

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Hamilton Fish Armstrong and Yugoslavia: How an Internationalist's Idea of a New State Made Interwar-Era Foreign Affairs—and *Foreign Affairs*

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*This article considers the role of national spaces in the creation of interwar-era internationalism. Specifically, it explores how the future editor of Foreign Affairs magazine, the mouthpiece of what would become the American Foreign Relations Establishment, found his way to internationalism not in the corridors of Versailles at the Paris Peace Conference, but rather through treading through the corners of the newly made Yugoslavia. During the 1920s and 1930s, internationally minded thinkers from across the political spectrum shared at least one commonality: they rooted their dreams for an international world in particular, and expressly national, spaces. This article explores how and why international thinkers became invested in foreign national movements during the interwar, suggesting that to some, these new states both represented and contributed to an idealized vision of an international world that could promote unity while protecting particularities.*

In January 1919, a young American military attaché, Hamilton Fish Armstrong, and a Red Cross volunteer, Helen Byrne, set off for their honeymoon in the war-weary city of Belgrade. The freshly instated Armstrongs whiled away that winter by dining with international statesmen (on severely rationed menus), flattering Armstrong's boss (whom they suspected desired a more experienced employee), and awaiting the arrival of their long-lost leather boots and winter coats (they never came).<sup>1</sup> A mere ten years later, in 1929, the Armstrongs' situation had changed rather drastically: the couple resided in Manhattan, and Hamilton Fish Armstrong had gone from an eager observer of international politics to something of a fixture within a burgeoning American Foreign Policy Establishment.<sup>2</sup> Armstrong's evolution was, in large part, thanks to his work as an editor at the recently founded and increasingly influential *Foreign Affairs* magazine, as well as his position as executive director of the nation's first foreign policy think tank, the Council on Foreign Relations. Yugoslavia, however, continued to play on Armstrong's mind throughout the decade. In between editing, he found time to author two books, both on the Balkan region. The second was dedicated to Helen.<sup>3</sup>

Technically, Armstrong's relationship with the Balkans predated his honeymoon, although its origins also contained a touch of romance. As an undergraduate reporter for the *Daily*

<sup>1</sup>Hamilton Fish Armstrong to Margaret Neilson Armstrong, Feb. 27, 1919, folder 1, box 5, Hamilton Fish Armstrong Papers (MC002), Public Policy Papers, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ [hereafter HFAP].

<sup>2</sup>Priscilla Roberts, "'The Council Has Been Your Creation': Hamilton Fish Armstrong, Paradigm of the American Foreign Policy Establishment?," *Journal of American Studies* 35, no. 1 (Apr. 2001): 65–94.

<sup>3</sup>Hamilton Fish Armstrong, *Where the East Begins* (New York, 1929), 15.

*Princetonian*, Armstrong set out on an assignment to cover a speech about the ongoing conflicts in the Balkan region. Delivering the address was one Madam Mabel Grouitch, a West Virginia coal mining heiress and wife of a Serbian diplomat. Grouitch's good looks, Armstrong would later recall, certainly did not "diminish the persuasiveness of her pleas for support of her good works."<sup>4</sup>

This chance encounter with Madam Grouitch would spur Armstrong's lifelong affair with Yugoslavia. After their meeting, Armstrong would go on to author three books on the Balkans (*The New Balkans* in 1926, the aforementioned *Where the East Begins* in 1929, and *Tito and Goliath* in 1951); make seven consecutive visits to Yugoslavia from 1919 to 1926, along with a smattering of other trips to the country throughout the interwar years; publish upward of ten Yugoslavia-related articles in *Foreign Affairs*; serve as a director of the American–Yugoslav Society and a vice chairman on the board of American Friends of Yugoslavia, as well as the secretary of the American Home for Yugoslav Children; and dedicate seven out of forty chapters in his eventual memoirs focused entirely on Yugoslavia (though several other chapters mention the country). While Armstrong's interest in Yugoslavia began as an undergraduate pet project, it became a lifelong attachment, enduring even after Armstrong's union with Helen came to an end; his final book on Yugoslavia was published over a decade after their divorce.

Armstrong's interest in Yugoslavia was no mere fluke. Indeed, Armstrong was but one individual—albeit, an influential one—who exemplified a broader trend of post–World War I era internationalists who found themselves getting "caught up" in national spaces. Revolutionary Russia became a hub for budding international communists; interwar China would attract a slew of foreign observers, many with missionary backgrounds, who would go on to become some of the most important American political commentators of the day; Harlem served as the theoretical capital of the "New Negro" movement; Liberia became popular with followers of Marcus Garvey; and India attracted both voracious detractors and defenders of empire.<sup>5</sup> Internationally minded thinkers in the interwar era from across the political spectrum shared a commonality: their dreams for the international world did not exist in the ether, but rather took root in particular, and expressly national, spaces.

For Armstrong, that national space was Yugoslavia. As the flashpoint of the recent war, it was a natural choice. This part of the world had become infamous in the summer of 1914 for its fractious—and explosive—nationalisms. These nationalisms apparently boiled over when ethnic Serbians in Habsburg-controlled Bosnia assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, sparking a globe-spanning war. Little wonder then that Armstrong and others paid such close attention to Yugoslavia, the state that emerged from the epicenter of the war—its internal disputes had proved highly capable of dictating the course of global politics.

The management of these pernicious nationalisms, especially in an age of increasing interconnection, fostered Armstrong's interest in Yugoslavia. While especially applicable in Yugoslavia, the question drove interwar-era international thinking at large: how could a world of stubborn national particularities also become a world of growing interdependence? Yugoslavia seemed to provide a tangible manifestation of both the question and its answer. Created as the war drew to a close in 1918, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (often referred to simply by its eventual name, "Yugoslavia") was composed of the formerly independent states of Serbia and Montenegro, as well as former Habsburg and Ottoman territories, including all or parts of Croatia, Dalmatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. Because Yugoslavia's structure and history made it such a useful model of the

<sup>4</sup>Hamilton Fish Armstrong, *Peace and Counterpeace: From Wilson to Hitler* (New York, 1971), 17.

<sup>5</sup>Alain Locke, "Enter the New Negro," *Survey Graphic* 6, no. 6 (1925): 631; David A. Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America* (Princeton, NJ, 2017); Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham, NC, 2006).

world at large, Armstrong also found Yugoslavia applicable when thinking through a number of international questions: how to grapple with a newly empowered public opinion in the world of foreign policy, how to create and maintain a federation that might allow for a less explosive iteration of national diversity, how to consider the United States' role in the broader world, how to contextualize the promises and perils of dictatorships, and more.

Armstrong was not alone in his fascination with Yugoslavia. The Great War had obviously renewed interest in the Balkan region, both among the diplomatic set, who gobbled up Robert Seton-Watson's anti-Habsburg magazine, *The New Europe*, and with citizens who encountered posters encouraging them to fight for the rights of small nations, including Serbia.<sup>6</sup> Some became interested in Yugoslavia as a potentially useful buffer against Bolshevism, but Armstrong, at least in 1919, claimed repeatedly in private correspondence to his family that he was not concerned about the threat of Bolshevik revolution in the Balkans.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, for a number of reasons, it seems that wartime fascination with "small states" did not end at the close of the war, but continued into the postwar. Throughout the interwar, Yugoslavia gained notable onlookers, including British author, Rebecca West; former U.S. Chief of Staff and signatory of the Versailles Treaty, General Tasker Bliss; British diplomat, Harold Nicolson; and the aforementioned West Virginia coal mining heiress and indefatigable fundraiser, Mabel Grouitch, to name a few.

While Armstrong's fascination with Yugoslavia did not make him an oddity within the world of interwar-internationalism—indeed, it made him typical—he seemed to suggest it did. "How did it come that someone who had been far off in Belgrade while the Olympians were making history in Paris was brought into the picture?"<sup>8</sup> After decades in the foreign policy world, Armstrong would begin his 1971 memoirs with this question. In fairness to Armstrong, it is notable that his initial trip to Yugoslavia meant that this future darling of the international relations world missed one of the most important international events of the day: the Paris Peace Conference. While the notorious shortcomings of the Paris Peace Conference—its excessively punitive provisions and its shocking naivete—were clear even to its contemporary participants, the meeting also revolutionized the practice of international relations. The conference established the world's first intergovernmental organization aimed at preserving peace, the League of Nations, and it produced an entirely new map of Europe that replaced contiguous empires with independent states and free cities.

According to the then-President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, the conference would also aim to accomplish these various feats in a new diplomatic fashion (frequently and aptly called, The New Diplomacy): theoretically, agreements would be made openly in the presence of a free press, rather than in secretive staterooms, and participants would be politicians, presumably responsive to their constituents, rather than insulated appointed statesmen. These changes came alongside a newfound faith in "public opinion." "Wilsonians" and other advocates of the New Diplomacy argued that a greater role for "public opinion" in the creation of foreign policy would curb the chances of the world finding itself in a war similar to the one from which it had only just emerged. Moreover, the conference also accelerated the popularity of the principle of national self-determination, which connected the rights of sovereignty and statehood to the existence of nationality. Therefore, in 1919, Paris also hummed with anticolonial nationalists, as well as feminists who sought their own kind of self-determination.<sup>9</sup> While many would come to reject the conclusions of the Paris Peace Conference,

<sup>6</sup>British diplomat Harold Nicolson recalled attending the Paris Peace Conference after having "imbued" himself in *The New Europe*. Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking, 1919, Being Reminiscences of the Paris Peace Conference* (1933; London, 2009), 26.

<sup>7</sup>Armstrong to Helen Armstrong, May 1, 1919 and Apr. 22, 1919, folder 6, box 4, HFAP.

<sup>8</sup>Armstrong, *Peace and Counterpeace*, 6.

<sup>9</sup>Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (New York, 2015); Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, NJ, 1997).

internationalists of all stripes now played in a world the conference had made. All in all, it seemed there was no better place than Paris in 1919 for anyone interested in international relations.

Yet as Armstrong pointed out, he was not in Paris in 1919.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps by flagging his absence, Armstrong was simply feigning modesty. Even so, implicit in his question is an assumption, one Armstrong presumed his readers shared, that international affairs were a cosmopolitan business, concerned with globe-spanning questions, and fundamentally disinterested in, if not outright opposed to, the machinations of domestic politics in those corners of the earth where national squabbles notoriously ruled the day. Historians of today, however, are perfectly aware that during the interwar period, the worlds of national politics—represented by Belgrade, in Armstrong’s phrasing—and international politics—represented by Paris—were not locked in a perpetual battle, but rather, intertwined. Glenda Sluga’s work on the relationship between internationalism and nationalism reminds us, “... at the end of World War I, the principle of nationality and the League of Nations were the shared basis for a new international world order.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, buzzing Paris and exhausted Belgrade were two sides of the same international coin.

Oftentimes, however, the scholarship on interwar internationalism considers only a single side of this international coin at a time. On the “Paris” side, scholars, perhaps seeking to understand the globalized present, have focused their studies on our world’s obvious forebearers: the United Nations’ predecessor, the League of Nations; various failed international treaties, pacts, and conferences that statesmen would remember and learn from at the end of World War II; historical efforts to develop an international society; the intellectual origins of globalized economic theories; and the birth of global American hegemony and its associated domestic foreign policy “Establishment.”<sup>12</sup> Some, though certainly not all, of these works aim to escape the traditional bounds of the historian—the nation-state—and instead take place in cosmopolitan cities, smoky conference rooms, and wherever “the international” took place.

Meanwhile, historians of the “Belgrade” side of the coin have made great strides. While the aforementioned Sluga argument demonstrated how the *principle* of nationality and the League of Nations served as the “shared basis” for a new world order, initially, less attention was paid to how *specific* national spaces informed the creation of international ideals. More recently, however, historians of the United States and the world have shown how Americans exported their principles—ranging from self-determination to structural racism—to the broader world.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Armstrong was in Paris, but in December 1918, to marry Helen. They left immediately.

<sup>11</sup>Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia, 2013).

<sup>12</sup>Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (New York, 2015); Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, NJ, 2009); Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (New York, 2003); Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History, 1919–1933* (Oxford, UK, 2005); Oona Anne Hathaway and Scott Shapiro, *The Internationalists: How a Radical Plan to Outlaw War Remade the World* (New York, 2018); Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore, 1997); Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley, CA, 2002); Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge, UK, 2012); Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and The Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, MA, 2018); Zachary D. Carter, *The Price of Peace: Money, Democracy, and The Life of John Maynard Keynes* (New York, 2021); G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton, NJ, 2011); Stephen Wertheim, *Tomorrow, the World: The Birth of U.S. Global Supremacy* (Cambridge, MA, 2020); Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, MA, 2005); David Allen, *Every Citizen a Statesman: The Dream of a Democratic Foreign Policy in the American Century* (Cambridge, MA, 2023).

<sup>13</sup>Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford, UK, 2007); Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World*; Wertheim, *Tomorrow, the World*; Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca, NY, 2015).

Similarly, historians of European Internationalism have shown how specific states in Central Europe implemented, contested, or ignored a new international order and its corresponding regime of plebiscites and mandates.<sup>14</sup> In short, rather than escaping the boundaries of a particular region, these studies extended those imagined boundaries into the world.

An examination of Armstrong, who was both a classic interwar-era internationalist, comfortable in any cosmopolitan crowd, and a genuine Yugoslav enthusiast, who spent his summers immersed in remote regions of the Balkans, draws the international and national sides of the coin, and their corresponding historiographies, together. Indeed, much in the way Armstrong saw Yugoslavia as simultaneously international and national realms, Armstrong serves a similar role in this article.

On the “Paris” side of the coin, Armstrong, a key American foreign policy entrepreneur at the exact moment in which the power of the United States began to grow, was engaged in thinking about some of the key issues of international politics—the role of public opinion in the creation of foreign policy, the seemingly global proliferation of federations, the utilities of democracies and dictatorships, and the role of a growing United States in the world of foreign affairs. What Armstrong thought on these issues would matter: he would go on to serve on World War II-era State Department advisory committees and helped to draft the United Nations Charter. Meanwhile, on the “Belgrade” side of the coin, Armstrong’s thoughts on these international issues were contextualized within a particular, national space—Yugoslavia. Armstrong’s experiences with Yugoslavia show how national spaces not only received ideas about the world, but also informed their creation, as Armstrong turned over key international questions of the day in one of Europe’s most notoriously fractious states.

Armstrong’s idea of Yugoslavia reveals the priorities of interwar internationalism. The first section, “Hamilton Fish Armstrong as Publicist,” explores a key question of the age: how to engage with public opinion in an era of growing populism. Both Armstrong’s work in the world of American internationalism and his ongoing preoccupations with Yugoslavia allowed him to develop a working theory on how to engage with public opinion, in both foreign affairs and *Foreign Affairs*. “Why Yugoslavia” explores how and why Yugoslavia in particular became so essential to Armstrong’s thinking. In an age when federations increasingly became essential, not only as a way to organize states, international groups, and empires, but also as idealized models of an imagined and potential international world, Yugoslavia became particularly appealing. Moreover, Yugoslavia, a place once famous for its combustible nationalisms, now offered a vision of how to solve the paradox of persistent diversity in a globalizing world. By thinking about federated Yugoslavia, Armstrong also reached new conclusions about the nature of national politics and the role of the United States on the world’s stage, while others used Yugoslavia to think about biopolitics, race, and empire. Finally, “A Tale of Two Dictators” considers Armstrong’s relationships with two very different Yugoslav dictators: one who aimed to preserve unity, and the next, who aimed to preserve particularities. By exploring the relationship between Armstrong’s Yugoslavia and his thoughts on international politics, an image of interwar internationalism emerges from all angles.

### Hamilton Fish Armstrong as Publicist

Armstrong was a natural-born editor. He wrote well, of course: along with his various specialist books and articles, Armstrong also published a collection of poetry and two compelling

<sup>14</sup>Peter Becker and Natasha Wheatley, *Remaking Central Europe: The League of Nations and the Former Habsburg Lands* (Oxford, UK, 2021); David Petrucelli, “Pimps, Prostitutes and Policewomen: The Polish Women Police and the International Campaign against the Traffic in Women and Children between the World Wars,” *Contemporary European History* 24, no. 3 (Aug. 2015): 333–50; Dominique Kirchner Reill, *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2020).

narrative memoirs.<sup>15</sup> Yet his real talents laid in pitching, rather than drafting, stories. Raised in the respectability of New York City's Gilded Age, the Princeton alum readily made and maintained connections with some of the most renowned political minds of the twentieth century. Armstrong found that he could convince almost all of them to write an article or two for the magazine, simply by dropping a highly tailored article proposal within an otherwise friendly letter. In addition to his networking skills, Armstrong also had a keen eye for aesthetics—a benefit of growing up in a house full of artists. He would recruit his sisters, Helen and Margaret, to hand-draw the new publication's front cover lettering and logo, while Armstrong himself spearheaded the effort to change the “unnecessarily dull” name of the magazine—the *Journal of International Relations*—into something more suggestive of a trust than a conference paper: *Foreign Affairs*.<sup>16</sup>

Armstrong's expansive Rolodex and sense of style helped to launch *Foreign Affairs* to the top of its field. While early backers of the magazine had hoped its first 1922 edition would make its way into the hands of a modest 500 subscribers, Armstrong happily reported that *Foreign Affairs* had gained over 2,000 subscribers in its first year.<sup>17</sup> Those numbers rose steadily in the 1920s, to 6,000 by 1924 and nearly 10,000 by 1925.<sup>18</sup> Naturally, its subscribers declined in the Depression of the 1930s, but the numbers shot back after the outbreak of World War II. In spite of rising paper costs, by 1947 the periodical had over 19,000 subscribers.<sup>19</sup>

Back in the early 1920s, however, *Foreign Affairs* was just one of a slew of new publications to hit the newsstands. *The New Republic* had launched just before the war in 1914, while the postwar years ushered in the creation of *Readers' Digest* in 1922, *Time Magazine* in 1923, and *The New Yorker* in 1925. The soon-to-be household bylines of Vincent Sheehan, Dorothy Thompson, and John Gunther gradually began flooding the pages of these and other publications, often with articles focused on the subject of “foreign affairs.”<sup>20</sup> After all, John Maynard Keynes's bestselling *Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919) recently proved that the public would willingly engage with—or at least buy—international materials. Moreover, in the wake of the Great War and Paris Peace Conference, many began to believe, and even fear, that public opinion would have a more prominent role in the creation of foreign policy. Publishers raced to meet the presumed need for information for their newest consumers—citizens.

Current historians are right to point out that for all their talk about a new role for public opinion in the creation of foreign policy, Wilson and his fellow advocates of the New Diplomacy likely never intended to hand over the reins of foreign policy to the masses.<sup>21</sup> Yet regardless of their *intentions*, the articulation of the idea nevertheless had *implications*, as contemporary statesmen knew all too well. Elihu Root, who had served as a United States Secretary of State, Secretary of War, and a Senator, shared his concerns about the dangers

<sup>15</sup>Hamilton Fish Armstrong, *The Book of New York Verse*, ed. Hamilton Fish Armstrong (New York, 1917); Armstrong, *Peace and Counterpeace*; Hamilton Fish Armstrong, *Those Days*, 1st ed. (New York, 1963).

<sup>16</sup>Armstrong, *Peace and Counterpeace*, 161. As Robert Vitalis has discussed in his book, *The Journal of International Relations* was actually a new name: the original publication had been *The Journal of Race Development*. This title change points to the significant role racial anxieties played in the development of international relations in the United States. By the launch date of *Foreign Affairs*, however, the journal had undergone significant changes in personnel (only one of the *Journal of Race Development's* editors remained on the editorial board, contributing five articles over the following sixteen years) and aesthetics. Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics*.

<sup>17</sup>“*Foreign Affairs* Finances and Circulation 1922–1948,” internal memo, June 22, 1966, box 76, HFAP.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Deborah Cohen, *Last Call at the Hotel Imperial: The Reporters who Took on a World at War* (New York, 2022).

<sup>21</sup>Stephen Wertheim, “Reading the International Mind International Public Opinion in Early Twentieth Century Anglo-American Thought,” in *The Decisionist Imagination: Sovereignty, Social Science, and Democracy in the 20th Century*, ed. Daniel Bessner and Nicolas Guillhot (New York, 2019), 27–63.

that democracies could pose to international relations in one of the first articles published within *Foreign Affairs*. Without publications such as *Foreign Affairs*, he feared the public could take on “mistaken beliefs” that could result in war or worse.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, that increasingly powerful public was also growing: from 1917 to 1920, suffrage extended across parts of Europe and North America to include more women and laborers, while electoral reforms in the United States in 1913 resulted in more direct elections of representatives. It was in this world that Armstrong attempted to find a space for *Foreign Affairs*. Carefully, he set out to balance a need to acknowledge a new reality in which the role and nature of public opinion appeared to be changing, with a more conservative ethos, expressed by some authors found within the pages of *Foreign Affairs*, that feared the potentially dangerous consequences of those perceived shifts.

*Foreign Affairs* never dreamed of reaching everyone. In the 1920s, when Henry Luce, the founder of *Time* and *Life* magazines, offered his help to ratchet up sales of *Foreign Affairs*, Armstrong graciously declined many of Luce’s suggestions for more “pictures of events and personalities.”<sup>23</sup> As David Allen has recently shown, *Foreign Affairs*’ parent organization, the Council on Foreign Relations, displayed markedly less interest in reaching the everyman—or at least, the Ivy League’s everyman—than its fellow foreign policy think tank rival, the Foreign Policy Association.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, *Foreign Affairs* did want to reach some members of the public. After all, according to Armstrong, for the magazine to be useful, it would need to be influential, and for it to be influential, it would need a sufficient number of subscribers to influence.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, as Priscilla Roberts has pointed out, *Foreign Affairs* aimed to attract well-known politicians as both authors and audiences—not academic experts.<sup>26</sup> Armstrong made arguments about the magazine’s need to appeal time and again to members of the Council, as he cajoled them to approve everything from holiday-themed subscriber drives (he was, he claimed, the first editor to deploy the “Give the Gift of [magazine]” tactic, which many of his colleagues disliked) to allowing a stylized font for the cover of the magazine.<sup>27</sup> While *Foreign Affairs* was not for everyone, it was, nevertheless, a product of an era newly concerned with cultivating a public’s opinion around foreign affairs.

In addition to managing the marketing of the magazine, Armstrong also needed to fill its pages. Given the current interwar internationalism literature’s focus on international organizations, institutions, and law, one might assume that the *Foreign Affairs* table of contents reflected a similar agenda. To a certain extent, it did: in the first few editions, the magazine included articles on the global economic situation, the international court, and the League of Nation’s mandate system. However, Armstrong also ran an overwhelming number of articles describing day-to-day life abroad, as well as particular state’s foreign policies. Take for example, articles from *Foreign Affairs* in April 1926 and January 1927.<sup>28</sup> Articles on the internal machinations of Ireland, Greece, Mexico, and South Africa were featured cheek-by-jowl with pieces on war loans and the international court. Perhaps even more interesting is the difficulty in categorizing some of these titles: railway strategies in Manchuria was, all at once, a local and international

<sup>22</sup>Senator Elihu Root, “A Requisite for the Success of Popular Diplomacy,” *Foreign Affairs* 1, no. 1 (Sept. 15, 1922): 4. Armstrong states his preference in his memoir, Armstrong, *Peace and Counterpeace*, 197.

<sup>23</sup>Armstrong, *Peace and Counterpeace*, 295–6.

<sup>24</sup>Allen, *Every Citizen a Statesman*.

<sup>25</sup>Armstrong, *Peace and Counterpeace*, 197.

<sup>26</sup>Roberts, “The Council Has Been Your Creation,” 70–2.

<sup>27</sup>Armstrong, *Peace and Counterpeace*, 86, 197.

<sup>28</sup>Article titles included “French Finance and the Franc,” “Ireland’s Economic Outlook,” “Three Days in Belgrade,” “Dictatorship in Spain,” “Race Questions in South Africa,” “Railways and Revolutions in Mexico,” “Abyssinia and the Powers,” “Malaya and the Philippines,” “French Naval Aims,” “The Jews in Palestine,” “Greece and the Greeks,” “Japan and Australia,” “Mexico’s Agrarian Problem,” and “The Virgin Islands Under American Rule.” See *Foreign Affairs* 4, no. 3 (Apr. 1926); *Foreign Affairs* 5, no. 2 (Jan. 1927).

issue. The international world's top-rate publication filled its pages as much with news from nations as it did with reports from Geneva.

While Armstrong generally stuck to editing, he made sure that Yugoslavia received its fair share of attention within his publication. A professional, not a propagandist, Armstrong dutifully reported on the difficulties the young state faced, including a keen need for economic modernization; the accompanying tensions of ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity; and populist unrest. These, very clearly, were not just the problems of Yugoslavia, but the perils of the world, thus the state's continual appearance in his publication.

However, coverage of Yugoslavia was not without controversy. Starting around 1925, the debate over "war guilt," which aimed to assess the causes of the recent Great War, underwent a moment of revival.<sup>29</sup> One question within the broader debate related to Serbia's role in the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, with some participants suggesting that any knowledge the Serbian government had of the assignation plot amounted to formal Serbian complicity. British scholar Edith Durham and American professor Harry E. Barnes in particular argued a much more forceful case against Serbia.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, in their view, Serbia not only had a degree of culpability in the origins of the war, but it also seemed to have benefitted from it: they considered Yugoslavia, with its capital city of Belgrade and Serbian monarchy, as little more than a Peace Conference-approved creation of a "Greater Serbia," robbing the autonomy of other national groups, especially the Albanians, in the process. Naturally, the debate had serious implications for the implementation of wartime reparations, and also pitted those, such as Armstrong, who saw Yugoslavia as a multinational state that could potentially serve as a model of the world against those, such as Durham, who seemed to desire a world that offered a state to each nation. Thus, the "war guilt" debate opened the floodgates for broader criticisms of the new state of Yugoslavia and the principles some believed it embodied.

In Armstrong's view, the Yugoslavs were slow to recognize an impending tidal wave of bad press. With uncharacteristic frankness, Armstrong said as much in a 1925 letter to Mabel Grouitch's husband and former Serbian diplomat, Slavko Grouitch. Armstrong explained that two years previously he had urged several former Serbian ministers to clarify their position on what exactly the Serbian government knew in 1914, offering them *Foreign Affairs* as a platform, or, perhaps some other suitable American publication like *Current History*.<sup>31</sup> According to Armstrong, these politicians dilly-dallied, languidly placing articles months later in smaller publications that "did not seem to me very interesting or to really meet the attacks which have been made on Serbia"—and were thus useless.<sup>32</sup> The Yugoslav government, Armstrong griped, "should care more about foreign opinion."<sup>33</sup> Later, in his summer of 1926 meeting with Alexander, Armstrong described himself as shocked to learn that Alexander only recently came to understand that the question of war guilt "was not merely a theme of historical research, but had current political importance."<sup>34</sup>

By the time Alexander and others in the Yugoslav government reached this conclusion, it was too late. Already in 1925, Durham published *The Sarajevo Crime*, which, among other claims, laid the blame for the war at the feet of the Serbians. Barnes's equally damning *The*

<sup>29</sup>Keir A. Lieber, "The New History of World War I and What It Means for International Relations Theory," *International Security* 32, no. 2 (2007): 155–91; Roy Turnbaugh, "Harry Elmer Barnes and World War I Revisionism: An Absence of Dialogue," *Peace and Change* 5, nos. 2\_3 (1978): 63–9; Grayson Myers, "Contradictory Explanations and Elusive Answers: The Historiography of the Sarajevo Assassination," *The Macksey Journal* 1, Article 114 (2020).

<sup>30</sup>M. E. Durham, *The Serajevo Crime* (London, 1925); Harry Elmer Barnes, *The Genesis of the World War; an Introduction to the Problem of War Guilt* (New York, 1926).

<sup>31</sup>Hamilton Fish Armstrong to Slavko Grouitch, Nov. 25, 1925, folder 3, box 33, HFAP.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Armstrong, *Peace and Counterpeace*, 353.



*Genesis of the World War* followed in 1926. According to Armstrong, articles from American professor, Sidney Fay, and the famous advocate of the breakup of the Habsburg Empire, Robert Seton-Watson, in 1925, were “very damaging to the reputation of Serbia,” and by extension, Yugoslavia.<sup>35</sup> It should be noted that while Armstrong was frustrated with Seton-Watson’s stance, which, while certainly friendlier than those of Barnes and Durham, nevertheless criticized the Serbian government, Armstrong still published Seton-Watson’s article in his own *Foreign Affairs*.<sup>36</sup>

In spite of his frustrations, Armstrong fired up the pro-Yugoslav publicity machine in the United States. Yet another American professor of history, Bernadotte Schmitt, published a scathing review of these recent anti-Serbian histories in—where else?—*Foreign Affairs*.<sup>37</sup> The review characterized Durham’s analysis of the origins of the war as biased, noting that she “despises the Serbs,” and dismissed Barnes’s efforts as leaving “much to be desired.”<sup>38</sup> Armstrong shared the article with Seton-Watson. While Seton-Watson was perhaps less supportive of the former Serbian government than Armstrong, he nevertheless characterized Barnes’s work as “rotten” and “impudent and charlatan,” and lamented that the “fatuous” Durham reviewed it positively in the British press.<sup>39</sup> Eventually, the war guilt debates would fade away, but the animosity between the two sides of the debate lingered. Decades later in 1941, when British author and Yugoslav enthusiast Rebecca West went to publish her life’s work, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*, she found the publication was delayed: West could not publish until she consented to remove Durham’s name from critical passages, for fear of legal action.<sup>40</sup>

Armstrong’s frustrations with Yugoslavia’s inability to reach public opinion became a consistent theme throughout the interwar years. In his very first article for *Foreign Affairs* in 1923, Armstrong bemoaned that while the Yugoslav premier, Nicholas Pasitch, had “played a really important hand in European politics,” his inability to speak any language but Serbian “barred him from gaining publicity for his views and from making Yugoslav aims understood abroad.”<sup>41</sup> Similarly, in a *Foreign Affairs* article in 1928, Armstrong complained that Yugoslavia was bested by Italy and Albania in a game of diplomacy-by-press release: essentially, he alleged that Italy and Albania formalized a preexisting treaty shortly after Yugoslavia and France signed one of their own, with Italy and Albania using the formalization process as “a device to confuse foreign opinion,” and make France and Yugoslavia appear as aggressors when, in fact, Italy and Albania made the first move.<sup>42</sup> Armstrong’s frustration in the mid-1920s over the Yugoslav government’s inability to appeal to foreign public opinion throughout the war guilt debate was just one episode out of many.

Armstrong masked these frustrations brilliantly in 1934 when Yugoslavia faced its greatest public relations crisis of the interwar period. King Alexander, who had gained a reputation as the glue that bound the Yugoslav Union together, had been assassinated. Indeed, Alexander held the state together in part by force—he led a coup in 1929 and installed himself as a dictator. Armstrong mourned the loss of Alexander in the pages of *Foreign Affairs*, while also assuring readers that the state would hold. Within his eulogy, Armstrong also praised the deceased, noting that while Alexander had an authoritarian bent, “He had nothing in common with the dictatorial demagogues of post-war Europe who grimace or shriek. He had no high-pressure advertising agents and no propaganda machine for hurling his opinions through the

<sup>35</sup> Armstrong to S. Grouitch, Nov. 25, 1925, folder 3, box 33, HFAP.

<sup>36</sup> R. W. Seton-Watson, “The Murder at Sarajevo,” *Foreign Affairs* 3, no. 3 (Apr. 1925): 489–509.

<sup>37</sup> Bernadotte E. Schmitt, “July, 1914,” *Foreign Affairs* 5, no. 1 (Oct. 1 1926), 132–47.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 140, 143.

<sup>39</sup> Seton-Watson to Armstrong, Dec. 3, 1926, folder 12, box 56, HFAP.

<sup>40</sup> Vesna Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia: A Transnational History* (Basingstoke, UK, 2010), 130.

<sup>41</sup> Hamilton Fish Armstrong, “Yugoslavia Today,” *Foreign Affairs* 1, no. 4 (June 15, 1923): 85.

<sup>42</sup> Hamilton Fish Armstrong, “Italy, Yugoslavia and Lilliputia,” *Foreign Affairs* 6, no. 2 (Jan. 1, 1928): 201.

ether upon the ears of his subjects and neighbors. There was nothing theatrical or meretricious about him, either in appearance or action.”<sup>43</sup>

In the wake of Alexander’s death, Armstrong decided to showcase what he had seen as a weakness of the Yugoslav government for over a decade—its inability to manage public opinion—as a strength. Public-relations incompetence transformed into quiet dignity. There are obvious reasons why Armstrong would present Alexander as such: a lingering post-World War I resentment over propaganda, and Armstrong’s desire to draw a distinction between Alexander and Europe’s other, illiberal dictators, were likely chief among them. While Armstrong claimed to appreciate that Alexander never grimaced or shrieked, his frustrations over the war guilt debates indicate that he may have privately hoped for Alexander to have had a bit more of a theatrical streak or access to one or two high-pressured advertising agents.

Much in the way that Armstrong pushed the Council to make *Foreign Affairs* slightly more appealing to the public, Armstrong lobbied Yugoslav leaders to care more about public opinion. Indeed, Armstrong encouraged Yugoslavia and its government to approach public opinion much in the style of his own magazine: to acknowledge the importance of public opinion as having a real role to play in the success or demise of foreign affairs, without going so far as to entirely feed into the madness of the crowd. Moreover, Armstrong’s public stance toward catering to public opinion—both in the case of his conversations around *Foreign Affairs* with Luce and Alexander’s dignified lack of public relations know-how—did not entirely reflect his private understanding of new political realities. Yugoslavia was the object of Armstrong’s growing public relations prowess and also a way in which to consider the new role of public opinion in both foreign affairs and *Foreign Affairs*.

### Why Yugoslavia?

Public opinion was not the only idea on Armstrong’s mind, however. Evidently, he devoted much time—and ink—to Yugoslavia. Yet one may wonder why Yugoslavia in particular held Armstrong’s attention. Some of Armstrong’s interest in Yugoslavia stemmed from his own personal fascination with learning about worlds different from his own, but much of it had to do with what Yugoslavia was: a federation. Throughout the interwar period, federations transformed from useful tools *for* organizing the world, into idealized models *of* the world. Yugoslavia, with all of its particularities, both modeled and built a vision for the broader world, especially for one keen Yugoslav observer: Armstrong.

Falling in love with far-off places was a long-standing habit of Armstrong’s. As a schoolboy, Armstrong had been fascinated with yet another distant land: Texas. In 1911, the New York native submitted an essay to his school newspaper, entitled “The Story of the Rise of the Texan Nation.”<sup>44</sup> In it, he carefully detailed the history of the Texas War for Independence, tracing its origins from a time of “Texan bondage” under Mexican rule, to its brief tenure as a stand-alone state, and finally, to its admission into the Union of the United States.<sup>45</sup> Throughout the article, Armstrong referred to the white settlers in Texas as both “Americans” and “Texans”—never as the Mexicans, which they actually were—while providing the Texans with their own patriotic heroes and myths, as if Texas were, as he called it, a “nation.” In Armstrong’s youthful calculation, the apex of Texas’s history was not its moment of independence, but rather its admission into the Union. Armstrong did not view the integration of Texas into the United States as a sacrifice of the Texan autonomy he so admired, but instead, as “an important measure not only for Texas, but for all the world.”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Hamilton Fish Armstrong, “After the Assassination of King Alexander,” *Foreign Affairs* 13, no. 2 (Jan. 1, 1935): 209.

<sup>44</sup>Hamilton Fish Armstrong, “The Story of the Rise of the Texan Nation,” *The Blue and The Gray*, 1911, 10-25, folder 7, box 105, HFAP.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

While tales of alleged cowboy heroism may have drawn him in, it was the creation of a federation that ultimately captured the heart and mind of a young Armstrong. Immediately, Armstrong linked the fate of the local and the global, and considered federation as beneficial to the local unit, the broader state, and the world at large. From a young age then, Armstrong had a clear ideal of state organization and national identity. Particular “national” identities, like that of the Texan, should be celebrated, yet this identity was best served when the nation was made viable through incorporation into a culturally similar, larger federation.

Armstrong’s schoolboy interest in federation reflected a broader cultural context. Americans had asked questions about federations since their country’s founding. However, a period of late-nineteenth-century imperial expansion into western indigenous lands, the Caribbean, and the Pacific meant that the early days of the twentieth century brought on a federal revival in the United States. Debates ensued over if and how to integrate some of these newly acquired territories into the union. While the vast majority of these conversations hinged on questions of race (would the admission of majority-nonwhite territories into the union threaten white supremacy?), more general ideas about federation whirred in the background. Increasingly, Americans questioned if and how unity could be forged in an expanding state. The federal idea was not simply an American inheritance, but an ongoing investment.

Interest in federations expanded outside of Armstrong’s United States. The appeal of federations became especially apparent to late-nineteenth-century European imperialists, as Western Europeans moved into Africa’s interior and China’s trading ports, while the Austro-Hungarian and Czarist Russian empires vied to inherit the weakening Ottoman Empire’s Asian and European territories. Quickly, however, these imperialists realized an expanding empire was not necessarily a stable empire. Even before the end of the Great War heralded a “Wilsonian Moment,” European empires contended with growing nationalist movements and increasingly autonomous settler states.<sup>47</sup> Federalism offered a solution that could placate nationalists while maintaining the strategic benefits empires provided for the metropole. Thus, the emergence of the idea of “greater Britain” in the late nineteenth century and the creation of the British Dominion system in 1907; the Third Republic’s attempts to more fully integrate France’s empire within the nation-state; and the increased interest in “trialism” within the Habsburg Empire after the already successful establishment of dualism in 1867.<sup>48</sup>

The federal ideal appealed to a growing number of budding and wide-ranging internationalists as well. As the world grew more interconnected, a slew of international groups emerged. Some sought to standardize the world, such as the International Telegraphic Union (1865), the Universal Post Union (1874), and the International Union for Weights and Measures (1875); others aimed to radicalize it, such as the Second Internationals (1889), International Council of Women (1888), and International Alliance of Women (1904); and still others hoped to create and implement law in it, such as attendees of The Hague (1899). While these organizations differed in their goals and politics, all of them tended to organize in a semi-federal fashion: members represented their states and assembled together at international meetings. The organization of these groups allowed them to weave the world closer together, by creating order, personal friendships, and coordinated worldviews, while also providing an opportunity to showcase diversity in thought, experience, and culture.

Yet it was not only self-proclaimed imperialists and internationalists who engaged with the federal ideal. Indeed, some of the biggest advocates of federations were nationalists. Italian nationalists Giuseppe Garibaldi and Giuseppe Mazzini, for instance, proposed their own ideal federations, composed of unified and independent nations within a broader world of nations.

<sup>47</sup>Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*.

<sup>48</sup>Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860–1900* (Princeton, NJ, 2007); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago, 2005).

It very well may have been these two Italians who helped to spur a young Armstrong's interest in Texas: Armstrong's father had been present in Rome during the final campaign for Italian unification.<sup>49</sup> One of the most active geographic zones for federal scheming could be found further to the east, in the Balkans. Over the course of the nineteenth century, Balkan intellectuals tested and developed various conceptions of sovereignty, nationalism, and autonomy.<sup>50</sup>

As World War I came to a close, some of these long-standing dreams of Balkan federations transformed into concrete realities. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was declared on December 1, 1918 (the state would formally change its name to its more commonly used moniker, "Yugoslavia," in 1929).<sup>51</sup> After much internal debate over what form the state would take, the vision that won out was a highly centralized federation—perhaps too centralized, Armstrong would later admit.<sup>52</sup> The borders of "historic" nations, such as Croatia and Serbia, did not appear on the new state's map. Rather, the state's administrative units intentionally crossed imagined ethnic and historical national boundaries to promote unity. While the new state allowed for cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity, its architects desired a single Yugoslav political unit.

It must have been a treat for Armstrong, who had once dreamed about the moment of Texas' incorporation into the United States and whose father had regaled him with stories of Italy's unification, to be on the ground a mere month after Yugoslavia formed. Over the coming decades, Armstrong would continue to witness growing federal movements. Right-wing thinkers in Europe, especially in Italy, Germany, and Austria, pushed for so-called "inner colonization" of their own and neighboring states as a means of increasing a state's ability to sustain itself without colonization abroad.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, in London, Paris, and Harlem, Black intellectuals began to envision the federalization of parts of Africa and the Caribbean, which would later be referred to as the Pan-African and Pan-Caribbean movements.<sup>54</sup> As the world crumbled into chaos in the early days of World War II, some, including American Wendell Willkie, abandoned all pretense and proposed a worldwide federation.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, back in the Balkans, federal schemes only expanded. Holly Case in particular has shown how Eastern and Central European politicians, including Czechoslovak minister, Edvard Benes, and Polish diplomat, Oszkár Jászi, and others from across the political spectrum remained interested in the idea of federation throughout the interwar period, creating the Little Entente alliance in 1920 (Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia), the Balkan Entente alliance in 1934 (Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Romania), and proposing the Danuban Federation in 1931.<sup>56</sup>

These other federal dreamers—from Central European alliance-seekers to Black internationalists—differed slightly in their thinking from Western observers of Yugoslavia, such as Armstrong. In the instance of the Central Europeans, Case argues these local federation schemers had no choice but to consider federation as a matter of geopolitical security (how to

<sup>49</sup>Armstrong, *Those Days*, 26–8.

<sup>50</sup>Dominique Kirchner Reill explored one such set of mid-nineteenth-century Adriatic thinkers, who contemplated the creation of a multinational zone that would theoretically allow for the flourishing of multiple nationalities within one state. Dominique Kirchner Reill, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice* (Stanford, CA, 2012).

<sup>51</sup>Other Balkan states, such as Bulgaria, Romania, and parts of Albania, remained independent states outside of Yugoslavia; the major ports of Trieste and Fiume became Italian and international free cities, respectively.

<sup>52</sup>Armstrong, *Where the East Begins*, 9.

<sup>53</sup>Tara Zahra, *Against the World: Anti-Globalism and Mass Politics Between the World Wars* (New York, 2023). Results included the Anschluss as well as territorial grabs from Germany and Italy across much of central and eastern Europe.

<sup>54</sup>Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, NJ, 2019); Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*.

<sup>55</sup>Samuel Zipp, *The Idealist: Wendell Willkie's Wartime Quest to Build One World* (Cambridge, MA, 2020).

<sup>56</sup>Holly Case, "The Strange Politics of Federative Ideas in East-Central Europe," *The Journal of Modern History* 85, no. 4 (Dec. 2013): 833–866.

protect one's state from the threat of surrounding states), internal security (how to nullify various national/ethnic/linguistic factions), and national interest ("federation" could enable territorial expansion).<sup>57</sup> Similar suggestions could be made for many of the aforementioned federal thinkers with living with would-be federations. Those observers who lived outside the bounds of these would-be federations, however, had the privilege of being able to think about federation less *strategically* and more *idealistically*. Surely, a certain level of ignorance about the internal machinations of the state and its politics allowed for more expansive international daydreaming as well.

And daydream they did. By the time Armstrong arrived in Yugoslavia, federations were not only seen as useful tools for organization and strategy, but also as an ideal in and of themselves, as well as a solution for some of the biggest international quandaries of the day. Indeed, many like Armstrong viewed much of Central Europe as, to quote Natasha Wheatley, "the ground zero for new international order" during the interwar era as international ideas about crime, capital, finance, minority rights, and borders played out in Central European spaces.<sup>58</sup> This proved especially true in Yugoslavia, which, as a typical Habsburg and Ottoman successor state—complete with its many religions, languages, ethnicities, and, yes, nations—was often seen by outsiders as the international world, writ small. Yet Armstrong not only saw Yugoslavia as a recipient of international ideals, but as a maker of them.

Federation not only allowed Yugoslavia to solve a host of problems for itself, but also to offer a model for the world at large. The following paragraphs will consider how Armstrong used Yugoslavia to think through problems related to the stubbornness of nationalism, the role of the United States in broader international affairs, the relationship between race and sovereignty, the end of empire in Europe, and much more.

Armstrong belonged to an American branch within a generations-old group of Western liberals with a passion for the Balkans. As Larry Wolff has argued, since at least the eighteenth century, Eastern Europe lived in the minds of some Western European thinkers as yet another iteration of Edward Said's "Orient"—that is, a kind of sterile "laboratory," untouched by the trappings of modernity, in which Westerners could encounter the unevolved "other" to better define themselves, and express their apparent superiority.<sup>59</sup> Similar to Said's "Orientalists," these "explorers" of Eastern Europe also produced reams of knowledge about a region that more or less existed only within their minds. While fascinated by the Balkans, these Eastern European orientalists frequently produced unflattering and outright racist analyses of people living in the region, rendering differences as instances of backwardness.

This attitude persisted into the interwar years; indeed, some early features of Armstrong's own early attitudes toward the region smacked of orientalism. Stashed in an archival box from his first trip to Yugoslavia is a draft of a poem authored by Armstrong, in which he described the Balkans as a "gateway" between the West and a mythical East. In a 1921 article, Armstrong could not help but observe a supposed "Balkan" ability to "unearth unforeseen difficulties in every sort of business undertaking or political enterprise," suggesting that political intransigence was an innate Balkan trait.<sup>60</sup> Evidently, Balkan orientalists persisted throughout the interwar years: as late as 1941, British diplomat Harold Nicolson could quip, "All my life I have been bored of people who make pets of Balkan countries."<sup>61</sup> For some Western observers, the idea of Yugoslav mattered as much as the place itself.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Natasha Wheatley, "Central Europe as Ground Zero of the New International Order," *Slavic Review* 78, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 900–911.

<sup>59</sup>Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA, 1994); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1979).

<sup>60</sup>Armstrong, "The Iron Gates," folder 25, box 132, HFAP; Armstrong, "The Hope of Order in the Balkan Chaos," *The Weekly Review* 4, no. 107 (May 28, 1921): 508–9, folder 47, box 106, HFAP.

<sup>61</sup>Harold Nicolson, "Marginal Comment," *The Spectator* 168, no. 5931 (Feb. 27, 1942): 202.

Yet the interwar attitudes of some Balkan observers did differ from their grandparents' orientalism, at times, quite self-consciously. By 1929, it seems Armstrong's views of the Balkans had somewhat evolved. In his second book on the region, *Where the East Begins*, Armstrong's introduction described his arrival in five successive cities in southeastern Europe: Trieste, Zagreb, Belgrade, Sofia, and Constantinople. Residents of each city assured him that while they are of the west, the city just to their east constituted the mythical boundary between east and west. After his travels, Armstrong was forced to conclude that such a clear boundary did not exist, noting, "I am never really to cross that magic line which divides all that is virtuous and clean and progressive from all that is slothful and smelly and decayed."<sup>62</sup> Armstrong did not entirely break free of orientalist thinking, however, and suggested that the east, whatever it was, belonged entirely to Asia.

Beyond some intellectual differences with older Balkan orientalists, Armstrong also had a different emotional relationship with Yugoslavia. For Armstrong, the Balkans did not serve merely as a place of armchair experimentation; rather it held some of his most cherished memories: Armstrong honeymooned, vacationed with his only daughter, and briefly lived in Yugoslavia. His Yugoslav friends, including the Grouitch family, were some of Armstrong's most prolific correspondents.<sup>63</sup> The Yugoslav King even bestowed upon Armstrong a military decoration—an honor Armstrong never received from his own government.

Armstrong also viewed Yugoslavia not as a removed "other," but rather as an integral part of the world—"an important European capital."<sup>64</sup> Rather than seeing Yugoslavia as a representation of an imagined past, Armstrong insisted on focusing on Yugoslavia's present and future: tellingly, his book and article titles included "Yugoslavia Today," *The New Balkans* (this title appeared on both an article and book), and "Yugoslavia in Transition."<sup>65</sup> Again and again, Armstrong argued that *everything* had changed in the Balkans, and therefore was worthy of new consideration.<sup>66</sup> Armstrong was not alone in this view. When Armstrong's friend, British diplomat Harold Nicolson, watched the new state of Yugoslavia fight with Italy over territorial claims at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, Nicolson recalled feeling that the dispute represented, "in its crudest form, the opposition between the hopes of the New World, and the desires of the Old."<sup>67</sup> For Armstrong and those like him, Yugoslavia was not only a remnant of an imagined past, but rather a possible harbinger of a brighter future.

Perhaps the biggest roadblock to that brighter future, however, were pernicious nationalist politics. "If there ever is another war in Europe, it will come of some damned silly thing in the Balkans," went the oft-cited, and, by 1914, correct, Bismarkian prediction. Armstrong took the problem on in his first Balkan-focused book, published in 1926 and entitled *The New Balkans*. Each chapter focused on a particular Balkan state, starting, of course, with Armstrong's favored Yugoslavia. Given Armstrong's deep affection for the state, one may have expected the former poet to fill the allotted Yugoslavia pages with an elegant hagiography of the new state's development. Instead, Armstrong wrote a straightforward, detailed, and, it must be said, rather dull, political history of the past five years in Yugoslavia. In particular, he recounted the contests between the various political parties, all loosely associated with a different nationalist group, especially those between the Croatian Peasant Party and the Serbian-dominated Radical Party.

<sup>62</sup> Armstrong, *Where the East Begins*, xviii.

<sup>63</sup> Armstrong's personal correspondence with Mabel Grouitch, for instance, spans over nine folders.

<sup>64</sup> Armstrong to S. Grouitch, Nov. 25, 1925, folder 3, box 33, HFAP.

<sup>65</sup> Armstrong, "Yugoslavia Today": 82–104; Hamilton Fish Armstrong, *The New Balkans* (New York, 1926); Hamilton Fish Armstrong, "The New Balkans," *Foreign Affairs* 3, no. 2 (Dec. 15, 1924): 293–312; Hamilton Fish Armstrong, "Yugoslavia in Transition" *Foreign Affairs* 14, no. 1 (Oct. 1, 1935): 160–162.

<sup>66</sup> Armstrong, *The New Balkans*, 19–20.

<sup>67</sup> Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, 130.

Armstrong could have approached the Yugoslav parliamentary battles through the usual Western lens, depicting various nationalist groups of Yugoslavia as acting out a supposedly “ancient” script of ethnic strife. Certainly, other Balkan observers of the time would have reached such a conclusion.<sup>68</sup> Armstrong, however, went in a different direction. The chapter reaches its climax when the various parties arrived at a compromise. While the deal quickly fell apart, its brief existence proved an essential point for Armstrong: “... in essence the Serbo-Croat dispute had all along been far more political than some were led to believe.” Moreover, Armstrong continued, “The theory that a bridgeless chasm separated Serbs and Croats, and that a period of civil war impended, fell to pieces in face of the sudden compatibility of the majority of Serb and Croat politicians as soon as it became politically expedient.”<sup>69</sup>

National differences, Armstrong concluded, were not always essential, and indeed could be overcome. To be clear, Armstrong acknowledged that the Yugoslav state had initially pressed too quickly for too much unification and centralization, in both the economic and political spheres, indicating some sympathy for national differences and grievances.<sup>70</sup> Armstrong’s chapter on Yugoslav political history, however, insisted not only on bucking some aspects of typical orientalist’s narratives but also showed how the allegedly intractable problem of national differences played second fiddle to political expediency. Armstrong thought about Yugoslavia intently, in part because it could prove (albeit, in a limited case) that nationalist politics were not fundamental, but a product of politics themselves. If Yugoslavia of all places could abandon politics based on national differences in its domestic politics, the problem of national politics on the world stage seemed surmountable.

Armstrong not only considered Yugoslavia’s national politics; he also thought about the politics of his own nation, the United States. Like many of his generation, Armstrong was a through-and-through Wilsonian, who wanted the United States to take a more active role in world politics. Later in his career, Armstrong lobbied against American neutrality in World War II, and pushed for the United States to “lead” the world in the immediate postwar years.<sup>71</sup> Armstrong’s views on foreign policy had major public impacts: he was, after all, the director of the Council on Foreign Relations; a member of the United States State Department’s Advisory Committee on Post-War Foreign Policies; and served as one of three senior American advisors sent to the 1945 United Nations conference in San Francisco, where the charter for the United Nations was drafted. If there was a hallmark of Armstrong’s views on foreign affairs, it was that the United States had a part to play in them.

Yet if Wilsonian insistence that the United States ought to engage in global politics derived, at least partially, from an inflated view of what the United States (and, perhaps, Wilson himself) had to offer the world, Armstrong’s perspective seems to have an additional, slightly different, origin: Yugoslavia.<sup>72</sup> In a 1920 article entitled “American Business Man in Europe’s New States,” Armstrong made a plea for American investment in Europe, especially the new Yugoslav state, gesturing at the supposed potential of state’s minerals and natural resources.<sup>73</sup> However, he concluded his pitch not with a promise of success for the American businessman, but instead with a warning of potential peril. Americans needed to make a habit of paying

<sup>68</sup>Rebecca West, for instance, certainly played into these tropes in her work. Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey through Yugoslavia* (New York, 1941).

<sup>69</sup>Armstrong, *The New Balkans*, 44.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>71</sup>For more on Armstrong’s WWII-era career, see Wertheim, *Tomorrow, the World*.

<sup>72</sup>Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*; Thomas Knock, *To End All Wars, New Edition: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Princeton, NJ, 2019); Larry Wolff, *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe* (Stanford, CA, 2020).

<sup>73</sup>Hamilton Fish Armstrong, “American Business Man in Europe’s New States,” *The Evening Post*, May 27, 1920 in box 105, HFAP.

attention to the Balkans, Armstrong forewarned, as the recent war in the Balkans proved that Americans could not escape the pull of European politics.

The view that the world had become so interconnected that Americans had no choice but to participate in it was hardly unique to Armstrong. Yet it was the Balkan example that Armstrong returned to again and again to make this point. *The New Balkans* opened with an introduction from Armstrong's boss, Archibald Coolidge, who dutifully reminded the reader: "The eternal 'Eastern Question'—the immediate cause of the World War—is still with us. In the multiplicity of the issues it raises, it is still one of the serious perils to the peace of mankind."<sup>74</sup> Armstrong paraphrased the point in his first chapter, explaining that he wrote the book because "the Balkan problems have been fruitful causes for intrigue and war in spheres far removed from the Danube and the Save, the Varfar and the Maritza."<sup>75</sup> Of course, Armstrong's belief in American interventionism likely stemmed from many different life experiences and cultural values. Still, it seems that, unlike some other Wilsonians, Armstrong did not exclusively look at domestic life in the United States and then consider its role in the world. Rather, Armstrong considered the domestic politics of various places in the world, and then imagined the role of the United States within them.

Armstrong was not the only one connecting Yugoslavia to broader international questions and ideas. For instance, tucked into the epilogue of British author Rebecca West's bestselling *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia* (1942) was her new understanding of empire. While contemporary proponents of empire argued that imperial projects brought infrastructure, education, and industrialization to otherwise underdeveloped areas, West concluded that various empires in the Balkans had only impoverished the region. Moreover, she applied her theory of empire in the Balkans to the world at large, concluding that it was universally "the tendency of Empire" to degrade the civilization and culture of the colony—a conclusion a host of Black intellectuals simultaneously reached as well, albeit in other contexts.<sup>76</sup>

Meanwhile, Armstrong's friend Madam Grouitch looked to Yugoslavia to ask increasingly popular questions related to global biopolitics and eugenics.<sup>77</sup> The population loss in Serbia from the Great War and preceding Balkan Wars, she fretted, could endanger the economy for generations.<sup>78</sup> Apparently, Armstrong shared these concerns, because he helped Grouitch manage a local orphanage (the American Home for Yugoslav Children). By providing the children with a temporary, Western-style home, the orphanage intended to both attend to the children's physical needs and impart to them "a high regard for the principles of peace and international friendship."<sup>79</sup> The installation of such values, especially and specifically within the children from the Balkans, the organization argued, was a matter of "world necessity."<sup>80</sup> Armstrong fed stories about the orphanage to reporters from the Associated Press, wrote a fundraising appeal that appeared in the *New York Times*, and even visited the home with his family.<sup>81</sup>

Of course, race too, an essential factor in the making of interwar international politics, could be turned over in Yugoslavia.<sup>82</sup> For instance, the growing parlance of "racial science" in the interwar period provided Yugoslav enthusiasts with a new lexicon to describe the state's residents—even one that would allow them to dodge the quagmire of nationality in the region.

<sup>74</sup>Archibald Cary Coolidge, "Introduction," in *The New Balkans*, ed. Hamilton Fish Armstrong (New York: 1926), 15.

<sup>75</sup>Armstrong, *The New Balkans*, 18.

<sup>76</sup>West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, 1091. For Black Intellectuals and others' critiques of empire, see Charles King, *Gods of the Upper Air: How a Circle of Renegade Anthropologists Reinvented Race, Sex, and Gender in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 2019); and Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics*.

<sup>77</sup>Alison Bashford, *Global Population: History, Geopolitics, and Life on Earth* (New York, 2014).

<sup>78</sup>Hamilton Fish Armstrong, "The American Flag on the Adriatic Coast," draft, box 67, HFAP.

<sup>79</sup>"American Home for Serbian War Orphans," box 67, HFAP.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Hamilton Fish Armstrong to Harry Romer, Sept. 25, 1925, box 67, HFAP.

<sup>82</sup>For more on race as a key issue of interwar international politics, see Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics*.



Yugoslav enthusiasts could consider Yugoslavia as a state for an imagined race—the “Slavs”—rather than discussing Yugoslavia as a state for an imagined nation—problematically composed of several preexisting “nations,” including the Serbs, Croatians, Bosnians, and more.

Why Yugoslavia, then? As international thinkers sought to manage dueling realities of both persistent, national particularities and an interconnected world, federations gained fresh traction. Yugoslavia was home to both some of the world’s most notorious strands of nationalism as well as the recent world war, an event that made the world’s interdependence clear and rocked the practice of international relations. Yugoslavia then became an ideal place for someone like Armstrong to consider a whole host of issues and possible solutions. Relatedly, Yugoslavia’s national problems—unyielding national political parties, a shrinking population, a need to develop an entire state after empire, and more—presented Armstrong and those around him a way of formulating and contextualizing their own international thoughts and principles. For some, a national space became a tangible representation of a broader world.

### A Tale of Two Dictatorships

“DEMOCRACY VS. DICTATORSHIP: Mr. Armstrong’s Challenging Picture of Two Worlds in Conflict”—the headline splashed across the front page of the *New York Times*’ Book Review section on the morning of January 3, 1937.<sup>83</sup> The book, entitled *We or They*, declared that the world’s democracies could not effectively conduct foreign affairs with the world’s dictatorships.<sup>84</sup> While both the headline and Armstrong’s title presented a stark binary between democracy and dictatorship, Armstrong himself approached the issue with more nuance, both before and after the book’s publication in 1936, especially when it came to Yugoslavia.

In 1929, seven years before Armstrong wrote, *We or They*, the situation in Yugoslavia appeared dire. Other than the small moment of compromise Armstrong had memorialized in *The New Balkans*, the state’s short history could largely be characterized by gridlock and bitter infighting, exemplified by the creation of over forty-five political parties and the failure of twenty-four cabinets.<sup>85</sup> Debates over the structure of the state raged on, with Croatian peasant party leader Stjepan Radić proving especially effective in rallying support for various degrees of Croatian autonomy. Meetings between these fractured lawmakers proved ineffective at best and deadly at worst: in the summer of 1928, a brawl in parliament ended with the deaths of three politicians, Radić among them. In addition to the shocking violence, the contentious state of politics meant that the government failed to serve its most basic of functions for its citizens. It was in this context that, in January 1929, King Alexander launched a coup, in which he dissolved parliament and abolished the constitution.

When news of the royal dictatorship hit Armstrong’s desk, he was neither surprised by nor particularly censorious of Alexander’s decision. Over the course of the 1920s, Armstrong visited Alexander frequently enough that he recalled Alexander would usually greet him with, “So you’re here for your annual report.”<sup>86</sup> Often over lunch, Alexander would provide Armstrong with detailed analyses of the internal Yugoslav situation, much of which, Alexander surely knew, would make their way into future *Foreign Affairs* articles. But in addition to providing Armstrong with insider information, Alexander also would occasionally solicit Armstrong for his opinions: his impressions of Radić, his views on the historiographical revisionist debates, and, finally, in the summer of 1928, his thoughts on dictatorship. Armstrong recalled that he carefully described dictatorships to Alexander as “a heavy

<sup>83</sup>William MacDonald, “DEMOCRACY VS. DICTATORSHIP; Mr. Armstrong’s Challenging Picture of Two Worlds in Conflict,” *New York Times*, Jan. 3, 1937: 93.

<sup>84</sup>Hamilton Fish Armstrong, *We or They: Two Worlds in Conflict* (New York, 1936).

<sup>85</sup>Marie-Janine Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia*, trans. Dona Geyer (West Lafayette, IN, 2019), 80–1.

<sup>86</sup>Armstrong, *Peace and Counterpeace*, 78.

responsibility.”<sup>87</sup> Naturally, Armstrong recalled the conversation immediately when, months later, he heard that Alexander declared the dictatorship.

Three months after the coup, Armstrong returned to Yugoslavia. He lunched with the queen and her children before his usual two-hour conference with Alexander. In their meeting, Armstrong recalled, Alexander listed not only his rationale for declaring a dictatorship, but a status report on how internal affairs had progressed since January—quite well, at least, according to his calculation. Privately, Armstrong described his feelings on Alexander’s dictatorship as “mixed”; later he would say that he guessed Alexander would “eventually” bring democracy back, though perhaps not in the “unfettered” form of democracy seen in the United States.<sup>88</sup> Not everyone agreed with Armstrong: Seton-Watson, for instance, publicly raised his concerns about the state’s turn towards authoritarianism.<sup>89</sup> Armstrong’s anxieties, if he had any, remained private. In his report on the Yugoslav situation to the readers of *Foreign Affairs*, Armstrong admitted that “we look back with wonder at the hopes of 1919,” but overall offered a favorable assessment. Alexander’s coup d’état was “psychologically refreshing,” Armstrong noted; Alexander “has started well,” making “substantial accomplishments.”<sup>90</sup>

Armstrong’s rather positive reaction to the dawn of dictatorship in his beloved Yugoslavia might have surprised those who would peruse *We or They* years later, and with good reason. While Armstrong and the magazine he published displayed some skepticism over the new perceived power of public opinion (in fact, Armstrong’s one-time dear friend and contributor to *Foreign Affairs*, Walter Lippmann, famously criticized the idea in 1922), Armstrong was, unquestionably, a proponent of democracy. In 1929 however, liberal democracies were thin on the ground: Italy, Portugal, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Albania, and Poland all had experienced various versions of authoritarian rule. Perhaps then, it is fair to say that Armstrong’s position as an observer of foreign affairs prepared him for Yugoslavia’s swing toward illiberalism. Moreover, as Armstrong himself pointed out, a strong Yugoslavia—even if that strength derived from silencing internal opposition—remained a geopolitically useful buffer against Italy’s expansionism.<sup>91</sup> Finally, it should be noted that Armstrong held Alexander in high regard personally. Publicly, he insisted that Alexander only undertook such a “bold initiative” because “[t]he situation must have seemed to him critical indeed, or he would never have undertaken responsibilities so little to his personal taste and fraught with such risks.”<sup>92</sup>

However, what was more important from Armstrong’s perspective than his personal affection for Alexander or his desire for a geographical buffer against Italy, was that Alexander proclaimed the dictatorship was necessary to preserve Yugoslav national unity. While others would later suggest Alexander used national unity as a pretense for a power grab, it seems Armstrong agreed with and endorsed Alexander’s assessment that the preservation of the state required a temporary dictatorship. In an article explaining the coup, Armstrong quoted Alexander’s unification justifications at length, including Alexander’s argument that parliamentary politics threatened Yugoslavia’s national unity. Moreover, Alexander’s actions at least suggested a desire to preserve that unity: Alexander rechristened the state, replacing the “Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes” with the “Kingdom of Yugoslavia”; he streamlined the state’s administration, replacing the thirty-three oblasts of Yugoslavia with nine new regions, none of which corresponded with old national boundaries; and he attempted to standardize court and education systems, all while producing state-run propaganda to garner domestic support for the idea

<sup>87</sup> Armstrong, “Memo,” Mar. 13, 1929, folder “1929,” box 99, HFAP.

<sup>88</sup> For “mixed,” see Armstrong to Seton-Watson, June 12, 1929, folder 12, box 56, HFAP. For “eventually” and “unfettered,” see Armstrong, *Peace and Counterpeace*, 426–7.

<sup>89</sup> R. W. Seton-Watson, “The Yugoslav Dictatorship,” *International Affairs* 11, no. 1 (Jan. 1932): 22–39.

<sup>90</sup> Hamilton Fish Armstrong, “The Royal Dictatorship in Jugoslavia,” *Foreign Affairs* 7, no. 4 (July 1, 1929): 615.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 601.

of Yugoslavia. For those who believed, as many did at the time, in the efficiency of dictatorships and the cumbersomeness of democracies, the early days of Alexander's dictatorship served as a case in point—at least, on paper.

Decades later, Armstrong would recall that Alexander "... stated that for him there was only one matter of capital importance: to preserve the unity of the state."<sup>93</sup> In his memoirs, Armstrong remembered Alexander above all else as a rare unifier in a state constantly threatening to tear itself asunder. This much can be understood by the chapter on him included in Armstrong's memoirs, entitled "The Only Yugoslav."<sup>94</sup> For Armstrong, unity in the Balkans trumped nearly all other feelings, personal or political. The battle was not democracy versus dictatorship; for Armstrong in 1929, it was unity versus fragmentation.

Armstrong's rosy predictions for Yugoslavia in 1929 proved false. Although Alexander had reintroduced a constitution in 1931, true democracy remained at bay. Moreover, in spite of Alexander's many unifying policies, nationalist politics remained powerful. In fact, members of Balkan separatist groups would assassinate Alexander in 1934. The death of Alexander anticipated Yugoslavia's first violent breakup, as a floundering Yugoslav government granted more autonomy to the Croats in a bid to prevent an Italian invasion. This concession proved futile. By April 1941, the Germans launched an attack and the Yugoslav government surrendered to the Germans days later.

Armstrong watched Yugoslavia implode not only from his usual perch in New York City, but also from Washington, DC. After the start of World War II in Europe, Armstrong traveled with increasing frequency to Washington, where he participated in a number of presidential postwar planning committees.<sup>95</sup> At the close of the Great War, statesmen scrambled to answer these questions, producing half-baked compromises, inconsistently applied doctrines, and questionable treaties. By contrast, as Elizabeth Borgwardt and Stephen Wertheim have pointed out, men like Armstrong began preparing for the close of the Second World War practically at its outbreak, hoping to provide definite answers.<sup>96</sup> Their plans indicated the lessons they learned. Because the United States avoided joining the League of Nations after World War I, the United Nations was organized to keep the United States in; because the Dawes Plan did not materialize until six years after the war's end, the Marshall Plan was dreamed up in less than two; and because nationalism seemed bound to persist in Europe, many nationalities would be given their own states.

That final point marked a seismic shift within international thinking. Throughout the interwar, the League of Nations attempted to institute a minority rights regime, which acknowledged the existence of national minorities within states and aimed to provide them with international protection, so national minorities could live within their home state. The minority rights regime had mixed outcomes; still, its existence indicated a commitment to diversity.<sup>97</sup> The postwar, however, looked different. At the Potsdam Conference, Poland and Czechoslovakia planned population transfers, "returning" various populations, such as German-speaking Czech residents, to their "homeland" of Germany (that many of these German speakers had never been to Germany was of little consequence).<sup>98</sup> In addition, the coming end of empire resulted in ever more nation-states, especially in the formally colonized continents of Africa and Asia. In this postcolonial moment, the federal dreams of the early

<sup>93</sup>Armstrong, *Peace and Counterpeace*, 423.

<sup>94</sup>Hamilton Fish Armstrong, "Chapter Five: The Only Yugoslav," in *Peace and Counterpeace: From Wilson to Hitler* (New York, 1971).

<sup>95</sup>Roberts, "The Council Has Been Your Creation."

<sup>96</sup>Wertheim, *Tomorrow, the World*; Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World*.

<sup>97</sup>Mark Mazower, "The Strange Triumph of Human Rights, 1933–1950," *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 2 (June 2004): 379–98.

<sup>98</sup>Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansings in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), 117–47.

twentieth century re-emerged, particularly in Africa and the Caribbean, but ultimately, the nation-state, not the federal unit, emerged victorious.<sup>99</sup>

The Balkans, however, proved to be an exception to this general rule. Former partisan fighter and communist, Josip Broz Tito, led the effort to rebuild a united Yugoslavia after the close of World War II. The reconstitution of Yugoslavia came with ethnic cleansing, show trials and executions, the repression of free press and speech, and general violence. Still, by the late 1940s, the new Yugoslavia that emerged was organized as more of a true federation than the former Yugoslavia: the various nations received nominal recognition. Under the motto “Brotherhood and Unity,” Tito created a durable Yugoslav identity that would last for decades. While the pressures of the postwar world increasingly divided states into smaller nation-states, the idea of federation persisted in the Balkans.

Armstrong assessed these changes to the Balkan peninsula in his 1951 book, *Tito and Goliath*. To write the book, Armstrong visited both the new state and its leader in the spring of 1950. Whatever impression Tito left, Armstrong saw him as a very different man from King Alexander. Whereas Armstrong viewed Alexander as reserved and bookish, he relied on descriptions of Tito as possessing “a quick temper and independence”; and while Armstrong recognized the authoritarian nature of both Alexander’s and Tito’s regimes, he saw Alexander as a liberal at heart and portrayed Tito as a forthright communist.<sup>100</sup>

Unsurprisingly, however, given both his lack of concern for both Bolshevism in 1919 and King Alexander’s dictatorship in 1929, Armstrong took the new developments in Yugoslavia under Tito in stride. *Tito and Goliath* offered a long history of Tito’s eventual break with Joseph Stalin, a suggestion that Tito’s independence could provide a model to other communist states in Eastern Europe, and a reminder that Yugoslavia’s independence had significant impacts on the developments of American foreign policy and military strategy. “[I]t is in our direct interest that Yugoslavia will remain independent,” Armstrong surmised, and, “[a]t present, she can remain independent only under Tito.”<sup>101</sup>

Armstrong had reasons other than record-stating and grand-strategy-making for considering Tito’s regime with interest. At its heart, the book was an exploration of a revolt against Stalin’s homogenizing expansionism in favor of national independence and particularity. Armstrong lamented, “... neither individual lives nor national lives are part of Stalin’s plan. Individuals and nations are being reduced to a gray amorphous mass, without character, integrity, or personality.”<sup>102</sup> By insisting on Yugoslav independence from Stalin, Tito, in Armstrong’s estimate, could ensure that Yugoslavia’s national character(s) would persist. What is more, Armstrong did not feel that it would be wise for Americans to “beg [Tito] to ‘join the West.’”<sup>103</sup> Instead, he hoped that Americans and Tito—and those like him— could learn to live in a world of diverse ideas.<sup>104</sup> Once again, Armstrong located within Yugoslavia a vision for the broader world.

“Democracy versus Dictatorship,” and even the title, *We or They*, failed to capture the nuances of Armstrong’s understanding of international politics. In the case of Alexander, Armstrong saw another European dictator, but he also saw a means of preserving unity in the face of continued fragmentation. Decades later, in the early days of the Cold War, Armstrong looked beyond Tito’s authoritarian communism, not only to locate a potential, if reluctant, ally for the United States, but also to identify a source of independence within an increasingly homogenous Eastern Europe. Both projects attempted to solve the paradox of persistent diversity, locality, and particularity in a unifying world. Much as historians of

<sup>99</sup>Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*.

<sup>100</sup>Hamilton Fish Armstrong, *Tito and Goliath* (New York, 1951), 37.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, 297.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, 298–9.

today frequently dismiss binaries as simplistic, it seems internationalist actors in the past also found the drawing of such stark divisions—be they “democracy versus dictatorship,” internationalism or nationalism, “East” or “West”—equally unhelpful while navigating the world of foreign affairs. Armstrong’s nuanced approach can perhaps best be exemplified by his willingness to take seriously Yugoslav dictators, for the sake of both unity and diversity.

To be sure, Tito’s Yugoslavia proved imperfect, as Armstrong readily acknowledged even in 1951. For one, Armstrong was not entirely convinced of Tito’s commitment to Yugoslav nationalism, suggesting perhaps Tito was overly idealized as a national leader.<sup>105</sup> It should also be noted that individuals in Yugoslavia protested mightily against Tito’s break from Stalin, and many were swiftly silenced by Tito’s regime. Still, Armstrong’s true loss of faith in Tito appears to have come only in 1961, when the Yugoslav leader criticized the United States loudly at the Belgrade Non-Aligned Conference. Across a manuscript containing Tito’s remarks, Armstrong scrawled out that he was “shocked and depressed” by Tito’s comments, and he received them as “a great blow to me, personally.”<sup>106</sup>

Obviously, the trajectory of Yugoslav foreign policy in 1961 did not take the personal reactions of Armstrong under its advisement. Nevertheless, after decades of loving Yugoslavia, Armstrong’s interpretation of Yugoslavia and its policy was personal. Ten years previously, when he first published *Tito and Goliath*, he sent a copy to the person with whom he first experienced Yugoslavia: Helen. In the thirty-two years between their honeymoon in Yugoslavia in 1919 and *Tito and Goliath*’s publication, their relationship had soured considerably. Helen had left Armstrong in 1938 for his dear friend, Walter Lippmann. Yet Helen responded enthusiastically to Armstrong’s gift. “You were wonderful to send me a copy of *Tito and Goliath*,” she wrote, “and I am so thankful to have this chance to know your complete thinking on the meaning of Yugoslavia to the whole world.”<sup>107</sup>

## Conclusion

As the interwar years marched on, the world of foreign affairs became increasingly urgent and explosive, while the magazine *Foreign Affairs* grew in prominence and demand. Yet as the international situation deteriorated and his professional responsibilities piled up, Armstrong did not set aside his university days’ fascination with Yugoslavia. Rather, he delved deeper into the new state’s politics, people, and culture, returning to it time and again as a template for his international understanding, even as his vistas broadened. When waves of democratization and populism crashed into the 1920s, Armstrong anchored his own perspective on the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy in Yugoslavia. Armstrong’s Yugoslav expertise also enabled him to spot connections between a growing number of federal dreams and schemes and broader international questions about the role of the United States in the world, and how to maintain national distinctions in a time of growing global connection. Armstrong’s commitment to that final question, of how to forge closer unity while also preserving particularities, became especially clear in the age of two dictatorships—the 1930s and the early years of the Cold War. For Armstrong, Yugoslavia did not simply have a role to play within the world; it embodied the issues and principles of foreign affairs that defined an era.

While Armstrong’s position as a prominent figure within a burgeoning American Foreign Policy Establishment makes his perspective worth studying in and of itself, his fascination with Yugoslavia also raises questions about where and how opinions on foreign affairs developed. After all, Armstrong was one of many interwar-era figures in the realm of foreign affairs

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 297.

<sup>106</sup>Pamphlet, folder “Belgrade Conference,” box 69, HFAP. Armstrong continued to have a professional interest and relationship with Tito.

<sup>107</sup>Hamilton Fish Armstrong to Helen Byrne Lippmann, Jan. 2, 1951, folder 13, box 41, HFAP.

who became embroiled in the inner workings of a foreign state. Revolutionary Russia, Black Americans' ideas of Liberia, a changing China, and all of Europe's other successor states gained plenty of followers between World Wars I and II—some of whom wrote about these places in the pages of Armstrong's *Foreign Affairs*.<sup>108</sup> While the idea of Yugoslavia in particular appealed to Armstrong's broader commitment to finding a balance between persistent national particularities and growing worldwide integration, others became caught up in ideas about global capitalism, the fate of empires, globe-spanning inequalities, and more. Many varieties of interwar-era international opinions could trace their roots back to the native soils of particular climates.

Thus, while the expanding historiography of interwar internationalism rightly investigates self-consciously international institutions, such as the League of Nations; foreign policy advocacy groups, such as the Foreign Policy Association or the League of Nations Union clubs; emergent foreign policy think tanks, such as Armstrong's own Council on Foreign Relations and more, equal consideration is due to the particular national spaces that inspired and shaped individuals' involvement in foreign affairs in the first place.<sup>109</sup> Falling in love with a foreign state could often be a step toward falling in love with the world at large, while also shaping the kind of international perspective and values individuals would develop at a time when "internationalism" captured a multitude of meanings and possibilities.

In a similar vein, a number of national and regional historiographies have demonstrated how states, especially those in Central and Eastern Europe, received, contested, reshaped, and made internationalism in the interwar era.<sup>110</sup> As these histories expand to also include examinations of the states' foreign interlocutors, ranging from Woodrow Wilson in Eastern Europe to Robert Seton-Watson in Yugoslavia, it seems that international historians, who have more familiarity with the foreign interlocutors' broader world, also have something to contribute to these conversations.<sup>111</sup> To be sure, studies of the national making of internationalism, in places such as Yugoslavia, and the contributions made by various foreign interlocutors to both the national and international projects, such as those made by Armstrong in Yugoslavia, can and should be conducted by national-area experts. However, a fuller picture of interwar internationalism comes into view if space is made at the table for historians with a different perspective as well. More diverse approaches to the subject would introduce new audiences to these rich national historiographies and foster more fruitful conversations across fields of study about when, how, and where internationalism came into existence. Intellectual histories of figures such as Armstrong, that examine both his broader positionality in foreign affairs and his particular interest in national spaces such as Yugoslavia, are but one way to expand both international and national historiographies.

Finally, an investigation of the significance of specific spaces to the practitioners of foreign affairs contextualizes what has otherwise been a largely theoretical understanding of the relationship between internationalism and nationalism in the interwar era.<sup>112</sup> Theoretically, it has been established that the relationship between internationalism and nationalism was not one of exchange, but rather one of mutual constitution. On the ground, that meant that the

<sup>108</sup>W.E.B. Dubois wrote on Liberia in *Foreign Affairs*: W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, "Liberia, The League and the United States," *Foreign Affairs* 11, no. 4 (1933), 682–695. China enthusiasts Pearl Buck and Edgar Snow wrote for *Foreign Affairs*; example articles include Pearl S. Buck, "The Future of the White Man in the Far East," *Foreign Affairs* 19, no. 1 (1940), 22–33; and Edgar Snow, "China's Fighting Generalissimo," *Foreign Affairs* 16, no. 4 (1938), 612–625.

<sup>109</sup>Pedersen, *The Guardians*; Allen, *Every Citizen a Statesman*; Helen McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations: Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism c. 1918–45* (Manchester, UK, 2011).

<sup>110</sup>Becker and Wheatley, *Remaking Central Europe*; Zahra, *Against the World*.

<sup>111</sup>Wolff, *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe*; Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*; Samuel Foster, *Yugoslavia in the British Imagination: Peace, War and Peasants before Tito* (London, 2021).

<sup>112</sup>Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*.

editor of *Foreign Affairs* magazine did not encounter Yugoslavia with a fully formed international perspective. Instead, his experiences with Yugoslavia helped to inform and create his evolving international outlook. Similarly, Yugoslavia, as a multinational state, was perceived by Armstrong as international from its very inception. Only by looking at Armstrong from the perspective of both his international role and national interests does a complete perspective of interwar foreign affairs—and *Foreign Affairs*—emerge.

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