high-strung, and intellectual daughter of an upper-class (albeit Irish Catholic) New York lawyer. The desertion by his wife of almost twenty years, to whom he was devoted, and the double betrayal by the best friend he so greatly admired, stunned Armstrong. From then onward Lippmann and Armstrong had no contact with each other and Lippmann, though he remained probably the most influential US commentator on international affairs, resigned from the Council's committees and henceforth remained conspicuously absent from its activities and publications.²⁴

By this time, however, Armstrong had become almost equally close to a former young Foreign Service Officer, Allen W. Dulles, whom economic necessity had driven to practice law with the prominent New York firm Sullivan & Cromwell, in which his brother John Foster was a leading partner, but whose first love remained international affairs. Allen quickly became a strong supporter of the Council, becoming a director in 1927 and serving on several of its study groups.²⁵ From 1933 onwards the two men, along with other leading lights of the Council such as Henry L. Stimson, increasingly sounded the then highly unfashionable rallying cry of the need to resist the rise of Hitler and Mussolini. Armstrong in particular was much affected by an interview with Hitler a month after the latter came to power, which convinced him that war was likely in Europe.²⁶ Both men were alarmed by the deteriorating European situation. They united in deploring in particular the American congressional and popular response, from 1935 onwards, of passing neutrality legislation specifically designed to prevent the United States being drawn into another war through disputes over trade with belligerents or the rights of Americans to travel on belligerent ships or in war zones. The two men co-authored two books opposing the neutrality legislation, publications which developed out of a Council study group and were sponsored by the Council: the first, *Can We Be Neutral?* (1936), suggested modifications to the legislation and active American involvement in world affairs with the aim of maintaining peace; the second,

²⁴ See correspondence between Armstrong and Lippmann, *ibid.*, box 41; Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston: Little Brown, 1980), 327–63.

²⁵ Peter Grose, *Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 122–23.

²⁶ Armstrong, memorandum, 27 Apr. 1933, Armstrong papers, box 121, file Travels-Germany 1933–57; see also Armstrong, memoranda, 20, 21 Apr. 1933, *ibid.*; Armstrong, *Peace and Counter-Peace*, 534–40.

Can America Stay Neutral? (1939), suggested that American disengagement from the coming European war was an unrealistic hope.²⁷ Armstrong also favoured amending the Neutrality Acts to allow the President to determine whether or not to invoke any or all of their provisions when he declared that a state of war existed, a move which would have given the President great discretion as to the degree to which the United States leaned to one side or the other in response to any foreign war.²⁸

Simultaneously Armstrong alone also produced several books on contemporary European affairs and America's relationship to these, works which suggested that fascism and democracy could not coexist and that the United States could not ultimately remain unaffected by developments in Europe. They included *Hitler's Reich – The First Phase* (1933), *Europe Between Wars?* (1934), "*We Or They*" (1937), *When There Is No Peace* (1939), and *Chronology of Failure* (1940).²⁹ He was encouraged in these views by his friendships with various likeminded American and British figures, among them Sir Robert Vansittart of the British Foreign Office and the historians Sir Harold Temperley and Arnold Toynbee, who strongly opposed the appeasement policies of the Baldwin and Chamberlain governments.³⁰ After the Munich settlement a disillusioned and disapproving Armstrong cabled to Vansittart: "Americans favorable to international collaboration feel all basis for that has been swept away as no international engagement any longer has value."³¹ After Duff Cooper, the British First Lord of the Admiralty, resigned his office in protest over Munich, the Council on Foreign Relations gave him a confidential forum in which to express his predictably critical views of British policy during his subsequent 1939 American lecture tour.³² Another strongly anti-Hitler figure was the

²⁷ Ibid., 123–27; Dulles and Armstrong, *Can We Be Neutral?* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1936); Dulles and Armstrong, *Can America Stay Neutral?* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939).

²⁸ Armstrong to E. Worth Higgins, 22 Sept. 1938, Armstrong papers, box 63, file U.

²⁹ *Hitler's Reich – The First Phase* (New York: Macmillan, 1933); *Europe Between Wars?* (New York: Macmillan, 1934); "*We Or They*": *Two Worlds in Conflict* (New York: Macmillan, 1937); *When There Is No Peace* (New York: Macmillan, 1939); and *Chronology of Failure: The Last Days of the French Republic* (New York: Macmillan, 1940). *When There Is No Peace*, published a few months after Munich, made the bestseller lists in the United States and quickly went through three printings.

³⁰ See correspondence for this period in Armstrong papers, box 61, file Harold Temperley; *ibid.*, box 62, file Arnold Toynbee; *ibid.*, box 63, file Sir Robert Vansittart.

³¹ Armstrong to Vansittart, 20 Sept. 1938, *ibid.*, box 63, file Robert G. Vansittart. See also the other correspondence between the two men in this folder.

³² See Council on Foreign Relations papers, Council on Foreign Relations, New York (micro-film ed.), Speakers files.

journalist Dorothy Thompson, whose writings Armstrong featured in *Foreign Affairs*. In 1935, for example, Armstrong asked her for “a sober and careful comparison of what Hitler promised and what he has produced” to be carried in the journal’s June issue.³³ Shortly afterwards he commissioned a series of articles from assorted authors “on education, religion, law, labor, etc., as they have been affected by the spirit, program and decrees of the present German regime,” arguing that “if we are to resist effectively the spread of Nazi doctrine to other countries, and mitigate or limit the results of the application of those doctrines within Germany itself, we must deal with the elements of the problem individually and in a detailed way, so as to bring home to those who are interested in some particular field of activity the destructive results of Nazi practice in that specific field.”³⁴ Yet another kindred spirit was diplomat George S. Messersmith, an early opponent of Hitler and Nazism whose views the Roosevelt administration largely ignored until the late 1930s.³⁵

In so far as he could, Armstrong endeavoured to persuade Franklin D. Roosevelt to endorse his views and deter the growing power of the European dictators. Throughout the 1920s the two men, fellow Democrats, were associated as officers of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, organized to promote the ideals of the late president, and Armstrong would indeed remain active on this body until at least the 1950s.³⁶ In 1932 Armstrong, a longtime supporter of a strong League of Nations, was repelled by Roosevelt’s politically motivated decision to repudiate the League, of which the latter man had previously been a strong supporter, and preferred the candidacy of the more dependably Wilsonian Newton D. Baker.³⁷ The election over, however, he moved to ingratiate himself with the new president, on whose policies he hoped to exercise some influence. In June 1933, back from six weeks in Central Europe, Armstrong offered to give Roosevelt the benefit of his experiences; although on this occasion the President declined his offer, a year later he was more successful in making a presidential appointment upon his return from several weeks in Germany, Austria, and the Balkans, perhaps because he asked for Roosevelt’s guidance before he wrote

³³ Armstrong to Dorothy Thompson, 18 Mar. 1935, Armstrong papers, box 62, file Dorothy Thompson. ³⁴ Ibid., Armstrong to Thompson, 8 Oct. 1935.

³⁵ See Armstrong papers, box 44, George S. Messersmith files.

³⁶ For the details of Armstrong’s activities, see *ibid.*, boxes 80–83, Woodrow Wilson Foundation files, and box 66, file Woodrow Wilson Foundation.

³⁷ Armstrong to Ralph Hayes, 30 June 1932, *ibid.*, box 53, file Franklin D. Roosevelt.

several articles and a short book.³⁸ On this occasion, Armstrong told his equally anti-German friend George Messersmith: “The point I particularly wanted to make to him is that we should not finance American exports to Germany. I gave him all the reasons, financial, political and moral, and you will be interested to know that he expressed himself in agreement with my conclusions.”³⁹ Despite Armstrong’s optimism, Roosevelt does not appear to have taken any action at this time on his suggestions. When the book appeared, Armstrong sent Roosevelt a copy, for which he received a warm note of appreciation.⁴⁰ Similar affable though perhaps to Armstrong somewhat unsatisfactory contacts continued throughout the decade.⁴¹ In 1936, in response to Italy’s invasion of Abyssinia, Armstrong tried again to persuade Roosevelt and the Department of State to block the extension of private American credits to Italy.⁴²

As the President slowly moved closer to Armstrong’s position, relations between the two men warmed still further. Armstrong congratulated Roosevelt on the quarantine speech of October 1937, when the President suggested the use of economic sanctions against aggressor nations.⁴³ In April 1938 he responded instantly when Roosevelt offered him a position on the newly established President’s Advisory Committee on Political Refugees, a transnational body charged with facilitating the escape of refugees from war-torn Europe. Particularly after war broke out in 1939, Armstrong personally made every effort to rescue as many such persons as possible, spending several months in Europe using all his numerous influential international contacts in this enterprise.⁴⁴ He did not hesitate to ask Roosevelt himself for special authority and visa clearances for European intellectuals and others in danger of German internment and execution. Armstrong’s energetic action in this crisis was only heightened by the fact that many of those most in need of rescue were personal friends whom he had come to know during his extensive travels of the previous two decades.⁴⁵

³⁸ Armstrong to Marvin H. McIntyre, 9 June 1933, McIntyre to Armstrong, 15 June 1933, Armstrong to Roosevelt, 8 May 1934, Armstrong to McIntyre, 16 May 1934, Armstrong to Marguerite LeHand, 22 May 1934, *ibid.*

³⁹ Armstrong to Messersmith, 24 May 1934, *ibid.*, box 44, file George S. Messersmith.

⁴⁰ Roosevelt to Armstrong, 11 Aug. 1934, *ibid.*, box 53, file Franklin D. Roosevelt.

⁴¹ See correspondence in *ibid.*, file Franklin D. Roosevelt.

⁴² Armstrong to LeHand, 6 Nov. 1936, *ibid.*

⁴³ Armstrong to Roosevelt, 6 Oct. 1937 *ibid.*

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, boxes 77 and 78, President’s Advisory Committee files.

⁴⁵ Armstrong to Roosevelt (telegram), 19 June 1940, *ibid.*, box 53, file Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Armstrong advocated a far more strenuous American response to the European situation than the simple rescue of displaced persons and those politically at odds with the fascist regimes. By early 1939 he confessed himself disappointed by what he saw as Roosevelt's failure to make "the very best possible use, strategically speaking, of the opportunities which he had a few weeks ago to define and popularize the American policy which to my mind would best serve ultimate American interests."⁴⁶ By November 1940, however, Armstrong was a dedicated Roosevelt supporter, won over by the President's increasing tilt towards the Allies.⁴⁷ Armstrong was one of those most determined to push the President in this direction. He was a founding member of the Century Group, interventionists who often met at the Century Club and who eventually formed the ultra-pro-Allied organization Fight for Freedom; the Century Group's most energetic organizer, Francis Pickens Miller, was also a Council employee on temporary leave of absence. Whereas the more moderate Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies argued that such assistance was the best means of keeping the United States out of the war, the Century Group hoped that their country would join Great Britain outright in the war against Hitler. They publicly urged Roosevelt to introduce conscription, build up American defences, and give all assistance possible to Britain, even at the risk of war with Germany, arguing that American national security and Britain's fate could not be separated.

In particular, in autumn 1940 they spearheaded a public campaign urging the President to conclude the "Destroyers-for-Bases" deal with Britain; and in 1941 strongly urged that the United States Navy escort convoys of merchantmen bound for Britain, even at the risk of war, and also advocated that the United States should include Greenland in its defensive perimeter, a policy the Roosevelt administration adopted.⁴⁸

Even before the United States entered the war, the Council on Foreign Relations, in collaboration with the Department of State, had begun to plan for the post-war world, one essential feature of which in their view would be that the United States would play a much larger role than had hitherto been the case. Here again Armstrong was instrumental in setting

⁴⁶ Armstrong to Foster Kennedy, 16 Feb. 1939, *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Armstrong to Roosevelt, 11 Nov. 1940, 30 Dec. 1940; Armstrong to Kenneth Stewart, 30 Dec. 1940; Armstrong to Ethel Salter, 9 Jan. 1941, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ See Armstrong papers, box 44, Francis P. Miller files; The Fight For Freedom Committee Papers, Mudd Manuscripts Library, Princeton University; also Francis Pickens Miller, *Man From the Valley: Memoirs of a 20th-Century Virginian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 89–104; Mark Lincoln Chadwin, *The Warhawks: American Interventionists Before Pearl Harbor* (New York: Norton, 1970).

up this programme, as he had so many of the Council's most topical study and discussion groups and publications. As early as October 1939, well before the United States had entered the war, the Council obtained funding from the Rockefeller Foundation to finance a programme of study groups to plan for the postwar world, an undertaking which had Roosevelt's tacit approval. The clincher in persuading the initially dubious Rockefeller Foundation to open its purse was apparently an interview between the Foundation's Dr. Joseph Willits and George Messersmith of the State Department, who "said that as regards other projects which have come to the Department's attention, none seemed of quite the same calibre, and he must say frankly that many of them were such as to cause the Department considerable concern." The two men agreed that, in view of the controversial public debates then in progress, for the time being this grant should receive as little publicity as possible.⁴⁹ This funding was renewed annually until 1945, and it resulted in the massive War–Peace Studies, an enterprise which the Department of State formally took over in February 1941, shifting its venue to Washington, but which even so remained very much a joint State Department–Council enterprise. Armstrong was a member of the Peace Aims and Armaments Groups; other groups provided potential guidelines and solutions for Territorial and Economic and Financial questions and, after 1942, on the matter of International Organization. Once a week throughout the war Armstrong travelled to Washington to attend meetings of the Committee on Postwar Problems, which gathered in the office of Sumner Welles, the Under Secretary of State, who was far closer to Roosevelt than his superior, Cordell Hull. Another Council official, Philip E. Mosely, spent most of the war in Washington working on the Department's Territorial Studies programme, which grew out of the War–Peace Studies. It is difficult to assess the precise practical effects of this programme, which produced numerous evaluations, memoranda, and position papers, and also served as a venue to introduce government officials to academic and business experts. Yet the very fact that it was undertaken was evidence that, even before the United States formally entered the war, leading officials envisaged that their country would assume a far more activist international role.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Armstrong, "Memorandum of telephone conversation with Mr. Messersmith, October 11, 1939," Armstrong papers, box 44, file George Messersmith 1938–40; Inderjeet Parmar, "The Issue of State Power: The Council on Foreign Relations as a Case Study," *Journal of American Studies*, 29 (1995), 87.

⁵⁰ There are many documents relating to these activities in the Armstrong papers. See especially boxes 72–76, Council on Foreign Relations series, Peace Aims and

Armstrong's wartime role was not limited to participation in the War–Peace Studies. In October 1944 he was seconded to London, with the rank of Minister, to work under John G. Winant, the American Ambassador to Great Britain, on the problems then facing the European Advisory Commission, which was supposed to devise workable arrangements for the occupation of Germany and other defeated European enemies. Although this gave Armstrong interesting insight into the growing tensions between the Soviet Union and its allies over Poland and Eastern Europe, and numerous opportunities to discuss international affairs with his British counterparts at Chatham House and other influential figures, within a few weeks he became frustrated when he found that he had little real function to perform in his new posting.⁵¹ Returning to Washington in early January, he confessed to an associate in the Council's War–Peace Studies that he “could not maintain that an attempt had been made to use me to advantage,” feelings he conveyed to the new Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., who promptly offered him a part-time unsalaried position with the title “Special Adviser to the Secretary.”⁵² In this capacity Armstrong – still a firm Wilsonian, who never entirely lost his youthful faith in and loyalty to the League of Nations – together with Stettinius and the Republicans Harold Stassen, John Foster Dulles, and Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, served on the bipartisan American delegation to the spring 1945 San Francisco Conference which hammered out the final details of the United Nations Organization.⁵³ Eager to return to his first love, the Council, in July he declined a further invitation from Stettinius as the American member of a Preparatory Committee which would meet in London to lay the ground for the future government of Germany.⁵⁴

War–Peace Studies files, and boxes 78–80, State Department series; see also Parmar, 86–93; Wala, *Council on Foreign Relations*, 30–46; Schulzinger, *Wise Men*, 81–112; Grose, *Continuing the Inquiry*, 23–26.

⁵¹ On Armstrong's activities while in England, see also his diary entries for this period, Armstrong papers, box 128; Armstrong to Mary H. Stevens, 20 Oct., 2, 14 Nov., 4 Dec. 1944, *ibid.*, box 59, file Mary H. Stevens; Armstrong memoranda for this period, *ibid.*, Memoranda series, box 100.

⁵² Armstrong to Philip E. Mosely, 2 Jan. 1945, *ibid.*, box 45, file Philip E. Mosely 1941–52.

⁵³ For details of his activities at the conference, see Armstrong's detailed diary notes for this period, in Armstrong papers, United Nations series, boxes 84–87, and Memoranda series, box 100; Armstrong's correspondence with Stettinius during the period of the conference, *ibid.*, box 59, file Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.; also Armstrong to Stevens, 3 May 1945, *ibid.*, file Mary H. Stevens.

⁵⁴ Armstrong to Stettinius, 23 July 1945, *ibid.*, box 59, file Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.

Armstrong's decision to devote himself full-time again to the Council and *Foreign Affairs* perhaps put him in an even better position to influence the future of Europe and the development of the Cold War. From 1945 onwards the Council set up numerous study and discussion groups to come up with recommendations on United States policy on international issues, groups whose members included such leading officials as the banker Frank Altschul, George F. Kennan, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Allen W. Dulles, Dean Acheson, and John J. McCloy. Among the topics covered in the seven or eight years after the war were Aid to Europe, American–Russian Relations, Europe's Economic and Political Reconstruction, Economic Aspects of American Foreign Policy, and the United Nations, while one prestigious group spent the three years 1944 to 1947 simply discussing "American Foreign Policy." These groups served the purpose of helping to hammer out an elite consensus on foreign policy, providing a confidential forum in which those "in-and-outers" who shuttled between government service and the worlds of business, banking and law, academics, and government officials could, in modern parlance, "brainstorm," floating potential courses of action before an informed and discreet audience. Their meetings helped to develop the initiatives which would bear fruit in the Marshall Plan, the regeneration of Germany, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, American rearmament, and United States support for European economic union.⁵⁵ Besides attending and participating in many of these groups' meetings, Armstrong made his own modest effort to influence public opinion at this time by publishing *The Calculated Risk* (1947), a book which not only argued in favour of the newly announced Marshall Plan, but also called for the modification of the United Nations charter to allow nations which so desired to sign a separate protocol under which they bound themselves to come to the aid of any nation attacked in contravention of any international treaty. This provision was intended to circumvent the veto power on any United Nations action which its Charter gave to all the five permanent Security Council members, including the Soviet Union.⁵⁶ In addition, Armstrong played some role – just how significant is difficult to assess – in shaping the views of the influential Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, the ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee when the Second World War ended, and that body's chairman in the crucial period 1947 to 1949. Armstrong and Vandenberg were

⁵⁵ See Armstrong's memoranda for this period, Armstrong papers, boxes 100–02, files Memoranda 1945–58; Schulzinger, 113–43; Wala, chapters 3–7; Grose, 30–40.

⁵⁶ Armstrong, *The Calculated Risk* (New York: Macmillan, 1947).

colleagues in negotiating the United Nations Charter at San Francisco, and Armstrong helped to persuade his erstwhile associate to support the Marshall Plan, the creation of first the Western European Union and then the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and finally the commitment of American military resources to NATO.⁵⁷

Armstrong initially seems to have hoped for the continuation of Soviet–American wartime co-operation. In January 1946 he professed himself shocked by a proposal from George Brett, the head of Macmillans, that he edit “a symposium ... attacking the concept of collaboration with Soviet Russia,” even though he admitted: “We all have reservations about the possibility of collaboration, and I think we ought to re-assess our position constantly.”⁵⁸ Within eighteen months, however, in the July 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Armstrong published what was almost certainly the most influential article ever to appear in the journal’s pages, the piece by Kennan (identified only as Mr. “X,” undoubtedly a remarkably thin disguise to most of those already moving in American decision-making circles) entitled “The Sources of Soviet Conduct.” This piece, drawing on memoranda and telegrams Kennan had already circulated around the Department of State, publicly stated the strategic doctrine of “containment” which would become the guiding principle of United-States foreign policy for the next four decades.⁵⁹ In 1948 he followed this with another piece on Russia by a State Department official, published under the pseudonym “Historicus,” a memorandum by George A. Morgan of the Division of Eastern European Affairs on the topic “Stalin on Revolution,” drawing attention to Stalin’s recent public re-spousal of encouragement of international Communist revolution.⁶⁰ These were only two of the many articles by officials, American and others, among them Henry L. Stimson, John J. McCloy, John Foster Dulles, and Dean Acheson, which essentially prepared public opinion to accept the evolving Cold War policies. Just as before World War II *Foreign Affairs*’ pages had been particularly readily available to those who condemned American neutrality and urged the United States to take a more interventionist line in checking dictatorships, so after the war those who favoured an activist United States policy towards Europe could count on a friendly reception from the journal’s editor.

⁵⁷ See correspondence between Armstrong and Vandenberg, 1945–50, Armstrong papers, box 63, file Arthur H. Vandenberg.

⁵⁸ Armstrong to Harold Stassen, 25 Jan. 1946, box 59, file Harold E. Stassen.

⁵⁹ See Armstrong/Kennan correspondence, *ibid.*, box 38 file George F. Kennan; also Byron Dexter to Armstrong, 15 Apr. 1947, *ibid.*, box 59, folder Mary H. Stevens 1944–70.

⁶⁰ See material in *ibid.*, box 34, file *Historicus*.

The immediate post-war years were probably the period of Armstrong's greatest direct influence upon United States foreign policy; despite painful back problems, the 1950s were perhaps his golden age. Buoyed by an extremely happy remarriage to a younger woman of British and German extraction, he unobtrusively assumed the mantle of elder statesman. The Armstrongs travelled extensively on all continents, a habit he would continue until his death, interviewing international notables as one of themselves and with considerable aplomb extracting articles from distinguished but often reluctant authors. *Foreign Affairs* also provided a forum for rising young academic and government stars, the most celebrated of whom was perhaps Henry Kissinger, who not only contributed numerous articles to the journal, using it as a springboard to launch his career, but also authored a bestselling Council study on nuclear weapons.⁶¹ Armstrong was a frequent star speaker in courses run by the National War College, the State Department, and other government agencies. As always, he participated energetically in Council discussion and study groups, attracted speakers, and also helped to orchestrate fundraising initiatives to tap the resources of both its wealthy individual and corporate supporters and the large foundations which had become so central to the finances of think-tanks such as the Council on Foreign Relations.⁶² In the late 1950s he also had a discernible impact on his country's foreign-aid programme. After a lengthy tour of the Middle East, undertaken at the request of the Senate, in February 1957 he submitted reports which recommended the "separati[on of] economic from military aid appropriations" and "two specific and I think original suggestions, one ... to set up a Foreign Education Aid Fund, the other ... to create mechanisms to provide credit facilities for small businessmen and farmers."⁶³ His report was well received by both Congress and the State Department, and correspondence between Armstrong and Fulbright suggests that it helped to strengthen the still young and struggling Fulbright Program of international educational exchanges of scholars and students.⁶⁴

⁶¹ See *ibid.*, box 39, Henry A. Kissinger files; Henry A. Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper, 1957); Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 82–88; Robert D. Schulzinger, *Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 12–13.

⁶² For details see Armstrong papers, Council on Foreign Relations series.

⁶³ Armstrong to Robert R. Bowie, 19 Feb. 1957, *ibid.*, box 36, file Senate Report 2; United States Senate, 85 Cong., 1st Sess., Special Committee to Study the Foreign Aid Program, *Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq; Report on United States Foreign Assistance Program* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1957).

⁶⁴ Armstrong to Fulbright, 19 Feb. 1957, Fulbright to Armstrong, 20 Feb. 1957,

Armstrong remained at the helm of *Foreign Affairs* until 1972, when in valediction he published the journal's fiftieth anniversary issue. His final years with the Council were shadowed by his growing discomfort over both the Vietnam War itself and the manner in which it devastated the Council's gentlemanly tradition of civility in disagreement, and also by a pronounced distaste for the changes initiated by its Chairman, David Rockefeller, Cyrus R. Vance, and its new President, Bayless Manning, appointed the Council's first full-time managing director in 1971. The function of the Council was changing and its influence was being challenged by other institutions and by the fact that a New York elite no longer dominated the United States to the same degree; in 1971 one of its fellows wrote:

It is questionable ... whether the CFR should consciously strive, as it may have during the 1930s, 40s and 50s, to be a consensus-builder and transmitter of that consensus to the governmental policy process. Distilling the issues and clarifying policy alternatives for the United States should be its goal.⁶⁵

Armstrong undoubtedly agreed with the plaint of his old associate, Walter Mallory, now retired: "The organization more and more assumes the character of the [far less exclusive and influential] Foreign Policy Association."⁶⁶ The age of the common man and the new sixties' disrespect for convention and good form could not but repel the Council's conservatively mannered founding elders. They, in turn, were often depicted as outdated and stuffy. In 1970 a group of younger academics and journalists, most with some Harvard connection, founded *Foreign Policy*, a rival journal whose editors suggested that *Foreign Affairs* was "unbelievably pompous, sleepy, and filled with articles ghost-written by the heads of many states."⁶⁷

Attempting to change this image, Manning initiated moves designed to broaden its member base geographically and socially, for the first time admitting women and consciously attempting to increase the numbers of black and younger members.⁶⁸ Armstrong was particularly distressed by

Armstrong papers, box 56, file Senate Report 2; see also other correspondence and reports in this file and in *ibid.*, files Senate Report 1 and Senate Report 3.

⁶⁵ Robert Gerald Livingston to David MacEachron, 1 Nov. 1971, *ibid.*, box 65, file Council on Foreign Relations–Livingston Memorandum.

⁶⁶ Mallory to Armstrong, 2 Aug. 1972, *ibid.*, box 42, file Walter H. Mallory.

⁶⁷ Clipping, *Harvard Crimson*, Friday, 23 Apr. 1971, in *ibid.*, box 76, file Foreign Affairs–Harvard Crimson.

⁶⁸ On these changes, see Grose, *Continuing the Inquiry*, 53–61; Schulzinger, *Wise Men*, 212–17.

the increasingly strong possibility that women would be allowed to join; he believed that the arguments against this were “incontrovertible,” that their presence would “tend gradually to transform the Council into more of a social organization,” and that “the advantages to the Council of taking them in are out of proportion to the difficulties and risks involved.”⁶⁹ Armstrong also took great exception to Manning’s plans to celebrate his fifty years with the Council with a huge fund-raising dinner at which William P. Rogers, the Secretary of State, would preside, a scheme he considered vulgar in the extreme and an affront to the Council’s ethos. He feared that the presence of Rogers, for whom he had no intellectual respect, would lead *Foreign Affairs* to be regarded as a mere adjunct to the government. He also objected to Manning’s intention to open a Washington office of the Council, which he feared would cheapen the Council and make it appear a lobbying organization.⁷⁰

In 1971 Armstrong, despite some apparent private misgivings of his own, was also distressed by the reaction when the council announced his old protégé William P. Bundy, the former Assistant Secretary State for Far Eastern Affairs under Kennedy and Johnson and Dean Acheson’s son-in-law, would replace him in the near future, when he left *Foreign Affairs* after completing his fifty years as editor. Armstrong had known Bundy and his family for many years and loyally welcomed the appointment, telling his successor in “one of the most rewarding jobs in the world” that the choice gave him the “greatest possible satisfaction,” and offering to help in any way possible but to refrain from any interference.⁷¹ A substantial minority of Council members, led by the Princeton academics Richard Falk and Richard Ullman, were less enthusiastic, arguing that Bundy, whom they believed was greatly to blame for American involvement in Vietnam, was an inappropriate candidate who would be unable to exercise sufficient objectivity to be an unbiased editor. They launched a well-publicized though unsuccessful attempt to rescind the appointment, a move which greatly distressed Armstrong, who believed that Bundy’s policies, though possibly

⁶⁹ “Memorandum by Mr. Armstrong on the Draft Report of the Membership Review Committee of July 19, 1969,” 14 Aug. 1969, Armstrong papers, box 70, file Council on Foreign Relations—Correspondence and Memoranda 1968–69.

⁷⁰ Armstrong to Manning, 24 July 1972, Manning to Armstrong, 26 July 1972, *ibid.*, box 43, file Bayless Manning. Armstrong sent a copy of this letter to all the Council’s Directors. See also Frank Altschul to Armstrong, 28 July 1972, Armstrong to Altschul, 1 Aug. 1972, *ibid.*; Altschul to John J. McCloy, 5 Aug. 1972, Armstrong papers, box 2, file Frank L. Altschul.

⁷¹ Armstrong to William P. Bundy, 4 Feb. 1971, *ibid.*, box 13, file William P. Bundy.

mistaken, had been undertaken in good faith and that “he and the others who made Vietnam policy had done their duty as they saw it at the time.”⁷² Armstrong was particularly disturbed by the contingent personal attacks on Bundy, some of which bluntly stated that he was a criminal who should stand trial for war atrocities, which to Armstrong were a total negation of the principle of courteous if sometimes heated respect for differing viewpoints which in his view had always characterized the Council.⁷³ Like other quondam critics of Bundy’s policies, George Ball for example, Armstrong responded indirectly by sponsoring Bundy’s membership in the exclusive Century Association, citing his “really distinguished career in government” and the fact that his nominee was “in every respect a cultivated and humane and likeable individual.”⁷⁴

The Vietnam War itself, however, was a subject on which Armstrong came to have the gravest of reservations. As early as May 1965 he told a high Council official that he had “lost a great deal of [his] respect for [Secretary of State Dean] Rusk in the last months” and that he believed that President Johnson’s “handling of foreign affairs has been crude and impulsive.”⁷⁵ A few months later he suggested to Arthur H. Dean, a leading New York lawyer and a long-time Director of the Council, that to take out a large public advertisement in the *New York Times* supporting administration policy on Vietnam might suggest “desperation” in the White House, and, when Dean did so regardless, Armstrong refused to sign it.⁷⁶ He gently reproved a Yugoslav academic friend who participated in a mock trial, organized by Bertrand Russell, of Johnson and his Cabinet officials for war crimes, on the grounds that this might actually hamper those Americans who wished “to bring the Viet Nam war to an end,” which Armstrong declared to be his “only concern.”⁷⁷ In 1967 he refused to sign another manifesto drafted by Paul Douglas, in this case one

⁷² Armstrong to Frank L. Altschul, 8 July 1971, *ibid.*, box 2, file Frank L. Altschul; see also Altschul to Armstrong, 20 July 1971, Armstrong to Altschul, 2 August 1971, *ibid.*; William L. Langer to Armstrong, 21 Aug. 1971, Armstrong to Langer, 25 Aug. 1971, *ibid.*, box 48, file Peace and Counterpeace. On the controversy, see Grose, *Continuing the Inquiry*, 50–51; Schulzinger, *Wise Men of Foreign Affairs*, 210–11.

⁷³ See minutes of 157th meeting of the Board of Directors of the Council on Foreign Relations, 22 July 1971, and attached letter, Richard Falk to David Rockefeller, 19 July 1971, Armstrong papers, box 70, file Council on Foreign Relations–Balance Sheets.

⁷⁴ Armstrong to Admissions Committee, Century Association, 29 Apr. 1971, *ibid.*, box 13, file William P. Bundy.

⁷⁵ Armstrong to Henry M. Wriston, 26 May 1965, *ibid.*, box 66, file Henry M. Wriston.

⁷⁶ Armstrong to Arthur H. Dean, 9 Aug. 1965, *ibid.*, box 63, file Vietnam; Armstrong to Dean, 29 Aug. 1965, Armstrong to McGeorge Bundy, 9 Aug. 1965, Armstrong to McCloy, 9 Aug. 1965, *ibid.*, file Arthur H. Dean.

⁷⁷ Armstrong to Vladimir Dedijer, 27 Sept. 1966, *ibid.*, box 54, file Bertrand Russell.

supporting all efforts to bring about peace, praising its “excellent objectives” but explaining that “over forty years as editor of a non-partisan periodical, I’ve refrained from adding my signature to any sort of manifesto no matter how laudable.”⁷⁸ By 1967 Armstrong was alarmed by the possibility that American and Vietnamese troops might expand the war from South Vietnam into neighbouring Cambodia, and wrote to McGeorge Bundy, the former National Security Adviser, expressing his misgivings. He was particularly – and rightly – concerned that the introduction of South Vietnamese troops into Cambodia, a hereditary enemy, might lead the latter country’s ruler, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, to seek aid from the People’s Republic of China, thereby enlarging the war and probably bringing about ultimate Communist domination of Cambodia. Armstrong urged that the United States should therefore respect Cambodia’s neutrality.⁷⁹

For years the Council was riven by divisions over Vietnam, which transformed its previous atmosphere of slightly rarefied disagreements into one characterized by bitter personal attacks and discord. Between 1964 and 1968 the issue of Vietnam was so sensitive that no study group even attempted to tackle it. It was the elderly Armstrong who courageously broke the Council’s silence in spring 1968, just after the crucial Tet offensive, by devoting large portions of three successive issues of *Foreign Affairs* to the war. These included articles giving varying perspectives on the conflict. In the first such issue Roger Hilsman, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs under Kennedy and Johnson, argued that the United States faced a choice between further escalation of the war and gradual withdrawal; he urged the latter course. Sir Robert Thompson, a British specialist on guerrilla warfare, suggested that the war could be won but this would be a long, slow process. Chester L. Cooper, a former National Security Council Assistant for Asian Affairs, suggested that a negotiated peace was a possibility, though achieving it would be difficult.⁸⁰

Despite misgivings from the Council’s chairman, John J. McCloy, who attempted to dissuade him by the argument that his views would be taken as an official statement of the Council’s position, Armstrong also included a contribution from himself which, as he told President Johnson’s liberal

⁷⁸ Armstrong to Paul H. Douglas, 19 Oct. 1967, *ibid.*, box 24, file Paul H. Douglas.

⁷⁹ Armstrong to Richard Helms, 29 Dec. 1967, *ibid.*; Armstrong to Bundy, 25 Dec. 1967, *ibid.*, box 13, file McGeorge Bundy.

⁸⁰ Roger Hilsman, “Must We Invade the North?,” *Foreign Affairs*, 46 (1968), 425–41; Sir Robert Thompson, “Squaring the Error,” *ibid.*, 442–53; Chester L. Cooper, “The Complexities of Negotiation,” *ibid.*, 454–66.

aide Bill Moyers: “I found I could not help writing.” He even told McCloy: “By and large, most of the articles we have printed in *FOREIGN AFFAIRS* over the years have tended to support Washington. ... [I]t doesn’t seem to me detrimental to *FOREIGN AFFAIRS* to indicate once in a while that we really are an independent organ of opinion.”⁸¹ He warned that Americans “must reconcile ourselves to the fact that there is not a final solution to the war there” and that the United States would be unable to attain anything it could define as victory. He urged negotiations with the Viet Cong, expressed great unease with aspects of the Thieu regime, and suggested that the United States must insist that South Vietnam’s government institute genuine political and land reforms and force the Thieu Government to broaden its base by including representatives of other political parties. He hoped that part or all of Vietnam might eventually be neutralized, the guarantors of such a settlement to be the United States, other Asian governments, and perhaps even the Soviet Union. He stated firmly:

[O]ur country cannot in conscience or good sense continue sacrificing lives – our own, those of our friends and those of our enemies – in an enterprise which was designed to help a people to freedom and prosperity but which instead is destroying them. Circumstances have changed and our policies must change to accord with them. We can assert with proper pride that our motives in first intervening in Viet Nam were of the best, and without humiliation that, in spite of greater efforts and painful sacrifices, our calculations – or lack of them – somewhere along the way misled us.⁸²

In his remaining years as editor Armstrong continued to publish extensively on Vietnam, as well as urging the Council to undertake a study of the reasons of American intervention in the region.⁸³ Armstrong’s choice of authors, whatever attempts he made to be impartial, undoubtedly reflected a strong sense that American involvement in the war was mistaken and must be brought to an end. The following issue carried articles by the political scientists Herman Kahn and Samuel P. Huntington on potential negotiated settlements, and by Bill Moyers, a former aide to President Johnson, on the American tradition of political dissent as

⁸¹ Armstrong to Moyers, 1 Mar. 1968, Armstrong papers, box 45, file Bill Moyers; Armstrong to McCloy, 2 Feb. 1968, McCloy to Armstrong, 28 Feb. 1968, *ibid.*, box 42, file John J. McCloy; Armstrong to McCloy, 29 Feb. 1968, *ibid.*, box 63, file Vietnam.

⁸² Armstrong, “Power in a Sieve,” *Foreign Affairs*, 46 (1968), 467–75, quotation from 473.

⁸³ Armstrong to McCloy, 2 Feb. 1968, Armstrong papers, box 42, file John J. McCloy.

demonstrated over Vietnam.⁸⁴ Early in 1969 the incoming National Security Adviser, Henry A. Kissinger, a former Council research fellow, wrote on the ongoing Paris peace negotiations, while later in the year the journal published an account by Clark Clifford, the outgoing Secretary of Defense and a well-known dove, as to the evolution of his views on Vietnam.⁸⁵ William P. Bundy, trimming to the prevailing winds, suggested that the balance of power in Asia was changing, due to China's Cultural Revolution and other factors, and that the rationale for American involvement in Southeast Asia had been greatly modified if it had not disappeared completely.⁸⁶ Early in 1971 Armstrong published a piece by the well-known journalist Harrison Salisbury, who in 1966 was the first American newspaperman to report from the North, which warned any remaining optimistic Americans that, after fighting bitterly for several decades against the French and the Americans, the North Vietnamese were unlikely to accept any settlement which failed to tilt the military balance in their favour.⁸⁷ For the next issue Armstrong solicited an article from Matthew Ridgway, commander of the United States troops during the Korean War, in which the old general suggested that the United States use whatever means necessary to extricate itself from Vietnam.⁸⁸

Unlike some Establishment critics of Vietnam, such as George Ball and Walter Lippmann, who regarded the war primarily as a strategic mistake on the part of the United States, Armstrong, still at heart a Wilsonian, was genuinely horrified by the savagery with which Americans waged the war, behaviour which he regarded as a betrayal of his country's ideals. In 1971 he sent to numerous members of Congress pictures taken by *Life* photographer Larry Burrows which graphically portrayed the sufferings of the ordinary people of Vietnam.⁸⁹ After the Christmas 1972 air raids on North Vietnam, Armstrong told *Time*: “[N]othing will justify the bombing of the North. Millions of Americans are disgusted by it and feel

⁸⁴ Herman Kahn, “If Negotiations Fail,” *Foreign Affairs*, 46 (1968), 627–41; Samuel P. Huntington, “The Bases of Accommodation,” *ibid.*, 642–56; Bill D. Moyers, “One Thing We Learned,” *ibid.*, 657–64.

⁸⁵ Kissinger, “The Viet Nam Negotiations,” *ibid.*, 47 (1969), 211–34; Clifford, “A Viet Nam Reappraisal: The Personal History of One Man’s View and How It Evolved,” *ibid.*, 47 (1969), 601–22.

⁸⁶ William P. Bundy, “New Tides in Southeast Asia,” *ibid.*, 49 (1971), 187–200.

⁸⁷ Harrison E. Salisbury, “Image and Reality in Indochina,” *ibid.*, 49 (1971), 381–94.

⁸⁸ Matthew B. Ridgway, “Indochina: Disengaging,” *ibid.*, 49 (1971), 583–92; see also Armstrong’s correspondence with Ridgway on this article in Armstrong papers, box 52, file Matthew B. Ridgway.

⁸⁹ Details of this mailing are in *ibid.*, box 63, file Vietnam.

uneasy about not being given any rationale or explanation.”⁹⁰ Yet, somewhat ironically, the Council found itself the target of demonstrations by protesters demanding that it condemn the war and United States bombing in Indochina and use its influence to bring about withdrawal.⁹¹

Armstrong’s swansong was his valedictory article “Isolated America,” published in the fiftieth-anniversary issue of *Foreign Affairs*, the last he edited before handing over to William P. Bundy. In it he looked back over its half-century to declare: “Not since we withdrew into comfortable isolation in 1920 has the prestige of the United States stood so low,” he stated. “The risk today is not that the American people may become isolationist; the reality is that the United States is being isolated.” The Vietnam War, he warned, “the longest and in some respects the most calamitous war in our history,” had “rent the American people apart, spiritually and politically. It is a war which has not been and could not be won, a war which was pushed from small beginnings to an appalling multitude of horrors. ... The methods we have used have scandalized and disgusted public opinion in almost all foreign countries.” Other foreign policy initiatives – the imposition of an import surcharge, visits to Moscow and Peking – were in themselves admirable, providing that “the endeavor did not involve sacrificing friendships and alliances with people with whom we had close ties.” The proviso was not heeded and some American allies, notably Canada, Japan, and India, felt badly treated. As a result, “American principles, which sometimes were characterized as naive but in general were respected as sincere and humane, now are freely called hypocritical and self-serving. ... The rhetoric of good works and high ideals is everywhere heard ... but the words used to express the highest aspirations have become shopworn.” Armstrong did not, however, despair. He called upon the United States to regain its former high standing in the world “by rehumanizing ourselves, by readopting civility as part of good behavior, by recognizing that history can inform the future, by encouraging the growth of elites in many fields, not in order to copy them snobbishly but to set standards to which everyone may in some degree aspire, by asserting that aesthetics is an essential element in art, by reestablishing learning as opening doors to choice, by leavening the mediocrity of our culture with snatches of unorthodoxy, by welcoming diversity of opinion as an essential element of strength in a democracy.”⁹²

⁹⁰ Excerpt from *Time*, 8 Jan. 1973, 14, *ibid.*

⁹¹ See, e.g., flyer circulated by Columbia’s Social Scientists for Peace Now, late Apr. 1971, Armstrong papers, box 43, file Bayless Manning.

⁹² Armstrong, “Isolated America,” *Foreign Affairs*, 51 (1972), 1–10.

As his valedictory article suggests, throughout his career Armstrong's had been a relatively liberal voice. One of his most attractive traits was his readiness throughout his lengthy time at the helm of *Foreign Affairs* to reconsider his views. In 1966 he wrote to McGeorge Bundy:

Are there limits to our national needs for influence in the world, and what are they? Personally, I've always maintained that our interests are world-wide but that we should be chary about assuming that we can secure those which lie outside the scope of our material power. The protection and promotion of those interests so far as possible, I thought, was the task of diplomacy.

We are now engaged on the mainland of Asia, we have troops and nuclear weapons in Europe, we are assumed by Latin Americans to be responsible for their prosperity or the reverse, and the list could be extended? Does this mean there no longer are limits?

Perhaps there are not. Or perhaps enough thought has not been given to whether or not the assumptions that led us into the Marshall Plan (with such successful results) give us valid reason to assume that we can deal with new far-flung problems with equal success.⁹³

Nonetheless, one can discern certain principles which informed his entire career, and through it the policy of *Foreign Affairs* and the Council on Foreign Relations. I have argued elsewhere that there exist two traditions in twentieth-century United States foreign policy. One, which can be traced back to Theodore Roosevelt, emphasizes that diplomacy needs to be based upon military force, stresses the need for an Anglo-American or Atlantic alliance, tends to rely upon great-power negotiations, and calls for the maintenance of a balance of power favourable to the United States. The other, which may be called Wilsonian, after its founder, is far more universalist in outlook, emphasizing the rights of all nations, large and small, and the need to base policy upon moral, idealistic and righteous principles.⁹⁴ To a considerable degree, Armstrong's outlook represented a fusion of these two strands.

Armstrong himself always remained faithful to the man who was his youthful political idol. During the First World War he spoke disparagingly of the views of those, such as Roosevelt and his associate General Leonard Wood, who called for military preparedness and universal military training, and was associated with the pacifist Oswald Garrison Villard.⁹⁵ Then and later admiration for Theodore Roosevelt was conspicuously absent from his writings, while, as we have seen, he showed continuing

⁹³ Armstrong to Bundy, 3 Oct. 1966, Armstrong papers, box 13, file McGeorge Bundy.

⁹⁴ Priscilla Roberts, "The Anglo-American Theme: American Visions of an Atlantic Alliance, 1914–1933," *Diplomatic History*, 21 (1997), 333–64.

⁹⁵ Armstrong, diary, 24, 29 Feb., 1, 5, 6 Mar., 4 Sept. 1916, Armstrong papers, box 128; Villard to Armstrong, 17 Jan. 1935, *ibid.*, box 63, file Oswald Garrison Villard.

reverence for Wilson. In 1970 he told Marshall Tito of Yugoslavia that he “belonged to the school of Wilson and Masaryk, who believed in human progress by politically moral methods.”⁹⁶ Congratulating Adlai Stevenson on a speech, he told him: “Your revival of Wilsonian idealism warmed my heart and carried me back to my first thrilling experiences with Wilson’s extraordinary personality.”⁹⁷ Discussing the League of Nations with Henry R. Luce in the 1960s, he argued that “it was the absence of the United States from the League [of Nations] that destroyed whatever chance it might have had for usefulness and survival.” He later told Luce that “the Senate’s action [in rejecting the League] was part of the isolationist attitude into which the U.S. gradually sank, and that, I feel sure, can be put down among the probable contributing factors to World War II.” Armstrong also recalled that Franklin D. Roosevelt learnt from Wilson’s failure the lesson that he might “prejudice the general peace settlement ... by tying them too closely to the plan for a world organization”, although Armstrong used his own position on the Committee on Postwar Problems “to stimulate his interest” in planning for a new League.⁹⁸

Armstrong’s own position might be described as a modified Wilsonianism. He quickly abandoned the pacifism of his youth and between the wars was one of the most vigorous American voices supporting the strengthening of the League of Nations, preferably reinforced by firm American backing. To Villard’s regret, in the 1930s he clearly supported stronger American resistance to the growing power of the dictators, if necessary through increased defence spending and the introduction of conscription,⁹⁹ and in the early 1940s he was a strong interventionist. In December 1941, as a member of the Armaments Group of the War–Peace Studies, he showed considerable interest in bringing up the question of whether the United States should secure air and naval bases in the Pacific at the end of the war.¹⁰⁰ All these positions suggest a concern for national security and a readiness to use force when necessary, as does his involvement in the Council’s assistance in developing the

⁹⁶ Armstrong, memorandum of conversation with Tito, 24 Sept. 1970, *ibid.*, box 62, file Josip Broz Tito.

⁹⁷ Armstrong to Stevenson, 16 Nov. 1955, *ibid.*, box 60, file Adlai E. Stevenson.

⁹⁸ Armstrong to Henry R. Luce, 31 July, 1 Sept. 1964, *ibid.*, box 53, file Franklin D. Roosevelt; on Roosevelt’s relationship to Wilson, see also Armstrong to Sumner Welles, 15 Dec. 1948, 5 Apr. 1949, *ibid.*, box 64, file Sumner Welles.

⁹⁹ Villard to Armstrong, 7 Jan. 1935, 15 Jan. 1937, Armstrong to Villard, 11 Jan. 1937, 9 Apr. 1938, *ibid.*, box 63, file Oswald Garrison Villard.

¹⁰⁰ Armstrong, “Memorandum for Mr. Miller,” 15 Dec. 1941, *ibid.*, box 73, file War–Peace Studies–Armaments Group–Memoranda and Meetings.

policies under which the United States pledged itself to resist the spread of Soviet influence in Europe immediately after the Second World War and his desire to make it easier for the United Nations to take military action in support of its declared policies.

Yet underlying these positions was a strong moralism. Indeed, Armstrong's early espousal of anti-Fascist American policies seems to have been due not so much to considerations of the national interest and the maintenance of a favourable European balance of power as to his almost instinctive revulsion from Hitler and all his methods, which affected him immediately he had met the Führer and never changed. He deprecated limited plans for an Anglo-American alliance, much preferring a broader universalist approach, and in 1943 stated:

I am worried by the plans to reach the goal through regional Councils which seem to me to offer too easy a way of escape for American isolationists who will espouse the idea of an American Council and say that the British and Russians, for example, must handle the problems of a council of Europe. I am also worried by the talk about alliances, specifically an Anglo-American alliance, even though the ultimate goal is a world organization. My reasons for this are principally two: I don't think we will get an Anglo-American alliance as a matter of practical politics; and I think it matters a good deal to other nations – e.g. Russia, France, Turkey, Brazil, Argentina, etc. – whether we try to implement a general undertaking by specific understandings with Britain and other powerful nations or whether we start with an alliance that leaves them out and then invite them in.¹⁰¹

Armstrong was always somewhat uncomfortable with undiluted *realpolitik*. In 1957 he told a historian friend: "I think Churchill's and Stalin's division of Eastern and Southern Europe into spheres of influence, in percentages, not only showed Churchill extremely naive but marked a moral lapse that has weakened our ability to stand up to Communism in Eastern Europe ... ever since."¹⁰² In 1952, writing to his friend Hugh Seton-Watson, who had submitted an article suggesting that it might be desirable that the fairly stable boundaries then attained in Europe should last indefinitely, Armstrong confessed himself disturbed since, "When you label any German demand for a change irredentism you seem to me to accept the Soviet fait accompli." Although he said that his opposition to this outlook sprang from fears that it would encourage subsequent German revisionist demands for revenge upon Russia, equally important seems to have been his concern that, "If the present regimes are

¹⁰¹ Armstrong to Swing, 27 Sept. 1943, *ibid.*, box 61, file Raymond Gram Swing.

¹⁰² Armstrong to Raymond J. Sontag, 4 Sept. 1957, *ibid.*, box 58, file Raymond J. Sontag.

to be allowed to consolidate themselves within the present boundaries, then what hope is there of bringing freedom to everyone some day?”¹⁰³ The writings of the realist Hans J. Morgenthau were likewise profoundly unsympathetic to him, and, despite the fact that Morgenthau was an opponent of the American commitment in Vietnam – albeit for reasons which differed from Armstrong’s – he was decidedly unhappy when Morgenthau was awarded a Council fellowship in the mid-1960s. Indeed, he saw what he believed was Morgenthau’s readiness to break the Council seal of confidentiality in discussions as a prime example of the way in which standards of behaviour had degenerated under the stress of Vietnam.¹⁰⁴ (One should note, however, that Armstrong was an early admirer and publicist of the writings of both Kennan and Kissinger, both of whom might also be regarded as adherents of the realist tradition, but who perhaps tempered their views with a greater leavening of idealism and moralism – or it may just have been that he found them personally more congenial.) It is perhaps fair to say that Armstrong, although always more a disciple of Wilson than of Roosevelt, represented a fusion of their two approaches, such as could also be found in the policies of Franklin D. Roosevelt.¹⁰⁵

One might go further and suggest that Armstrong’s own eclectic foreign-policy outlook may have played its part in giving the Council the resilience to weather the storms of fifty years and remain an influential organization throughout that time. Armstrong was always less than worshipful towards his Council’s wealthy business sponsors. In 1971, shortly before his retirement, he complained that eight of thirteen nominees for Resident Membership in the Council were bankers, emphasizing: “The Council began as a merger of two organizations, on the understanding and agreement that the business and non-business elements would be pretty much held in balance, and this has been a feature of the organization which has given it special values.”¹⁰⁶ Many of its

¹⁰³ Armstrong to Hugh Seton-Watson, 30 Dec. 1952, *ibid.*, box 56, file Hugh Seton-Watson.

¹⁰⁴ Wriston to Armstrong, 24 May 1965, Armstrong to Wriston, 26 May 1965, *ibid.*, box 66, file Henry M. Wriston 1960–72; Armstrong to Frank Altschul, 30 Nov. 1966, *ibid.*, box 45, file Hans J. Morgenthau.

¹⁰⁵ On the manner in which Franklin D. Roosevelt regarded himself as the heir to both Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, see John Lamberton Harper, *American Visions of Europe: Franklin D. Roosevelt, George F. Kennan, and Dean G. Acheson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 32–42.

¹⁰⁶ Armstrong to Carroll L. Wilson, 16 Nov. 1971, Armstrong papers, box 70, file Council on Foreign Relations–Correspondence; cf. Armstrong to George Franklin and David MacEachron, 5 Oct. 1965, *ibid.*

earliest officers – Paul D. Cravath, Norman H. Davis, John W. Davis, Thomas W. Lamont, Henry L. Stimson, and George W. Wickersham, for example – were passionate Anglophiles who, despite the admiration of some for Wilson, essentially adhered to the Rooseveltian viewpoint described above.¹⁰⁷ The Council might easily have become no more than a mouthpiece for their views and, although these certainly received a good airing, other potential versions of ‘internationalism’ also received fair coverage from Wilson’s disciple, who would himself help to found the United Nations. Perhaps more than any other one man Armstrong prevented the Council’s monopolization by any one “internationalist” school of thought, for fifty years deliberately – and sometimes over strong protests from the organization’s more business-oriented members¹⁰⁸ – providing an atmosphere hospitable to diverse and often conflicting views, with many of which he was not necessarily in sympathy. This was perhaps not entirely true of his role in the 1930s and 1940s, when he clearly espoused a particular outlook and did what he could to publicize and promote the view that the United States should intervene in European affairs. In his final years, however, Armstrong’s continuing open-mindedness gave him the courage to use *Foreign Affairs* to provide a forum for dissenting views on the Vietnam War. While the Council, whatever its claims to be impartial, undoubtedly represented the views of a particular elite, most of them – including Armstrong – dedicated believers that the United States should play a far greater international role than it had hitherto done, it retained that flexibility and ability to co-opt new men and new ideas and to adapt to changing circumstances which is the hallmark of institutions possessing the ability to survive and to weather difficult times. Deliberately or not, perhaps Armstrong’s greatest contribution to the body which became his life’s work sprang from his own humane, generous, and enlightened character, and would give the “Council [which ha]d been [his] creation” the strength to endure and thrive even in adversity.

¹⁰⁷ For further details, see Roberts, “Anglo-American Vision”; Parmar, “Issue of State Power,” 84–88; Schulzinger, *Wise Men*, 14–16.

¹⁰⁸ See, e.g., *ibid.*, 17–19, 41; Grose, *Continuing the Inquiry*, 15. Schulzinger suggests that Armstrong deliberately pursued a policy of giving a hearing in the Council to all points of view, but restricting membership to those who were in general sympathy with its prevailing “internationalist” outlook.