

The London School of Economics and Political Science

***The Welles of Loneliness: Sumner Welles and the
Creation of American Foreign Policy***

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis examines the intersection of the personal and professional lives of former Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles. It argues that Welles' sexuality had a formative influence on his worldview and, hence, his career as a policymaker, his place in the Roosevelt administration, and his legacy in U.S. political and diplomatic history. Using sexuality as a lens through which to view his career, this thesis provides fresh interpretations of the major events in Welles' career while offering new insights into the contradictions, ambiguities, and continuities in Welles' thinking and behaviour.

Welles' sexuality permeated his entire life. It impacted the trajectory of his career, shaped his personality, and altered the dynamics of his worldview. Beginning with formative experiences that positioned Welles as an outsider, Welles' upbringing and sexuality conditioned him with unique characteristics and beliefs that shaped his professional life. These characteristics were manifested in three ways: an aversion to military solutions to diplomatic problems, a belief in paternalistic idealism toward the world outside the U.S., and the development of a close political bond with a fellow outsider to conventional masculinity, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Through a close reading of Welles' papers, documents from his formative years, accounts by his contemporaries, and a consideration of the broader political and societal context in which he operated, this thesis shows how examining Welles' personal life is crucial to understanding his impact on American foreign policy.

This thesis is not a straight diplomatic history. Its primary focus is on Welles as an individual and how he embodied the intersection between sexuality, power, and diplomacy. It directly engages with the existing historiography about Welles by challenging the portrayals of his sexuality as aberrant and incidental. That said, while the components of personality and sexuality are fundamental to this thesis' argument, this thesis does not argue Welles' sexuality is the sole or all-encompassing criterion by which his career can be understood. Rather, this thesis highlights the salience of sexuality alongside more traditional metrics of ideology,

politics, culture, and power, in order to provide a richer understanding of Welles' contributions to the political and diplomatic history of the U.S., particularly with regards to Latin America, World War Two, and the internal politics of the Roosevelt administration. More broadly, it expands the scope of analysis for historians studying foreign policy and diplomacy by demonstrating how sexuality shapes the attributes and outlook of foreign policy decision makers.

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Introduction:

In October 1940 two State Department officials, William Castle and Hugh Cumming Jr., met for lunch. Castle, who had served as Herbert Hoover's Undersecretary of State, noticed the current Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles leave the room just as they entered. "[I]t was strange a man as forbidding as he and sometimes almost repellent," Castle commented about Welles, "should appeal so much to the ladies."¹ His lunch companion echoed Castle's bewilderment with foreboding. "[W]hen a man wanted to change existing circumstances, to remake the world, but had no idea of how it was to be done except as to the destruction," Castle remembered Cumming saying about Welles, "he was queer and exaggerated in everything he did, personal and physical as well as mental."² Welles' queerness was all the worse, Cumming added, because "his iconoclasm was not sincere but merely practice [sic] because it seemed best for the iconoclast."³

Few exchanges better encapsulate the complexities, controversies, ambiguities, and prejudices that characterized Sumner Welles and his career. His perplexing personality, the suspicions of his motives, his purported ambitions, and the alleged deviousness of his character expressed through blatant, albeit coded, sexual language all defined Welles during his career and in much of the historical scholarship studying it.⁴ Furthermore, in explicitly linking Welles' 'queerness' to his political ambitions Castle and Cumming unwittingly unlocked a key aspect of Welles' professional life: the salience of sexuality to understanding it.

Welles was a key figure in the creation, deliberation, and execution of American foreign policy for over a quarter of a century. His career spanned pivotal events and epochs, the courses of which were directed, in part, by his hand. The achievements he amassed as a practitioner of foreign policy were substantial and his downfall tragic. Yet despite intensive historical inquiry into Welles and the key

¹ Diary Entry, 18 October 1940, Harvard University, Houghton Library, William R. Castle Diaries, Vol. 40. 378-9.

² *Ibid.*, 379.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ That all this took place with Welles momentarily close by, literally behind his back, further underlined the furtive manner in which Welles has been discussed.

moments in his career, crucial questions about him have remained unanswered. Was Welles an idealistic Wilsonian internationalist “[o]r did he merely seek to camouflage his real aims behind an idealistic smokescreen?”⁵ Was he Franklin Roosevelt’s “Global Strategist” or was his relationship with FDR more distant and supplicatory?⁶ How does one make sense of the apparent contradictions in Welles’ career?: Advocating non-intervention in the Good Neighbor Policy while calling for troops to invade Cuba, exalting Anglo-American wartime cooperation while picking fights with the British, or maintaining warm relations with foreign diplomats while fomenting bitter feuds with his colleagues in the State Department.

This thesis seeks to answer these and other questions about Welles’ motivations and deliberations in order to elucidate his contributions to the political, diplomatic, and social history of the United States. Crucially, this thesis employs sexuality as a category of analysis for Welles’ career. It uses sexuality as a lens through which to explore Welles’ professional life and explain the controversies and idiosyncrasies of his diplomatic career as well as the legacy he left on American politics and foreign policy. Its central argument is that Welles possessed a distinctly queer persona that played a formative role in shaping his worldview, his professional relationships, and ultimately, the diplomatic and political history of the United States. Specifically, this influence can be seen in Welles’ aversion to militarism, his paternalistically idealistic worldview, and his close political partnership with Franklin Roosevelt.

Importantly, this thesis does not argue that sexuality was the sole defining factor in shaping Welles’ worldview or career. Sexuality existed alongside other forces and factors that shaped Welles and his outlook over the course of his life. Distinct from his sexuality, his upbringing in the elite world of East Coast Brahmins had a profound impact on his worldview and the political partnership he forged with Franklin Roosevelt. Along with many of his contemporaries, especially those who emerged out of Welles’ cultural milieu, Welles held deeply nationalistic beliefs,

⁵ Christopher D. O’Sullivan, *Sumner Welles: Postwar Planning and the Quest for a New World Order 1937-1943* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), xiv.

⁶ Benjamin Welles. *Sumner Welles: FDR’s Global Strategist* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), xiii.

often expressed through imperialistic, paternalistic, and jingoistic rhetoric; stemming from this, Welles demonstrated a strain of Anglophobia that influenced his thinking at several key moments throughout his career. Welles was also deeply influenced by global events and their consequences, in particular World War One and the advent of Wilsonianism in its aftermath. Welles' mix of idealistic political ideology with pragmatic strategizing, as well as his persistent belief in the efficacy of multilateral negotiation, were rooted in these transformative moments.

All of these factors were at play in Welles' career and they hold great interpretive value as a means of understanding the course of his career and the motivations behind specific decisions. Nevertheless, Welles' sexuality was important too. Hidden beneath the surface or detectable in the subtext of many episodes in Welles' life was a continuity of discourses about sexuality and gender, especially as they related to power, aggression, and politics. As they wended their way through his life these discourses shaped Welles by setting the parameters in which he operated and, occasionally, by directly altering the course of his career for better and worse. Most interestingly, this interaction was not unidirectional; Welles shaped these discourses as well. Because of his prominence, the longevity of his career, and the persistence of his sexual non-normativity Welles made a significant (albeit unintentional) contribution to the way that sexuality, power, and politics were perceived in the United States. Understanding that legacy requires tracing back the strands of Welles' sexuality and observing the places in Welles' career where diplomacy, sexuality, and politics were first stitched together.

Wellesian Historiography:

Several scholars have already intently studied Welles' career or aspects of it. Seven works published as monographs or completed as Ph.D. dissertations form the backbone of the scholarship about Welles. These works fall into two categories: case studies focusing on specific events or aspects of Welles' career and broad surveys of his entire life. All are impressive in the own right and collectively they have painted a rich portrait of Welles as an individual and a decision-maker. However, none have

comprehensively explored the role that sexuality played in Welles' personal and professional lives, and some have ignored the matter entirely, a gap that this thesis seeks to fill.

The earliest work about Welles was Thomas Millington's 1965 dissertation, "The Latin American Diplomacy of Sumner Welles."⁷ As indicated by the title, Millington's focus was Welles' involvement in the Caribbean and Latin America; conceptually his work was an assessment of Welles as a diplomat – an approach echoed by all the other close case studies of Welles to follow. Millington argued Welles' diplomatic style was "fascinatingly supple and protean," its "salient characteristic ... was, in fact, its extraordinary adaptiveness."⁸ In Millington's view, Welles "tended to merge into the modalities of the immediate situation and to lose touch with policy."⁹ In essence, Millington argued that Welles tended to get swept up in events and that this caused him to overlook problems and ignore his superiors, most notably Secretary of State Cordell Hull.

In Millington's view, Welles' policymaking was a strong, albeit vague, style of Wilsonian idealism.¹⁰ For instance, in explaining his controversial actions in Cuba in 1933, Millington argued that for Welles, "in the best Wilson tradition, recognition should be used selectively as a lever to stimulate the growth of stable and representative governments in that part of the world."¹¹ This was part of "a characteristic blend of genuine idealism and supple pragmatism" that defined

⁷ Thomas M. Millington, "The Latin American Diplomacy of Sumner Welles" (Ph.D. Dissertation. John's Hopkins University, 1965).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁹ *Ibid.*, iii.

¹⁰ Wilsonianism is a slippery term that many historians and political scientists have defined over the years. Among the best descriptions is one offered by Robert D. Accinelli: "a cluster of concepts and values, commonly identified with Woodrow Wilson, prescribing American leadership in the creation an growth of a peaceful, reformed and organized world order. The Wilsonian persuasion is marked by an antipathy to authoritarianism of both the Right and Left as well as to power politics and imperialism. Among its principal elements are a belief in American exceptionalism, global interdependence, international organization, the rule of law, collective security, the spread of democracy, liberalized trade, and national self-determination," Robert D. Accinelli, "Pro-U.N. Internationalists and the Early Cold War: The American Association for the United Nations and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1947-1952," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 9, No.4, 351. Also quoted in Gail Hanson, "Sumner Welles and the American System: The United States in the Caribbean, 1920-1940" (Ph.D. Dissertation. State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1990), 91, n.4.

¹¹ Millington, "The Latin American Diplomacy of Sumner Welles", 111.

Welles' entire career.¹² Welles' concern with the peoples of Latin America and his prescriptions for their wellbeing were "Wilsonesque," yet his pragmatism and willingness to accept compromise gave this Wilsonian impulse a Wellesian twist.¹³ Whatever name is given to this dichotomy, the tension between Welles' idealism and pragmatism (or his nationalism and internationalism) has been a prominent theme in the historiography about Welles ever since, one that this thesis addresses by acknowledging the interplay of both these impulses in Welles' thinking as a function of his upbringing, his experiences as a junior diplomat, his relationship with FDR, and his sexuality-induced exceptionality. Welles' style of Wilsonianism possessed a paternalistic dimension, fused with genuine idealism stemming from an aversion to militarism in diplomatic affairs.

Welles' sexuality did not merit mention in Millington's work but Millington did acknowledge certain idiosyncrasies in Welles' diplomatic style and linked them to his ideology. "Invariably correct in demeanor and impeccable in dress," Millington wrote in assessing Welles' record in the Dominican Republic, "Welles' outward fastidiousness, however, belied an extraordinarily resilient and fertile mind. These latter traits made for a peculiarly supple kind of diplomacy."¹⁴ Commenting on his whole career, Millington wrote of Welles, "[m]any of his thoughts and actions were permeated by his sense of the malleability of things. He was markedly given to elaborate attempts to contrive situations in accordance with his own predilections."¹⁵

Although Millington does not acknowledge sexuality as the link between Welles' 'fastidiousness' and 'supple' diplomacy, the analytical thrust of the argument is the same as the one taken by this thesis. Welles' foreign policy decision making was just as much a function of his personality as was his demeanour in Latin America and elsewhere. The fact that Welles chose diplomatic routes in which to be 'supple', and the fact that he had a relationship with his superiors (specifically Roosevelt) with whom he could exert his 'malleability', stemmed from learned

¹² Millington, "The Latin American Diplomacy of Sumner Welles", 112-3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 274.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13-4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, v.

behaviour and assumptions about the world with deep roots in Welles' upbringing. Understanding one requires analyzing the other, and vice versa.

Such interplay is more easily executed in works that take a broad view of Welles' career rather than being a focused case study. However, this was not attempted in the first Ph.D-level work to focus on Welles' entire career. Published posthumously in 1977 by the family of the author, Frank Warren Graff's *Strategy of Involvement: A Diplomatic Biography of Sumner Welles*, surveys Welles' career but focuses mostly on Welles' involvement in planning for war and peace around World War Two. Graff's work assesses how Welles operated within the State Department and catalogues his major foreign policy achievements, including the Good Neighbor Policy, the inter-American system, and his eponymous mission to Europe. In that respect it is an impressive index of Welles' life, tracing the arc of his career from start to finish and highlighting many of its salient moments.

However, Graff's analysis was limited in scope and depth. He drew no conclusions about Welles' motivations or objectives. He offered few insights into Welles' personality or the substance of his formative years and relationships. Most troublingly, he deliberately ignored the role of sexuality in shaping Welles' life and career. As such, he did not give a full account of the machinations behind Welles' rise and fall, nor to the real circumstances that led to his resignation. Indeed, Graff dismissed the very notion of the rumour campaign that ousted Welles, writing:

"[n]othing can be gained from a discussion of these rumors and whispers about Welles' personal life. The only reason this problem is mentioned in this study at all is: first, the rumors prevented the President from brushing aside Hull's complaints as he had done so many times before; secondly, once the rumors began to spread, they impaired Welles' effectiveness as a diplomat."¹⁶

Perhaps part of the reason for this oversight was the lack of sources available to Graff at the time. Critical sources of information about Welles' sexuality, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.) report on the Bankhead Train incident,

¹⁶ Frank Warren Graff, "Strategy of Involvement: A Diplomatic Biography of Sumner Welles" (Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Michigan, 1971), 419, n. 68.

which eventually led to his dismissal, and Welles' F.B.I. file, was not available when Graff was writing.¹⁷ Furthermore, the field of LGBT history was in its infancy in the 1970s and few scholars would have thought to take this line of investigation in studying a figure like Welles.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Graff's work was the first analysis of the broad scope of Welles' career and it set the standard for subsequent scholars in its attempt to show the ebb and flow of Welles' political fortunes.

That standard was next taken up in a 1990 Ph.D. thesis by Gail Hanson entitled "Sumner Welles and the American System: The United States in the Caribbean, 1920-1940." Hanson argued Welles' actions in constructing the Good Neighbor Policy were rooted in the lessons he learned from Progressive-era diplomats and policymakers and that this provided an intellectual bridge between the United States' Gilded Age Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean and the Cold War interventions of half a century later.¹⁹ Hanson's arguments were compelling and her documentation surprisingly robust in light of the lack of complete access to Welles' papers. Her contention that Welles' Latin American diplomacy was informed by his earlier career was a worthy one and not in dispute. However, because the thesis was limited to Latin America the extent of the link between Welles' earlier career and his later actions was not fully drawn.

Hanson did, though, touch on one of the most critical components of Welles' career and his involvement in U.S. diplomacy – the influence of key figures on Welles' foreign policy ideation. Hanson made a case for the role of figures as diverse as Woodrow Wilson, Charles Evans Hughes, Theodore Roosevelt, and Elihu Root as guiding lights for Welles' thinking. Whoever the object of his interest, Hanson identified "Welles's history of forming close associations with men who were older

¹⁷ The Bankhead Train incident refers to the night of 17-18 September 1940 when Welles was alleged to have solicited sex from several male railway porters while on a train returning from the funeral of Speaker of the House of Representatives William Bankhead. It was the subject of a subsequent investigation by the F.B.I., the report of which was used as leverage by Welles' political enemies to force his resignation from office in 1943. A fuller discussion of this incident and its significance can be found in Chapter Six.

¹⁸ LGBT stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender – one of several shorthand terms used to describe the sexual communities and subcultures of which great historical inquiry has been made since the 1970s.

¹⁹ Hanson, "Sumner Welles and the American System", iii-iv, 7.

and who occupied higher ranks, such as Leo Stanton Rowe, Charles Evans Hughes, Enoch Crowder and Norman H. Davis. This pattern indicated his faith in leadership.”²⁰ The observation was apt as it helped explain many of the critical moments in Welles’ career as well as the means by which he was able to ascend the hierarchy of the State Department as quickly as he did. Other scholars have identified this same process in a more general way, as Robert Dean did in noting how during the early twentieth century “[w]ithin the government ... older powerful men used mechanisms of patronage to approve the inclusion of younger men into the circles of power.”²¹ Building on Dean, this thesis introduces sexuality as a component of this theoretical approach and combines it with Hanson’s and others’ specific observations about Welles’ formative influences. As discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Three, Welles’ relationship with Franklin Roosevelt was forged in their shared elite background and amidst discourses about masculinity and sexuality, and became a critical component in Welles’ decision making thereafter.

The relationship between Welles and FDR was at the centre of the two most prominent studies of Welles’ career. Irwin Gellman’s 1995 book *Secret Affairs: Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles* was the first, followed two years later by *Sumner Welles: FDR’s Global Strategist*, written by Sumner Welles’ firstborn son Benjamin Welles. These books delved into Welles’ life and career as no other works up to that point and their assessments have formed the conventional wisdom about Welles ever since.

FDR’s Global Strategist followed its subject from cradle to grave, exposing the highs and lows of a “life ... of light and shadows.”²² This foray into Welles’ life and career was intensive, expansive, and impressive in its detail as to both the personal and professional aspects of its subject’s life. Accordingly, the work was as much biography as political history. Welles the younger recounted his father’s formative years, his marriage and the start of his family, and the advent of his career in the State Department during the Wilson administration. Its chronological approach to

²⁰ Hanson, “Sumner Welles and the American System”, 475.

²¹ Robert D. Dean. *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 13.

²² Welles, *FDR’s Global Strategist*, 380.

Welles' diplomatic postings and major diplomatic and political campaigns (the mission to Europe, the Good Neighbor Policy, postwar planning), and post-resignation decline made it a useful reference guide to scholars of Welles and the Roosevelt administration. Interspersed with journalistic accounts of Welles career were entertaining anecdotes, often originating from the author's own recollection. However, while such anecdotes gave a colourful perspective on events, they also often raised far more questions than they answered.

This sole biography of Sumner Welles was marred by the author's clear discomfiture with the seamier facets of Welles' life. Benjamin Welles made a worthy effort to weave the non-homosexual events of his father's personal life into the discussion of his professional decisions, such as the birth of his children, the death of his second wife, and the stress placed on his marriages by the long work hours he kept. This effort demonstrated an encouraging methodological approach to understanding Sumner Welles and the author executed it deftly. But when it came to describing Welles' relationships with men, the author betrayed a noticeable bias that unwittingly replicated the very homophobia that was the impetus for removing his father from office in 1943.

Benjamin Welles went out of his way to demonstrate that his father's homosexual desires were accidental, superficial, or the product of being "physically and emotionally exhausted ...[w]eary in his cups".²³ For example, Welles' relationship with a man in France whom Welles met several times and who sent him a gift was portrayed as the unilateral pursuit of Welles by a stalker.²⁴ The emergence of Welles' "latent bisexuality" during a posting to Argentina was interpreted as the influence of "a favorable environment," according to a source reflecting later on Welles' behaviour, adding "[r]espectable married men of high position, like himself, [Welles] gave vent to deviation ... his preference for men was always there, only controlled by shame and a Puritan ethos. In Argentina, he found a different attitude

²³ Welles, *FDR's Global Strategist*, 379.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 29. Benjamin Welles recounted the story from a letter delivered to him by Welles' long-time friend, Ives Gammell.

and he let the reins slip.”²⁵ An account of Welles’ relationship with his male “valet” during his later years was explored almost entirely in the context of his “malignant influence” on Welles of his companion.²⁶ Conversely, the author never missed a chance to expound on Welles’ purported affairs with women. A contemporary of Welles was quoted at various intervals to assert Welles “recoiled from anything even suggestive of homosexuality” during his time at Groton and carried on “multiple love affairs, almost all with women nine or ten years older” while in Paris.²⁷ Welles, “was repelled by the homosexuality then prevalent among the French upper classes,” according to his son, who himself scoffed at Argentines of this period who “turned to drugs and homosexuality for stimulation.”²⁸

Like the rest of the literature on Welles, this work deliberately quarantined Welles’ queer sexual behaviour away from the rest of his life, refusing to observe or engage with the link between them. No effort was made to analyze how the rumours about Welles ostracized him from the professional networks he used to advance his policy agenda. Nor was any analysis made of how such ostracizing attitudes enhanced existing rivalries, or frayed existing friendships, and what effects those changes had on Welles’ political influence. By ignoring these episodes, Benjamin Welles drew an incomplete picture of his father and the social and political worlds he inhabited.

Although Benjamin Welles’ book was the first biography of his father, it was not the first published work to take a biographical interest in Sumner Welles. That distinction went to Irwin Gellman’s 1995 work *Secret Affairs: Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles*. Gellman placed Welles alongside President Franklin Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull, presenting them as a triumvirate whose deliberations and disputes defined wartime foreign policy as well as domestic politics. Gellman wove a rich tapestry of personal and political events that conspired to bring together these three very different, yet in many ways

²⁵ Welles, *FDR’s Global Strategist*, 58-59.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 368, 372.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13, 29.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29, 58.

complementary, men during the epochal years of the New Deal and the Second World War.

Secret Affairs drew its strength from the union of personal and professional detail in its depiction of high-level diplomacy and bureaucracy during the New Deal era. Countless studies of Roosevelt's management style, with which Gellman largely concurred, showed the complicated interpersonal factors underlying FDR's policy-making process. But Gellman enhanced the understanding of this somewhat peculiar yet effective bureaucratic universe by exploring how chaotic the professional lives of Welles, Hull, and Roosevelt had become. Equally, by delving into the psyche of Roosevelt, Gellman demonstrated how the chaos was managed and manipulated.

Where *Secret Affairs* stumbled was over the lack of clear focus on Welles and the links between his personal and professional lives. Gellman's research offered more than enough information to analyze the impact of Welles' sexuality on his professional life but none of it was analyzed critically. Welles' marriages – all three of them – were addressed with brief, isolated acknowledgements.²⁹ His children receive no mention whatsoever. Gellman was also troublingly lopsided in his treatment of Welles' personal life. He expended considerable energy recounting the gossip, innuendo, and often unverified suspicions that swirled around Welles with regards to his violations of sexual norms.³⁰ This resulted in a partial and highly judgmental depiction of Welles' personality.³¹ The Sumner Welles in Gellman's book was a Jekyll and Hyde: two wildly different co-existing personalities in constant conflict, the latter disgracing the former. Gellman lauded the sober, fastidious, conniving Sumner Welles who remade American diplomacy in Latin America, promoted peace in Europe, and set the foundations of the postwar world. By contrast, Gellman condemned the humiliated, improvident, alcoholic Sumner Welles whose actions precipitated the destruction of his own career. Such a bifurcated approach ignored broader theoretical questions about the role of sexuality in

²⁹ Irwin F. Gellman, *Secret Affairs: Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 60, 62-63, 395.

³⁰ Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, 392, 397, 398.

³¹ Gellman wrote repeatedly of Welles' "clandestine bisexual behavior" and "homosexual interludes." While not inaccurate, these descriptions are dismissive and serve to delegitimize Welles (while reinforcing the alleged impropriety of queer sexuality in general). Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, 56.

shaping Welles' professional life. Like Benjamin Welles' biography, it unwittingly replicated the homophobic portrayal of Welles' sexuality that precipitated the conspiracy to remove him from office and destroyed his career.

Perhaps because of the controversial nature of Welles' sexuality, the most recent historical scholarship on Welles has turned back to the case study approach of earlier decades and largely eschewed biographical investigations of Welles' life. Simon Rofe's 2007 book *Franklin Roosevelt's Foreign Policy and the Welles Mission* examined the causes, development, and consequences of the eponymous high profile diplomatic mission taken by Welles in February and March of 1940. Expanding on earlier scholarly work about the Welles mission by Stanley Hinton, Rofe argued the mission's objectives were always variable and changed as it became apparent how little influence Welles could really have on the course of events.³² Rofe identified four key objectives of the Roosevelt administration for the mission – preserving Italian neutrality, exploring potential peace plans, gathering information, and “prolonging the phony war.”³³ Rofe expertly showed how these priorities shifted as news from Welles filtered back to the United States, highlighting the salience of U.S. public opinion to the decision making process. The book gave a meticulous account of the conflicting pressures Roosevelt faced. It deftly interpreted the byzantine course followed by Roosevelt during these critical months. Rofe's insights into the budding Anglo-American ‘special relationship’ were particularly impressive. As a work of diplomatic history it was exceptionally detailed and prolifically sourced, an essential text for any Welles scholar.

As suggested by the title, the object of Rofe's analysis was Roosevelt's foreign policy and the degree to which Welles' role helped explicate its ambiguities and contradictions. Because of that focus the book did not emphasize Welles' personality, character, or overall political motivations. However, Rofe did glean some worthy insights into Welles' political relationship with FDR, noting how “the two men had shared a common upbringing typical of the East Coast establishment

³² See: Stanley E. Hilton, “The Welles Mission to Europe, February-March 1940: Illusion or Realism?” *The Journal of American History* Vol., 58, No.1 (June 1971).

³³ J. Simon Rofe, *Franklin Roosevelt's Foreign Policy and the Welles Mission* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 2.

families into which Franklin and Sumner were born” which “instilled a common set of values that manifested itself in a shared view of the place of the United States in the world.”³⁴

Most compellingly, Rofe picked up on Welles’ isolation. His analysis that “Welles was happiest and most effective working on his own under broad-ranging instructions from the President and independently of the Secretary of State as he had done in Latin America,” was especially astute.³⁵ For Rofe, Welles was a stern tactician whose resolve to never show emotion brought him success. This presented a diplomatic character sketch of Welles that helpfully contributed to understanding this notoriously stolid figure. It is the contention of this thesis that Rofe’s observations can be taken further by incorporating sexuality into the analysis of how Welles’ personality influenced his diplomatic tactics and strategies: Welles’ austere demeanour and prickly relationships with fellow State Department employees and their foreign counterparts gains greater meaning when seen as a by-product of a lifelong process to conceal his sexuality. Similarly, his contribution to FDR’s “penchant for personal diplomacy” gains greater nuance when placed in the context of Welles’ unique bond with Roosevelt based on their mutual background and respective alienation from hegemonic masculinity.³⁶ In this regard, Rofe’s work left many open avenues for further research.

Bridging the gap between the focused case studies of Welles and the broader surveys was the most recent analysis about Sumner Welles: the 2009 work, *Sumner Welles: Postwar Planning and the Quest for a New World Order 1937-1943*, by Christopher O’Sullivan. O’Sullivan made Welles out to be a committed Wilsonian internationalist who pursued his goals with ruthless efficiency. Briefly charting Welles’ upbringing, his early career forays in Latin America, and reorganization of the State Department, O’Sullivan focused the most attention on Welles’ efforts at devising plans for the U.S. in the postwar world, creating a world organization, and managing international relations in his new world order. Somewhat ambivalently,

³⁴ Rofe, *The Welles Mission* 15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 185.

O'Sullivan pondered whether Welles was a champion of "the most advanced universal and liberal goals of the [Roosevelt] administration," or whether he sought "merely ... to camouflage his real aims behind an idealistic smokescreen?"³⁷

However, although this work was a formidable analysis of Welles' personality, *Postwar Planning* was fundamentally a work of political and diplomatic history. Its energies focused on accounting for Welles' influence on the drafting of the Atlantic Charter, the proposed partition of Germany, and the constitution of the United Nations Organization (U.N.O). To this end, Welles' contributions were highlighted, but only in reference to Welles' capacity as the Undersecretary of State. O'Sullivan spent little time assessing the impact of Welles' relationship with FDR, or his early career, or the political rivalries that impacted Welles' effectiveness. As a character analysis this work was impressive but incomplete. It offered worthwhile reflections on Welles as a political figure, but stopped short of examining Welles' personal life in depth.

Superficially, this thesis bears a similarity to *Postwar Planning*. Both works see Welles' later decision-making as a product of formative experiences in Welles' upbringing and early career. Both works see Welles' methods and objectives as part of the same overall worldview that shaped his political fortunes and diplomatic praxis. However, in scope, methodology, and concept this thesis and O'Sullivan's book are substantially different. O'Sullivan identified one component of Welles' worldview – his "passion for order" – and used it to explicate only one aspect of Welles' career, his involvement in postwar planning.³⁸ This thesis by contrast examines multiple motivating factors in Welles' psyche including his aversion to militarism, his relationship with FDR, and his paternalistic *cum* idealistic worldview, and applies them to the entire breadth of his career. More importantly, this thesis uses sexuality as a critical lens through which to understand Welles' motivations and actions.

Although O'Sullivan's treatment of Welles' sexuality was the best out of the existing scholarship it still followed the pattern of quarantining sexuality to the

³⁷ O'Sullivan, *Postwar Planning*, xiv.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, xv.

margins, in particular to the incident on the Bankhead Train that led to Welles' resignation in 1943. For O'Sullivan and all the authors studying Welles before him, Welles' sexuality was relevant for only this one episode and only insofar as it helped destroy him. This thesis offers evidence to show that Welles' sexuality was, in fact, a salient feature throughout his life and that its influence on him was more than merely tragedy.

Nevertheless, O'Sullivan's work blazed the trail for this thesis in its attempt to unite an assessment of Welles' personality with the conduct of his professional career. O'Sullivan described Welles as "a figure of immense contradictions, a deeply troubled man who wore different faces for different occasions and different people."³⁹ He captured the pathos of Welles as a man who "concealed himself behind an exaggerated fastidiousness and propriety" and whose "human frailties, which, coupled with his certitude, elitism, and arrogance, aided in his downfall."⁴⁰ This approach was refreshing, though as seen in Chapters One and Six of this thesis, those 'frailties' were less an aspect of Welles' personality and more a product of a much broader series of discourses about sexuality in the twentieth century United States. Moreover, the contradictions in Welles that O'Sullivan observed are less baffling when a fuller treatment of Welles' sexuality is used to interpret them. O'Sullivan all but conceded this point with his comment that "the lurid nature of the real reasons behind his abrupt resignation in August 1943" had resulted in a "muted" approach to scholarship about him and his contributions. The silence of historians on the interplay of sexuality and politics in Welles' career gives urgency to the necessity of scholarship that speaks out about it.⁴¹

Further Background:

Besides works specifically focusing on him, Welles has been discussed to varying extents in literature about the events on which his career had an impact, be

³⁹ O'Sullivan, *Postwar Planning*, x.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, xii, xi.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, x.

it U.S. foreign policy, the Roosevelt administration, Latin American foreign relations, or LGBT history. Despite the more cursory nature of the mentions of Welles, the historiography of these subjects provides additional context and information about Welles' career.

Looking at Welles from the perspective of that region, historians of Latin America have examined Welles in the context of broader patterns of relations between the U.S. and the rest of the Americas. The historical debates that have ensued focus mainly on to what extent the United States' policies toward Latin America or specific countries within it were imperialistic and to what extent this changed under the Roosevelt administration.⁴² Curiously, when viewed from the Latin American perspective, historians tend to invert the traditional interpretations of Welles' foreign policy legacy. In Cuba, for example, Welles' efforts to oust General Machado, prop up the government of Manuel de Cespedés, and undermine the government of Ramón Grau San Martín are seen less as a spectacular failure and contradiction and more of a predictable, albeit disappointing, episode in a long history of failed U.S. attempts to exert influence in Cuba.⁴³ With varying degrees of condemnation and ascription to Welles of imperialistic motivations, historians of Cuba and Cuban-American relations have cast Welles' actions in 1933 in an ambivalent light and relegated him to playing an important but more marginal role in a relationship with deep and complicated roots. This controversy is addressed in Chapter Four of this thesis as a means of demonstrating the salience of Welles' paternalistic predilection for constitutional solutions to diplomatic problems as well as his unique relationship with FDR.

⁴² Such judgments, it should be noted, are not limited to scholars of Latin America. William Leuchtenburg noted, for instance, "Roosevelt's first months in office actually marked a retreat toward imperialism" in Latin America. William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), 207.

⁴³ Louis A. Perez Jr., *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (London: University of Georgia Press, 2003); Louis A. Perez Jr., *Cuba Under the Platt Amendment, 1902-1934* (London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986); David Bernell, "The Curious Case of Cuba in American Foreign Policy". *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Summer, 1994); Edmund O. Smith, *Yankee Diplomacy: U.S. Intervention in Argentina* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1953); Irwin F. Gellman, *Roosevelt and Batista: Good Neighbor Diplomacy in Cuba, 1933-1945* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973).

Conversely, many of these same historians interpret Welles' ostensible triumph, the Good Neighbor Policy, with much more scepticism than those focusing solely on Welles or U.S. foreign policy in general. "The Good Neighbor," wrote historian Lester Langley, "had sought to bridge the gap between North and South in the Americas and had succeeded in ameliorating their historically troubled diplomatic relations, forging economic bonds that had not existed before the war, and fashioning a cosmetic cultural understanding."⁴⁴ Langley hastened to add, however, that "[t]he wartime alliance ... required Latin America's accommodation to Washington's priorities."⁴⁵

In general, historians writing about Welles and Latin American relations tend to betray their origins in diplomatic history by glossing over most of the biographical information about Welles, limiting references to his sexuality to brief mentions.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, there have been exceptions to this case. Writing about the Good Neighbor Policy in general, Frederick Pike interpreted Welles' sexual nonconformity as a sign of genuine policy shifts, observing:

"many Americans... dreamed of liberation not necessarily from the old sexual taboos but certainly from the sort of channeling of the libido into the pursuit of private wealth as commanded by the Protestant Ethic. Sumner Welles ... was a person of private means who saw little need to channel the libido into the pursuit of additional private wealth. And, when it came to hemispheric policy, so far as he was concerned much more was involved than the defense of hard-bitten, rough-edged Yankee capitalists ... Bisexual and something of a hedonist himself, Welles brought to his evaluation of Latin American affairs an entirely different perspective than Hull's."⁴⁷

Regardless of Welles' role, the works on Latin American history that mention him raise questions about the trajectory of and motivations for the expansion of U.S.

⁴⁴ Lester D. Langley. *America and the Americas: The United States in the Western Hemisphere* (London: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 156.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Frederick B. Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 202-3, 262; Irwin F. Gellman, *Good Neighbor Diplomacy: United States Policies in Latin America, 1933-1945* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 176-8.

⁴⁷ Frederick B. Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 6.

power abroad during the first half of the twentieth century. How much this was due to specific events like World War Two or long-term instability in U.S.-Latin American relations, and how much was due to Welles or FDR's personal influence, is an ongoing discussion. This thesis interjects in that discussion by using a new interpretive framework for Welles' motivations as well as providing greater texture to the pivotal events around which U.S. expansion revolved. It argues Welles' contributions to the Good Neighbor Policy were an expression of a combination of factors and impulses: a heartfelt, albeit somewhat paternalistic, idealism, Welles' unique relationship with FDR, and Welles' instinct for multilateral, consensus-focused approaches to diplomatic problems, linking back to an aversion to militarism that was born out of Welles' formative experiences as an outsider to traditional masculinity and heterosexuality.

The second major arena for historiographic consideration of Welles beyond his own career comes from the fields of U.S. foreign policy history, specifically during the administration of Franklin Roosevelt. This literature, which is vast, addresses Welles in two principal ways: his contribution to the deliberation and execution of U.S. foreign policy and his relationships within the Roosevelt administration. With respect to the former Welles has been portrayed to varying degrees as a policy specialist and something of a foreign policy Svengali to Roosevelt.⁴⁸ In the words of Susan Dunn, Ted Morgan, and Jonathan Fenby, Welles was Roosevelt's "trusted envoy," a "loyal friend," and "Roosevelt's favourite diplomat."⁴⁹ His involvement in the negotiations over the Atlantic Charter and his selection by Roosevelt for a personal trip to Europe during the Phoney War stand out as exemplars of the close relationship between the two men as well. In this

⁴⁸ Specific examples of Welles' intimate involvement in Roosevelt's decision-making process can be found in Frederick W. Marks III, *Wind Over Sand: The Diplomacy of Franklin Roosevelt*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988.), 155; William Langer and Everett Gleason, *The Undeclared War* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1953), 919; Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 67, 142; David Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 146-7.

⁴⁹ Susan Dunn, *1940: FDR, Willkie, Lindbergh, Hitler – the Election amid the Storm* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2013), 96; Ted Morgan, *FDR: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 684; Jonathan Fenby, *Alliance: The Inside Story of How Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill Won One War and Began Another* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 12.

manner, few deny Welles a central role in Roosevelt's decision-making structure, though some like John Lewis Gaddis observed the limitations of Welles' influence, demonstrated most prominently by his removal from office in 1943.⁵⁰

Besides his role in shaping Roosevelt's thinking, scholars have noted the degree to which Welles infiltrated all aspects of foreign policy making, especially during his time as Undersecretary.⁵¹ Whether through meeting with outside lobby groups or by manipulating the bureaucratic structure of the State Department, Welles worked his way into the fabric of U.S. foreign policymaking enough for him to become the de facto Secretary of State by the early 1940s. Welles' bureaucratic position has often been discussed in the context of wider institutional disorder during the Roosevelt administration. Most authors writing about this subject noted the haphazard and often chaotic bureaucratic organization overseen by the president; this situation was particularly acute in the State Department where Welles' austere demeanour earned him few friends and where he butted heads with Hull.⁵²

This thesis builds on these arguments by adding explanatory context for the origins of Welles' peculiar position in the State Department, his close relationship with Roosevelt, and the resulting feuds and tensions. Welles' enigmatic relationship with FDR was no mere by-product of childhood familiarity. As argued in Chapter Three, Welles and Roosevelt's unique partnership was grounded in their mutually felt detachment from the social worlds they each inhabited, further strengthening the bonds of their common upbringing. As outsiders to hegemonic masculinity – for Welles due to his sexuality, for Roosevelt due to his disability, Welles and Roosevelt

⁵⁰ John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-47* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 19.

⁵¹ Examples of Welles' involvement in dimensions of foreign policy decisions at this time beyond Roosevelt himself include: Jason Berger, *A New Deal for the World: Eleanor Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 16, 17; Andrew Johnstone, *Dilemmas of Internationalism: The American Association for the United Nations and US Foreign Policy, 1941-1948* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 53-4, 68-9;

⁵² Warren F. Kimball, *The Most Unsordid Act: Lend Lease, 1939-1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 34; Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 340; Morgan, *FDR: A Biography*, 681; Warren F. Kimball, *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 242, n.45; Jean Edward Smith, *FDR* (New York: Random House, 2008), 582.

shared an uncommon sympathy with one another. As shown in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, this undergirded a level of trust between the two men that would have direct effects on the foreign policy they created together and that Welles was often tasked to enact.

A final area of broader historiographic consideration of Welles has been in the literature on sexuality and gender in the United States during the twentieth century. Because of the queer elements of the scandal that pushed him from office Welles has merited mention in several contexts, ranging from LGBT cultural histories, to investigative exposés on the F.B.I., to legal briefs.⁵³ Historians mentioning Welles typically do so as part of a narrative about LGBT people in general, invoking Welles within the context of the political, social, and intellectual changes regarding sexuality during this era in U.S. history. These works are less concerned with Welles' involvement in foreign affairs and more focused on his behaviour and interpersonal relationships, especially with Roosevelt and Hull.⁵⁴ In that respect they echo much of the more traditional literature on Welles.

However, there are important differences in how this literature understands Welles and his historical significance. A key undercurrent of these works is the portrayal of Welles as a queer person. Welles' actions on the Bankhead Train and his other episodes of sexual non-conformity are treated more sympathetically than in traditional diplomatic history. They tend to avoid the judgmental histrionics of other works describing Welles' sexuality.⁵⁵ Such works also identify Welles and his sexuality as part of a broader evolution of sexual mores. David Johnson, for instance,

⁵³ John Loughrey, *The Other Side of Silence: Men's Lives and Gay Identities: A Twentieth-Century History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 100, 200; Richard Hack, *Puppetmaster: The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (Beverly Hills: New Millennium Press, 2004), 224-6; Kenneth O'Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC, and the Red Menace* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1983), 326; William N. Eskridge, Jr. "Privacy Jurisprudence and the Apartheid of the Closet, 1946-1961" *Florida State University Law Review* Vol. 24:703 (1997).

⁵⁴ Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 134; Loughrey, *The Other Side of Silence*, 153; Charles Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis: 1940-1996* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997), 17-8; David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 65-7.

⁵⁵ By contrast, Jean Smith refers to Welles' "homosexual advances", Smith, *FDR*, 582; Ted Morgan refers to "lewd homosexual advances", Morgan, *FDR: A Biography*, 678; Christopher O'Sullivan repeatedly refers to Welles' scandal as "lurid", O'Sullivan, x, 224; further examples can be found in the discussions of works by Benjamin Welles and Irwin Gellman above.

demonstrated how Welles “seemed to foreshadow” the much wider persecution of homosexuals in the federal government during the Cold War.⁵⁶ Johnson’s observation was apt, and one that this thesis elaborates upon by showing the longevity of Welles’ marginalization due to his sexuality.

Nevertheless, this literature possessed some theoretical and methodological problems. The definitional discussions related to Welles’ sexuality have, thus far, been less nuanced than the historical record demands. Applying to Welles terms like ‘homosexual’ and ‘bisexual’, as several scholars have done, has imposed historically anachronistic and contextually inappropriate concepts on an individual who did not identify with those definitions during his life nor use them to describe his relationships. Thus far, no study has taken the time either to investigate the contours of Welles’ sexuality or used it as a means of interpreting his behaviour in a comprehensive way. This thesis provides that comprehensive look and discusses theoretical considerations of how, why, and with what implications they interacted with larger historical patterns. Welles’ sexual history, though in many ways indicative of broader trends, was also exceptional and exceptionally problematic given his contemporary setting. As discussed in Chapter Six, the unique characteristics of Welles’ profession, his individual demeanour, and the intersections of race and class created an altogether different sort of queer history, one that complicates existing narratives about LGBT people during this time.

Methodology:

Any work of history focusing on a single person must grapple with certain conceptual questions: how to examine that person’s beliefs; how to place an individual in their broader historical context; and how to assess the role of personality and personal relationships against structural and ideational forces. This thesis, with its focus on sexuality and policymaking, must tackle further conceptual

⁵⁶ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 67. See also: John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States 1940-1970* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 50-53.

problems over how the above stated factors intersect with socially constructed, contextually contingent concepts like sexual orientation, gender, and masculinity, as well as how much an individual, admittedly a very powerful one, influenced the broader bureaucratic and political apparatus around him.

At the heart of this thesis is a fresh conceptual approach to understanding these complex interactions. It takes as its starting point the premise that sexuality is a critical component in the psychological and behavioural makeup of any decision-maker. Welles' sexuality shaped him, and therefore his diplomacy, in fundamental ways. "Homosexuality is not merely a personal characteristic to be alternatively ignored or celebrated," argued historians George Chauncey, Martin Duberman, and Martha Vicinus. It is "a significant influence on the lives of individuals and on patterns of cultural organization in ways historians need to explore."⁵⁷ Though Welles' sexuality was notoriously hard to define ('homosexual' was merely one of the terms applied to him during his life and afterwards) Welles' sexual non-conformity shaped him in profound ways merely by existing.⁵⁸ The sexual paradigm of the times Welles lived in made his sexuality automatically suspect, or in the words of historian John Loughrey: "[h]ow one reacts to loving or sexually desiring members of one's own sex does matter in twentieth-century America because society has made it matter by means of repressive laws, by condoning violence and discrimination, and by its own incessant style of classifying and naming."⁵⁹

In Welles' case, because of his job, these social pressures and patterns played out in the arena of national politics and international diplomacy. They were manifested in his professional relationships with other bureaucrats and diplomats. They shaped how Welles perceived his role as a diplomat, his country's place in the world, and the diplomatic options available to him at any given moment, with profound implications for U.S. foreign policy. Although this process applied to

⁵⁷ Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey Jr., "Introduction", in Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey Jr. (eds.) *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 3.

⁵⁸ Besides 'homosexual' Welles has been referred to as 'bisexual', 'queer', and a myriad of other euphemisms describing sexual non-conformity. A fuller discussion of this definitional ambiguity as it applied to Welles can be found toward the end of this introduction and in chapters 1 and 6.

⁵⁹ Loughrey, *The Other Side of Silence*, xvii.

Welles it was not specific to him. As Robert Dean has argued, when it comes to foreign policy “the men who make the decisions are complex, socially constructed beings, who act from a repertoire of possibilities that are a product of their experience. Foreign policy reason too, is thus culturally constructed and reproduced.”⁶⁰ Thus, to fully comprehend the motivations and intentions of Welles’, or any diplomat, scholars must examine the ways that diplomacy was shaped by sexuality.

Gender and sexuality as definitional concepts are both fundamental and highly unstable. Like race or class, they are “[s]ocial identities [that] are not simply foisted on people from the outside, as it were, but are more properly understood as sites from which we perceive, act, and engage with others.”⁶¹ At its most basic level “[g]ender,” argued Raewyn Connell, “is a way in which social practice is ordered.”⁶² It pervades virtually every aspect of life. “[T]he gender configuring of practice [can be found] however we slice the social world, whatever unit of analysis we choose.”⁶³ It is intimately tied to the body and in that sense defines every individual.

In the same manner, sexuality is both pervasive and yet often invisible to historical actors and the historians who study them. “The development of sexual identity always occurs in a particular social and culture location” and impacts upon the individual in a multiplicity of ways.⁶⁴ Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has gone so far as to argue “an understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition”⁶⁵ Whether or not such a sweeping statement holds up to scrutiny, it is undeniable that sexuality is more than just the concern of “a small, distinct,

⁶⁰ Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*, 3.

⁶¹ Linda Martín Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 287.

⁶² R.W. Connell. *Masculinities* (Oxford: Polity, 1995), 71.

⁶³ Connell, *Masculinities*, 72.

⁶⁴ Bertram J. Cohler and Phillip L. Hammack. “Lives, Times, and Narrative Engagement: Multiplicity and Meaning in Sexual Lives.”, 453-63, 453 quoted in Phillip L. Hammack and Bertram J. Cohler (eds.) *The Story of Sexual Identity: Narrative Perspectives on the Gay and Lesbian Life Course* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009)

⁶⁵ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 1.

relatively fixed homosexual minority" but rather "an issue of continuing, determinative importance in the lives of people across the spectrum of sexualities."⁶⁶

Despite this centrality, diplomatic history as a field has been somewhat late to embrace gender and sexuality as critical components of analysis. On issues as fundamental as subject matter, methodology, and sources these two fields have had profound disagreements over what are legitimate areas of historical interest (as recently as 1994 a prominent diplomatic historian derided discursive analysis as "the mental equivalent to eating at McDonald's.")⁶⁷ Meanwhile, historians of sexuality and LGBT history have made few attempts at engaging with international diplomacy as an arena for their investigations of the past.⁶⁸ Yet over the past two decades scholars from many fields have demonstrated the insights to be gained into foreign relations by examining discourses of sexuality and gender, and vice versa, laying a methodological foundation for this thesis.

Chief among this effort are recent works by Frank Costigliola.⁶⁹ In analyses of the career of George F. Kennan and the formation of the Anglo-American-Soviet alliance during World War Two, Costigliola has argued "how huge policy issues ... were filtered through highly personal relationships, intense desires and disappointments, and deep flaws of body and personality" in the personal lives of the decision makers involved.⁷⁰ In this case, Costigliola was referring to Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin in their deliberations over the future of the United Nations during World War Two, but the analysis is applicable to any historical figure, including Welles.

⁶⁶ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 1.

⁶⁷ Bruce Kuklick, "Commentary: Confessions of an Intransigent Revisionist about Cultural Studies" *Diplomatic History*, Vol: 18, No. 1, 122

⁶⁸ Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*, 3-4.

⁶⁹ See: Frank Costigliola. *Roosevelt's Lost Alliances: How Personal Politics Helped Start the Cold War* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012); "Broken Circle: The Isolation of Franklin D. Roosevelt in World War II" *Diplomatic History*, Vol.: 32, No. 5 (November 2008); "After Roosevelt's Death: Dangerous Emotions, Divisive Discourses, and the Abandoned Alliance" *Diplomatic History* Vol.: 34, No. 1 (January 2010).

⁷⁰ Costigliola, *Roosevelt's Lost Alliances*, 20.

Costigliola's scholarship underlined how sexuality shapes the interpersonal interactions that form the basis of institutional relationships, diplomatic contacts, and political discourses. "Only by including the overlooked private lives of public statesmen, the emotional stakes of their diplomacy, and the cultural context of their ideology," Costigliola argued, "can we arrive at a more holistic picture" and appreciate "the nexus between public and private" that "helps us see the messy way that history really happens."⁷¹ For Welles, the nexus of public and private had profound effects on the trajectory of his career. It forced him to resign from office twice and dramatically shaped the ways Welles was perceived by his colleagues. It also was intimately bound up with his partnership with FDR, emerging from their shared cultural upbringing and social marginalization and shaped by the dispositions and strategies employed by both to acquire political power.

Costigliola's work also opens up a methodological avenue for interpreting Welles' foreign policy decision making as a component of his sexuality. The policy issues Welles dealt with were, indeed, interpreted through the 'personal relationships' and 'intense desires' that Costigliola identified for FDR, Stalin, and Churchill. But more than that, Welles' sexuality set the psychological and attitudinal boundaries within which his policymaking took place. The options Welles considered when facing a diplomatic dilemma or political negotiation, and the tactics employed by him were products of his psychological disposition – a disposition that had been profoundly influenced by his experience growing up with a sexuality that was outside the norm.

This interpretive schema has been employed extensively by Robert Dean to analyze U.S. foreign policymakers in his 2001 work *Imperial Brotherhood*. It was Dean's contention that the policymakers who embroiled the United States in the Vietnam War did so in part due to their being unwittingly shaped by the discourses about masculinity and sexuality they had imbibed as young men during their formative years. Dean's conception of an 'Imperial Brotherhood' specifically invoked the concept of hegemonic masculinity to articulate how policymakers interpreted

⁷¹ Costigliola, *Roosevelt's Lost Alliances*, 20.

aggression, power, and strength in their deliberations over how to respond to diplomatic problems and opportunities. The inculcation of these policymakers' values began in their formative years and shaped their entire worldview, or as Dean put it, "social systems of inclusion and exclusion operate[d] to favor 'hegemonic' ideologies of masculinity."⁷²

In Welles' case, interaction with hegemonic discourses of masculinity, power, and sexuality were just as important to shaping his worldview. However, Welles' sexuality added a further complication to the mix. Excluded from the hegemonic discourses about masculinity and sexuality on account of his queerness, Welles traversed alternative routes to political power. Similarly, Welles' position outside the dominant patterns of masculinity and heterosexuality shaped his worldview, downplaying the importance of aggression and militarism, and priming him to place greater emphasis on beneficent paternalism toward the rest of the world and idealistic rhetoric to articulate it. How Welles' positionality as a queer individual impacted his worldview, and how this unique situation altered the course of U.S. foreign affairs, is one of the central investigations of this thesis.

Although Dean and Costigliola have been relatively novel in their placement of discourses about gender and sexuality at the forefront of their analyses, the conceptual framework upon which they based their investigations has a much wider acceptance in international history and related fields. Analyzing the belief systems and cognitive biases of an individual, and assessing the salience of those beliefs on the decisions based on them, has long been a staple of international history.⁷³ Such analyses draw on both intimate biographical details and broad societal forces over which the individual has little control.

In their work assessing the 'mental maps' of decision makers, Steven Casey and Jonathan Wright asserted the influence of factors as varied as "family backgrounds, education, political values, the domestic and external constraints within which [decision-makers] conceived and tried to implement their policies,

⁷² Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*, 6.

⁷³ Steven A. Yetiv, *National Security through a Cockeyed Lens: How Cognitive Bias Impacts U.S. Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

sometimes the incidents of mere chance that opened or closed an opportunity."⁷⁴ In this way, it became "possible to explore the underlying political, cultural and social environments in which various leaders developed and rose to influence [and] ... to shed light on the broader pressures at work when the leaders were confronted with a range of policy problems."⁷⁵

In a similar vein, political scientist Avi Shlaim emphasized "the need to explore the belief systems" of those practicing foreign policy.⁷⁶ In his estimation, the justification for such an approach "stems from the simple fact that decision-makers act in response to their perception of reality, not in response to reality itself."⁷⁷ In this view, a decision maker's "belief system predisposes them to act in a particular way, to choose one course of action from a range of perceived options."⁷⁸ Building on these methodological forbearers, this thesis asserts that whatever form a decision maker's belief system, mental map, or cognitive biases take, they are inextricably linked to his or her sexuality and that sexuality ought to be considered alongside other psychosocial factors in assessing the motivations and actions of decision makers – especially in the case of Sumner Welles.

This contention, it should be noted, is not an argument for deterministic essentialism –seeing a single overriding category like sexuality as explaining all aspects of a person's life. Nor is studying the early childhood experiences of a decision maker an effort at constructing an explanatory *bildungsroman*. An individual's sexuality operates under the auspices of broader structural and ideational factors that have their own explanatory value; no consideration of sexuality is complete without an acknowledgement of these factors. In Welles' case, the worldview that was shaped by his sexuality emerged in a specific time and place for the diplomatic history of the United States. Expanding global power at the end of the nineteenth century and the enormous impact of World War One and the

⁷⁴ Steven Casey and Jonathan Wright, eds. *Mental Maps in the Era of Two World Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), xii.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, xii-xiii.

⁷⁶ Avi Shlaim, "Truman's Belief System: Russia and the Berlin Blockade," quoted in Richard Little and Steve Smith, eds., *Belief Systems and International Relations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 229.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Wilsonian tradition that came out of it established certain parameters for action and set certain events in motion that would have played out regardless of Welles' sexuality. Similarly, the longstanding tensions between Latin America and the United States and the extraordinary refashioning of the world brought about by the New Deal and World War Two played out around Welles in ways well beyond his ability to manipulate, even accounting for his particularly prominent role in those processes.

However, ranking the relative prominence or position of sexuality *vis à vis* these other levels of analysis is beside the point. Structural and ideational explanations operated alongside Welles' own agency, not in competition with it. The interaction between these factors synthesized a mixture in which no one component was solely at work. Welles' sexuality was a part of this mixture, at times prominently, in ways that historians have hitherto ignored or denied. Acknowledging sexuality as a component of Welles' psyche and life experience offers a fresh perspective for understanding the forces that shaped U.S. foreign policy during Welles' time and afterward.

Sources:

In some respects, the sources necessary to analyze the intersection of the public and private lives of Sumner Welles are plentiful. With the opening of his personal files to the public in 1996, the Welles Papers at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library offered enormous quantities of personal correspondence, diaries, and memoranda, in which the implicit influence of sexuality was clearly evident. Newly uncovered documents from Welles' formative years at Groton and Harvard contained in this thesis have added to this already large corpus of material. Welles' personal recollections and writings, especially when viewed in their totality so as to better identify the key themes, are particularly apt for the close reading and discursive analyses that evoke the salience of sexuality and masculinity in matters as diverse as Welles' relationship with FDR, his 1933 posting to Cuba, and the public perception of the reasons for his resignation in 1943. These sources complement

other government documents that address Welles' career in the State Department, principally those contained in the State Department archives at the National Archives and Records Administration II complex in College Park, Maryland.

It is often the case that inquiries into the personal lives and sexuality of historical figures suffer from a comparative dearth of documentation. Indeed, in Welles' case, documents pertaining to his sexuality and inner life are not as plentiful as official correspondence and memoranda. In part this was due to the social taboo about non-normative sexuality that was so pervasive during Welles' life, as well as due to Welles' reserved personality. However, in Welles' case there is a notable and notorious exception. Copies of Welles' F.B.I. file and the confidential files of F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover contain extensive, and often explicit, descriptions of Welles' sex life. Less dramatically, files of the State Department Social Secretary provide context to Welles' behind-the-scenes manipulations of diplomatic affairs. Discursive analysis of these documents helps illuminate the salience of sexuality in Welles' career, and can be used to trace the intersections of sex and politics in Welles' life when augmented with the diaries and reminiscences of Welles' contemporaries, particularly men like William Castle, Adolf Berle, and others who wrote extensively about Welles.

Altogether, these sources, in combination with extensive use of traditional sources on diplomatic history such as the *Foreign Relations of the United States* and the Decimal File of the State Department, demonstrate how Welles' career was suffused and shaped by his sexuality. In this manner, this thesis implicitly follows Robert Dean's recommendation for the success of such analyses (in his review of a recent article by Frank Costigliola): a "[p]ersistence, and a willingness to piece together a wide variety of materials as historical evidence."⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Robert Dean, 'The Personal and the Political: Gender and Sexuality in Diplomatic History', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (September 2012), 764.

Outline:

This thesis is divided into seven chapters, arranged roughly chronologically, that examine the major epochs in Welles' life and career. It begins by analyzing Welles' formative experiences, including his upbringing, his early diplomatic career, and his relationship with FDR. The first three chapters lay the groundwork for the interpretive explanations of Welles' motivations and actions as a foreign policy practitioner that follow, demonstrating the link between Welles' sexual non-normativity and his worldview and professional relationships, particularly with FDR. The three subsequent chapters apply this analytical framework to the major arenas of Welles' foreign policymaking career, specifically Latin America and World War Two. This framework is also applied to the final chapter of this thesis on Welles' post-resignation career. An additional chapter, Chapter Six, deepens the discussion of the influence of Welles' sexuality in his life by analyzing the circumstances of his resignation from office in 1943, noting the broader social and political trends at play.

Chapter One explores the early years of Welles' life and career from his birth until his entry into the State Department. It analyzes his formative years and identifies the salience of sexuality in Welles' early life experiences, demonstrated through same-sex relationships and friendships, social ostracizing, and the broader context of the social worlds he inhabited. It argues the discourses about sexuality in Welles' life interacted with broader discourses about masculinity, power, and nationhood endemic in Welles' social caste. These forces shaped his worldview and set the mould for his future diplomatic thinking and praxis.

Continuing the discussion of Welles' emergent worldview, Chapter Two focuses on Welles' first decade as a diplomat from 1915-1925. This chapter identifies two key aspects of Welles' diplomatic praxis: a paternalistic idealism, especially toward the countries of Latin America, and an aversion to militaristic aggression that went hand in hand with a preference for idealistic multilateral consensus-driven solutions to diplomatic problems. These characteristics were evident in specific instances during Welles' first decade in the State Department,

notably his postings in Argentina and the Dominican Republic, along with briefer sojourns in Japan and Washington D.C. Building upon the analysis of the cultural and psychological interpretations of Welles' motivations in Chapter One, this chapter elaborates further on the formative political and diplomatic experiences in Welles' early career, most notably the influence of World War One and the diplomatic legacy of Charles Evans Hughes. It demonstrates how Welles' worldview came into focus during this period, and how it manifested in specific policies and attitudes, such as qualified support for the League of Nations and a resentment toward the British. The ideals Welles began to articulate during these years –Wilsonianism, hemispheric nationalism, and an idiosyncratic aversion to aggression – he would carry through the rest of his career.

Chapter Three continues the investigation of the formative influences on Welles' career but shifts focus to the role of one particularly important individual: Franklin Delano Roosevelt. This chapter shows how Welles ingratiated himself with Roosevelt and cultivated a homosocial bond that provided prodigious access to the corridors of power as well as political protection against potential enemies. Welles and Roosevelt's storied friendship was founded on a shared cultural background among the rarefied social circles of late nineteenth century East Coast aristocracy. Their respective eccentricities, particularly with regard to their respective relationships with masculinity and sexuality, complemented one another and resulted in an unusually close collaboration that would influence Welles' foreign policy praxis thenceforth. This opened up unlikely avenues for political and diplomatic affairs to unfold and transformed Welles from a mid-level bureaucrat to a top-level presidential confidant. It laid the groundwork for the enormous influence of Welles and his worldview on U.S. diplomacy later in his career.

Chapters Four and Five shift the discussion of the intersection of the personal and political in Welles' career to the arena of foreign policy praxis, specifically the two major areas of Welles' foreign policy legacy: Latin America and World War Two. Along with Chapter Seven, they demonstrate the salience of the themes identified in the first three chapters – aversion to militarism and preference for multilateral

action, paternalistic idealism, and patronage by FDR – and apply them to the major events in Welles' career.

Chapter Four looks at how Welles enacted the Good Neighbor Policy, highlighting two main examples: his disastrous turn as Ambassador to Cuba in 1933 and his later much more successful efforts to forge inter-American unity through multilateral conferences. In both efforts Welles again demonstrated the worldview and diplomatic strategies that had defined his earlier work in Latin America during his early life. In Cuba, Welles' idealistic and paternalistic belief in the wisdom of his own policies blinded him to the situation around him, resulting in his orchestrating the fall of one government, the installation of another, and the slow suffocation of a third. This episode also showed his reliance upon the patronage of high-ranking figures, specifically Franklin Roosevelt, when he did not get his way. However, Cuba also demonstrated the limited effectiveness of these approaches and tactics and how they could just as easily backfire.

Welles' efforts to forge inter-American unity met with more success and more prominently displayed his political views, professional style, and ideological perspective. Welles' ordered multilateral approach to inter-American cooperation was his brainchild, embodying all the idiosyncratic themes of Welles' diplomatic style discussed above. Moreover, the specific applications of the Good Neighbor Policy reflected Welles' idiosyncratic influence with tangible results for U.S. foreign policy. Because of factors specific to Welles – his close relationship with FDR and his aversion to militarism/paternalistic idealism, in particular – the U.S. response in Latin America to the growing threats emanating from Europe and Asia took a distinctively Wellesian form.

Chapter Five examines Welles' involvement in wartime foreign policy, including his prewar attempts at a negotiated peace, his mission to Europe, his involvement in forging the Anglo-American alliance, and his contributions to postwar planning. It argues that Welles' pursuit of peace in an increasingly belligerent world reflected the tension between his aversion to military solutions to diplomatic problems and the growing dangers overseas. This was on display in Welles' failed attempts to convene a disarmament conference in 1937 and 1938.

Welles' desire to forge consensus and avoid confrontation was incompatible with the vicissitudes of a world sliding toward war.

As war approached, Welles' professional collaboration with FDR reached its peak and exerted an ever-greater influence. This was seen most especially his Welles' 1940 mission to Europe. Welles and Roosevelt's partnership infused the mission with a personal dimension and was at the core of the way the mission was conceived, perceived, and executed. It also gave a glimpse into the dynamics of Welles and Roosevelt's personal relationship and how Welles fit into the firmament of the Roosevelt White House at the time, as Welles' status rose relative to other members of the State Department and administration.

As Welles' career approached its height the significance of his worldview assumed greater relevance to U.S. foreign affairs, particularly with regards his desire to imprint his characteristic blend of paternalism and idealism on wartime and postwar planning. This desire was manifested in two main ways: a recurrence of the Anglophobia that had emerged in Welles' worldview during his earlier career; and the development of plans for a postwar organization that reflected his desire to maintain U.S. hegemony in the Western Hemisphere and his paternalistic attitudes toward international affairs in general.

Chapter Six returns to domestic politics and personality with an analysis of the process by which Welles was forced to resign as Undersecretary in 1943. Welles' sexuality became an increasing liability during his last years in office due to changing mores about sexuality occasioned by World War Two, growing political opposition to Welles, and Welles' own behaviour, specifically his solicitation of sex from male railway porters on a presidential train in September 1940. Welles' behaviour on the Bankhead Train violated many taboos about race, sex, and class. Although it was not inevitable that his actions would have resulted in semi-public scandal, Welles' idiosyncratic positionality created circumstances in which it was possible. Nevertheless, it took the actions of jealous and homophobic colleagues to launch the conspiracy to oust Welles and to initiate a sequence of events that would have a dramatic impact on Welles and discourses about sexuality in the U.S. thereafter.

The final chapter of this thesis examines a largely overlooked aspect of Welles' career – his post-resignation activities. Though he achieved some measure of success as a public intellectual, Welles' post-resignation career was a case study in Welles' gradual marginalization from public discourse following his resignation from the State Department. Despite being out of office, Welles' worldview continued to be characterized by those key themes that had defined him from the outset. However, relegated to the sidelines, Welles' found his beliefs increasingly discordant with the world around him. In the immediate aftermath of his resignation Welles' paternalistic idealism led him to embrace the United Nations Organization (U.N.O.) and cooperation with the Soviets. However, as plans for the U.N.O. changed and the Cold War commenced Welles found it difficult to maintain his enthusiasm and increasingly seemed out of step. Meanwhile, Welles' ability to influence events was greatly reduced by the death of Franklin Roosevelt in April 1945, a testament to how reliant Welles had been upon Roosevelt's benefaction for his own power.

Chapter One:
The Outsider: Welles' Formative Years, 1892-1915

In the summer of 1944 Drew Pearson, Francis Biddle, and an assortment of other Washington dignitaries attended a dinner held by former Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles. Following the dinner, Biddle quipped to Pearson “[w]hat a nice dinner we had at Sumner’s. Do you realize that there were six graduates of Groton present, and six divorced couples?” Somewhat surprised, Pearson later recounted “I wasn’t quite sure whether he was aiming a barb at Groton or a barb at divorce. But insomuch as he was from Groton and the only couple there not divorced I assumed it was just friendly Biddle conversation.”¹

Friendly or not, Biddle’s banter spoke to an undercurrent about status, reputation, and gender norms in Washington political circles at that time, particularly as they related to the far reaching legacy of Groton Preparatory School. Like Biddle, Welles had attended Groton in his youth and the impact it had on his later life was substantial. The lessons he was taught by his instructors shaped his outlook on the world, imbuing him, along with his classmates, with a patriotic pride and portentous expectations for their own and their country’s ambitions. However, Welles’ experience at Groton was not entirely typical, and his upbringing was, in many important respects, unusual. In large part on account of his sexuality Welles was conditioned by distinct experiences that had a profound impact upon his personality, outlook and, ultimately, his future career.

This chapter examines the formative years of Sumner Welles, from his schoolboy days at Groton to the start of his career as a diplomat. It investigates how Welles’ early experiences shaped his worldview and approach to diplomacy, arguing that this process was intimately tied to his sexuality. Taking Welles’ sexual non-normativity as a starting point, this chapter uses sexuality as an interpretive framework to uncover salient themes in Welles’ life that first became evident in the early stages of it. Despite his growing up among the East Coast aristocracy of turn-

¹ Pearson to Welles, 18 August 1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library (FDRL), Sumner Welles Papers (SWP), Box: 147, Folder 1.

of-the-century America, Welles' sexuality positioned him as an outsider to the dominant social order. Excluded from full membership in hegemonic masculinity and heterosexuality and the worldview that inculcated – what Robert Dean has called “Imperial Manhood” – Welles developed a distinctive persona and an alternate perspective on the expansion of American power and its role in the world that he would carry with him throughout the rest of his life and career.²

In laying the groundwork for this prosopographical analysis of Welles' career, this chapter offers the first comprehensive historical analysis of the queer elements of Welles' early life, focusing on his relationships, his demeanour, and the broader social-sexual context with which Welles interacted during this period. To demonstrate the salience of sexuality in Welles' life this chapter employs three approaches. First, there is a general assessment of the effects of sexuality on the development of personality traits of youths and adolescents using sociological and psychological literature to establish the methodological basis for interpreting Welles' life in this way. Second, historical literature examining how masculinity, sexuality, and power were intertwined in political and pedagogic discourses during these years and how these applied to Welles in particular is explored. Finally, and most importantly, previously unused material from archives at Groton and Harvard University, personal recollections and accounts from Welles himself and others during his formative years, are used to that demonstrate his sexual non-normativity and its implications for Welles' future.³ Directly refuting the contentions of other authors who have looked at this period in Welles' life, this chapter shows how Welles' sexuality deviated from the norm from a very early age, dramatically influencing his personality, his worldview, and as a result, his future conduct as a diplomat.

² Robert D. Dean. *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 17

³ The material used for this section was obtained from several sources including the Houghton Library and Pusey Library at Harvard University as well as through personal correspondence between the author and the Chief Archivist at Groton Preparatory School, Massachusetts, USA, during the summer of 2015. Besides copies of specific documents, the author obtained summaries of additional materials compiled and transcribed by the Groton School Archivist. A copy of the transcribed pages can be found at the end of this thesis in Appendix A.

Background:

Despite their formative influence, Welles' early years have attracted surprisingly little attention among historians. To the extent that they have examined Welles' early years most historians have drawn conclusions based on his formal education and a general impression of his social caste. For instance, Frank Graff noted the relationship Welles formed with Groton Headmaster Endicott Peabody ("If I ever achieve anything in this world," Welles wrote to Peabody, "it will be due very greatly to you").⁴ Christopher O'Sullivan noted how Welles' "upbringing within the cloistered and privileged world of the New York elite shaped him by reinforcing his feelings of superiority over others and contributing to his inability to relate well with those from different backgrounds."⁵ This assessment echoed Irwin Gellman's description of Welles during his first stint in the State Department where he developed "certain characteristic approaches to issues ... [that] ... would be hallmarks of his future career" including an independent streak, an appeal to higher bureaucratic authority, and a disinclination "to understand or accommodate other viewpoints."⁶

However, there is much more to be gained from analyzing Welles' formative years than identifying him as a snob, and much more to his personality than snobbishness. As evidenced in the two works that explore Welles' early life in considerable depth – Benjamin Welles' biography of his father and Gail Hanson's dissertation on Welles' Caribbean diplomacy – worthwhile insights can be gained into Welles' psyche and the milieu in which he operated by examining these most crucial years.⁷

⁴ Welles to Peabody, 4 January 1915, Endicott Peabody Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University quoted in Frank Warren Graff, "Strategy of Involvement: A Diplomatic Biography of Sumner Welles" (Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Michigan, 1971), 2.

⁵ Christopher D. O'Sullivan. *Sumner Welles: Postwar Planning and the Quest for a New World Order 1937-1943* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 2.

⁶ Irwin F. Gellman, *Secret Affairs: Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 62.

⁷ Benjamin Welles. *Sumner Welles: FDR's Global Strategist: A Biography* (New York: MacMillan Press, 1997); Gail Hanson. "Sumner Welles and the American System: The United States in the Caribbean, 1920-1940." (Ph.D. Dissertation. State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1990).

In the first major work looking at Welles' early years, Gail Hanson adopts an expansive scope that affords a predictive value for interpreting Welles' later diplomatic career. Hanson argued for the primacy of Progressive Era thinkers Elihu Root and Theodore Roosevelt on Welles' later foreign policy ideation.⁸ This influence was rooted, at least in part, in some of Welles' earliest formative experiences. For Hanson, Welles' "patrician background drove much of his commitment to legal and tutelary strategies for maintaining the United States's influence and control."⁹ She credits Groton with teaching Welles "self-restraint and antipathy to what [Welles] later termed 'narrow selfishness'" as well as a pattern of Anglophilia, "affinity to British-style liberalism", and "moral absolutism."¹⁰ Similarly, at Harvard University Hanson noted "Welles's major subjects denoted a leaning toward order and balance in his patrician world."¹¹

Though accurate, Hanson's argument lacked an analysis of the generative forces underlying Welles' search for order. Welles' isolation as a youth was taken for granted, with little effort expended to interrogate the nature of Welles' ostracizing or the psychological impact it may have had given the broader social and pedagogic context. Similarly, no explanation was offered for why Progressive figures, as opposed to more conservative ones, would have been especially attractive to Welles. Although Hanson did try to incorporate the personal and political elements of Welles' character during his formative years – his "passive" father may have inspired Welles to seek leadership from other figures – there was no cohesive analysis of Welles' personality as an originator for his ideological or professional motivations.¹² Greater acknowledgement of Welles' intimate life and the impact that had on his personality and positionality, *vis à vis* his contemporaries, and the implications this had for him later in life, is required.

Benjamin Welles made some attempt at such a link in his biography of his father. The younger Welles devoted the first three chapters of his book to the elder

⁸ Hanson, "Sumner Welles and the American System", iii.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 38, 37.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹² *Ibid.*, 41, n.32.

Welles' formative years. He traced their mutual lineage back to the colonial era in "a family molded for three centuries by New England's harsh climate and its Puritan values."¹³ Along with descriptions of Welles' education at Groton and Harvard, and colourful journalistic accounts evoking the spirit of the age, Benjamin Welles' depiction emphasized the aristocratic genteel qualities of Sumner's upbringing, as well as the fecklessness and shortcomings he often exhibited. Welles' family circulated in the highest rungs of New York society – his father was one of twenty-five men called the "Patriarchs," a group founded to "create and lead' New York society" – yet Welles was "dominated" by his overbearing mother.¹⁴ Friends remembered Welles as "very sophisticated" but also "[n]ever a fellow you could get close to."¹⁵ His time at Harvard and in Paris involved long periods of isolation punctuated by episodes of drunkenness and ribaldry. The overall impression was that Welles was groomed for success and received all the advantages that status, wealth, and privilege could bestow – factors that made his various misfortunes and subsequent downfall all the more tragic.

However, this juxtaposition was not utilized as part of any systematic interrogation of Welles' character or the broader forces influencing its development. Benjamin Welles did not knit the various instances of Sumner's isolation as a youth into any larger pattern, or the episodes of turmoil into insights about Welles' inner life. Welles' social marginalization at Groton was never tied to any deeper psychological (or sexual) factors. Broad sweeping influences, like Welles' interactions with Theodore Roosevelt at Groton or his observations of the outbreak of World War One while travelling Europe, were employed only as anecdotes. Moreover, there was a troubling tendency to deemphasize – or castigate – the non-heterosexual elements of Welles' early life. The author described how headmaster Peabody's "iron vigilance had largely spared Groton the blight of adolescent homosexuality" and how a friend remembered "Sumner 'recoiled from anything

¹³ Welles, *FDR's Global Strategist*, 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 12, 9.

even suggestive of homosexuality.”¹⁶ Somewhat contradictorily, he acknowledged Welles’ later displays of homosexuality, but derided them as “personal weakness.”¹⁷ Conversely, Welles’ heterosexual relationships and alleged exploits with women were expounded, or speculated, upon repeatedly and at length.¹⁸

Both Welles and Hanson overlooked evidence of queer intimacy and homosocial patterns of interaction and isolation in their retelling of Sumner Welles’ early life. Such omissions can be explained in part by limitations on access to sources and prioritizing of information, but they also speak to a resistance to writing histories about queer people. Even a cursory examination of Welles’ life, whether in its formative years or later, demands acknowledgement of the existence of non-heterosexual sexual object choice by Welles. Furthermore, it is undeniable that Welles’ non-normative sexuality operated within a society that was variously suspicious and hostile to such deviations from established norms. Exploring the interplay of these two inextricable facets of Welles’ formative experiences is a necessary prerequisite to understanding the mind of the man who would go on to shape so much of U.S. foreign policy.

Concealable Stigma:

In order to conduct an investigation of the influence of sexuality upon Welles’ life, or anyone else’s, it is necessary to establish the scientific and intellectual basis for considering sexual orientation as a defining personal characteristic. The exact role that sexuality plays in the development of an individual’s personality and worldview has been a matter of considerable scholarly investigation. Almost from the moment sex became a subject for scientific inquiry in the later nineteenth century, psychiatrists, sociologists, and sexologists have attempted to ascertain what implications result from possessing a sexual orientation that deviates from the

¹⁶ Welles, *FDR’s Global Strategist*, 13.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19, 33

societal norm.¹⁹ To that end, researchers have made extensive observations and identified discrete characteristics about the lived experience of queer people, some of which hold particular salience in understanding the challenges faced by Sumner Welles.

Beginning in the 1960s sociologists identified sexual orientation as an example of a psychosocial phenomenon known as ‘concealable stigma’. Concealable stigma was defined as “a socially marginalized characteristic not readily apparent to observers.”²⁰ Examples included sexual orientation, membership in a marginalized religious group, immigrant status, HIV status, and many other characteristics. Those possessing a concealable stigma faced the unique and ongoing challenge of “manag[ing] information about their stigmatized status in social interactions” in an unremittingly hostile world.²¹

The dilemmas associated with concealing one’s sexual orientation in a hostile world could leave a particularly lasting impact upon an individual’s disposition, demeanour, and psyche. In multiple studies on individuals possessing a concealable stigma, researchers have found “individuals with a concealable stigma continually face[d] a dilemma of disclosure, which force[d] them to regularly interpret ambiguous social situations and adapt to the threat of potential discovery.”²² For those possessing a concealed stigma, heightened awareness of social cues, of one’s own comportment, and the interaction between them becomes a predominating psychological and social concern.

¹⁹ The literature on sexology and its epistemological heritage is substantial; excellent examples for further reading on the subject include: Elena Mancini. *Magnus Hirschfeld and the Quest for Sexual Freedom: A History of the First International Sexual Freedom Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Lucy Bland and Laura Doan, eds. *Sexology Uncensored: The Documents of Sexual Science* (Cambridge: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); Jeffrey Weeks, *Making Sexual History* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2000); Sarah Toulalan and Kate Fisher, eds. *The Routledge History of Sex and the Body* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (London: Longman, 1981).

²⁰ Alexandra Sedlovskaya, Valerie Purdie-Vaughns, Richard P. Eibach, Marianne LaFrance, Ranier Romero-Canyas and Nicholas P. Camp, “Internalizing the Closet: Concealment Hightens the Cognitive Distinction Between Public and Private Selves” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2013, Vol. 104, No. 4, 696.

²¹ András Tilcsik, Michel Anteby, and Carly R. Knight, “Concealable Stigma and Occupational Segregation: Toward a Theory of Gay and Lesbian Occupations” *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2015, 2.

²² *Ibid.*, 6.

The psychological impact of this ongoing struggle could be profound. According to recent work investigating the psychological impacts of concealed stigma on LGBT people,

“... concealment entails active self-monitoring of the success of one’s efforts at concealment and vigilance for risks of self-exposure associated with public settings. As a consequence of this monitoring in public versus private contexts, the public setting, where the identity is concealed, becomes psychologically distinct from a more private setting, where expression of the stigmatized identity is less constrained.”²³

In other words, because of the mental efforts deployed in the effort to successfully conceal oneself, those with concealable stigma demonstrate detectably different cognitive behaviours and patterns, with ramifications for every cognitive process and function as a result.

Furthermore, the consequences of these psychological stresses can be tracked to specific locations and contexts, most significantly the workplace. Research focusing on LGBT people attempting to remain concealed, i.e. in the closet, found specific behavioural and dispositional consequences to the experience. “Forced to manage information about a stigmatized attribute on a daily basis from an early age, many gay men and lesbians seem to adapt to their stigmatized role by developing an increased sensitivity and diagnostic accuracy with regard to others’ reactions,” strategies that have specific impacts upon the work environment and the behaviour an individual with a concealed stigma exhibits in the workplace.²⁴ Thus, for LGBT people attempting to hide their sexual orientation from their friends, family, and colleagues, the mere existence of their efforts creates a distinct psychological profile. By concealing their sexuality, LGBT people develop a sharp distinction between their public and private selves, a pattern that “represent[s] a

²³ Sedlovskaya, et al., “Internalizing the Closet”, 697. The authors of this paper refer to this psychological divergence as the ‘public-private schematization’, see: Ibid., 695.

²⁴ Tilcsik, Anteby, and Knight, “Concealable Stigma and Occupational Segregation”, 6.

meaningful axis that informs the architecture of their self-concept and, thus, influences their psychological functioning.”²⁵

When applied to a specific individual in a specific time and place, this profile can help reveal otherwise unaccounted for themes in that person’s professional interactions, personal demeanour, motivations, and decision-making. In Welles’ case, the fact of his sexual non-normativity set in motion a series of conscious and unconscious social perceptions and interactions that shaped his personality from the earliest stages of life and were carried with him into adulthood and his career. The realization of difference from most of his classmates, as well as the implications of the particular kind of difference realized in this case (homosexuality), conditioned Welles with a specific set of psychologically formative experiences. This process shaped how Welles conducted himself in his professional life. The decisions Welles took, the options he considered or rejected, and the methods by which he implemented them were all shaped by the psychological foundation from which they emerged. That foundation was laid during Welles’ formative years at Groton and Harvard and contained as part of its aggregate the impact of Welles’ sexuality.

Cui servire est infernum: Welles’ Isolated Youth

To gain a deeper understanding of Welles’ actions and behaviour requires examining the specific conditions in which those formative experiences of concealing his stigmatized sexuality unfolded. The process by which Welles realized and reacted to his sexuality-induced marginalization began early in life, but it became particularly noticeable after enrolling at Groton. It was there that Welles first displayed characteristics and formed relationships that would place him outside the bounds of heterosexuality. The interplay of Welles’ gradual realization of his sexuality with the necessity of concealing that otherness from those around him shaped his personality in profound ways.

²⁵ Sedlovskaya, et al., “Internalizing the Closet”, 710.

Among the most defining features of Welles' early life was his awkward fit with his social, cultural, and institutional surroundings. His difficulty socializing with his peers and fitting in at the schools he attended, a common experience among queer people during youth and adolescence, was painfully evident.²⁶ Despite the enormous wealth and privilege of his family, Welles' early years were not especially happy ones. Welles was, in the words of one historian, a "sickly child, dominated by his mother throughout his early years;" tragically, Welles' mother died 1911 when Welles was only nineteen.²⁷ He was subject to frequent eye infections and a persistent ocular dysfunction that kept him from away from Groton for an entire semester when he was fourteen.²⁸ Welles' eye problems were severe enough for Welles' doctor to recommend he not "study by the light in the school room at night" and for his mother to request clemency for Headmaster Peabody to "excuse Sumner from written examinations."²⁹ An oft-told, possibly apocryphal, but nonetheless revealing, story about Welles from this period in his life described him as having worn white gloves to play when he was a child.³⁰

When he did attend school Welles still had difficulties fitting in. He was described as "a loner" and a "misfit" and was seldom recognized beyond scholastic achievements.³¹ "He was not an athlete, nor a joiner," wrote one historian, an observation that seemed to echo the impressions of those who knew Welles later in life.³² According to his son, Welles was "[g]angling, fast-growing and ill-coordinated;" "[i]solated by his ineptitude at – and indifference to – sports, Sumner vented his hurt in sarcastic witticisms at the expense of classmates – thus isolating himself all the more."³³ The only acknowledgments of athletic prowess in his record were for a one-term stint as a second rower in his final year and as a football

²⁶ See: Paul Flowers and Katie Buston, "I was terrified of being different': exploring gay men's accounts of growing-up in a heterosexist society" *Journal of Adolescence* (2001), Vol. 24, Issue 1.

²⁷ O'Sullivan, *Postwar Planning*, 2; Welles, *FDR's Global Strategist*, 18.

²⁸ B.S. Welles to Endicott Peabody, 6 January 1906, Groton Preparatory School Archives (GPSA), Groton, MA; Correspondence between the author and Douglas Brown, Chief Archivist at Groton Preparatory School.

²⁹ Frances Welles to Endicott Peabody, 18 September 1907, GPSA.

³⁰ "The Diplomat's Diplomat" 11 August 1941, *Time Magazine*.

³¹ Hanson, "Sumner Welles and the American System", 33; Welles, *FDR's Global Strategist*, 13.

³² Hanson, "Sumner Welles and the American System", 34

³³ Welles, *FDR's Global Strategist*, 11.

manager during his penultimate year.³⁴ Welles' father took note of his son's seeming disinterest in sports, writing to Peabody his displeasure of finding out that Sumner had "been taking drawing + boxing lessons" which he had specifically not authorized.³⁵ "I am most anxious that his leisure hours should be spent out of doors," Welles' father explained.³⁶ Welles' father managed to get his way elsewhere, enrolling Sumner in a cadet corps, though Sumner's own son later recalled "[f]ew were less cut out for close-order drill than Sumner Welles."³⁷ Meanwhile, Welles served as a chapel usher in his penultimate year at the school, a fact that Peabody picked up on; he later recommended to the then-seventeen year old Welles that he join the priesthood.³⁸ Even Welles himself seemed to concur with these assessments of his early life. When asked as an adult if he liked his experience at Groton, Welles replied, "[o]h, Lord no; I was a worm."³⁹

Welles also displayed characteristics that set him apart in his scholastic endeavours. Initially, he was not a stellar student, usually occupying the middle and lower third of his class in terms of grades after his first year, though he did rank at top his class in his first semester at the school.⁴⁰ Just prior to his term-long absence due to poor health, he was placed on the "Black list," presumably for academic underachievement, a record that Welles went on to repeat at Harvard several years later.⁴¹ Yet, Welles clearly possessed great academic potential and showed signs of growth over time. In his final year his performance was rated as "better" and "doing well," and Endicott Peabody himself writing "[t]here has been a marked

³⁴ Correspondence between the author and Douglas Brown, Chief Archivist at Groton Preparatory School.

³⁵ B.S. Welles to Peabody, 10 May 1906, GPSA.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Welles, *FDR's Global Strategist*, 9.

³⁸ Correspondence between the author and Douglas Brown, Chief Archivist at Groton Preparatory School; Welles, *FDR's Global Strategist*, 13; Hanson, "Sumner Welles and the American System", 34-5.

³⁹ Hanson, "Sumner Welles and the American System", 34

⁴⁰ Correspondence between the author and Douglas Brown, Chief Archivist at Groton Preparatory School.

⁴¹ Ibid.; Transcript of Sumner Welles Class of '14, Student Folders and Transcripts, c1895-1932 of the Biographical Research section of the Harvard University Archives (HUA): the folder and transcript of Sumner Welles (graduated 1914). Pusey Library, Harvard University Archives (PLHUA), Cambridge, MA.

development in character, which I have noted much satisfaction.”⁴² Welles won the Reading Prize (likely given to the student who had read the most books), indicating both a degree of intellectual curiosity and a bookish personality that aligned with his interest in drawing and a withdrawn approach to athletic activities.⁴³

This pattern of artistic appreciation was replicated several years later when Welles matriculated to Harvard. There, Welles gained “high praise for a play which he wrote” and gained permission from his tutors to spend his final year studying at *l'École des beaux arts* in Paris.⁴⁴ He showed a budding interest in poetry, writing to a friend in his sophomore year “how much I liked your Titanic poems which I read for the first time the other day. I thought them very strong and very beautiful.”⁴⁵ When Welles’ mother died in 1911 he found solace in the lachrymose poetry of Lord Alfred Tennyson.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, he took out a subscription to the *Architectural Quarterly* of Harvard University, and seemed to be keen on pursuing architecture as a career.⁴⁷ His course selection at Harvard also indicated a student with a more artistic bent. Welles opted to take four language courses – Latin, Greek, German, and French – and advanced courses in Greek, Latin, and German.⁴⁸ In order to aid him in his ostensible future career as an architect, Welles also took Plane Geometry, Elementary Physics, and Algebra, though in an indication of the degree to which the abstraction rather than the tactile nature of this craft appealed to him, Welles opted not to take courses in Solid Geometry, Machine Work, Woodworking, Chipping, or Blacksmithing.⁴⁹

Although Welles’ creative sensibilities, his disinterest in athletics, and his cloistral habits set him somewhat apart from his classmates during these years, his

⁴² Correspondence between the author and Douglas Brown, Chief Archivist at Groton Preparatory School. Emphasis original.

⁴³ Correspondence between the author and Douglas Brown, Chief Archivist at Groton Preparatory School.

⁴⁴ B.S. Welles to Julian Coolidge, 4 March 1911, HUA; Sumner Welles to Dean Hulbert, 27 September 1913, HUA.

⁴⁵ Sumner Welles to Corrine Roosevelt Robinson, undated, Papers of Corrine Roosevelt Robinson, Series I, Container 1470, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

⁴⁶ Sumner Welles to Endicott Peabody, 25 May, GPSA. Specifically, Welles wrote the he had read Tennyson’s elegiac *In Memoriam A.H.H.* over and over while mourning the loss of his mother.

⁴⁷ Transcript of Sumner Welles Class of ’14, PLHUA; Welles, *FDR’s Global Strategist*, 24.

⁴⁸ Transcript of Sumner Welles Class of ’14, PLHUA

⁴⁹ Ibid.

ostracism was not total. Despite the regimented lifestyle at Groton, Welles found solace and companionship in the form of a “small artistic boy” named Ives Gammell.⁵⁰ Gammell and Welles met at Groton when they were both students and according to Gammell “discussed everything: the Rector, the masters, schoolmates, courses, sports, colleges, politics, life – even sex.”⁵¹ They shared mutual interests including a love of French, music, and the arts; the arts provided many outlets for Welles’ frustrations at the time, most notably witnessed by his portrayal in full drag of a Spanish senorita during a school play.⁵² Gammell seems to have been Welles’ only close confidant during these years. When Welles’ mother died, Gammell was one of the few people who “offer[ed] haven in a sunless world.”⁵³ After graduating from Groton they attended different schools in Boston, but made plans to move to Paris together after graduation, where they would study fine arts. This they did in 1914 and Gammell’s recollections from the time depict Welles pursuing a variety of different relationships with women and men, exchanging gifts and notes with them, and commiserating with Gammell.⁵⁴

Gammell’s close relationship with Welles was at times tempestuous but their intense emotional bond and tight camaraderie were profound. As they grew older and their lives went in separate directions, Welles and Gammell continued to correspond, with Gammell paying close attention to Welles’ career. Although the correspondence was conventional for the most part, telling references cropped up from time to time that indicated an atypical subtext to the relationship. Upon hearing the news of Welles’ resignation in 1943, Gammell, wrote a long maudlin letter to Welles expressing his sympathy and commiserating over the isolation that Welles now suffered. The letter included Gammell’s wistful reflections on his early years with Welles in Provincetown and Paris – “the first hint that there existed a world into which I might fit” – and his discovery that “the things I cared about

⁵⁰ Welles, *FDR’s Global Strategist*, 12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵² *Ibid.*, photographic pages.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

mattered to other people.”⁵⁵ In the same letter Gammell used a tellingly mixed metaphor to express confidence in Welles, writing, “I picture you resting on your laurels and waiting to move into the next square – I suppose you are a queen now and can move in any direction across the board.”⁵⁶

Welles’ relationship with Gammell was not the only one during his youth that hinted at experiences that deviated from the norms of masculinity and heterosexuality. At Harvard, Welles shared a room and was a “close personal friend” with Harden de Valson Pratt. Welles and Pratt struck up what would become a lifelong friendship.⁵⁷ They roomed together at Harvard and devised a “gentleman’s agreement” wherein they frequented each other’s social clubs in the Boston area.⁵⁸ Although their friendship was not commented upon at the time, a later investigation into Welles’ sexual behaviour identified Pratt as a “sexual pervert” with whom Welles corresponded.⁵⁹ Pratt’s friendship with Welles may have been little more than grasping at straws by the F.B.I., but the association demonstrated how Welles’ experiences during his formative years included a distinctive queerness, one that was detectable even decades later.

Welles’ relationships with Gammell and Pratt clearly established Welles’ sexuality as being outside the definitions of strict heterosexuality. He developed close relationships with men his age that, at the time or later on, would indicate clear signs of sexual non-conformity. His experiences on the margins of his schools’ social life mirrored the experiences of other queer individuals in similar

⁵⁵ Letter, Gammell to Welles, 15 December 1943, SWP, Box: 146, Folder: 7. Provincetown, Massachusetts (likely what Gammell was referring to) had by this time not fully earned its reputation as a mecca for gay men, but it did have a well-established art colony centred around the Cape Cod School of Art founded by Charles Webster Hawthorne and, with it, a nascent queer community. For further reading see: Karen Christel Kraulik, *Provincetown: From Pilgrim Landing to Gay Resort* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 69-105.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Memorandum For the Director, 4 September 1942, NARA, RG 65, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [1 of 2].

⁵⁸ Welles, *FDR’s Global Strategist*, 24-5.

⁵⁹ Memorandum For the Director, 4 September 1942, NARA, RG 65, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [1 of 2].

circumstances.⁶⁰ He was, in essence, a queer youth grappling with the challenges and obstacles inherent in that identity.

Unsurprisingly, his personality evolved in response to these experiences. Buffeted by the twin onslaughts of social marginalization and perceived stigmatization, Welles learned to conceal his emotions from public view at all costs. He developed a tough outer shell while still maintaining an intimate private life, learning to get by on his own while simultaneously maintaining a few, close relationships with carefully chosen individuals. With such a pattern established so early and ingrained so deeply in his personality, this “public-private schematization” left a lasting imprint on Welles’ demeanour and personality.⁶¹ Once the lasting legacy of these efforts to separate the stigmatized aspects of his private life from his outward public persona during his formative years is acknowledged, aspects of Welles’ later career as a diplomat begin to take on a new light.

Notoriously, during his time as a diplomat Welles adopted an austere demeanour as a professional persona. He became an expert at concealing his emotions from public view while maintaining an immaculate public facade. Contemporary observers of Welles almost exclusively highlighted his austere manner. Interior Secretary Harold Ickes called him “glacially top-lofty,” while Dean Acheson called him “formal to the point of stiffness.”⁶² During his eponymous peace mission to Europe in 1940 he earned the nickname “Sumner the Silent’.”⁶³ Journalists Joseph Alsop & Robert Kintner depicted him as “looking like a man with a bit of bad fish caught in his mustache” while another journalist extended the simile, saying Welles was a:

“cold fish. He was brought up in ... cold-fish ways ... went to cold-fish schools ... entered a cold-fish calling. His hero is a slightly warmed-over cold fish,

⁶⁰ See: Peter M. Nardi, David Sanders, and Judd Marmor (eds.) *Growing Up Before Stonewall: Life Stories of Some Gay Men* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁶¹ Sedlovskaya, et al., *Internalizing the Closet*, 695.

⁶² Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, 197, 106.

⁶³ J. Simon Rofe, *Franklin Roosevelt’s Foreign Policy and the Welles Mission* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 114.

Charles Evans Hughes. He is as reserved as a box at the opera ... Even his blond mustache looks cold.”⁶⁴

Though many of these descriptions could be attributed to professional jealousy or gossipy name-calling, they contained more than a grain of truth about how Welles mediated his interactions with an outside world that was profoundly hostile to a key element of his life. Welles’ severity can be seen as an implicit understanding that as a sexual outsider in the corridors of power he had to remain eternally, and conspicuously, above reproach. It was a defense mechanism employed to overcome the psychological strain he endured on account of his concealed stigma and the isolation it caused him at Groton and elsewhere in his youth. Interestingly, in one of his recollections of Welles, former Vice President Henry Wallace seemed to perceive this inner tension. In a description of Welles Wallace said: “I had the feeling looking at him behind that rather impressive exterior, there was inside a soul of a rather badly frightened small boy.”⁶⁵ The division of Welles’ psyche into distinct public and private personas helped him navigate the treacherous terrain of social customs in a society of oppressively hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity. As an adult, it helped him construct a persona of dignified reserve that would, paradoxically, earn him respect while simultaneously isolating him. Either way, Welles’ demeanour was a defining characteristic in his diplomatic career; its roots stretched back to his earliest and most intimate experiences.

Imperial Masculinity:

If Welles’ austere demeanour can be traced to the legacy of his formative experiences as an outsider at Groton and Harvard, then it stands to reason those institutions also left an impression on his attitudes and broader outlook on the

⁶⁴ “The Diplomat’s Diplomat”, 11 August 1941, *Time Magazine*.

⁶⁵ Graham White and John Maze. *Henry A Wallace: His Search for a New World Order*. (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 161.

world.⁶⁶ Perceptible in his recollections of these years and in the larger pattern of his career was the influence on Welles' outlook of institutional and ideological factors endemic to these elite bastions, particularly Groton. Their example taught Welles lessons about power, politics, and the wider world that would set the parameters within which his later decision-making would operate. However, although Welles imbibed these lessons and was shaped by them, Welles' sexuality prevented him from unequivocal adoption of these values. Welles' sexuality acted as a filter, allowing some aspects of Groton's ethos through but blocking others, the result of which was the distillation of a peculiar mix of attitudes and beliefs that would become quintessentially Wellesian.

At the turn of the twentieth century Groton was more than a stuffy boarding school for the scions of great wealth. It was a site of indoctrination for a specific set of values including muscular Christianity, *noblesse oblige*, and American nationalism. According to historian Edwin Hoyt, "[t]he announced purpose of the school was 'to cultivate manly, Christian character, having regard to moral and physical as well as intellectual development.'"⁶⁷ This ethos was born as well out of fears of national weakness, imperial overstretch, and social upheaval; Groton instructed their students with the expressed purpose of the "perpetuation of a ruling caste."⁶⁸

At Groton the indoctrination of these values and the grooming of pupils for greatness stemmed directly from its headmaster, Endicott Peabody, whom Welles would cite specifically as a guiding influence later in life. Peabody was renowned for his rigid instruction, haughty demeanour, and high expectations for his students. In an assessment of the entirety of Peabody's career, his biographer wrote "[o]ne may take issue with Peabody. One may use words like 'aristocratic,' 'old-fashioned,' 'Victorian.' He believed in old-fashioned things; quality, smallness, personal integrity, the family, the League of Nations, goodness resting on strength."⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Groton's influence upon major figures in American politics and diplomacy can be found in works studying many of its alumni. For a particularly relevant example see: Graham Cross, *The Diplomatic Education of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1882-1933* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 6.

⁶⁷ Edwin P. Hoyt, *The Peabody Influence: How a Great New England Family Helped to Build America* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1968), 246.

⁶⁸ Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*, 18-9, 21.

⁶⁹ Frank D. Ashburn, *Peabody of Groton: A Portrait* (New York: Coward McCann, inc., 1944), xii.

The inclusion of the League of Nations as an example of what Peabody stood for was no playful coincidence. Ingrained into the fabric of Peabody's strict discipline was an explicit political project; Peabody instilled in his students a directive to strive for achievement, struggle with adversity, and through so doing remake the world into a better place. In the words of one observer, "the idea of Endicott Peabody was to exert an influence on the world through these boys, by instilling in them a capacity for leadership and service."⁷⁰ In Peabody's own words, "... in the absence of interest there was determination that the work should be done as a matter of duty ... These should be component parts of the education of one who was preparing for *service* in the world."⁷¹

Peabody's appeal was more than a general call to service. It was an exhortation to a specific set of values, ideological beliefs, and even political opinions that Welles and his classmates imbibed. Assessing Peabody's vision for Groton at length, Frank Ashburn wrote:

"Peabody and Groton were Hamiltonian and not Jeffersonian. He was a patrician and believed in patricians. If it is not the popular kind of democracy today, it is a very genuine kind from which the modern fashion originated. It would have been understood by Sir Harry Vane or Washington or the Adamses or Gladstone or Winston Churchill. It was a theory of democracy which holds that all men are entitled to justice before the law, with equal opportunity for equal talents as an unrealized goal rather than a realized fact. It made no pretense of considering all men equal, since, it held, experience and common sense proved they were not. It believed that democracy was the hope of the world, with free speech and the rights of conscience, but it also believed that the only hope of democracy was its ability to produce an ever devoted and intelligent and honest aristocracy. It objected to the theory that the average or mediocre is as good as the best."⁷²

Implicitly and explicitly Welles incorporated these principles into his value system. In his final year at Groton Welles opted into a stream that studied Virgil's

⁷⁰ Hoyt, *The Peabody Influence*, 246.

⁷¹ Ashburn, *Peabody of Groton*, 72. Emphasis original.

⁷² Hoyt, *The Peabody Influence*, 250

Aeneid, a text that emphasized, among other things, duty and devotion.⁷³ His academic interests after Groton, notably his brief desire to study architecture, also denoted an appreciation of order and structure. In his comportment, too, Welles emulated Peabody's example. After a brief period of youthful gallivanting in Europe, he decided on a career devoted to public service. Once in that role he showed extraordinary dedication to the offices in which he served, eschewing overt politicking and personal aggrandizement, in essence living out Ashburn's description of Peabody's hope for a 'devoted and intelligent and honest aristocracy'.

Groton also served as the template for what Welles viewed as the proper course of upbringing. He retained close contacts with the school for decades through the alumni association.⁷⁴ Tellingly, when it came time to decide the educational futures of his own children he insisted that both his sons attend Groton, going so far as to insist during custody negotiations with his ex-wife Esther Slater that no change could be made to their children's educational plans "except with my prior consent."⁷⁵ The focus on Groton was not just parental fussing over academic opportunities and potential; it was specifically concerned with the formative elements of the Groton experience. Writing to a friend about his sons' education, Welles believed Groton was instrumental in the development of his eldest son's "self assurance and self control" and wondered whether Groton would have the same effect on his younger son, too.⁷⁶

However, Peabody's lofty goals and pompous rhetoric had an ulterior dimension, one that Welles could not integrate as easily. Welles attended Groton at a moment when the United States was in a uniquely imperialistic and expansionistic phase. The closing of the frontier in 1890 and the acquisition of overseas territories at the end of the Spanish-American War a decade later had changed the country's

⁷³ According to the Groton Course of Study for Welles' Sixth Form, selections from books VII-XII of the Aeneid were assigned to the class. Whether Welles noted the presence of the same-sex relationship between Nisus and Euryalus in book IX is not known. See: Groton School Curriculum, 1909-1910, GPSA, Groton, MA

⁷⁴ S. Sloan Colt to Sumner Welles, 28 November 1950, FDRL: SWP: Box 141: Woodrow Wilson Foundation, 1949 - G, 1950, Folder 9: G, 1950.

⁷⁵ Chandler P. Anderson to William S. Gordon, 9 May 1927, FDRL, SWP, Box: 19, Folder: 1.

⁷⁶ 'Sumner Welles Diary', 27 March 1930, FDRL, SWP, Box: 265.

attitude toward the rest of the world.⁷⁷ This shift was occasioned, or enhanced, by a sense of cultural dominance and chauvinistic swagger with deep undertones of racial superiority, masculine pride, and aggression; the paragon and exemplar of this new attitude was Theodore Roosevelt, a man whose life story embodied the spirit of conquest, virility, and individuality that characterized the age.⁷⁸ Roosevelt and others like him set an example for the younger generation, particularly for those being bred for positions of power.

Integral to these values was a particular kind of collective masculine ethos, dubbed by historian Robert Dean as “Boarding-School Masculinity.”⁷⁹ Elite private institutions like Groton had long been engaged in the process of “melting down the refractory material of individualism into the solid metal of elite collectivism,” but at Groton under Peabody it assumed greater proportions and held deeper implications.⁸⁰ “Boys at Groton and other boarding schools,” Dean wrote, “were systematically taught how to imagine manhood.”⁸¹ Inculcated through rigid discipline, Spartan conditions, and ‘character building’ exercises of sport and other competitive games (often approximating war or combat), students at Groton and other similar institutions were taught to emulate a particular ideal of manhood. “Conformity to the standards of the brotherhood was compulsory; and the penalty for any conspicuous deviation was becoming the target of ostracism, ridicule, and ritual physical abuse;” “Failure to adhere to an explicit ideal resulted in painful consequences: social, psychological, and, frequently, physical.”⁸² For Welles, a self-described ‘worm’ and a ‘loner’, such failure was all but inevitable and the consequences severe.⁸³

⁷⁷ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 299-336.

⁷⁸ For an in depth exploration of the racialized and sexualized language of conquest and power in the United States through the persona of Theodore Roosevelt, see: Sarah Watts, *Rough Rider in the White House: Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Desire* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003).

⁷⁹ Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*, 22.

⁸⁰ Peter W. Cookson, Jr. and Caroline Hodges Persell, *Preparing for Power: America's Elite Boarding Schools* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1985), 124.

⁸¹ Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*, 24.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 25, 24.

⁸³ Hanson, “Sumner Welles and the American System”, 33-4.

The implications of this brutally enforced hegemonic masculinity for the individuals it was foisted upon went far beyond beliefs about gender roles. It instilled Grotonian boys with a belief in the primacy, indeed the nobility, of adversarial confrontation, competitiveness, and combat. “[T]he prescriptions of ‘manliness’ compel[led] men to defend their society against internal and external threat” and to perceive those threats in the first place.⁸⁴ More profoundly, these processes of socialization affected how these future “decision makers understood threats, and which responses they considered legitimate or even conceivable.”⁸⁵ Valourizing “courage and ‘toughness,’” the men inculcated in this way opted for aggression over compromise and bullheadedness over collaboration forming, in Dean’s words, an “Imperial Brotherhood.”⁸⁶

Dean’s conception of an imperial brotherhood provides a useful template for understanding the way discourses about gender and sexuality influence foreign policymakers. However, it can also be expanded to understand how alternative perspectives on power can be learned among those who were inculcated in the same fashion but whose personality and positionality inoculated them against some of its lessons. In Welles’ case, although he was immersed in Groton’s regimented lifestyle and the ethos it exuded, because of his social and sexual marginalization he learned different lessons about manhood, and hence formed different ideas about power, aggression, and its use in the wider world. Dean tacitly acknowledged the possibility of people like Welles who interpreted their experiences with this cultural indoctrination differently, noting how “[a] few alumni, particularly those of an artistic bent, looked back on their experience with dismay and a sense that the brutalities of boarding school had damaged them (and their classmates) or had interfered with healthy adjustment to life.”⁸⁷

For Welles the aggressive masculinity idealized at Groton, with which he did not identify and by which he was likely victimized, was separate from the obligations to patriotic duty, class-conscious *noblesse oblige*, and maintenance of

⁸⁴ Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*, 241.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 28.

social order. Clues to Welles' disposition against aggression were evident in his reminiscences of this period. Recalling his reactions as a child to the dangers of the outside world, Welles later wrote in *The Time For Decision* "I can well remember as a child looking with trepidation at the flaming cartoons prevalent in the nineties after the Bulgarian and Armenian massacres."⁸⁸ Closer to home, Welles emphasized the non-belligerent aspects of figures he admired, despite their reputation for aggression. This was most evident in his appreciation for Theodore Roosevelt himself, with whom Welles was familiar both by reputation and through correspondence with Roosevelt's sister, Corrine. In a pair of letters between Welles and Corrine Roosevelt in 1912, Welles expounded on his admiration for Theodore, but conspicuously without making mention of his martial or chauvinistic prowess. Reflecting on the importance of then-Presidential candidate Theodore Roosevelt, Welles opined that Roosevelt was "the greatest force for good that the United States has ever known."⁸⁹ In contemplating Roosevelt's potential demise, Welles emphasized how such a "tremendous disaster" would bring "ruin" and be compounded by the "great social crisis" at hand.⁹⁰ In a subsequent letter, Welles passed along a short list of translations of articles originating in Latin America written about Roosevelt. Welles sought to underline "how truly he was appreciated in Latin America notwithstanding the political capital made by his opponents."⁹¹

Thus, Welles' perception of Roosevelt centred more on his appreciation of Roosevelt's beatific reputation and his hopeful, progressive leadership; he overlooked the martial aspects of Roosevelt's record. It was an indication that Welles' values were not perfectly aligned with the Grotonian ethos of manly Christian aggression. Combined with his reserved and pacifistic manner (Peabody had, after all, recommended him for the clergy), there was an identifiable departure

⁸⁸ Sumner Welles, *The Time For Decision* (London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), 243-4; See also: Hanson, "Sumner Welles and the American System", 33-34.

⁸⁹ Sumner Welles to Corrine Roosevelt Robinson, undated, Papers of Corrine Roosevelt Robinson, Series I, Container 1470, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Sumner Welles to Corrine Roosevelt Robinson, 29 May, Papers of Corrine Roosevelt Robinson, Series I, Container 1470, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

in Welles' personality from the swaggering masculinity that imbued so much of the political and social culture in which he was being inculcated.

However, despite the fact that Welles developed attitudes toward aggression and force that were atypical of most of his classmates, the Groton experience left a distinct impression. Welles imbibed the paternalistic sense of duty and belief in the superiority of American civilization that Groton taught him but eschewed the belligerent tone and tactics. For Welles, American imperial expansion was less of a struggle for global domination against implacable foes and more of a constructive endeavour, eliding confrontation and using alternative means to achieve power. Throughout the rest of his career, Welles' approach to diplomatic matters and foreign affairs was consistently tinged with this balance of aversion to militarism and belief in the beneficence and superiority of American power. In Latin America he encouraged "multilateralization" of U.S. foreign policy; in Europe he proposed collaborative disarmament agreements even in the face of imminent war; his plans for a postwar organization were described as a "quest for a new world order," and he pursued it all through a "supple and protean" diplomacy.⁹²

That predisposition would shape Welles' later decision making just as the emphasis on manliness and aggression had shaped those of his contemporaries. It would emerge gradually during the early phases of his career and mature into a cohesive worldview by the time he became Undersecretary of State in the later 1930s and 1940s.⁹³ More immediately, it would spur Welles to take certain decisions and choose certain paths in life that were more amenable to the application of his particular sensibility and less hostile to the queer elements of his personality, starting with his entry into the State Department.

⁹² Graff, "Strategy of Involvement", 52; O'Sullivan, *Postwar Planning*, 94; Thomas M. Millington, "The Latin American Diplomacy of Sumner Welles" (Ph.D. Dissertation: Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, 1966), 273.

⁹³ See Chapters Two, Four, and Five for fuller elaboration of this collaborative paternalistic idealism worldview.

Robust and Extravagant: Gender Norms and Welles' Early Career

Although Welles never gave a specific reason why he decided on a diplomatic career and applied to the State Department in 1915, his decision to do so would have come as little surprise to anyone aware of Welles' personality and the State Department's reputation. The State Department and Welles were a perfect match. Both were predisposed to prioritizing diplomatic solutions over militaristic ones in resolving disputes, both were concerned with the importance of public service, and both carried with them a reputation for skirting the edges of norms of behaviour with regards to gender and sexuality.

Notwithstanding its venerable position in the auspices of American governing traditions, the State Department was often the object of suspicion and derision as a manifestation of federal power and alleged subversion. As early as the nineteenth century, critics attacked civil servants (including those in the State Department) for being "effeminate" and "'political hermaphrodites'."⁹⁴ The State Department came under particular attack for its elitism and because of the perception of anything foreign as being necessarily potentially un-American – what historian David Johnson described as "long-standing rumors that the diplomatic corps was a haven for effete intellectuals."⁹⁵ On account of their demeanor, background, and comportment diplomats (including Welles) were portrayed as being part of a "diplomatic aristocracy" that was perceived to exist apart from the experiences and perspectives of most Americans.⁹⁶ This separateness derived in part from suspicion by those who feared foreign influences corrupting the integrity of the U.S. and was often expressed in gendered language. Politicians and journalists fretted about "diplomats [who] might succumb to European foppishness and manners" and compromise the nation's interests as a result.⁹⁷ In this view, "[i]f

⁹⁴ Rung, Margaret C., *Servants of the State: Managing Diversity & Democracy in the Federal Workforce, 1933-1953* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002), 9, 14.

⁹⁵ Johnson, *Lavender Scare*, 69.

⁹⁶ Barry Rubin, *Secrets of State: The State Department and the Struggle Over U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 27.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

American diplomacy itself was a practice designed to quarantine foreign contagions, those on the front lines were deemed particularly prone to corruption.”⁹⁸

By the twentieth century, such anxieties had mutated into the slightly less virulent, but no less pervasive stereotype of the “cookie pushers in striped pants” whose defining characteristics included cosmopolitanism, gregariousness, sophistication, and homosexuality.⁹⁹ Although often exaggerated and not uniformly applicable to every gay man or diplomat, the stereotype was widely known and its presence was a matter of concern for anyone working in the State Department. Thus, the mere fact that Welles was working in the State Department meant that discourses about gender and sexuality were applied to his professional life automatically.

Even if this had not been the case Welles did little to dispel such associations. In his initial annual performance evaluation by the State Department in 1918, following a successful posting to Japan, the State Department assessed Welles’ capacity as a diplomat. The report rated as “excellent” Welles’ “dignity” and “discretion” while noting his “particular forte” was his “judgment & willingness to assume responsibility.”¹⁰⁰ In the euphemistic parlance of the State Department of the time, these descriptors indicated a highly talented diplomat with the ability to sway opinions and manage social settings to his advantage. They were also indicators of Welles’ preternatural reserve and a sign that Welles’ efforts to conceal his private persona while constructing a more socially amenable public one were well underway.

Welles’ early performance reviews had further telling comments that indicated the influence of discourses about gender and sexuality. Welles was described as having an “extravagant” scale of living.¹⁰¹ When describing Welles’ capacity for entertainment of local dignitaries, it emphasized the “rather expensive”

⁹⁸ Rubin, *Secrets of State*, 6.

⁹⁹ Johnson, *Lavender Scare*, 65, 70, quoting Philip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers* (New York: Rinehart, 1942; reprint, New York: Pocket Books, 1960), 232-60.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Sumner Welles Performance Evaluation’, SWP, Box: 261, Folder: 3.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

attire worn by his wife at various occasions.¹⁰² Such descriptions reveal as much about the priorities of the State Department as they do about Welles: ‘extravagant’ and ‘rather expensive’ were pre-selected terms on the evaluation sheet. Nevertheless, the report singled out Welles for his conspicuous social deportment. It implicitly linked together Welles’ success in diplomatic affairs with his sophisticated tastes in clothes and dining and the ability such tastes gave him to manipulate diplomatic situations to his advantage.

The State Department’s assessment of Welles at this early stage also recalled many of the characteristics identified earlier in this chapter as those indicative of an individual who possessed a concealed stigma. Welles’ exquisite comportment and attention to detail, particularly in social settings, was a textbook example of the “careful reading of social cues” and “increased sensitivity and diagnostic accuracy with regard to others’ reactions” that were the result of the psychological effort to conceal a stigma.¹⁰³ Like Welles’ austere demeanour, itself a consequence of the psychological effort of hiding his sexual orientation, Welles’ immaculate deportment and conspicuous propriety were integral parts of his personality and critical components of his diplomatic profile.

Conclusion:

The diplomat Sumner Welles became at the height of his career was shaped by the personality and perspectives he forged as a young man. Exceptionally, the crucible of Welles’ formative years involved navigating the extraordinarily difficult social and psychological path introduced by his sexuality. Traversing it successfully or without incurring disaster left a profound mark on his temperament, comportment, and attitude. The legacy of these years shaped his personality and set many of the psychological parameters in which Welles would operate throughout the rest of his life, which on account of his later stature and power, had significant consequences for U.S. politics and global affairs.

¹⁰² Sumner Welles Performance Evaluation’, SWP, Box: 261, Folder: 3.

¹⁰³ Tilcsik, Anteby, and Knight, “Concealable Stigma”, 11, 6.

The process by which Welles realized and reacted to his social marginalization began with his time at Groton Preparatory School. From an early age Welles developed an acute sense of being an outsider, primarily because of his deviation from established norms and ideals of masculinity and sexuality. Welles' inhabiting of a social space outside the heterosexist norms of his time was inescapable, as his relationships with Ives Gammell and others attested to. Excluded from full participation in the "symbolizations, and exhortations of masculinity" that were so important to the social world he inhabited, Welles developed specific coping mechanisms to protect himself from conspicuous attention and insulate himself from potential attack.¹⁰⁴ The aloof personality and austere demeanour that resulted from these efforts became one of the hallmarks of Welles' persona as an adult and a diplomat.

Welles' queer positionality had wider implications too. Welles' location on the margins of masculinity isolated him from prevalent social and political discourses that sanctified violence and aggression in the name of nationalism. Suspicious of the bullish and clannish exhortations to struggle for greatness, but still convinced of the righteousness of his class and his country, Welles eschewed the overt aggression and adversarial mentality of others from his class and background while embracing a more idealistic view. That disposition eventually led him into a career in the State Department, where his impulses were channelled into specific policies, ones that still operated within the parameters set by the attitudes forged in his youth. Along with subsequent experiences after he came of age, explored in the next chapter, these instincts led Welles to form a unique perspective to diplomatic problem solving later in life.

¹⁰⁴ David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 3.

Chapter Two:
***Emerging Patterns: Paternalistic Idealism, Anti-Militarism, and Welles’
Diplomatic Style, 1915-1925***

Reflecting on his career in his 1944 memoir *The Time for Decision*, Sumner Welles wistfully recalled “[t]he exuberant hope and confident optimism that was so general in the United States” in the immediate aftermath of World War One.¹ “[W]e were headed toward a new and better world. We were confident that the errors of the past were to be valiantly corrected; that human wrongs would all be righted,” Welles enthused, and that “war, in this new dawn breaking over the earth, was now a nightmare of the past.”² Of particular importance was that “our United States had asserted leadership in this great crusade;” “We had been thrilled to the depth of our emotional and intellectual being by the vision that Woodrow Wilson had held out to us of a world order founded on justice and on democracy.”³ Yet, as Welles himself conceded only a few paragraphs later, “the wave of idealism which had swept the world ... lasted a short time indeed. And ... the dreams and hopes of humanity vanished.”⁴

The world’s postwar optimism may have dissipated only a few months after the Armistice of 11 November 1918, but the idealism and confidence it inspired in Welles endured far longer.⁵ As he launched his career as a diplomat in the second half of the 1910s Welles was imbued with an optimistic belief in the improvement of the moral and material wellbeing of mankind, and the role the United States could play in bringing it about. This belief would place Welles solidly on the side of Wilsonianism and internationalism in foreign policy matters for the rest of his career; by the 1940s he would become one of the most forceful and erudite advocates for that particular strain of foreign policy thinking.

¹ Welles, Sumner. *The Time for Decision* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), 3.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁵ For a survey of the political and ideological shifts following World War One, see: Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916-1931* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014).

However, Welles' beliefs were far more sophisticated and ambiguous than his Pollyannaish remembrances might imply. Though optimistic about the ability of peoples and nations to improve their lot, Welles consistently stressed the need for American involvement; he articulated a vision that was highly paternalistic toward countries outside Western Europe and highly suspicious of those inside it. Furthermore, Welles' embrace of Wilsonian principles, such as non-intervention and multilateral cooperation, reflected much older and deeper strands of Welles' thinking, born out of the prejudices of his class and innate misgivings about aggression and belligerence.

This chapter examines the emergence of Welles' outlook and foreign policy ideology during his first stint in the State Department in the years 1915-1925. It investigates how Welles matured as policymaker, articulating a more sophisticated understanding of global affairs and a comprehensive worldview during his early career. That worldview was defined by two key components: paternalistic idealism toward the outside world, particularly Latin America, and an aversion to using military solutions to solve diplomatic problems, preferring constitutional and multilateral options instead. Building on arguments presented in Chapter One, which established the socio-cultural and psychological basis for Welles' behaviour and attitudes, this chapter shows how Welles' worldview came into focus through a combination of idiosyncratic preferences and prejudices and the impact of broader forces in international politics, ultimately emerging with a distinctive Wellesian approach to diplomacy.

Early Career Significance:

The origins and contours of Welles' worldview constitute perhaps the richest vein of scholarly debate about him. Historians studying Welles have disagreed on the most fundamental of matters. According to Welles' biography, he was "a benevolent imperialist in tune with his times."⁶ Conversely, Irwin Gellman believed

⁶ Benjamin Welles, *Sumner Welles: FDR's Global Strategist* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 75

one of Welles' "greatest faults [was his] ignorance of or lack of sympathy with others' feelings" – hardly benevolent.⁷ The first book-length assessment of Welles' career praised, "Welles' success in communicating his belief in the Good Neighbor approach [as being] due to his open and candid attitude in conversations with Latin American officials."⁸ Yet the most recent work analyzing Welles' career wondered whether he masked his real beliefs "behind an idealistic smokescreen?"⁹

On his demeanour and behaviour, too, scholars have reached little consensus. Assessing his assignment to Cuba in 1933, one scholar wrote how Welles "demonstrated the rigid, dogmatic, and opinionated characteristics that would persist for the rest of his career" while another praised the government Welles helped set up in that country for being "the most intricate and contextualistic diplomacy Welles had yet employed."¹⁰ In her attempt at a more systematic assessment of Welles' beliefs, Gail Hanson convincingly argued Progressive-era lawmakers, especially Elihu Root, Philander Knox, and Enoch Crowder, provided a template for Welles' diplomatic career and outlook. Yet even she had to concede "the absence of psychological insights into Welles himself" her study could provide.¹¹

Clearly, there is little harmony over what, if anything, motivated Welles' thinking or characterized his diplomatic style. What can be said is that Welles' approach to diplomacy did not chime with any singular motivation or ideology. A confluence of factors including, but not limited to, the impact of World War One, the failure of the League of Nations, the reconfiguration of American involvement in the Caribbean, and Welles' own upbringing pushed him to follow paths and adopt positions that would have a formative influence on his career and, eventually, a

⁷ Irwin F. Gellman, *Secret Affairs: Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 62.

⁸ Frank Warren Graff, "Strategy of Involvement: A Diplomatic Biography of Sumner Welles" (Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Michigan, 1971), 146.

⁹ Christopher D. O'Sullivan, *Sumner Welles: Postwar Planning and the Quest for a New World Order 1937-1943* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), xiv.

¹⁰ Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, 84. Thomas M. Millington. "The Latin American Diplomacy of Sumner Welles" (Ph.D. Dissertation: Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, 1966), 276.

¹¹ Gail Hanson, "Sumner Welles and the American System: The United States in the Caribbean, 1920-1940" (Ph.D. Dissertation: State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1990), 479.

lasting impact on the foreign policy of the United States. Identifying these factors, assessing their interactions with one another, and determining their ramifications are essential steps to understanding how Welles became such a prominent figure in U.S. foreign policy.

Examinations of policymakers' formative experiences have provided a wealth of scholarship, particularly in recent years. Graham Cross's analysis of the "diplomatic education" of Franklin Roosevelt offered a particularly relevant example of this historiographic approach.¹² Cross's attempt to "bring clarity and precision to the many existing shorthand descriptions of [FDR's] early life" elucidated many key themes that defined Roosevelt's later foreign policy, including his relationship with military power, his sense of geography, and his particular strain of internationalism.¹³ Cross contended FDR "found at least some of the answers" to the questions about how to forge an U.S.-led global hegemony "in his appreciation of the limitations of both physical and ideological power stemmed from the experiences of his prepresidential life and career."¹⁴ A similar approach to Welles can yield insights about his future worldview, how he conducted himself as a diplomat, and what were the salient features of his diplomatic thinking throughout his career.

The League, the Union, and the Republics: Welles' Paternalistic Idealism

The first major characteristic of Welles' worldview that came into focus during his first decade as a diplomat was a paternalistically idealistic attitude toward the rest of the world, particularly Latin America. Welles articulated a view that envisioned collaboration and cooperation among the nations of Latin America under the benevolent guardianship of the United States. This view, which manifested itself in many forms was most evident Welles' attitudes toward the League of Nations, his opinions about the British, his efforts to help facilitate the

¹² Graham Cross, *The Diplomatic Education of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1882-1933* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 6, 154-5, 166-7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

creation of a union of the nations of Central America, and his emulation of the rhetoric of Charles Evans Hughes.

The origins of Welles' paternalistic idealism stemmed both from his own idiosyncratic upbringing and broader social and political currents of thought in the U.S. during his formative years. As discussed in Chapter One, the *noblesse oblige* of his East Coast aristocratic social milieu and the muscular Christianity of Groton Preparatory School had specifically inculcated him with a sense of obligation and the nobility of United States leadership. Endicott Peabody's directive to instil in Grotonian students a drive for leadership compelled Welles from an early age to view the outside world as a place in need of reordering and improvement, by his hand if necessary. As he could not embrace the aggressive masculinity behind Groton's ethos on account of his sexuality Welles sublimated it into a beneficent idealistic paternalism.

Paternalistic attitudes toward Latin America among people from the United States had multiple sources. Throughout its history, but especially after the Spanish-American War, many in the U.S viewed the countries of Latin America with a combination of covetousness and protectiveness. "American middle-class men," wrote Fredrick Pike, "esteemed the so-called manly qualities, as opposed to feminine weakness and emotionalism and childish fecklessness and fantasizing. Qualities that Americans admired, they consistently failed to find among Latin Americans."¹⁵ This highly gendered and sexualized attitude, extended beyond Latin America, suffused Americans' understanding of their nation, its role in the world, and its view of outsiders. Writing of the Cold War era Lavender Scare, historian Naoko Shibusawa wrote: "[s]exuality was ... an elemental way in which hierarchies of power were rationalized in an imperialist framework: who was civilized/uncivilized or worthy/unworthy."¹⁶ Welles was not immune to these perspectives. Such views were detectable in him even before he entered the State Department. Gail Hanson speculated upon a paternalistic streak in Welles' thinking

¹⁵ See: Fredrick B. Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 48

¹⁶ Naoko Shibusawa, 'The Lavender Scare and Empire: Rethinking Cold War Antigay Politics', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (September 2012), 751.

about the world beyond the U.S. in her observations of Welles' interest in the writings of art historian Ernest F. Fenellosa. According to Hanson, Welles may have "retained a core of belief in Fenellosa's views on the 'feminine' East and 'masculine' West and his advocacy of world-wide cooperation."¹⁷

Wherever they originated, Welles' attitudes during his early life showed susceptibility toward seeing the rest of the world through a paternalistic lens. However, these views were not fully formed by the time he entered the State Department in 1915. They emerged gradually over the subsequent decade, evolving in response to his experiences at his diplomatic postings and worldwide events of great significance. Reflecting the confluence of both longstanding paternalistic views of Latin America by people from the U.S. and the impact of the aftermath of World War One, the first indication of Welles' evolving worldview came during his posting to Argentina (1917-1920) amid discussions about the recently proposed League of Nations.

Argentine-American relations were in flux at the end of the 1910s. Up to that time "the policy of the United States towards Argentina ... [was] merely a specific application of its general Latin American policy," thus lacking, in other words, any special attention or consideration.¹⁸ Argentina, for its part, "defined its relationship with the United States in terms of autonomy."¹⁹ This stance of mutual disinterest did not make for warm relations between the two countries but economic opportunities stemming from the war led to renewed mutual interest. American investment in Argentina grew rapidly after World War One as did trade between the countries, with American products constituting over one quarter of Argentina's imports by the end of the 1920s, a transformation to which Welles was a firsthand witness as Commercial Affairs Officer at the American Embassy in Buenos Aires.²⁰

¹⁷ Hanson, "Sumner Welles and the American System", 48, n.40.

¹⁸ Arthur P. Whitaker, *The United States and Argentina* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 88.

¹⁹ Deborah L. Norden and Roberto Russell, *The United States and Argentina: Changing Relations in a Changing World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1.

²⁰ Harold F. Peterson, *Argentina and the United States, 1810-1960* (New York: State University of New York, 1964), 342.

Argentina's place in the United States' conception of postwar international affairs also depended upon forces beyond their bilateral relationship, namely, the League of Nations. By February 1919 the preliminary outlines for the League of Nations drawn up at the Paris Peace Conference had become public knowledge.²¹ Drawing on Progressive politics, a highly moralistic worldview, and robust patriotism, President Woodrow Wilson articulated lofty new goals for American foreign policy, emphasizing the moral obligation of Americans to spread the benefits of democracy to all the peoples of the world, the main vehicle of which was to be the League of Nations.²²

However, the setup of the League had yet to be agreed upon and a significant backlash was brewing. A contingent of Republican lawmakers, led by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, began speaking out against the League, and opposition in the United States Senate as well as within the general population began to grow.²³ Although the proposal was popular among the many Democrats who shared Wilson's idealism, many worried that the League might trump American foreign policy prerogatives in key areas, in particular with respect to the Monroe Doctrine, the defensive proclamation against European incursion into the Western Hemisphere.²⁴

It was in this context that Welles began to formulate his blend of idealism and paternalism. Argentina's place within the League was a matter of intensive debate in that country. In recollections of his daily activities at the time, Welles recorded in detail the thoughts of several prominent Argentine politicians who

²¹ John Milton Cooper, Jr. *Breaking the Heart of the World: Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the League of Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 11.

²² Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy in American Foreign Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 7; Arthur S. Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist: A Look at His Major Foreign Policies* (New York: Viewpoints, 1957), 12-16. The literature on the origins and characteristics of Wilsonianism is voluminous. In addition to the texts listed above excellent titles include, but are not limited to: Norman A. Graebner and Edward M. Bennett, *The Versailles Treaty and Its Legacy: The Failure of the Wilsonian Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition: The Treaty Fight in Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Breaking the Heart of the World: Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the League of Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²³ Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist*, 127-9, 135.

²⁴ Herbert F. Margulies, *The Mild Reservationists and the League of Nations Controversy in the Senate* (London: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 12; Merlo J. Pusey, *Charles Evans Hughes, Vol. 1* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 396.

expressed opinions about the League. In so doing he revealed a great deal about his own beliefs. Welles' views about the League reflected a tension over the proper role of the League and the prerogatives of the United States in Latin America respectively. He broadly agreed with the idealistic sentiment and internationalist bent behind Wilson's proclamations, but detectable in Welles' support for the League was a vein of nationalistic self-interest and a paternalistic prioritizing of American hegemony over genuine multilateralism.

Welles expressed his ambivalence in the context of discussing the Monroe Doctrine. In a long talk with former Foreign Affairs Minister Jose Luís Murature in April 1919, Welles discussed the relationship between the Monroe Doctrine and the League's structure. In his diary Welles noted Murature was "in entire accord with that portion of public opinion in the United States which demands the definite inclusion of the Monroe Doctrine in the League."²⁵ A few days later over dinner with Dr. Carlos Ibarguren, a progressive Conservative deputy, Welles recalled Ibarguren expressing the opinion that the inclusion of the Monroe Doctrine in the structure of the League "was not a mere selfish insistence on the right to exclude others from the material advantages of the continent, but was rather a declaration to all the world that for all purposes of international right the continent was not divided, but would stand together."²⁶

Though these opinions were those of the Argentine officials with whom Welles met, the detail with which he recorded these sentiments, and the frequency with which they appear in his diaries suggests Welles was not giving an unfiltered account of any view expressed to him about the League, but to some degree was expressing his own views instead. To wit, on those occasions that Welles recorded his own views alongside those of his Argentine counterparts, the views expressed fit together seamlessly. When challenged by Senator Diego Molinari about the potential upset to hemispheric relations portended by the League of Nations, Welles stated that he believed Americans would "confin[e] ourselves in our dealings with Europe and with Asia merely to the intercourse and relations which our obligations under

²⁵ 'Welles Diary', 12 April 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 1.

²⁶ 'Welles Diary', 14 April 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 1.

the League of Nations imposed, and to the obligations which commercial interests demanded.”²⁷ In essence, Welles was expressing his belief that the relations between the United States and the rest of the Americas were to remain sacrosanct, notwithstanding American involvement in the League of Nations.

Similarly, in a discussion with opposition politician Sanchez Sorondo in August 1919, Welles espoused the view that:

“ ... I felt that by adherence to the League of Nations it was possible for the immense and almost dormant moral force which is contained in the political spirit of the American republics to assert itself and to become, as it should be, the greatest factor in the world today, by opposing itself to the imperialism of the far East and the chaos threatening Europe.”²⁸

Two intertwined strains of Welles’ thinking were evident in this passage. Firstly, the degree to which his outlook at the time was essentially idealistic and optimistic. The ‘moral force’ and ‘spirit of the American republics’ of which Welles spoke were his own formulations, expressed in utopian terms, of how he envisioned relations within the Western Hemisphere, themes to which Welles would return frequently during his subsequent career. The second characteristic evident in Welles’ reflection was the undeniable self-interested formulation of his idealistic pronouncements. Though ostensibly altruistic, Welles’ depiction of the League was couched in his understanding of how it might be employed to serve U.S. interests, in this case countering imperialism in the Western Hemisphere. Calling out the dangers posed by the Far East and the chaos threatening Europe served as a rallying cry for opposing non-American intrusion into that portion of the globe that Welles had identified as a critical component of U.S. foreign policy, as opposed to areas outside the Western Hemisphere which would require attentiveness only out of obligation.

Thus barely concealed behind Welles’ ostensible support for the League was a clear intention to use it as a means of achieving specific goals. Welles revealed a

²⁷ ‘Welles Diary’, 13 August 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 3.

²⁸ ‘Welles Diary’, 7 August 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 3.

multifaceted understanding of U.S. relations with Latin America, with Wilsonian utopianism tempered by a desire to maintain U.S. hegemony in Latin America, even under the auspices of a world organization. It also mirrored the deeper tension within Welles' personality between his Groton-instilled *noblesse oblige* and his more sentimental qualities.

Perfidious Albion

Another dimension of Welles' paternalistic desire to maintain U.S. hegemony over the countries of Latin America as a means of bringing about its advancement and progress can be seen in his resentful attitude toward potential rivals to the U.S. in that region. Consistently evident in Welles' writings while in Argentina was a persistent and palpable resentment of rival European powers, particularly Great Britain. This dislike did not reflect official American policy nor was it an obvious reaction to deliberately provocative policies on the part of the British. Rather, Welles' antipathy reflected his own beliefs about the role of the United States in the world and the future of Latin America.

To some degree Welles had reason to resent the British in Argentina. Britain had long held a "special relationship" with the Argentines, stemming from immense economic investment in the country during the middle and late nineteenth century.²⁹ By the early twentieth century Britain had become "the Argentine Republic's banker, stockbroker, railway builder and supplier."³⁰ For its own part, American policy toward Britain following the conclusion of World War One was ambivalent; "there were no violent quarrels during the twenties, little active argument, but just indifference to each other's point of view," as witnessed by the encroachment of American business into British interests in Argentina.³¹

²⁹ Jeremy Adelman, *Essays in Argentine Labour History, 1870-1930* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1992), 6.

³⁰ James Scobie, quoted in Eduardo Crawley, *A House Divided: Argentina, 1880-1980* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1984), 10.

³¹ Bruce M. Russett, *Community and Contention: Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1963), 13, citing William Clark, *Less Than Kin*, New York, 1957, 129-130.

However, while challenging British dominance in Argentina, American diplomats after April 1917 had calibrated their language carefully to avoid opening a rift in their wartime alliance. This was evident even in Argentine affairs. In a telegram to the Secretary of State detailing an attempt by the British to seek the annulment of a telegraph concession given to a company by the Argentine government, the American Ambassador advised a yielding and carefully worded response from the State Department that would “bring the attention of the British Government to the manner in which the British authorities” had acted.³²

Welles exhibited no such niceties. Instead, he displayed an attitude of antipathy toward the British that extended beyond any understandable spirit of competition or feelings of national rivalry. He was consistently dismissive and condescending about British diplomats and British people in general, never missing an opportunity to deride them for what he perceived as incompetence or arrogance.

He blamed the British for difficulties and disruptions that arose in various sectors of Argentina’s economy. According to Welles, a general strike in 1919 was instigated by the poor treatment of a sailor by a British ship captain and its escalation two weeks later a consequence of poor treatment of Argentine workers by British-owned companies.³³ Conversely, a British offer to end an earlier strike with a payment of 200 000 pesos to the labour unions was dubbed by Welles “a typically stupid piece of British diplomacy in South America.”³⁴

Little about the British legation assigned to Buenos Aires impressed Welles. He noted that the British Minister, Sir Reginald Tower, had “upon every possible occasion gone out of his way to offend” a prominent Argentine politician, and had “undoubtedly injured the Allied cause by doing so.”³⁵ The actions of an agent of the British-owned Central & South American Telegraph Company, identified as Mr.

³² ‘Telegram from Stimson to the Acting Secretary of State’, 10 December 1918, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1919, Vol. I, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1934), 172.

³³ ‘Welles Diary’, 10 April 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 1; ‘Welles Diary’, 22 April 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 2.

³⁴ ‘Welles Diary’, 17 March 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 1. Historical and contemporary accounts do not support Welles’ interpretation of events. It is generally agreed that the dockworkers strike stemmed from deep fissures in Argentine politics and economic pressures following the end of World War One. See: Rock, David, *Argentina in the Twentieth Century* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 157-158.

³⁵ ‘Welles Diary’, 24 April 1919, SWP, 1919-1943, Box: 167, Folder: 2.

Irland, was described by Welles as “about as perfect a specimen of the narrow-minded Britisher as one could find.”³⁶

For their part, the British took little notice of Welles’ hostility. British diplomatic and consular officers posted to Argentina at the same time as Welles cooperated easily with other representatives of the United States on a variety of matters. The U.S., for example, acquiesced to a British request to divert a shipment of coal bound for Argentina to a British-owned railway line that was running short.³⁷ In a note to Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, British Ambassador to Argentina Sir Reginald Tower reported on a thoughtful consultation between himself and Ambassador Stimson over finding a resolution to the ongoing dockworkers strike in Buenos Aires.³⁸ British economic concerns in Argentina, which were substantial, and a topic of frequent discussion in diplomatic correspondence, rarely mentioned the U.S. and never approached the level of rivalry imagined by Welles.

Welles’ desire to undercut the British pushed him to seek out allies in kind. In January he met with two businessmen who told him anecdotally of increased British competition with American commerce across South America.³⁹ Only a few weeks later, he recommended curtailing cooperation with British (and French) legations on matters stemming from the end of hostilities in Europe.⁴⁰ Welles also made a point of establishing connections with members of the Argentine political elite who were suspicious or resentful of British investment in their country. By doing so, Welles tapped into a deep divide in Argentine political circles over the course their foreign policy should take. Proponents of closer ties with the United States advocated for “American regionalism” while those who supported closer ties with Europe (or weaker ties with the U.S.) pushed for “Europe and universalism.”⁴¹ Still

³⁶ ‘Welles Diary’, 13 February 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 1.

³⁷ ‘Telegram to Lord Grey’, 22 December 1919; ‘Decypher. Mr. Lindsay (Washington)’, 30 January 1920 BNA, FO 368/2051.

³⁸ Dispatch to Balfour, 22 April 1919, British National Archives (BNA), FO 371/3504.

³⁹ ‘Welles Diary’, 22 January 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 1.

⁴⁰ ‘Welles Diary’, 6 February 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 1.

⁴¹ Whitaker, *The United States and Argentina*, 95.

others advocated for pan-Hispanic alternatives to provide a bulwark against the United States.⁴²

Welles met frequently with members of the American regionalist group, among them Diego Molinari, a man whom Welles noted believed the aforementioned dockworkers strike was “entirely due to British influence.”⁴³ Welles and Molinari quickly became close friends and the two shared further mutual criticisms of the British over the duration of Welles’ tenure. Welles also met with various deputies and local officials close to President Irigoyen who expressed to Welles the latter’s resentment of the “commercial system of domination” (in Welles’ words) established by Britain during the preceding decades and of recent actions by the British Legation.⁴⁴ Indeed, much to Welles’ delight, Irigoyen himself seemed to share some of these opinions, with Welles reporting in January 1919 that Irigoyen “had no confidence in and disliked extremely” British Minister Sir Reginald Tower.⁴⁵

In fairness, although Welles’ antipathy for the British was paramount, his jealousy toward potential rival powers in Latin America was not entirely exclusive to that country. The French legation, Welles complained, was comprised of “retired consular officers who have nothing to recommend them to either official or social circles.”⁴⁶ Though a perfectly reasonable criticism to make, the motivation for this critique may have been jealousy, as Welles noted resentfully that despite the lack of attention, there is “no country more affectionately regarded by the Argentines in general” than France.⁴⁷ Conversely, Welles was reassured when President Irigoyen assured him that the war had precluded any rapprochement with German businesses “for years to come” and, on a separate occasion, when informed by a Japanese diplomat that Japan’s interests in Argentina were unlikely to improve in the near future.⁴⁸

⁴² John Milton Cooper Jr., *Reconsidering Woodrow Wilson: Progressivism, Internationalism, War, and Peace* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 179.

⁴³ ‘Welles Diary,’ 24 February 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 1.

⁴⁴ ‘Welles Diary,’ 23 January 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 1.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ ‘Welles Diary,’ 15 July 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ ‘Welles Diary,’ 23 January 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 1; ‘Welles Diary,’ 9 April 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 1.

But Britain was the most powerful non-American presence in Argentina and for that reason it garnered the lion's share of Welles' ire. He identified it, correctly, as the greatest obstacle to American penetration into Argentina, and hence to the hemispheric solidarity he sought. Welles' Anglophobia was a reaction to the challenge posed by the British to the righteous American leadership Welles had been taught during his formative years and now sought to effect. Like his conditional support for the League of Nations, it reflected a deep-seated desire for U.S. hegemony over Latin American countries, and the paternalistic obligation Welles believed Americans had toward its southern neighbours. Welles' experience in Argentina facing off against the British gave his worldview a tinge of Anglophobia that he would carry with him for the rest of his career.

Grander Strategy: The Central American Union

When Welles' assignment in Argentina came to an end in 1920, and he returned to Washington D.C. to take up the post of Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, his worldview was beginning to come into focus.⁴⁹ Increasingly confident in his ability to bring about the hemispheric cooperation and solidarity he so desperately sought, Welles looked for opportunities to enact his peculiar mix of paternalistic idealism and a desire to expand American influence. His first chance to do so came soon after his promotion in the form of a quixotic plan to forge a political union among the countries of Central America.

During the first decades of the twentieth century the nations of Central America briefly considered (not for the first time) forming a federal union among themselves.⁵⁰ Although idea eventually fell through due to the reluctance of Nicaragua to join the project, instability in Guatemala, and the perception of

⁴⁹ Welles was reassigned to Washington following his return from Argentina in early 1920. He was assigned to the Division of Latin American Affairs in May, made Assistant Chief of the Division in June, and promoted again to Acting Chief in September. Norman Davis to Sumner Welles, 1 September 1920, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, Decimal File 1910-1929, Box 1724: 123 W 45/69 - 123 W 523 - 48, 123W451/25a.

⁵⁰ See Thomas L. Karnes, *The Failure of Union: Central America, 1824-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 204-28.

meddling by the U.S., in the brief period when the union was still a possibility Welles was one of its most enthusiastic supporters.⁵¹ Here again Welles' methods and rhetoric for supporting the idea exhibited the same mix of idealism and paternalism that had characterized his support for the League of Nations and antipathy to British involvement in Argentina.

For the short time the Central American Union was being considered, Welles looked for any way he could think of to sculpt it in his own image. Early on he recommended the State Department propose moving the site of a conference on the proposed union to Washington D.C. His reasoning for doing so – to make “any attempt to foster anti-American sentiment ... impossible” – explicitly invoked the need to preserve American influence over the proceedings.⁵² Later on, during a visit of delegates from some of the proposed member-countries of the Union to Washington D.C., he personally arranged and shepherded the delegates of the provisional union into a meeting with the Secretary of State.⁵³

Welles' efforts to play midwife to the union's creation reflected the degree to which he was thinking strategically about U.S. influence in Latin America. In a memo to the Secretary of State elucidating a specific concern about a U.S. treaty with Nicaragua that was holding up negotiations Welles wrote, “I can see no valid reason why Central American Union should not be energetically supported by the Government of the United States.”⁵⁴ Tellingly, Welles justified his recommendation by underlining how it “will be a very distinct advance in the progress of the Central American peoples and will simplify to a great extent our dealings with Central America.”⁵⁵ He saw such a union as a potential “buffer state between Mexico and the other Latin American countries and would prevent to a great extent the infiltration

⁵¹ Karnes, *The Failure of Union: Central America*, 213, 219, 221.

⁵² Memorandum Re: Proposed Central American Conference, 20 August 1920, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, Decimal File 1910-1929, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Central America, 1910-29, Microcopy No. 672, Roll No.3.

⁵³ Welles to the Secretary of State, 19 November 1921, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, Decimal File 1910-1929, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Central America, 1910-29, Microcopy No. 672, Roll No.6.

⁵⁴ Welles to the Secretary of State, 11 May 1921, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, Decimal File 1910-1929, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Central America, 1910-29, Microcopy No. 672, Roll No.6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

of anti-American sentiment emanating from Mexico throughout the rest of the continent.”⁵⁶

Though Welles was not alone in his support for the idea of a Central American Union he was singular in his advocating for it from the perspective of both increasing U.S. esteem in Latin America and the wellbeing of the Central American people. In Welles’ emergent worldview, these two concepts were inseparable and complementary, whether under the auspices of an indigenously conceived multinational union or a global effort of assembling a league of nations. Notably, this formulation was in stark contrast to that of Welles’ superior, Assistant Secretary of State Fred Morris Dearing, who viewed the project as misguided. In a memo circulated in December 1921, Dearing argued the proposed union was ill conceived, unstable, and likely to foster anti-American sentiment, comparing the project unfavourably to the failed government of the Articles of Confederation.⁵⁷ As it happened, such pessimism proved prescient, as the Central American Union collapsed almost as quickly as it was formed. Nevertheless, Welles had made clear his enthusiasm for such a project and, in laying bare his reasons for doing so, further demonstrated his unique blend of paternalism and idealism in Latin American affairs.

Patronizing Paternalism: Charles Evans Hughes and Welles’ Emergent Worldview

Besides the experiences he gained from specific postings during his early career, Welles’ foreign policy outlook was also shaped by the people he worked with in the State Department during the 1920s, specifically Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes. Although they worked together for only four years, Welles and Hughes developed a close partnership. Hughes nurtured Welles’ career, helping

⁵⁶ Welles to the Secretary of State, 11 May 1921, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, Decimal File 1910-1929, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Central America, 1910-29, Microcopy No. 672, Roll No.6.

⁵⁷ Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State to Mr. Fletcher, 7 December 1921, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, Decimal File 1910-1929, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Central America, 1910-29, Microcopy No. 672, Roll No.6.

Welles hone his skills as a diplomat and allowing his emerging paternalistic and idealistic beliefs to crystallize into a more coherent worldview.

Charles Evans Hughes provided a worthy model for Welles to attempt to imitate. He was one of the United States' most accomplished political figures even before he became Secretary of State; his biography points to certain clues as to why Welles developed a professional affinity for him. Like Welles, Hughes was born in New York, albeit not raised among privilege as Welles was. He scaled the political and legal worlds of turn-of-the-century America with surprising speed, graduating from Columbia Law School and becoming partner in a New York law firm by the age of twenty-five.⁵⁸ Like Welles, he made a name for himself as an indefatigable worker. As a litigator he earned a reputation as an impressive trial lawyer, possessed of substantial intellect and operating with "the vigor of a dynamo."⁵⁹ "When he rose to argue," historian Merlo Pusey wrote, "it was always a tour de force."⁶⁰ These attributes served him well in court as well as on the political stage, which he entered somewhat reluctantly in 1906 as the Republican candidate for governor of New York.⁶¹ His election brought him a national profile, culminating in his unsuccessful run for president in 1916 against Woodrow Wilson. His selection as Secretary of State in Warren Harding's cabinet five years later surprised no one; President Harding and Vice-President Calvin Coolidge were said to be "in awe" of the former governor.⁶² In Hughes Welles could see an example of the work ethic and career trajectory he hoped to follow: tireless effort, backed by a brilliant mind, and ultimately rewarded with appointment to high political office.

Unsurprisingly, once the two men met they got along rather well. From the beginning of their collaboration in the State Department Welles and Hughes developed a good working relationship. Hughes was impressed with Welles' performance as Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs and kept him on in the post for over a year before selecting him to serve as Commissioner to the

⁵⁸ Betty Glad, *Charles Evans Hughes and the Illusions of Innocence: A Study in American Diplomacy* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1966), 59.

⁵⁹ Pusey, *Charles Evans Hughes, Vol. 1*, 384.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 385.

⁶¹ Glad, *Charles Evans Hughes*, 64.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 138.

Dominican Republic. In this manner, Welles was the beneficiary of Hughes' changes to the administration of the State Department, specifically ending the tradition of promoting diplomats more for economic or political stature than talent or accomplishment.⁶³ Hughes' willingness to promote Welles despite his young age "reflected [his] concern with merit," and foreshadowed the overhaul of the diplomatic and consular services that Hughes initiated, culminating in the passage of the 1924 Rogers Act.⁶⁴

The confidence Hughes placed in Welles was rewarded on multiple occasions. Welles' performance in the Dominican Republic earned him special commendation from Hughes, as did shorter missions to Haiti and Honduras, where Welles handled himself ably. Upon successful completion of his mission to the Dominican Republic, Hughes cabled Welles saying the Department "congratulates and commends you for the very important part that you have played in bringing about this result."⁶⁵ Welles made such a good impression that he was selected to personally accompany Hughes to the Pan American Conference in Panama in 1924. Here Welles again impressed Hughes, this time with his "special aptitude for negotiations with Latin Americans."⁶⁶ Reflecting in his diary later in life, Hughes wrote that Welles was "a diplomat of 'exceptional ability, poise, and force of character'."⁶⁷

Hughes' favourable impressions of Welles' were gladly reciprocated. Welles respected Hughes even before his appointment as Secretary of State, evidenced by his being "dismayed" when Hughes lost the 1916 election to Wilson.⁶⁸ Welles' admiration for Hughes continued after their work together in the State Department ended too. In the policy papers he wrote for Franklin Roosevelt during the years of

⁶³ It should be noted that although Welles was promoted for his abilities, he also possessed substantial financial and proprietary resources courtesy of his first wife, Esther Slater.

⁶⁴ Glad, *Charles Evans Hughes*, 135.

⁶⁵ Welles, *FDR's Global Strategist*, 101, quoting NARA RG 59, State Department Decimal File, Hughes to SW, 22 March 1924, 839.00/2812.

⁶⁶ Welles, *FDR's Global Strategist*, 94; quoting Hughes' memoirs, David J Danelski and Joseph S. Tulchin, eds. *The Autobiographical Notes of Charles Evans Hughes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 269.

⁶⁷ Merlo J. Pusey, *Charles Evans Hughes, Vol. 2* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 531, quoting CEH Notes, p.327.

⁶⁸ Welles *FDR's Global Strategist*, 49.

political exile, Welles wrote approvingly of Hughes' policies while in office.⁶⁹ Reflecting on Hughes later in life, Welles wrote "the Government of the United States was singularly successful so long as Mr. Hughes was Secretary of State" with regards to disputes in Latin America.⁷⁰

Hughes' Latin American policy had a profound influence on Welles. Over the subsequent years Welles would repeatedly invoke Hughes' example as a guiding light for his own policies and rhetoric. This was most obvious over the topic of the Monroe Doctrine. Beginning in 1921 Hughes delivered a series of speeches about the Monroe Doctrine that advocated for a general reassessment of American hemispheric policy. Other Secretaries of State before him, including Elihu Root and others, had attempted to rehabilitate the Monroe Doctrine, but few achieved very great success.⁷¹ Coming in the wake of World War One, where the United States saw its involvement in world affairs take on a new dimension, and in the shadow of the League of Nations, which many Americans saw as a threat to their traditional prerogatives, Hughes set out to reinterpret the Monroe Doctrine for a new age. According to one historian, Hughes "recognized, the meaning of the [Monroe] Doctrine had become obscured."⁷² He blamed this on the "tendency to use it as a cover for 'extravagant utterances and pretensions which are foreign to the purposes of our Government, the demands of our security, and the sentiment of our people'."⁷³

Hughes spoke frequently on the matter in public forums in the United States and at conferences in Latin America. As Marlo Pusey noted, Hughes argued "[t]he Monroe doctrine ... is not a policy of aggression; it is a policy of self-defense."⁷⁴ Giving a speech on the 100th anniversary of the declaration of the Doctrine, Hughes spoke of "the equality of the American republics" and "the duty of protecting the

⁶⁹ Welles to Roosevelt, 20 January 1928, SWP, Box: 148, Folder 8.

⁷⁰ Sumner Welles, *Naboth's Vineyard: The Dominican Republic, 1844-1924* (Payson & Clarke, 1928), 934.

⁷¹ Gaston Nerval, *Autopsy of the Monroe Doctrine: The Strange Story of Inter-American Relations* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1934), 155.

⁷² Glad, *Charles Evans Hughes*, 237.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, quoting *Our Relations to the Nations of the Western Hemisphere* (Princeton, N.J.: 1928), p.17.

⁷⁴ Pusey, *Charles Evans Hughes, Vol. 2*, 535.

rights which citizens of other states have acquired under its laws.”⁷⁵ The lofty rhetoric was backed up by renewed pledges by Hughes for peaceful resolution of outstanding disputes between Latin American nations, limitation of armaments, and honest participation by the United States in Pan American conferences, among other promises.⁷⁶

Welles took note of Hughes’ pronouncements and frequently invoked them when it came time to articulate his own views. In a series of articles and speeches he wrote or co-authored between 1924 and 1931 Welles borrowed Hughes’ rhetoric about the Monroe Doctrine and inter-American relations and repurposed it to help him enunciate his unique blend of idealism and paternalism. In an article in *The Atlantic Monthly* published in 1924, Welles echoed Hughes’ insistence that the U.S. was not imperialistic by arguing “our Government is responsive solely to the desire to promote good understanding and to remove discord, using its powerful influence at all times on the side of right and justice” and extolled “the sincerity and unselfishness of our purpose.”⁷⁷ Quoting Woodrow Wilson and Charles Evans Hughes, Welles proclaimed, “no imperialistic policy will ever be supported by the American people.”⁷⁸

Welles continued to invoke Hughes’ rhetoric when he began working for Franklin Roosevelt after 1928. In a campaign speech that year Welles all but quoted Hughes when he wrote that the Monroe Doctrine was, in fact, not “an unselfish declaration of this Government intended to preserve republican institutions” but rather a “policy of self-defense.”⁷⁹ In another speech, Welles diagnosed the problem of Latin American relations by arguing “[t]he basic difficulty is that there has never yet been demanded by the American people from their Government a policy towards Latin America which recognizes the absolute equality in sovereignty of the Latin American nations,” clearly echoing Hughes’ statements from five years

⁷⁵ Pusey, *Charles Evans Hughes, Vol. 2*, 536.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Sumner Welles, “Is America Imperialistic?,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1924, 422-3, 422.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 423.

⁷⁹ Campaign Speech, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library (FDRL), Sumner Welles Papers (SWP), Box: 194, Folder, 2, p.9.

earlier.⁸⁰ Similarly, in an article Welles ghostwrote for Norman Davis during the lead up to the 1932 presidential campaign, Welles insisted the Monroe Doctrine had "insured throughout a century the security, liberty and independence of all the Americas" and that it was "the opposite of aggressive."⁸¹ By invoking Hughes' rhetoric in this fashion Welles added gravitas to his writing while crystallizing his own paternalistically idealistic approach to Latin American relations. By the time his first decade as a diplomat was over, and the next stage of his career as an advisor to Franklin Roosevelt was beginning, Welles could articulate a forceful argument that combined the necessity of U.S. leadership in Latin America with idealistic pronouncements about the need to respect the sovereignty of Latin American countries.

However, as Welles' paternalism emerged more clearly, he exhibited a startlingly naïve view of his country's actions. He described U.S. lordship over the Dominican Republic as "nothing more nor less than the lending by the United States of its credit to the Dominican people," noting later that the act "was welcomed not only by the Dominican Government but by the Dominican people."⁸² Assessing the contention that the U.S. had placed the countries of Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia into economic dependency, Welles insisted "[c]ommercial development ... cannot be considered economic domination."⁸³

This same characteristic of Welles' thinking was detectable in his rhetoric about the Monroe Doctrine during this period as well. Reflecting a conflation of paternalism toward Latin America with U.S. national interest, Welles recommended the U.S. "invite its sister American republics to proclaim those principles as an integral part of their own national policy."⁸⁴ Later, after Roosevelt's election to the presidency, Welles repeated the same line in a policy paper he drew up for Roosevelt on Latin American relations. In another call back to Hughes' rhetoric, Welles singled out "erroneous interpretations" of the Monroe Doctrine for poor

⁸⁰ Welles to Roosevelt, undated, SWP, Box: 148, Folder: 8.

⁸¹ Norman H. Davis, "Wanted: A Consistent Latin American Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1931, 565, 566.

⁸² Davis, "Wanted: A Consistent Latin American Policy," 557.

⁸³ Welles, "Is America Imperialistic?," 421-2.

⁸⁴ Davis, "Wanted: A Consistent Latin American Policy," 566-7.

relations between Latin America and the United States and suggested the Doctrine's "adoption by every American republic as a portion of its national policy."⁸⁵ In this proclamation Welles echoed his efforts to rehabilitate the League of Nations during his posting in Argentina by aligning it with the Monroe Doctrine. It also laid the groundwork for his future efforts to draw together the republics of Latin America in the form of the Good Neighbor Policy, and later still, his proposed regional framework for the a post-World War Two international organization.

Welles' paternalism had an uglier side to it as well. More than once in these articles Welles expressed sentiments that reflected a racialist interpretation of international affairs. In a speech he wrote for Franklin Roosevelt, Welles spoke of the familiarity among Latin American countries due to their "similar racial origin."⁸⁶ This echoed an earlier article in which Welles issued a caveat to his own argument that Latin American esteem of the U.S. was improved "notwithstanding the occasional difficulty of the Latin to comprehend the Anglo-Saxon mentality."⁸⁷ True to the cognitive dissonance Welles was capable of in these matters, Welles in the same article castigated anti-American voices in Latin America by comparing them to "those groups in our own country who promote racial or religious antagonism for personal or political ends."⁸⁸

Despite the apparent hypocrisy in Welles' positions there was an internal logic to his pronouncements. For Welles, paternalism and idealism in Latin America were synonymous so long as he was the one advocating them. Because the United States had only the highest aims for its sister republics – at least when Welles and those he supported were in charge – it was not possible for U.S. intervention to be anything but beneficent. Perhaps unwittingly, Welles summed up this worldview in an introductory paragraph written for the *Foreign Affairs* article he penned for Norman Davis in 1931:

⁸⁵ Welles to Hull, 12 January 1933, SWP, Box: 149, Folder: 1.

⁸⁶ Campaign Speech, SWP, Box: 195, Folder, 2, p.8.

⁸⁷ Welles, "Is America Imperialistic?," 422.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 412.

"The Latin American peoples unquestionably have the right and duty to regulate their own national affairs and to determine their own destiny; but the political and economic power of the United States is such that the policies of this Government and the activities and interests of its nationals must necessarily have a considerable effect on the political and economic life of the other peoples of this hemisphere. It therefore is part of the duty and interest of this nation to wield its power with justice and wisdom and to extend a friendly and helpful hand to its sister republics, to which it is bound by so great a community of interest."⁸⁹

By synthesizing high-minded idealistic pronouncements with paternalistic insistence on maintenance of order, Welles was able to rhetorically overcome the evident contradiction in his view that Latin American sovereignty must be respected but that the United States must retain its leading role in the hemisphere. It was a blend of ideologies that Welles concocted out of his experiences as a diplomat and the prejudices of his class held over from his formative years. The pattern of thinking that he established in his early career would hold through subsequent decades, and projected onto the world stage as his stature and power grew.

*Naboth's Vineyard: Welles' Anti-Militarism and Anti-Interventionism*⁹⁰

While Welles' paternalistic idealism provided the complexion for his worldview, other facets of his diplomatic style and outlook also took shape during these early years. The most prominent and significant of these facets was a pervasive skepticism of the military and militaristic solutions to diplomatic problems. Growing out of predilections and prejudices formed during his youth, and then reinforced by experiences as a young diplomat, Welles eschewed aggression as an aspect of his diplomatic praxis. This characteristic would last throughout his

⁸⁹ Davis, "Wanted: A Consistent Latin American Policy," 548.

⁹⁰ Naboth's vineyard refers to a parable in the Hebrew Scriptures in which the Samarian King Ahab, at the urging of his wife Jezebel, contrives the death of a neighbour, Naboth, whose vineyard (garden) he coveted. When confronted by a Tishbite named Elijah who tells him the Lord will smite Ahab's family and country for taking Naboth's vineyard, Ahab abdicates and becomes a hermit, prompting God to delay His wrath until Ahab's son takes the throne. 1 Kgs 21:1-29. It was also the title of Welles' 1927 book on the history of the Dominican Republic and a useful exegesis for Welles' skepticism about the use of aggression.

career and shape the sorts of problems he perceived and the solutions he devised for them.

Welles' distaste for militarism was evident from his earliest days as a diplomat. Welles' first diplomatic posting upon entering the State Department was to Japan. The posting overlapped with the escalation of World War One, culminating in the entry of the United States into the conflict in April 1917. Unsurprisingly, the issue that occupied most of his attention during his two years there was a direct consequence of the war – the treatment of German prisoners of war (POWs) captured by the Japanese. As it was his first diplomatic post, Welles was neither in a senior position nor delegated much responsibility. Nevertheless, he proved remarkably adept and valuable. Fluent in German, Welles inspected the POW camps and compiled a report on the treatment of the prisoners there. The memoranda Welles wrote greatly impressed his superiors, who commended him for his “thorough and painstaking” investigation and “comprehensive and temperate report.”⁹¹ In the words of one historian, “Welles brought a genteel point of view to the Japanese Empire during the Great War.”⁹²

However impressive Welles' performance of his duties may have been, the experience seemed not to have impressed Welles. Though he befriended some of the more progressive-minded Japanese leaders and later wrote highly of the “unique body known as the Genro, or Elder Statesman”, Welles was troubled by what he called “a primeval military instinct, and [the fact] that the basic reality of Japan rested in the war machine which had been created.”⁹³ Benjamin Welles, writing about his father's time in Japan, observed how Welles “had returned from Japan deeply disturbed by its growing militarism,” no doubt a reflection of Welles' interactions with German POWs and the Japanese military officials guarding them.⁹⁴ Conversely, in her assessment of Welles' time in Japan, historian Gail Hanson called

⁹¹ George W. Guthrie to the Secretary of State, 11 April 1916, NARA II, Decimal File 1910-1929, State Dept. Records Re World War I and Its Termination, 1914-29, Apr.-May 1916, 763.72114/1491.

⁹² Hanson, “Sumner Welles and the American System”, 48.

⁹³ Sumner Welles, *The Time For Decision* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), 274, 275.

⁹⁴ Welles, *FDR's Global Strategist*, 53.

Welles' reaction to the country as one of "ambivalence."⁹⁵ Ambivalent or not, Welles' experience in Japan underlined a central characteristic that would stay with him for the rest of his career: an aversion to the military. Though he may have performed his diplomatic duties to the best of his ability, the military matters with which he was concerned left him cold.

Welles' suspicion of the military persisted over time, but it was only with his reassignment to the Dominican Republic that it emerged in its fullest form. From 1 July 1922 to 13 July 1924 Welles served as the American Commissioner to the Dominican Republic, invested with the rank of Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. He had specific instructions:

"... for the purpose of investigating and reporting upon political conditions in the Dominican Republic, and for the purpose of ascertaining the views of the Dominican people with respect to an appropriate agreement with the Government of the United States as a result of which the military forces of the United States may be withdrawn from the Dominican Republic."⁹⁶

In theory, Welles had a free hand to facilitate, with the full support and authority of the Military Government, the peaceful transfer of power from the American military occupation to Dominican authorities that had been agreed to the previous March. In practice, his authority was constantly challenged and undermined by overlapping jurisdictions, jealous colleagues, and squabbling Dominican politicians.

The country to which Welles was assigned in 1922 was if not chaotic, then at least in desperate shape. "The Dominican pattern" one historian wrote, "had been one of recurrent periods of utter chaos and of absolute despotism" wherein "no tradition of democratic and representative government had been established."⁹⁷ Six years had passed since Woodrow Wilson had authorized a military occupation of the island, "with the greatest reluctance," in response to continued delinquency of the

⁹⁵ Hanson, "Sumner Welles and the American System", 51.

⁹⁶ Telegram Hughes to Welles, National Archives and Record Administration II, College Park, Maryland (NARA), RG 59, Central Decimal File, Decimal File 1910-1929, Box 1157, 839.00/2539a.

⁹⁷ Howard J. Wiarda, *The Dominican Republic: Nation in Transition* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1969), 32-33.

Dominican government to its creditors.⁹⁸ Wilson's 1916 intervention stemmed from mounting concern over German penetration into the Caribbean, which many feared might be a prelude to an attack on the Panama Canal.⁹⁹ Justifications for the action derived in part from legal precedent, specifically a 1907 treaty giving the United States control over the distribution of the country's import duties.¹⁰⁰

Concomitantly, the ascendance in Washington of progressive lawmakers, exemplified by but not limited to Wilson, imbued the occupation with a missionary zeal that increasingly characterized American foreign policy at the time. Progressives believed political instability in the Dominican Republic, as elsewhere in Latin America, was caused by "lack of progress toward 'constitutional democracy'" and that the United States "had the responsibility, even the moral duty to foster democracy in Latin America, by force if needs be."¹⁰¹ Historian Bruce Calder noted of the Dominican occupation that "some occupation officials acted not only as agents of imperialism but also as representatives of U.S. domestic political currents, particularly the then popular Progressive movement."¹⁰² Even after the election of Warren Harding in 1920 on the promise of a "return to normalcy" Welles' dual task of extricating the U.S. from its Latin American dependencies and bequeathing them something like stable democracy remained politically charged.¹⁰³

Welles' assignment to the Dominican Republic was the culmination of several years' effort to initiate a withdrawal of American marines and re-establish an indigenous Dominican government. Continued nationalist resistance to the American presence had convinced even the most altruistic progressives that the United States had to leave.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, a highly successful international public relations campaign by Dominican nationalists caused problems for American

⁹⁸ Welles, *Naboth's Vineyard*, 792 quoted in G. Pope Atkins and Larman C. Wilson, *The United States and the Trujillo Regime* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 30.

⁹⁹ Bruce J. Calder, *The Impact of Intervention: The Dominican Republic during the U.S. Occupation of 1916-1924* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), xii.

¹⁰⁰ Atkins and Wilson, *The United States and the Trujillo Regime*, 29; Calder, *The Impact of Intervention*, 4.

¹⁰¹ Atkins and Wilson, *The United States and the Trujillo Regime*, 29, 30.

¹⁰² Calder, *The Impact of Intervention*, xv.

¹⁰³ Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *From Wilson to Roosevelt: Foreign Policy of the United States 1913-1945* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), 131.

¹⁰⁴ Calder, *The Impact of Intervention*, 183.

diplomats and politicians abroad, further enhancing support for withdrawal.¹⁰⁵ Previous attempts by Wilson, and after 1921 by Harding, to agree on a timetable for withdrawal had failed, in part due to a standoff between Dominican demands for immediate withdrawal and the U.S. government, which did not want to leave with “no strings attached.”¹⁰⁶ Welles’ arrival marked a shift in policy reflecting “renewed control of the State Department over the Dominican situation, as well as the department's concern to improve the disastrous relationship which had developed between the Dominican people and the military government.”¹⁰⁷

The American occupation of the Dominican Republic had always been an ungainly creation, characterized by overlapping jurisdictions, unclear lines of authority, and a tense bureaucratic standoff between the Department of the Navy, Department of War, and Department of State. Through a process of happenstance and bureaucratic inertia, the Department of the Navy had assumed primary control of the Dominican Republic following the invasion in 1916, despite having “no internal organization for administering a foreign government’.”¹⁰⁸ Welles’ arrival signalled an end to that control and the officers assigned to the country were understandably resentful of what appeared to be a usurpation of their authority.

Thus in one respect, some sort of confrontation was inevitable. However, Welles’ experiences with the military governor in the Dominican Republic went deeper than a clash of institutional prerogatives. Welles developed a persistently antagonistic relationship between himself and the Military Government administering the occupation, exemplified by his constant quarrelling with the U.S. military governor in the country, admiral Samuel S. Robison.

Welles and Robison fought over every aspect of the transfer of American power, from the timing of elections, to the deployment of marines, to the treatment of the (re)emerging Dominican political class. In a letter to Secretary of State Hughes

¹⁰⁵ Calder, *The Impact of Intervention*, 199.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 205-206.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 217.

¹⁰⁸ Valentina Peguero, *The Militarization of Culture in the Dominican Republic* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 34, quoting Robert D. Crassweller, *Trujillo: The Life and Times of a Caribbean Dictator* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 41 and Marvin Goldwert, *The Constabulary in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1962), v.

dated October 1922, Welles complained about the “attitude taken by the Military Governor and the majority of the members of this administration toward the Dominican Commission and the Dominican people as a whole” stemming, according to Welles, from their “inability to understand the character and temperament of the people.”¹⁰⁹

Welles singled out Robison personally for criticism. He thought Robison paranoid, exaggerating threats of political upheaval due to a prejudice against Latin American countries and their peoples. “Like most military men, he tends to exaggerate the importance of such conspiracies in a Latin-American country of this character,” Welles wrote to Francis White, referring to a Secret Service report on recent nationalist activities.¹¹⁰ Welles faulted Robison for being unable to understand “that the very fact that the American Forces of Occupation are here ... is bitterly resented by almost every Dominican.”¹¹¹ Welles later expressed concern that the military, if given a free hand, would completely undermine the Plan of Evacuation setting out the process of American withdrawal that had been agreed to prior to Welles’ arrival. He also suggested the military officers, “owing to their training and the nature of their profession” were overly eager to employ military options and unwilling to make concessions to popular opinion.¹¹² Welles learned to view the military authorities as counterproductive at best, and at worst, adversaries with whom he had to fight for supremacy.

Many of the officers also viewed the end of the occupation as a usurpation of the military’s authority, relegating it to “second-class status” behind the State Department.¹¹³ This inevitably produced tensions, particularly as the two organizations fought for supremacy over policymaking. In June 1922 Welles had received a letter from Assistant Secretary of State Francis White outlining relevant recent developments in the negotiations with Dominican leaders. White noted that

¹⁰⁹ Welles to Hughes, 3 October 1922, SWP, Box: 157, Folder: 3.

¹¹⁰ Welles to Francis White, 23 November 1923, SWP, Box: 157, Folder: 4.

¹¹¹ Welles to Hughes, 3 October 1922, SWP, Box: 157, Folder: 3.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Calder, *The Impact of Intervention*, 229.

he recommended “reserv[ing] the right to the Department (*I advisedly did not say of ‘the Military Government’*) to modify” the draft Convention.¹¹⁴

One major clash between Welles and Robison centred on the plan to transfer power from the U.S. military to a Dominican provisional government. Despite months of effort by Welles to ease the transition of power as set out by the Plan of Evacuation of 14 June 1921, Robison persisted in proposing amendments and revisions of his own at the last minute, much to Welles’ consternation. The revisions, which included provisions to maintain American military presence and patrols and for the U.S. to reassume control of the Dominican Government should the plan fall apart, ran directly counter to what had been negotiated by Welles and to the process of withdrawal in general.¹¹⁵ Welles bitterly resented the action and wrote to the State Department to explain how “the plan proposed by the Military Governor ... will inevitably destroy all the work of the United States.”¹¹⁶ In order for the withdrawal to be successful, Welles insisted, “the disposition of the Military Government must ... be adapted to conform to the provisions of the plan as now constituted.”¹¹⁷ Whatever the response, Welles’ hope for a resolution did not materialize, as he reported little over a month later: “Robison is in accord neither with the plan nor the Military dispositions rendered necessary by the carrying out thereof.”¹¹⁸

As elections scheduled by the Plan of Evacuation drew closer, Welles’ clash with the military authorities escalated. In August 1923 Welles made an official request for the rescinding of a decree issued by Robison several months earlier that had closed several Dominican newspapers. Insisting that “the Dominican people should have the right freely to express their views regarding the steps which it is proposed shall shortly be taken,” Welles specifically requested that Hughes tell the Department of the Navy to tell Robison “to issue no further orders of this nature without the consent of the Department of State.”¹¹⁹ Later in October, with the

¹¹⁴ White to Welles, 30 June 1922, SWP, Box: 157, Folder: 3. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁵ “The Commissioner in the Dominican Republic (Welles) to the Secretary of State’ 9 August 1922, *FRUS*, 1922. Vol. II, 39-41.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Robison to Hughes, 9 August 1923, SWP, Box: 157, Folder: 6.

¹¹⁸ Welles to Hughes, 19 September 1923, SWP, Box: 157, Folder: 6.

¹¹⁹ Welles to Hughes, 29 August 1923, SWP, Box: 157, Folder: 6.

elections only two weeks away, Robison irked Welles by refusing to withdraw marines deployed throughout the country during election day, despite a request by the Dominican Commission.¹²⁰ By this point Welles had run out of patience with Robison and was skeptical of every move made by the Military Government to assert its authority. In a long telegram to Secretary Hughes in early October, Welles explained “[s]ince the arrangement proposed by Admiral Robison is not satisfactory to me, I am forced to submit this matter for your consideration, with the hope that you may share my views.”¹²¹ This tactic of appealing to higher bureaucratic authority with whom he had a direct connection, and who agreed with Welles’ objectives and methods was another hallmark of Welles’ diplomatic style and would be used to great effect later in career.

But in the context of the Dominican Republic the move was a definitive statement by Welles that he had no regard for the role of the military in participating in diplomatic matters. From Welles’ perspective, the military only made things more difficult. Specifically, and significantly, it was the belligerence, narrow-mindedness, and arrogance of the military that Welles found most distasteful. It offended his instincts for seeking consensus and directly undermined Welles’ efforts to facilitate cooperation and build lasting relationships with Dominican leaders. Welles’ experiences with the military in the Dominican Republic reinforced the suspicions of aggression inculcated by his exclusion from, and victimization by, the macho aesthetic of the ‘imperial brotherhood’ during his youth. Furthermore, it reinforced his belief in the righteousness and power of his own more collaborative approach to diplomatic affairs.

The legacy of Welles’ experience in the Dominican Republic, and the degree to which it crystallized his suspicions of belligerence and militarism, became evident in the years following the conclusion of his assignment. In his 1924 article *Is America Imperialistic?* Welles articulated publically for the first time his distaste for military involvement in diplomatic affairs, specifically in his denunciations of U.S.

¹²⁰ Welles to Hughes, 2 October 1923, SWP, Box: 157, Folder 6.

¹²¹ The Commissioner in the Dominican Republic (Welles) to the Secretary of State, 2 October 1922, *FRUS*, 1922. Vol. II, 65.

intervention in Latin American countries. He railed against the Taft era interventions in Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, as well as in the countries of Central America, calling them “an artificial method of restoring outward tranquility.”¹²² In the same article Welles boasted about “[t]he very notable improvement in the feeling existing in the Central American republics toward the United States, which has taken place during the past few years, [that] has been largely due to this spirit of helpful cooperation – as distinguished from intervention or imposition.”¹²³

As time passed, this anti-militarist opposition to intervention view expanded to include tacit acquiescence of hostility within Latin American countries. In his 1931 article in *Foreign Affairs* Welles excoriated the Hoover-era policy of recognizing governments even if they had come to power by revolutionary means (as opposed to gaining democratic legitimacy – a Wilson-era policy Welles supported) for denying “the benefits of ordered liberty and of security of life and property” to the countries of Latin America.¹²⁴ By this point, Welles argued “[m]ilitary intervention in Latin America can be justified upon only one ground, namely, our national safety,” with the only real possibility of this being a clear threat to American control of the Panama Canal Zone.¹²⁵

Indeed, the truest expression of Welles’ distaste for the military may have been in the reluctance by which he acknowledged that, on rare occasions, force was sometimes necessary. Not wishing to come off as a complete pacifist, Welles begrudgingly conceded the need for military intervention at times, but only in the most extreme circumstances. If, he pondered in 1924, “material assistance ... had substituted the benefits of civilization (without the impairment of ultimate sovereignty) for a condition of anarchy and chaos, who could claim that our policy had not been wise?”¹²⁶ Though patently self-serving, Welles’ view held the

¹²² Welles, “Is America Imperialistic?,” 414-5?

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 417.

¹²⁴ Davis, “Wanted: A Consistent Latin American Policy,” 547-8.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 562.

¹²⁶ Welles, “Is America Imperialistic?,” 421

demonstrably extreme condition of ‘anarchy and chaos’ to be the threshold at which point American intervention could be justified.

Welles again drew on that sentiment seven years later when he wrote that “[i]f the safety of the United States requires that non-American Powers be kept from intervening on the American Continent,” then, “justice requires that reasonable grounds for such intervention be removed.”¹²⁷ Tellingly, Welles’ formulation for when military action might be permissible coincided with his conviction that only the United States – not European countries – possessed the ability to safeguard the wellbeing of the Latin American republics.

In his first decade as a diplomat, Welles’ ingrained distaste for belligerence and skepticism of militarism evolved into a full-throated denunciation of military intervention in Latin America. His evolution was spurred on by forces that affected everyone at the time, such as the worldwide reaction against militarism in the wake of the slaughter of World War One, as well as by his own experiences in Japan and the Dominican Republic and his inherent dislike of belligerence generally held over from his youth. Tasked with analyzing and defending his record in the Caribbean toward the close of his involvement there in the mid-1920s, Welles took the opportunity to enunciate increasingly pointed criticisms of intervention, militarism, and the policies that supported them. By the time the 1920s ended, the twin strands of Welles’ worldview – paternalistic idealism and anti-militarism – were fully intertwined, just in time for the major portion of his diplomatic career to begin.

Conclusion:

During his early career Welles developed a worldview that blended paternalistic idealism and an aversion to overt aggression into a coherent outlook. The contours of Welles’ paternalism toward Latin America were shaped by many factors. Broad forces in international politics, namely World War One and its consequences, played their part by providing a general scope for his plans for Latin

¹²⁷ Davis, “Wanted: A Consistent Latin American Policy,” 558.

America, most notably in the form of his early support for, albeit in qualified form, the League of Nations. But specific encounters to which Welles was witness, including his tussling with the British in Argentina and an abortive attempt to help create a Central American Union, shaped his thinking as well. Welles became convinced that economic interdependence and multilateral cooperation were necessary and indispensable, both for the maintenance of American hegemony in the region and the benefit of the Latin American countries themselves. Individuals like Charles Evans Hughes helped Welles crystallize his beliefs by providing the rhetorical precedents that Welles would draw upon to articulate his vision. By the 1930s Welles emerged from the first chapter of his career professing an idiosyncratic style of idealistic paternalism that he would carry with him for the rest of his career.

As Welles' diplomatic education progressed salient aspects of his thinking and style began to emerge. Alongside his growing enthusiasm for American-led multilateral leadership in the Western Hemisphere, Welles demonstrated a consistent aversion to belligerence and aggression in diplomatic affairs. This attitude manifested in persistent skepticism of the military and its role in executing diplomacy. In his first posting in Japan and again during his lengthy mediation in the Dominican Republic, Welles showed a tendency to eschew aggression and militarism in favour of a more collaborative cooperative multilateralism.

Whatever Welles became during Franklin Roosevelt's second and third terms was founded upon the attitudes and tactics evolved during the first decades of his life. Welles was no pie-eyed idealist nor was he a cynical realist. His embrace of progressive internationalism was consistently in service of paternalistic and nationalistic aims. However, he genuinely believed that U.S. leadership could bring peace and prosperity to the world, or at least to Latin America. That belief pushed him to advance American interests in a multitude of ways, including developing an intense dislike of the main competitor for Latin American hegemony at the time, Great Britain. These convictions were expressed in a preference for multilateral, consensus-based diplomatic institutions that facilitated negotiation, cooperation, and collaboration between parties, whether individuals or states. This approach was

a tacit rejection of – and a specific reaction to – the more belligerent expansionism of most of his compatriots. Though only partially successful in this early stage of his career, this approach set the mould for Welles' later endeavours, beginning with his political resurrection in partnership with Franklin Roosevelt after 1928.

Chapter Three:

Acolyte: Franklin Roosevelt and Sumner Welles' Homosocial Patronage, 1921-1937

By August 1943 Franklin Roosevelt was out of options. For nearly three years he had tried to suppress the F.B.I. report about his friend and close advisor Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, with ever decreasing success. Enemies of Welles, primarily Secretary of State Cordell Hull and former Ambassador William "Bill" Bullitt, had successfully circulated rumours about Welles' sexuality widely enough to reach a tipping point. Faced with the prospect of a Senate investigation into Welles' behaviour, Roosevelt asked Welles to submit his resignation. This Welles did on 16 August 1943.¹

Not long after, Bullitt, brimming with confidence from his victory, asked Roosevelt for his support in a bid for the mayoralty of Philadelphia. Roosevelt, who was not known for outbursts of anger, told Bullitt in reply:

"If I were the Angel Gabriel and you and Sumner Welles should come before me seeking admission into the Gates of Heaven, do you know what I'd say? I would say: 'Bill Bullitt, you have defamed the name of a man who toiled for his fellow men, and you can go to hell.' And that's what I tell you to do now."²

Roosevelt's florid excoriation of Bullitt came in response to the termination of a political partnership that had lasted nearly thirty years. It was a heartfelt tribute to a man Roosevelt respected and admired, both as a friend and as a senior foreign policy advisor. Yet despite his passionate defense, Roosevelt had nonetheless acquiesced to Welles' resignation. It was the price he was willing to pay for the restoration of tranquility in the State Department, so necessary as wartime events accelerated and thoughts turned toward the postwar settlement. The threat of a political scandal at that crucial moment was too important to risk, even if it did mean the end of Welles' political career. Despite Roosevelt's power as president,

¹ Welles to Roosevelt, 16 August 1943. Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library (FDRL), Sumner Welles Papers (SWP), Box: 152, Folder: 4.

² Ted Morgan, *FDR: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 686.

despite his reliance on Welles' advice, and despite years of close personal friendship, Roosevelt was unable to protect Welles from Bullitt's homophobic onslaught.

Besides highlighting the quarrelling within the Roosevelt administration in the early 1940s, this sudden end to a long professional collaboration underlined the remarkable relationship that Welles and Roosevelt had with each other. As a key member of the president's already shrinking inner circle, Welles played a vital role keeping Roosevelt informed about diplomatic affairs, State Department politics, and plans for postwar peace. That Welles, who was technically only second-in-command at the State Department, assumed so a prominent place in the staff of such a complex man during such a momentous period in U.S. history, and was kept in that position for years after Roosevelt became aware of the potentially explosive political liability Welles represented, indicated that he was something more than just a valuable adviser.

This chapter examines the political partnership of Sumner Welles with Franklin Roosevelt. It explores how these two men forged a relationship based on cultural affinity and mutual sympathy that was born of their respective exclusions from hegemonic masculinity, and how that affected their own careers and the diplomatic history of the United States. As in previous chapters, this chapter uses sexuality as an analytical lens. It argues that to understand the origins and contours of Welles and Roosevelt's partnership it is necessary to analyze how sexuality shaped each man's political career and how that process facilitated their compatibility. From this analysis this chapter offers new insights into many of the salient aspects of about Welles and Roosevelt's relationship and the significance of their collaboration: the degree to which Welles was the originator or mere executor of Roosevelt's foreign policy ideas and the peculiar situation Welles' occupied *vis à vis* the rest of Roosevelt's inner circle and how that contributed to the bureaucratic disorganization that characterized Roosevelt's administration, and the reasons why Roosevelt protected and promoted Welles despite the liabilities associated with his sexuality.

The Missing Man: Welles in Rooseveltian Historiography

The conventional wisdom for explaining Welles and Roosevelt's relationship, shared by historians and contemporaries alike, has relied on two main themes: personal affinity and political expediency. Those stressing the personal affinity explanation observed Welles and Roosevelt "had attended the same schools and moved in similar social circles," to explain their close collaboration.³ In his recent work on FDR's personal relationships, Frank Costigliola noticed the undertones to this bond, recounting speculation that Welles' close attachment to Roosevelt might have been romantic in nature, stemming from "impulses that might prove disturbing if 'put into words'."⁴ Gail Hanson observed a degree of intimacy in her estimation of Welles and Roosevelt's relationship as well, noting the "timely relationship with Franklin D. Roosevelt ... resembled one of mentor and pupil."⁵ Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long echoed this sentiment, noting "Welles was a boyhood friend of Roosevelt and Roosevelt sticks by his friends."⁶ Whatever the case, the general conclusion of this interpretation was that Welles was a member of Roosevelt's 'old boy' club and was, therefore, given preferential treatment and deferential influence over foreign policy.

However, others have emphasized the professional aspect of Welles' and Roosevelt's partnership, characterizing it as a union of mutual interdependence and support. David F. Schmitz noted that "Roosevelt relied on the advice of Sumner Welles ... an old friend" who was like-minded about policy prescriptions.⁷ Similarly, J. Simon Rofe wrote, "Roosevelt made sure Welles was promoted [to Undersecretary]," because of the background they shared and Welles' extensive

³ Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 340.

⁴ Frank Costigliola, *Roosevelt's Lost Alliances: How Personal Politics Helped Start the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 47.

⁵ Gail Hanson, "Sumner Welles and the American System: The United States in the Caribbean, 1920-1940" (Ph.D. Dissertation. State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1990), 475.

⁶ Fred L. Israel, ed., *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long: Selections from Years 1939-1944* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 325.

⁷ David F. Schmitz, *The Triumph of Internationalism: Franklin D. Roosevelt and a World in Crisis, 1933-1941* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books Inc., 2007), 26.

diplomatic experience.⁸ Steven Casey and Warren Kimball emphasized Welles' and Roosevelt's close alliance in contrast to the terse relationship Roosevelt had with Secretary of State Cordell Hull, or with the State Department generally.⁹ So too did Thomas Fleming, observing: "Roosevelt had no confidence in Hull or anyone else in the State Department except reserved, ultra-dignified Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles."¹⁰

In these writings as in many others, the like-mindedness between the two men is taken for granted. Little effort is expended trying to determine what were the foundations upon which the underlying relationship was based. Studies focusing directly on Welles tend to hint at a more complexly layered relationship with Roosevelt. Benjamin Welles' account of his father's relationship with Roosevelt portrayed the two men as intimate political partners. Welles gave credit to both his father's upbringing and his work ethic for sustaining the relationship with Roosevelt. Welles was Roosevelt's right hand man, so professionally devoted that he "broke his health" for Roosevelt, but also inured to a fraternal devotion, forged in their childhood experiences together.¹¹ Irwin Gellman also depicted a symbiotic relationship, wherein "Roosevelt respected the younger man's [Welles'] experience and ability to translate ideas into action; Welles reciprocated with genuine affection and admiration."¹² Though incomplete, the analytical thrust of these arguments is correct: Welles and Roosevelt shared a complex relationship that was based on both personal and professional factors, neither of which can be understood without taking account of both.

In his analysis of Welles' postwar planning activities, Christopher O'Sullivan explained how "Welles considered himself more than a mere executor of Roosevelt's

⁸ J. Simon Rofe, *Franklin Roosevelt's Foreign Policy and the Welles Mission* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 14.

⁹ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 138. Warren Kimball, *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991), 242, n.45.

¹⁰ Thomas Fleming, *The New Dealers' War: FDR and the War Within World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 15.

¹¹ Benjamin Welles, *Sumner Welles: FDR's Global Strategist* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 7.

¹² Irwin Gellman, *Secret Affairs: Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 69.

will and aims,” vaguely describing him as “something more than a traditional adviser.”¹³ O’Sullivan accounted for the “difficulty in tracing the seams or connections in the Welles-Roosevelt partnership” by citing a combination of factors, including Roosevelt’s chaotic managerial system, Welles’ tight-lipped demeanor, and the “loyalty and depth of commitment” that stemmed from their pre-political social interactions.¹⁴ O’Sullivan’s connection between the professional and personal circumstances that the two men shared provided the most sophisticated account of their extraordinary partnership.

This chapter contends that this link can be extended further. By acknowledging the queer context of Welles’ perspective, and taking a fuller account of the peculiarities of both men’s masculinity, the seams and connections between Welles and Roosevelt become easier to trace. Because of their respective marginalized positionality *vis à vis* sexuality and hegemonic masculinity Welles and Roosevelt created a dynamic between themselves that actually caused the opacity O’Sullivan identified. Welles’ anomalous position in the Rooseveltian firmament, the rivalries that provoked, and the symbiotic collaboration between the two men on matters of policy were all to some extent products of interpersonal dynamics, as well as social and cultural patterns, that were responses to how sexuality had shaped the personalities and experiences of both men.

The Seeds of Partnership – Welles and Roosevelt’s Shared Background

Exploring the interpersonal dynamics between two key individuals in order to elucidate broader themes in politics, society, or diplomacy has a long tradition. Presidential advisers, particularly foreign policy gurus, have long been fodder for historical analysis. Welles and Roosevelt’s partnership echoed such venerable pairings as Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House, and foreshadowed the fateful

¹³ Christopher D. O’Sullivan, *Sumner Welles: Postwar Planning and the Quest for a New World Order 1937-1943* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), xiii.

¹⁴ O’Sullivan, *Postwar Planning*, xiv.

collaborations of McGeorge Bundy with Lyndon Johnson, Henry Kissinger with Richard Nixon, and George W. Bush with Dick Cheney.¹⁵

In all of these cases, the relationship between the two men was as important as the two men individually when trying to comprehend the policies they conceived and enacted together. Delineating the contours of such relationships, including their boundaries and texture, is necessary to fully comprehend the impact these men had and the personalities that defined them. However, in most cases, analyses of interpersonal dynamics among decision makers has tended to elide the influence of gender, sexuality, and other socially constructed characteristics. Indeed, diplomatic historians, particularly those studying Franklin Roosevelt, have often treated their subject as a rational actor with clearly identifiable and consistent goals in mind while formulated policy and responding to events, often overlooking important psychological and idiosyncratic attributes in the process.¹⁶

With a relative paucity of clear analogues within diplomatic history, an analysis of Welles and Roosevelt's relationship, and the role discourses of sexuality had in shaping it, must look further afield. Historians of LGBT history have, obviously, made a greater account for sexuality in analyzing historical figures. Historians writing about figures as varied as J. Edgar Hoover and Clyde Tolson, Martin Luther King Jr. and Bayard Rustin, and Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn have shown how paying fine-grained attention to the tenor as well as the content of the relationships between historical actors can reveal hitherto unnoticed dimensions to historical events and actors.¹⁷

¹⁵ See: Shirley Anne Warshaw, *The Co-presidency of Bush and Cheney* (Stanford: Stanford Politics and Policy, 2009); Alexander L. George and Juliette L. George, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Personality Study* (New York: New York Publishing, 1964); Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (London: Hutchinson, 1949); Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (London: Allen Lane, 2007); Seymour M. Hersh, *Kissinger: The Price of Power. Henry Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (London: Faber, 1983).

¹⁶Graham Cross, *The Diplomatic Education of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1882-1933*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 5. Exceptions to this rule exist. Robert Dean's *Imperial Brotherhood*, extensively cited in the Introduction and Chapter One, deliberately acknowledges the social construction of gender as an influence on decision makers' approaches to foreign policy. So, too, does Frank Costigliola in his various works on Franklin Roosevelt, George Kennan, and the start of the Cold War.

¹⁷ See: John D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (New York: Free Press, 2003); Harvey G. Cohen, *Duke Ellington's America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010); Claire Bond Potter, "Queer Hoover: Sex, Lies, and Political History" *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol.

For Welles and Roosevelt, such an approach begins by analyzing their cultural similarities and shared upbringing. Welles and Roosevelt belonged to the “cloistered and privileged world” of turn of the century East Coast American aristocracy.¹⁸ They were both scions of wealthy, well-established families whose fortunes and lineage were significant. Interestingly, Welles had a more direct claim to American aristocratic heritage than did Roosevelt. Sumner Welles was a descendant of Thomas Welles, one of the first Europeans to arrive in New England in the early seventeenth century and the third governor of the Colony of Connecticut. He could also trace his ancestry to the fiery nineteenth century abolitionist Senator Charles Sumner, whose name he bore.¹⁹ The Roosevelts, by contrast, arrived later and though wealthy were considered, until the rise of Theodore and Franklin, to be a “‘dynasty of the mediocre’.”²⁰ In both cases, the generation preceding Sumner and Franklin was extremely wealthy and firmly established among the institutions and customs of America’s Gilded Age elite.

Based in New York, the Roosevelts and the Welleses were members of an increasingly self-conscious aristocratic elite, self-defined as being apart from both common people and the upper class.²¹ Members of this aristocracy “knew that they belonged and had an acute sense of their entitlement to a position in ‘society’.”²² Anglophilic, decadent, and imbued with a sense of *noblesse oblige*, the society in which Welles and Roosevelt circulated was very small in size, likely no more than a thousand families at its height in the 1890s.²³ This, combined with the highly formal system of etiquette, protocol, and obligation, helps explain why separate childhood experiences between Welles and Roosevelt, occurring decades before they worked

15, No. 3 (Sep., 2006). Coincidentally, Welles’ nemesis William Bullitt could be added to this list on account of his close partnership with his assistant and friend Carmel Offie.

¹⁸ O’Sullivan, *Postwar Planning*, 2.

¹⁹ Hanson, “Sumner Welles and the American System”, 30

²⁰ Jean Edward Smith, *FDR* (New York: Random House, 2008), 3. It should be noted that Franklin Roosevelt’s maternal side, the Delano’s, stretched back into colonial lore at least as far as the Welles’ – they arrived on the Mayflower in 1621 – and were prominent in American high society for centuries.

²¹ Eric Homberger, *Mrs. Astor’s New York: Money and Social Power in a Gilded Age* (London: Yale University Press, 2002), 3.

²² *Ibid.*, 3.

²³ David C. Hammack, *Power and Society: Greater New York at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 72.

together, could produce such fondness and camaraderie. Coming from this background was a unique and exclusive experience that few others shared, even among the highest echelons of power.

The two men were also acquainted on a personal level. Welles spent part of his summers on Campobello Island, New Brunswick, Canada, where Roosevelt also vacationed, although how much they interacted there is not precisely known.²⁴ However, they were on good enough terms for Roosevelt to ask Welles to be one of the pages at his wedding to Eleanor Roosevelt.²⁵ Both men followed the same educational and social course in early life attending Groton Preparatory School then matriculating to Harvard University. Although Welles was ten years Roosevelt's junior, these elite institutions and the rarefied social atmosphere that went with them meant Welles and Roosevelt shared friends and common experiences, and developed a nascent familiarity with one another's social circles. Their contact during this period led directly to future professional collaboration. In 1915 Welles asked then Assistant Secretary of the Navy Roosevelt for a letter of recommendation to the diplomatic service.²⁶ Thus, the first professional encounter between Welles and Roosevelt, the one that launched Welles' diplomatic career, was built on almost two decades of close, albeit infrequent, social interaction among the rich socialites of their respective families.

However, the personal affinity between the two men was not the sole basis for their close partnership, nor for Welles' unusual position *vis à vis* the rest of Roosevelt's entourage. Both men had a history of transgressing norms of sexuality and social propriety with regard to romantic matters and both men had been profoundly shaped by experiences that set them apart from the dominant hegemonic discourses of masculinity. Their shared marginalization was the crucible for a common sympathy and understanding that would have a palpable effect on their interactions with each other.

²⁴ Bullitt Memorandum, 15 January 1943, Yale University Archives, William C. Bullitt Papers (WCBP), Box 210, Folder 218.

²⁵ Welles, *FDR's Global Strategist*, 1.

²⁶ Sumner Welles to Franklin Roosevelt, 13 April 1915, FDRL, FDR Papers as Assistant Secretary of the Navy 1913-1920, Box: 61, Folder: Correspondence: Welles, Sumner.

In the mid-1920s Welles and Roosevelt found their careers in serious jeopardy, albeit for different reasons. In 1921, while vacationing at Campobello Island Roosevelt contracted poliomyelitis. The resulting paralysis brought Roosevelt's political career to an abrupt halt and profoundly transformed his persona and outlook. Dealing with the disease, in Frances Perkins' estimation, "altered his relations with other politicians and the voters."²⁷ This "one and only major experience with failure" for FDR "helped make him a more compassionate person" but, ironically, also made him more isolated and dependent on a close circle of trusted advisers.²⁸ "Trapped in a chair," wrote Hugh Gregory Gallagher, "he had to rely upon others to do things for him. Thus, whether to order, beg, or cajole, he was caused to be manipulative to get things done, to enforce his will."²⁹ According to Frank Costigliola, because Roosevelt was "[r]elatively immobile because of polio, he maneuvered others to revolve around him ... His manipulations made administration politics emotional, competitive, and unstable."³⁰ Living with polio also altered Roosevelt's style of leadership, a process that mirrored the one that Welles underwent as a child, where the marginalization caused by his queer positionality influenced the public-private schema of his psychological profile. "In most of his battles, FDR preferred to manipulate rather than confront."³¹

This approach to leadership, moreover, was part of the genesis of the close bond that he and Welles developed during their years working together. As Costigliola observed:

"With an unknowable degree of conscious intent, Roosevelt chose talented people who defied disability. LeHand was plagued by insecurity and a tendency toward depression. Howe suffered asthma, emphysema, and facial scarring. Hopkins endured near starvation from gastrointestinal problems. Welles harbored a closeted desire for homosexual acts with men he

²⁷ Hugh Gregory Gallagher, *FDR's Splendid Deception: The Moving Story of Roosevelt's Massive Disability – and the Intense Efforts to Conceal it from the Public* (St. Petersburg, FL: Vandamere Press, 1994), 74

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 215.

³⁰ Frank Costigliola, "Broken Circle: The Isolation of Franklin D. Roosevelt in World War II" *Diplomatic History*, Vol.: 32, No. 5 (November 2008), 679.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 680.

otherwise disdained ... Like FDR, these aides demonstrated that in facing down “disability,” one could hone extraordinary ability.”³²

Although Welles’ sexuality was not a ‘disability’ in the same way as Roosevelt’s polio, it was a characteristic that put him at a disadvantage, socially and emotionally – something Roosevelt could recognize and sympathize with.

Besides a general sympathy Roosevelt had had for people who were disadvantaged, Roosevelt also had reason to see Welles as someone whom he could relate to on matters of social status. In 1923 Welles began divorce proceedings from his wife Esther Slater.³³ Welles’ courting of another woman, Mathilde Townsend, the wealthy daughter of a New England Senator, prompted the divorce. Adultery still being taboo, and divorce illegal in the United States, Welles faced serious obloquy for his actions. This was initially expressed only in non-professional settings, becoming a matter of gossip among the Washington elite. However, the death of President Warren Harding changed the political landscape and Welles’ fortunes. The elevation of Calvin Coolidge to the presidency brought with it a decidedly less tolerant attitude toward personal indiscretions, particularly ones involving the still taboo subject of divorce.

This attitude coincided with a turnover of personnel in the State Department, wherein Coolidge and his ally Senator (now vice president) Charles Curtis sought to nominate a diplomat named Thomas Kelly as General Receiver for the Dominican Republic.³⁴ Upon learning of this Welles wrote a memo criticizing Kelly for possessing neither “experience nor demonstrated capacity” for the job.³⁵ The memo accidentally made its way to Coolidge who was already infuriated at Welles due to recent press coverage of Welles’ divorce. The memo was all the excuse he needed to fire Welles, but rather than doing so Coolidge chose a more indirect route. Coolidge endeavoured to force Welles to resign by making things “so consistently

³² Costigliola, “Broken Circle”, 680.

³³ Untitled. SWP, Box 19, Folder: 1.

³⁴ Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, 65.

³⁵ Welles, *FDR’s Global Strategist*, 113.

uncomfortable for Welles,” that he would have no choice.³⁶ He refused to appoint him to a panel of the Central American court alongside every other officer who had been proposed for the role, a serious humiliation.³⁷ When his acting Secretary of State wrote a memo suggesting Welles deliver a letter to the president of the Dominican Republic, Coolidge wrote in the margin “I think Mr. Welles better retire from the service.”³⁸ Welles’ resignation came only days later, effectively casting him into the political wilderness.

The episode was an eerie foreshadowing of how Welles’ personal behaviour could negatively impact his professional life, and how the interaction between the personal and the political was a prominent factor in Welles’ career from its earliest days. It was also fortuitous in that it placed Welles in the position of needing political patronage from someone who would be willing to overlook, or sympathize with, his plight. Struck down at almost the same moment, Welles and Roosevelt’s determination to rebuild their respective careers was galvanized by their mutual struggle to regain social standing along with political power.

Roosevelt’s sympathy with the difficulties faced by Welles specifically was undoubtedly further deepened by another episode in his early career: the Newport Scandal. During his last months as assistant secretary of the navy Roosevelt received accounts from governor Livingston Beekman of Rhode Island of prostitution and homosexuality around the Newport naval training station. Roosevelt authorized an investigation that involved, among other things, enlisting young naval recruits to entrap men around Newport by soliciting and often engaging in male-male sexual activity. The investigation floundered when its attempt to prosecute a local Reverend produced more revulsion at the tactics used to entrap him than the sex acts themselves, prompting a Senate inquiry that shocked the nation.³⁹ Roosevelt

³⁶ ‘National Affairs’, *Time Magazine*, 11 August 1941.

³⁷ Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, 65.

³⁸ Joseph C. Grew to Coolidge, 10 July 1925, SWP, Box: 261, Folder: 6.

³⁹ For a full discussion of the Newport Scandal see: George Chauncey, Jr., ‘Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion? Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War I Era’, in Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey Jr. (eds.) *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989); Ted Morgan, *FDR: A Biography* (London: Grafton Books, 1985), 234-245; Lawrence R. Murphy, *Perverts by Official Order: The Campaign Against Homosexuals by the United States Navy* (London: The Haworth Press, 1988);

was forced to testify to his knowledge of the matter, significantly tarnishing his political reputation.

Tellingly, Roosevelt's behaviour in the Newport Scandal hinted at a degree of indifference to sexual non-normativity. Though he referred to the homosexuality in Newport as "contaminating influences" and "horrible practices," FDR shied away from the antigay witch-hunt some other officials sought. Quoting an interview with psychologist C.A. Tripp, historian Laurence Murphy noted "Roosevelt 'repeatedly went out of his way' to protect homosexuals from discovery and disgrace. Any homophobia manifested in the navy department, according to Tripp, 'is sharply at variance with his later attitudes and actions.'"⁴⁰ Reflecting on this scandal, later historians have argued that because of the Newport Scandal "Roosevelt came to see that homosexuality was not necessarily an impediment to effective government service" a fact that was tied directly to his protection of Welles after 1940.⁴¹ Combined with Roosevelt's sympathy for those who did not conform to societal norms of masculinity and virility, on account of his polio, as well as his pursuit of extra-marital relationships with Lucy Mercer, Missy LeHand, and Daisy Suckley that violated social taboos in their own right, Roosevelt's ability to appreciate Welles – to see his strengths despite his ostensible weaknesses, and to recognize a kindred spirit struggling with setbacks despite having all the advantages of a privileged upbringing – was undoubtedly enhanced.

Back in the Game: Welles and Roosevelt's Pre-Presidential Collaboration

The setbacks for Roosevelt and Welles in the 1920s were short lived. Their respective attempts at professional rehabilitation and reintroduction into public life coincided with their renewed collaboration together on diplomatic affairs. Beginning in 1928 Welles and Roosevelt developed a close professional relationship that was founded upon Welles' provision of invaluable expertise to Roosevelt on

and John Loughery, *The Other Side of Silence: Men's Lives and Gay Identities: A Twentieth-Century History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), chapter one.

⁴⁰ Murphy, *Perverts by Official Order*, 292.

⁴¹ Loughrey, *The Other Side of Silence*, 12.

Latin American affairs. However, from the outset the queerness of Welles' relationship to Roosevelt was apparent. Welles occupied a position in Roosevelt's entourage that was not like any other, a reflection of the unique sympathy the two men shared on account of their shared past and marginalization.

The people surrounding Roosevelt during his political ascent and time as president served many roles and supplied many demands, occupying an ever-changing and often ambiguous orbit around him. Among the closest and most important of these valences was Roosevelt's inner circle. This consisted of Roosevelt's immediate family, most prominently his wife Eleanor Roosevelt, as well as a select group of highly trusted personal aides. His personal secretary Missy LeHand (later replaced by Grace Tully), attorney Thomas Corcoran, press secretaries Marvin McIntyre and Steve Early, and longtime political adviser Louis Howe occupied, at one time or another, this most intimate of sanctums.⁴² These individuals' entire lives revolved around Roosevelt, often to the detriment of their own independence and good health. Most of them lived in the White House for at least a short time, and their interactions with Roosevelt extended from intimate personal contact to heady affairs of state. In one telling, they were compared to "courtiers in the court of Pascal's king."⁴³ Welles was clearly not part of this group. He maintained his independence from Roosevelt, physically and socially, throughout their time as colleagues. There was none of the quotidian interaction that characterized Roosevelt's closest relationships.

Another set of individuals that held sway in Roosevelt's firmament were the succession of highly skilled, deeply influential advisers whom Roosevelt relied upon at various points to provide political support and execute policies. Men like Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Postmaster General James Farley, Secretary of Commerce and later vice president Henry Wallace, and even later additions such as Secretary of War Henry Stimson, all assumed outsized positions of influence in Roosevelt's administration at various points and in various contexts, depending on Roosevelt's immediate needs. Whether the task was getting Roosevelt

⁴² See, Gallagher, *FDR's Splendid Deception*, 125; Costigliola, "Broken Circle". 683.

⁴³ Gallagher, *FDR's Splendid Deception*, 125.

elected, tackling the Depression, or fighting World War Two, Roosevelt collaborated closely with key individuals to help him devise policies and see them enacted, giving them extraordinary access and influence in the process.

Among the most famous of such advisers was the so-called “Brains Trust” that Roosevelt recruited during the run up to his first presidential campaign. This group included several bright, educated, progressive minds that Roosevelt brought into his inner circle from Ivy League Universities, particularly Columbia and Harvard, as well as bright, young intellectuals working in progressive causes around the country.⁴⁴ Figures such as Raymond Moley, Adolf Berle, and Rexford Tugwell provided academic heft to Roosevelt’s policies and speeches and helped give the New Deal much of its intellectual drive and vigour.⁴⁵

Within the context of this entourage, Welles did not quite fit the mould either. Although educated at Harvard, his strengths had never been as much academic as organizational. He lacked the spark of more rigorous thinkers like Adolf Berle and Raymond Moley, both of whom would join Welles in the State Department after Roosevelt’s election. Roosevelt himself seemed to endorse the view that Welles was not a Brain Truster when, in 1937 while considering appointing Adolf Berle alongside Welles in the State Department, “Roosevelt told him that it was the State Department that needed a Brain Truster!”⁴⁶

Thus, Welles’ precise place in the firmament surrounding Roosevelt remained somewhat uncertain during the period before and after Roosevelt’s election. As an old friend and a confidant on domestic political matters, Welles recalled the likes of Louis Howe, Sam Rosenman, or James Farley, whose relationships stretched back decades and whom Roosevelt considered intimate friends.⁴⁷ As a policy specialist, Welles was akin to the Brain Trusters, but evidently not fully part of them.

⁴⁴ See: Rexford Tugwell, *The Brains Trust* (New York: Viking Press, 1968).

⁴⁵ Morgan, *FDR: A Biography*, 347.

⁴⁶ Jordan A. Schwarz, *Liberal: Adolf A. Berle and the Vision of an American Era* (New York: The Free Press, Inc., 1987), 111.

⁴⁷ Steve Neal, *Happy Days Are Here Again: The 1932 Democratic Convention, the Emergence of FDR – and How America Was Changed Forever* (New York: William Morrow, 2004), 2.

The anomaly of Welles' position held only one real analogue in the multiple competing valences of Roosevelt's entourage: Harry Hopkins. Like Welles, Hopkins occupied something of a middle ground between these two groups, in that he was a close friend of Roosevelt's who nonetheless was relied upon extensively for policy advice. As with Roosevelt and Welles, on policymaking, "the fine line between Roosevelt and Hopkins remained a matter privy only to them."⁴⁸ Hopkins, too, developed "a special bond" with Roosevelt over the physical disadvantages they faced, specifically "the fact that both men had fought with death at close range."⁴⁹

However, to call Welles an equivalent to Hopkins would be inaccurate. Their personalities were vastly different. Welles was austere and dignified, Hopkins was "thoroughly and gloriously unpompous."⁵⁰ As well, they served different functions in Roosevelt's political machinations. Welles' role was often to give a patina of gravitas to matters he was assigned; meanwhile Roosevelt once said he admired Hopkins because he "doesn't even know the meaning of the word 'protocol'."⁵¹ Though both men could operate within the highest echelons of Roosevelt's entourage, Hopkins did so as a matter of course, while Welles only did so occasionally.

However, this did not mean that Welles was not important or that his relationship with Roosevelt was not uniquely intimate. On the contrary, the very fact that Welles traversed these boundaries was a key characteristic of the anomalous position he held within Roosevelt's entourage and, more importantly, a sign that the forces that governed his place within that entourage were different than the ones that applied to most of the rest of Roosevelt's close advisers. This ambiguity was one of the more salient features of Welles and Roosevelt's relationship, frustrating Welles' opponents and supporters alike, and it stemmed from the peculiar bond that Welles shared with Roosevelt. No other policy adviser of Roosevelt's had a personal history stretching so far back, bearing so many similarities to his own, and none shared in Roosevelt's exclusion from hegemonic masculinity as Welles did. Welles

⁴⁸ Christopher D. O'Sullivan, *Harry Hopkins: FDR's Envoy to Churchill and Stalin* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 14-5.

⁴⁹ Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

was an oddity and an outlier, but nevertheless operated within a close orbit of Roosevelt. Welles' access to power (i.e. Roosevelt) was simultaneously more direct and more obscure than that of Moley or Berle. Similarly, Welles' relationship with Roosevelt was as professionally defined and personally sympathetic as those of Hopkins, LeHand, or McIntyre. The sympathy of an elite upbringing combined with the crucible of shared social marginalization forged a unique partnership between Roosevelt and Welles that would fundamentally define their political interactions thenceforth.

Meeting of Great Minds: Welles' Advice, Foreign and Domestic

The unique characteristics of Welles' and Roosevelt's partnership was made manifest in the variety of roles he filled, the diversity of settings in which he was consulted, and in the texture of their mutual collaboration on matters of international affairs during Roosevelt's pre-presidential years. Initially, the most prominent role Welles played, and the first record of Welles and Roosevelt's renewed professional collaboration, came over Welles' advising of Roosevelt on foreign affairs.

In early 1928 Roosevelt wrote Welles to solicit his advice on the general state of Latin American affairs.⁵² Welles responded to Roosevelt's request with two long letters in January and March detailing the "picture, as I see them, of the relations of the United States with the Latin American Republics."⁵³ The letters were a comprehensive account of internal Latin American politics, American diplomatic relations, and State Department bureaucratic gossip. They reflected, too, the degree to which Welles felt comfortable sharing his views with Roosevelt and the extensive remit Welles felt entitled to address in his recommendations. Welles called for a "new policy of cooperation" with the Latin American republics and a "preventative policy [of] ... effective diplomacy."⁵⁴ Anticipating the rhetorical and policy shift in

⁵² Welles, *FDR's Global Strategist*, 123-5.

⁵³ Welles to Roosevelt, 15 March 1928, SWP, Box: 148, Folder: 8.

⁵⁴ Roosevelt to Welles, 20 January 1928, SWP, Box: 148, Folder: 8.

Latin American affairs that would later be dubbed the Good Neighbor Policy, Welles advocated greater economic, specifically agricultural, openness between Latin American nations and the United States as a means of fostering intraregional cooperation. He argued the United States had to take a leading role in fostering this sort of cooperation and had to set an example for other Latin American nations to follow. Most importantly, he called for a recalibration of the United States' entire approach to Latin American relations, insisting that "a constructive, and continuous policy, to be carried out day by day by the Department of State in its dealings with the Latin-American Governments, with an ever-present view to the future, and not in what is said or signed at occasional Pan-American conferences, useful as these may be in their way, that the truer interest of this country lies."⁵⁵

In his replies to Welles, Roosevelt indicated his broad concurrence with Welles' proposals. He wanted to continue discussing these matters and arranged for the two of them to meet in person at a later date, which they did periodically for the next four years. Evident in their correspondence was the degree of accord between Roosevelt and Welles on the substance of Welles' analysis and recommendations. Roosevelt praised Welles' writing as "most interesting and constructively useful" with regards to Latin American affairs.⁵⁶ Roosevelt continued, stating that what Welles wrote was "something along the line of what you and I are both agreed is a new and proper policy" and he hoped that it "will be adopted by those who come into power in the near future."⁵⁷

Roosevelt's reaction to Welles' ideas pointed to a meeting of minds and a level of symbiotic thinking between the two men that hinted at the depth of their partnership and how that partnership influenced the crafting of policy. In a letter to Roosevelt on Latin American affairs in January 1928, Welles wrote "[i]t [was] unnecessary to detail what I mean by a preventive policy, since you undoubtedly appreciate that by an effective diplomacy, which suggests rather than commands"

⁵⁵ Welles to Roosevelt, 15 March 1928, SWP, Box: 148, Folder: 8.

⁵⁶ Roosevelt to Welles, 24 February 1928, SWP, Box: 148, Folder: 8.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

the United States would improve its position in Latin America.⁵⁸ Welles' phrasing was telling. He believed he understood Roosevelt's thinking well enough to know that he would implicitly appreciate what he was suggesting. When Welles did offer an example of his 'preventive policy', it came in the form of a single mention of the Central American Conference of 1923, with no explanation of what decisions or context the Conference held that would illustrate Welles' views.

The subtext to Welles' recommendation revealed the symbiotic way the two men discussed and deliberated upon policy: they required collaboration with each other to determine what policies they would enact. This dynamic was seen in a letter dated 5 May 1932 in which Welles raised the topic of the World Court by confessing he had "not had the opportunity in our talks during the past few years to obtain an impression of what your own views may be."⁵⁹ Crucially, this dynamic was not one of deference, with Welles kowtowing to whatever Roosevelt believed; Welles gave his opinion on the World Court in the memo quoted, despite not knowing Roosevelt's views. Roosevelt's respect for Welles was genuine; it was based on an appreciation of Welles' mind and independence and how it could help elucidate complex problems in a way Roosevelt could understand. This could be seen elsewhere in Roosevelt specifically soliciting opinions from Welles on matters of current events, such as the 1928 Havana Conference, without any indication of Roosevelt's own thinking to guide him.⁶⁰

As the accord between the two men grew Welles' involvement in Roosevelt's political circle expanded and the collusion of their outlooks deepened. In September 1928 Roosevelt recruited Welles to write "a magazine article or a pamphlet" on foreign affairs; Roosevelt suggested "'The Crime Against our American Neighbors'" as a potential title.⁶¹ This showed Welles' usefulness to Roosevelt on a practical matter of politics, rather than merely offering advice, and brought the two men

⁵⁸ Roosevelt to Welles, 20 January, 1928, SWP, Box: 148, Folder: 8.

⁵⁹ Welles to Roosevelt, 5 May 1932, SWP, Box: 148, Folder: 11.

⁶⁰ Roosevelt to Welles, 7 March, 1928, SWP, Box: 148, Folder: 8.

⁶¹ Roosevelt to Welles, 8 September 1928, SWP, Box: 148, Folder: 8.

closer together. In the following months, Roosevelt continued to solicit Welles' opinions and thoughts, deepening their political cooperation in the process.⁶²

This dynamic provided the blueprint for Welles and Roosevelt's professional collaboration over the subsequent years while Roosevelt served as governor of New York and planned his campaign for the Democratic nomination for president in 1932. In response to a speech attacking the record of the Wilson administration by Secretary of State Henry Stimson, Welles wrote to Roosevelt recommending "the necessity of some outstanding and representative individual in the Democratic party replying to the address."⁶³ What resulted was an expansive and widely disseminated article published (again) in *Foreign Affairs* the following July, this time ostensibly written by Wilson's former Undersecretary of State Norman Davis, a friend of Welles'. Welles supplied much of the text as well as the overall thesis of the argument and suggested that Davis was the best figure for this occasion.⁶⁴

Welles and Roosevelt's collaboration on the articles in 1928 and 1931 showed the evolution of Welles' role in Roosevelt's entourage. Graduating from adviser to ghostwriter, Welles could count himself as Roosevelt's principal source of information on Latin American matters. Furthermore, the collaboration that preceded and produced these articles reflected a complex and subtle relationship between the two men. It was not as simple as Welles acting as Roosevelt's cipher or Welles acting as Roosevelt's Svengali. Their mutual efforts to craft policy statements were symbiotic, a symbiosis made possible by the bedrock of trust formed by mutual sympathy about their respective personal lives.

The unique character of Welles' partnership with Roosevelt and place within his entourage was further underlined by his inclusion in discussions well outside his area of expertise. Throughout Roosevelt's terms as governor and for most of the first term as president, Welles served as a political informant and emissary for Roosevelt in Maryland, where Welles resided. Welles made himself useful to Roosevelt in a multitude of ways. He fed information about unfolding dramas involving major

⁶² Roosevelt to Welles, 20 July 1928, SWP, Box: 148, Folder: 8.

⁶³ Welles to Roosevelt, 17 February 1931, SWP, Box: 148, Folder: 10.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

political players in Maryland, gauged support for Roosevelt during the lead up to his run for the Democratic nomination, and advised him on the progress of the Democratic campaign in the state during elections. On more than one occasion, he gave Roosevelt the use of his luxurious home at Oxon Hill Manor in Maryland to meet with important Democratic Party figures.⁶⁵

Discussions of domestic politics began very soon after Welles and Roosevelt began working together in 1928. Amidst their deliberations about Latin American politics, Welles fed Roosevelt a steady stream of updates about Democratic fortunes in Maryland and the progress of the presidential campaign of Al Smith. Through the summer and fall of 1928 Welles made informal political reports about the Smith campaign in his correspondence with Roosevelt. These reports included updates about the “dry [anti-Prohibition] and usually Republican” Eastern shore, the likelihood of winning the “negro vote,” and the relative unpopularity of the state’s senior Senator William Bruce.⁶⁶

However, the pamphlet was unable to stop the landslide victory of Herbert Hoover in November, a blow that came as a “bitter disappointment” to Welles.⁶⁷ However, he also noted that the “one bright spot” was Roosevelt’s own election as governor of New York.⁶⁸ Though their correspondence over the next few years would diminish as Roosevelt served as governor and Welles took a series of unofficial assignments in Latin America, the future of their political collaboration was already being planned. “[N]ewspapers, politicians, and private citizens, many of whom do not know you and have not heard of you” Welles wrote Roosevelt on 10 November, “are all saying that if there is any man who can hold the Democratic Party together and prevent the schism which now exists from becoming permanent, that man is yourself. More power to you!”⁶⁹

By 1931 Welles’ participation in Roosevelt’s entourage had advanced to include discussions of political strategy. Over a dinner at Hyde Park in February

⁶⁵ Linda Lottridge Levin, *The Making of FDR: The Story of Stephen T. Early, America’s First Modern Press Secretary* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2008), 145.

⁶⁶ Welles to Roosevelt, 13 September 1928, SWP, Box: 148, Folder: 8.

⁶⁷ Welles to Eleanor Roosevelt, 9 November 1928. SWP, Box: 148, Folder: 8.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Welles to Roosevelt, 10 November 1928, SWP, Box: 148, Folder: 8.

1931, Roosevelt shared with Welles his concerns about the difficulty of winning the Democratic nomination. Roosevelt openly discussed that he was worried about Al Smith “becom[ing] jealous of the latter’s [Roosevelt’s] increasing national prominence” and the possibility of Smith orchestrating a re-nomination for himself in the event of a deadlocked convention.⁷⁰ Welles traveled to Hyde Park at least three more times in 1931, participating in high-level strategy discussions with some of Roosevelt’s closest advisors. At a meeting attended by Eleanor Roosevelt, Louis Howe, and Samuel Rosenman (“an extraordinarily able Hebrew of Texas origin,” according to Welles), Roosevelt “went over the whole political situation ... in the frankest possible way” with Welles and the others.⁷¹ The discussion was a highly detailed account of Roosevelt’s strengths in various states, and among different ethnic groups and power blocs, indicating the kind of information Roosevelt was comfortable sharing with Welles at this time.

The wider implications of the burgeoning relationship between Welles and Roosevelt were evident within weeks of Roosevelt’s election. As soon as Roosevelt’s landslide victory occurred, Welles began to attract attention from those who wished to have an audience with the president, hoping that Welles might arrange a meeting with, or at the very least pass on a message to the president-elect. One of the first and most significant instances of this pattern emerged over the subject of American recognition of the Soviet Union.

Relations between the Soviet Union and the United States had deteriorated after the Bolshevik victory in the Russian Civil War, ending completely with a policy of non-recognition during the Harding administration.⁷² However, “by 1930 the arguments against recognition of the Soviet Union by the United States were definitely weakening.”⁷³ The longevity of the Soviet regime had sunk in and the rapid expansion of the Soviet economy, particularly in contrast to the floundering American one, had forced a reconsideration of non-recognition. For his part,

⁷⁰ ‘Sumner Welles Journal’, 18 February 1931, SWP, Box: 265.

⁷¹ ‘Sumner Welles Journal’, November 1931, SWP, Box 265.

⁷² Peter G. Boyle, *American-Soviet Relations: From the Russian Revolution to the Fall of Communism* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 18-19.

⁷³ Norman E. Saul, *Friends or Foes?: The United States and Soviet Russia, 1921-1941* (New York: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 254.

Roosevelt felt “sentimental prejudice against the USSR’ [was] nonsense” that was, in the words of his wife Eleanor, “not in keeping with American traditions, and possibly useful in blocking aggression and aiding recovery.”⁷⁴

However, with the possibility of a backlash from non-recognition proponents who were still dominant in the State Department, and with the Depression dominating political affairs, Roosevelt stayed mum on the subject through his 1932 election campaign. Thus it was through proxies for Roosevelt that proponents of recognition first attempted to raise the issue; one of the first solicitations came through Welles. On 12 January 1933 Welles sent Roosevelt a letter describing how he had been contacted by a Mr. Skvirsky, identified by Welles as “the unofficial representative of the Soviet Government” in Washington.⁷⁵ Skvirsky had contacted Welles on the recommendation of Professor Stephen Duggan, a prominent lawyer at Columbia University. At the meeting Skvirsky explained to Welles “the reasons which ... made desirable the recognition of the Russian Government by this country when your Administration came into power.”⁷⁶ Skvirsky did not especially impress Welles. “His arguments” he wrote Roosevelt “were, in general, those which have repeatedly been made by spokesmen for the Russian Government” with the promise of commercial benefits leaving Welles “far from convinced.”⁷⁷

Nonetheless the meeting was a significant step forward for American-Soviet relations. It was the first documented case of a representative of the Soviet government reaching out to Roosevelt over the issue of recognition after Roosevelt’s victory. It was the starting point for a nearly yearlong process of delicate talks that culminated in the opening of negotiations between the two countries on the basis of recognition. Beyond its diplomatic angle, the meeting was a significant indicator of the dynamics of the relationship between Welles and Roosevelt as well as the salience of that relationship within domestic and international political circles. Skvirsky did not choose Welles to relay his message by accident. It was a deliberate

⁷⁴ Mary E. Glantz, *FDR and the Soviet Union: The President's Battles over Foreign Policy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 18; Edward M. Bennett, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Search for Security: American-Soviet Relations, 1933-1939* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1985), 1, n.1.

⁷⁵ Welles to Roosevelt, 12 January 1933, SWP, Box: 149, Folder: 1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

attempt to solicit an audience with the president-elect through a trusted and intimate advisor. Welles was neither the most prominent foreign policy expert attached to Roosevelt's campaign nor the most powerful. However, he was the one who could be counted on to have Roosevelt's ear and carry weight with his opinion.

Presidential Patronage: The FDR-Welles Connection Asserts Itself

The ramifications of the unique bond between Roosevelt and Welles were not limited to the creation of policy. Roosevelt's fondness for Welles, and Welles' own ambition, inspired changes to the bureaucratic hierarchy of the State Department, specifically the position Welles would occupy within it. Twice during the mid-1930s Welles made a play for advancement within the State Department, both times relying on his close relationship with Roosevelt to help secure him the position he desired. Welles' efforts, and Roosevelt's reaction to them, reflected the anomalous position of Welles within Roosevelt's entourage and the bond of mutual sympathy they shared forged out of respective social marginalization.

The first of these episodes transpired during the interregnum between Hoover and Roosevelt's presidencies in early 1933. Along with dozens of other supporters of Roosevelt, Welles hoped to receive an appointment to a preferred government post, specifically Undersecretary of State. Welles' candidacy for Undersecretary was tied to the race for the position of Secretary of State. Welles was close with one of the frontrunners, Norman Davis. The two men were long-time friends, having first collaborated during the Harding administration. They met frequently in January and February of 1933 to discuss the unfolding political machinations regarding the selection of cabinet and subcabinet officials. As early as 11 January 1933 Davis and Welles had agreed that if the former were selected as Secretary of State, the latter would be recommended as Undersecretary.⁷⁸

Such an eventuality looked likely in the early months of 1933, with Roosevelt "without saying so in so many words, that he was at present trying to make up his

⁷⁸ Sumner Welles Journal, 11 January 1933, SWP, Box: 265.

mind whether to offer the Secretaryship of State definitely either to him [Davis] or to Senator Walsh of Montana.”⁷⁹ However, events quickly turned against Davis and Welles as their unofficial plans to get appointed to the two top jobs in the State Department attracted a jealous counterattack from fellow Roosevelt acolyte Raymond Moley.

Moley, a central figure in the Brain Trust and one of Roosevelt’s top speechwriters, was also gunning for the position of Undersecretary of State. Although they had worked together on Roosevelt’s campaign, there was no love lost between Moley and Davis. Davis believed Moley lacked “the remotest understanding of the practical nature of international questions” and was wholly unsuited to any work in the State Department.⁸⁰ For his part, Moley identified Welles and Davis as his primary competitors and went after them with a vicious campaign of character attacks in the press. In January, Moley orchestrated the leak of documents pertaining to a botched land deal in Cuba made by Davis thirty years earlier that had ended in a messy court battle. The documents were hardly scandalous, and to Welles showed nothing more than that “[Davis] had unwisely depended upon the representations made to him” by an adviser and “a lack of discretion;” but they did mar Davis’ reputation and hurt his chances for the Secretaryship.⁸¹

Welles and Davis responded to the attacks in kind. In February 1933, Welles passed a letter to Louis Howe “containing the details of [an] incident which took place at a talk ... with some newspaper men, in which Moley had spoken disparagingly” of Davis.⁸² Welles and Davis’ efforts were evidently more successful than Moley’s, as Davis reported to Welles that Roosevelt indicated he “had no intention” of appointing Moley to the State Department and, furthermore, that Cordell Hull had stated that if he were appointed Secretary of State it would be conditional on Moley not being appointed Undersecretary.⁸³

⁷⁹ Sumner Welles Journal, 20 January 1933, SWP, Box: 265.

⁸⁰ Sumner Welles Journal, 11 January 1933, SWP, Box: 265.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Sumner Welles Journal, 17 February 1933, SWP, Box: 265.

⁸³ Ibid.

The significance of these developments became apparent within weeks of Welles' successful campaign against Moley. Late in February 1933 Welles caught wind of an alleged attempt to procure information about his dismissal from the State Department in 1925 that was "unfavorable."⁸⁴ The information in question was related to a memorandum about Welles' dismissal and how it had been prompted by President Coolidge's revulsion at Welles' divorce from Esther Slater and his subsequent marriage to Mathilde Townsend. Not long after, Norman Davis reported to Welles that Cordell Hull was concerned about the "very strong opposition" to his appointment as Undersecretary and that this was serious enough to jeopardize his confirmation in the Senate.⁸⁵ Unhappily for Welles, congressional resistance combined with Cordell Hull's ambivalence proved too great an obstacle. By mid-March it became clear that Welles would not be selected as Undersecretary of State.

Yet, unlike in 1925, rumours about Welles' violating traditional norms of social propriety did not terminate his career ambitions. Only two weeks after the circulation of the memorandum implicating Welles, speculation in the press turned to the likelihood of an ambassadorial post, most likely in "Germany, Belgium, or a South American capital."⁸⁶ In fact, Roosevelt had decided to name him Ambassador to Cuba, one of the most prominent and politically challenging diplomatic posts in the Western Hemisphere. (Ironically, this development was still disappointing for Welles, as he had categorically denied his interest in being Ambassador to Cuba earlier in the year.⁸⁷)

The Undersecretary appointment rignarole illustrated a key aspect of Welles' relationship with Roosevelt. Despite the political liability posed by Welles' past violations of social mores, Roosevelt was not willing to abandon Welles. Even in the face of opposition from within Roosevelt's inner circle and from outside congressional and diplomatic heavyweights, Welles was able to draw on Roosevelt's respect for him as a diplomat and a friend to withstand the onslaught. Although Roosevelt was not able to place him in the role Welles wanted, the position he got

⁸⁴ Sumner Welles Journal, 18 February 1933, SWP, Box: 265.

⁸⁵ Sumner Welles Journal, 23 February 1933, SWP, Box: 265.

⁸⁶ "Five Appear Sure of Foreign Posts," *New York Times*, 3 March 1933, Sec. 1, A2

⁸⁷ Sumner Welles Journal, 27 January 1933, SWP, Box: 265.

was still significant. It identified Welles as someone still favoured by Roosevelt, as there was no other Assistant Secretary of State who was tasked with a specific foreign policy problem, never mind one as prominent as Cuba, where American investment in the Caribbean was greatest. It also left open the possibility of promotion as soon as the Cuban episode was resolved. It was an indication that the relationship Welles and Roosevelt had developed was not merely one of political expediency.

This dynamic was underlined four years later when the episode of Welles' attempt to procure the Undersecretaryship for himself was repeated. In the absence of a sex scandal, Welles proved remarkably adept at flatfooting his opponents, specifically by parlaying his close relationship with Roosevelt to its fullest advantage. In late 1936 William Phillips resigned as Undersecretary of State to take up the position of Ambassador to Italy. The move caught the attention of many in Washington and the State Department, including Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Affairs R. Walton Moore, Phillips' ally and close friend, Ambassador to France William "Bill" Bullitt, and Sumner Welles. Each of these men had ambitions for higher office and all of them believed that they had the upper hand in the situation through a close relationship with Franklin Roosevelt. In reality, none of these men had a monopoly on Roosevelt's affections, though Welles did have the advantage.

R. Walton Moore and Sumner Welles shared few characteristics. In his late seventies, Moore was one of the oldest members of the State Department in 1937. He had served in the House of Representatives for over a decade, where he had struck up a good working relationship with fellow Representative Cordell Hull. His wife was distantly related to Franklin Roosevelt and he "held Roosevelt 'in high regard'."⁸⁸ Having been selected by Hull as an Assistant Secretary of State in 1933, they worked closely together. They also shared a common background and temperament. They were methodical, cautious, and conservative in mentality, albeit holding liberal views. Moore was unlikely to upstage Hull by being too dynamic and

⁸⁸ Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, 42, 44.

he fit in well with Hull's cautious approach to foreign policy, as opposed to Welles' more impulsive methods. Unsurprisingly, Hull preferred Moore for Undersecretary.⁸⁹

Moore had the added advantage of being popular with Bill Bullitt. Bullitt looked up to Moore with almost filial devotion and in the spring of 1937 became his most fervent advocate for the Undersecretaryship. Bullitt ostentatiously returned from Paris for a week in March 1937 to visit a vacationing Roosevelt in Warm Springs, Georgia.⁹⁰ With Bullitt at his back, Moore seemed an obvious choice. However, Moore's candidacy was in jeopardy from the outset and he quickly found himself outmanoeuvred by the more agile Welles.

As he did against Moley during the early stages of the 1933 battle, Welles embarked a campaign of political subterfuge. Welles fed stories about Moore to Drew Pearson, who wrote the gossip column "Washington Merry-Go-Round." In three columns printed in March 1937, Moore was attacked for his age, his alleged desperation to be named Undersecretary, and an unauthorized credit made by Moore as Chairman of the Export-Import Bank.⁹¹ The columns came at a critical moment during Roosevelt's deliberations over the Undersecretary's position and "put a further damper on Moore's chances."⁹² Further diminishing Moore's chance was his unwillingness to lobby for the job himself. Moore opined, "Mr. Welles is a heavy fighter, whereas in this business I have refrained from fighting."⁹³ Moore's pacifistic approach further highlighted the dynamism that Welles brought to the fight, and presumably, would bring to the job as well.

Welles was also adept in counteracting the efforts by Bullitt to lobby for Moore. On 16 March 1937 Welles sent a testy letter to Marvin McIntyre, the president's personal secretary, insisting that he be given a chance to meet in person

⁸⁹ Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, vol. I* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1948), 509.

⁹⁰ Orville H. Bullitt ed., *For the President Personal and Secret: Correspondence Between Franklin D. Roosevelt and William C. Bullitt* (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1973), 209.

⁹¹ Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, 130.

⁹² *Ibid.*, quoting "Washington Merry-Go-Round," Mar. 3, 17, and 26, 1937.

⁹³ Moore to Bullitt, 20 May 1937, Yale University Archives, WCBP, Group 112, Series I, Box 58, Folder 1436.

with Roosevelt despite his being on vacation at Warm Springs.⁹⁴ The letter drew attention to the fact that Welles “ha[s] never taken up his [the President’s] time with anything but essential matters.”⁹⁵ The letter closed with Welles explaining in excruciating detail how he could visit Warm Springs and return to Washington quickly, having only taken up an hour or so of the president’s time.⁹⁶ That Welles was so insistent on getting additional face time with the president indicated a great anxiety on his part to press his case. It also spoke to a willingness to exercise political muscle and use his friendship with the president to his advantage.

The resolution of the struggle between Welles, Hull, Bullitt, and Moore over the Undersecretary’s position did little to stem the increasingly rancorous feelings between the men involved. Caught between personal allegiances to both Welles and Moore and the political pressure exerted by both men’s supporters, Roosevelt equivocated. He promoted Welles to Undersecretary and simultaneously revived the position of Counselor of the State Department, which had been eliminated in 1923, to give to Moore.⁹⁷ The Counselor position was equal to the Undersecretary’s in rank and pay, but the reality was that Moore had been sidelined; he would not be involved in the day-to-day running of the Department and had no delineated powers or directive. As Moore put it in a letter to Bullitt soon after Welles’ confirmation in the Senate: “Mr. Welles has won his fight ... and it is desired that I shall win the consolation race.”⁹⁸

Conclusion:

Welles and Roosevelt’s partnership was a unique blend of cultural affinity, homosocial patronage, and mutually shared experiences of social marginalization. It was unlike any other relationship Roosevelt had during his presidency. Though

⁹⁴ Welles to McIntyre, 16 March 1937, SWP, Box: 149, Folder: 8.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Graham H. Stuart, *American Diplomatic and Consular Practice, Second Edition* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1952), 41.

⁹⁸ Moore to Bullitt, 20 April 1937, Yale University Archives, WCBP, Group 112, Series I, Box 58, Folder 1436.

Welles was not the closest adviser to FDR – that title is more fitting for men like Harry Hopkins or Louis Howe – he occupied an exceptional place in his inner circle. Welles and Roosevelt could relate to each other. They commiserated over shared experiences in childhood and empathized with setbacks and obstacles faced during adulthood. They were, to some degree, mutually dependent. Welles relied on Roosevelt for patronage, access to political power, and protection from jealous colleagues. In turn, Roosevelt relied on Welles' meticulous mind to articulate his general ideas about foreign policy. He also depended on Welles' unflinching loyalty to ensure those policies were carried out properly by the State Department, of which Roosevelt was ever mistrustful.

However, although political expediency was never far from the surface, the bedrock of the relationship between the two men consisted of genuine sympathy and mutual respect for each other born of common experiences. Welles and Roosevelt's shared upbringing in the Brahmin elite inculcated them with certain values and understandings about the power and role of the U.S. in the world. Moreover, both men were also distanced from this world by personal circumstances beyond their control – Roosevelt by polio, Welles by his sexuality. The shared experience of marginalization from hegemonic masculinity gave their outlooks a unique compatibility.

The consequences of this configuration were observable and significant, particularly for those seeking Roosevelt's attention. Welles was able to parlay his relationship with Roosevelt into political power. He advised Roosevelt on his campaigns for governor and president and collaborated with Roosevelt to devise policies, chiefly regarding Latin America and foreign relations. After 1932, Welles used his relationship with Roosevelt to seek professional advancement within the State Department. Although initially unsuccessful in his attempt to become Undersecretary in 1933, Welles was still able to count on Roosevelt's support when he was under political attack and use his close relationship with Roosevelt to overcome potential rivals. As a consequence, Welles assumed a commanding position in the State Department during Roosevelt's administration, with significant implications for U.S. foreign policy.

Chapter Four:

"Man-Of-All-Work Welles"¹: Sumner Welles and Latin American Policy

From 1933 to 1943 Sumner Welles held an integral position in the foreign policy making apparatus of the Roosevelt administration. His influence was broad and deep, expanding across the globe while involving minute considerations of day-to-day diplomatic matters. Though by the time of his resignation his remit had broadened, his first focus – the one that occupied most of his attention and the one closest to his heart – was Latin America. Latin America was “Welles’s special preserve;” “[n]one held center stage like Welles” did.² Decades after Welles resigned, the *New York Times* wrote, “it is no exaggeration to say that Sumner Welles made American policy toward Latin America more than any other diplomat or official.”³ As a consequence, Latin American affairs at this time were shaped, in part, by Welles’ beliefs, prejudices, and his particular vision for American power in the Western Hemisphere.

This chapter examines Welles’ role in the creation and implementation of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America during the Roosevelt administration. It analyzes Welles’ motives and tactics as he crafted the policies and rhetoric that came to define the Good Neighbor Policy. Specifically, this chapter will analyze two main arenas for Welles’ actions: his posting as Ambassador to Cuba from April to December 1933, and his conduct at various inter-American conferences between 1936 and 1942. Building upon the analytical framework laid out in Chapters One, Two, and Three, this chapter will demonstrate the salience of three main influences on Welles’ diplomatic praxis in those arenas: his paternalistic idealism, his aversion to military solutions to diplomatic problems, and his reliance upon the patronage of Franklin Roosevelt to achieve his policy aims. In doing so, this chapter will draw

¹ “The Washington Merry-Go-Round” by Drew Pearson, 7 February 1942, located in SWP, Box: 186, Folder: 8.

² Morgan, *FDR: A Biography*, 684; Irwin F. Gellman, *Good Neighbor Diplomacy: United States Policies in Latin America, 1933-1945* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 81.

³ Obituary for Sumner Welles, 25 September 1961, *New York Times*.

conclusions about the ambiguous legacy of the Good Neighbor Policy and the degree to which Welles' unique positionality contributed to it.

Cuba: The Good Neighbor's Awkward Introduction

The idiosyncratic aspects of Welles' policymaking in Latin America during the Roosevelt administration first appeared during his stint as Ambassador to Cuba in 1933. Relations between the Cuba and the United States had never been easy. Nearly invaded by the United States in 1868, Cuba was occupied during the Spanish-American War and granted its independence shortly thereafter, following which it descended quickly into political chaos. The 1901 Platt Amendment, passed by the U.S. Congress in response to growing political instability in Cuba, gave the United States the authority to "intervene militarily in the island's domestic affairs," a right which had been invoked twice in the three decades between then and Welles' arrival.⁴ This situation gradually increased tensions, as U.S. interference in Cuban politics, combined with repeated military actions to quell rebellions on the island, became "[a] source of enduring injury to Cuban national sensibilities."⁵

The island held great economic importance for the United States. U.S. companies invested heavily in Cuban agriculture and industry while simultaneously supplying a market for Cuba's sugar exports, the mainstay of the country's economy.⁶ By the 1920s Cuba had become the linchpin of the United States' presence in the Caribbean, a strategic base for guarding the Panama Canal and a conduit for investment further south. Control of Cuba ensured open access to the country's resources for U.S. companies and had brought a measure of political stability. However, as one historian pointed out, "this only mean[t] that the level of

⁴ Gellman, *Good Neighbor Diplomacy*, 17.

⁵ Louis A. Perez Jr., *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy, Third Edition* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 176.

⁶ For an overview of Cuban-American relations see: Jose M. Hernandez, *Cuba and the United States: Intervention and Militarism, 1868-1933* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1933) and Jules R. Benjamin, *The United States & Cuba: Hegemony and Dependent Development, 1880-1934* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977).

political violence was not as high in Cuba as elsewhere."⁷ In fact, U.S. involvement in the country's economy had bred intense resentment among Cubans. Cuban historian Louis Perez wrote:

"For more than two decades the United States had endeavored to create conditions in Cuba in which North American interests – political, economic, strategic – could flourish and prevail, not only against the interests of other foreigners but against Cuban ones as well."⁸

Cuban nationalists resented the U.S. military presence, and as time passed Cuban workers of all classes increasingly resented policies designed to undermine Cuban economic independence.

By 1933 Cuba was beset by profound economic and political problems that threatened to throw the island into chaos once again. Gerardo Machado had been President of Cuba since 1924, when he was elected democratically. But his rule quickly descended into dictatorship and political terror. Machado was pathologically intolerant of opposition and fearful that the restive growing working class of Cubans might stage a revolution and overthrow him. Machado responded to labour agitation with "terrorist tactics ... murder, torture, disappearances."⁹ His re-election in 1928, in contrast to that of 1924, was also marred by corruption. Machado bribed all the major parties to nominate him as their candidate for president, then forced through a constitutional amendment extending the presidential term from four years to six.¹⁰ Political opposition to Machado was driven underground and became increasingly radicalized, especially through the growth of the Communist Party.¹¹ "By the spring of 1933," one historian wrote, "Cubans were living through a political and economic crisis where numerous bombings, kidnappings, mysterious seizures of weapons and munitions, and urban and rural protest were daily occurrences."¹²

⁷ Hernandez, *Cuba and the United States* 160.

⁸ Perez Jr., *Ties of Singular Intimacy*, 170.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹¹ Robert Whitney, *State and Revolution in Cuba: Mass Mobilization and Political Change, 1920-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 81, 95.

¹² Whitney, *State and Revolution in Cuba*, 82

Padre Sabe Mejor: Welles' Paternalistic Plans

Drastic and immediate action was needed to rectify the situation. After a short deliberation over whether to send former Undersecretary of State Francis White, Roosevelt decided in early April 1933 to appoint Welles to Cuba as minister plenipotentiary.¹³ Welles arrived in Cuba in May of 1933 armed with what he believed to be an airtight plan to solve Cuba's political, economic, and social problems. The plan was simple, straightforward, and firmly grounded in Welles' experience and outlook.¹⁴ Machado would appoint a neutral party as vice-president to serve out the rest of his term. He would ask the congress to draft a new electoral law shortening congressional terms so that a new congress would be elected alongside the president in 1935. In the meantime, negotiations on a new trade agreement with the United States would continue with the understanding that, once the new government was elected, it would be signed.¹⁵

Immediately evident in Welles' plans, ostensibly magnanimous though they were, was a transparently paternalistic approach to solving the Cuban situation. Despite assurances that the U.S. and Cuba would treat each other as equals, Welles' plans made clear they would be implemented under the continued auspices of the existing legal structure of Cuban-American relations "by [the] rights and obligations as set forth in the first five articles of the treaty between the United States and Cuba signed at Havana May 22, 1903;" the Platt Amendment would not be abrogated and

¹³ Irwin F. Gellman, *Secret Affairs: Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 58; Welles was confirmed by the Senate on 24 April 1933. Summary of Congressional Record, Monday, April 24, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library (FDRL), Sumner Welles Papers (SWP), Box 176, Folder 2.

¹⁴ Bryce Wood, *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 59.

¹⁵ "The Secretary of State to the Appointed Ambassador in Cuba (Welles), 1 May 1933, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1933. Vol. V: The American Republics, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1952), 279-86.

the U.S. would retain the right to set terms for renegotiation of the trade agreement.¹⁶

Welles also employed somewhat sentimental language that underlined a belief that the plans he was unilaterally proposing were what was best for the Cuban people. In his inaugural statement upon his appointment, Welles confessed a “peculiar sympathy” for the island and its population.¹⁷ A few weeks later in press interview, Welles expressed the opinion that “the Cuban people should have faith in themselves and that unquestionably there were evidences of impatience and impulsiveness on the part of the Cuban people at the present time.”¹⁸ He related his opinion in a letter to his friend and colleague Laurence Duggan in which Welles explained how a prominent Cuban had chided him for this attitude. In response, Welles somewhat indignantly told Duggan “I should think in this connection that any patriotic Cuban would feel ... that they should have enough patience and enough faith in their own capacity to attempt to work out a solution of whatever political problems they might be concerned with in an orderly and peaceful manner.”¹⁹ Meanwhile, during his explanation of the details of his plans for resolving the political crisis to President Machado, Welles justified his approach by explaining “I was under the very positive impression that not only the eventual benefits to be derived from such agreement but also the turning of the attention of the general public from political agitation to questions of economic interest to every Cuban citizen would have a markedly beneficial psychological effect.”²⁰

Beyond the rhetoric he used to express himself, Welles’ characteristic paternalistic idealism was revealed in his undue optimism about Cuban politics. Welles profoundly misread the political landscape, particularly with regard to Machado. During his first months in Cuba Welles was pleased, as his plans appeared to achieve a great deal of success. Machado was “very obviously impressed with the

¹⁶ Benjamin, *Hegemony and Development*, 91-2; Instructions to Welles from Hull, 1 May 1933, SWP: Box 176, Folder 2.

¹⁷ Statement by Mr. Sumner Welles, Assistant Secretary of State, 20 April 1933, *FRUS*, 1933. Vol. V, 278.

¹⁸ Welles to Laurence Duggan, 31 May 1933, SWP: Box 171, Folder 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Secretary of State, 13 May 1933, *FRUS*, 1933. Vol V, 288.

declarations” Welles had proposed and had agreed to step down and submit to new elections according to a timetable to be devised by Welles.²¹ Opposition leaders, initially unwilling to even sit at the same table with Machado, were gradually coming to see that their best interests lay with courting Welles. By June, the only holdouts to negotiation were fringe ultranationalists and radicals, whose support among the population was minimal.²²

However, this comity was illusory. In July, despite initially agreeing to Welles’ plans for his eventual removal from power, Machado gave a series of “rambling and at times almost incoherent speeches” in the Senate and House in advance of a debate that had the potential to undermine Machado’s grip on power.²³ The speeches were, in Welles’ opinion, “delivered at a singularly inopportune moment and were in many passages most unfortunately worded.”²⁴ Negotiations fell apart and a crisis was soon at hand. Welles had seriously misjudged Machado’s character and it led to a serious threat to the success of Welles’ efforts.

Welles compounded this miscalculation by adopting an unduly optimistic assessment of the restlessness of the Cuban people. Although well aware of the political instability caused by Machado’s campaign of terror and violence over the previous five years, Welles did not fully comprehend the depth of dissatisfaction with the current regime, nor did he appreciate the influence of more radical groups on the Cuban political spectrum. Despite the fact that they were highly organized and led by eloquent leaders, Welles was unable to attach very much importance to the student groups. When a series of strikes in late July and early August brought Havana to a standstill Welles downplayed their political significance.²⁵ Despite having evidence that the government was trying to orchestrate a general strike, Welles continued to hold lengthy meetings with government and opposition members, insisting that “[p]ractically all important points have already been agreed

²¹ Welles to Hull, 13 May 1933, *FRUS*. 1933, Vol. IV, 288-9.

²² Louis R. Perez Jr., *Cuba Under the Platt Amendment* (London: University of Pittsburg Press, 1986), 308.

²³ The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Acting Secretary of State, 27 July 1933, *FRUS*. 1933, Vol. V, 330.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Benjamin, *Hegemony and Development*, 99.

to."²⁶ Within two days, Welles was forced to abandon his plans and compel Machado's resignation.²⁷

If his misplaced confidence in Machado's statesmanship and the Cuban people's magnanimity reflected Welles' undue optimism, his actions following Machado's removal underlined the condescending nature of his paternalistic approach. Upon Machado's departure for Bahamanian exile, Welles made the fateful decision to select Carlos Manuel de Céspedes y Quesada as interim President. Céspedes was a prominent politician and diplomat who shared a close relationship with Welles. Welles had a special affinity for Céspedes, having worked closely with him during his posting to Cuba in 1921. At that time, Welles believed "Céspedes would make an ideal president because of his "amenability to suggestions or advice which might be made to him by the American Legation," suggesting that even then Welles' priorities had never entirely centred on the well being of the Cuban people.²⁸

However, in spite of – and to some extent because of – his support from Welles, Céspedes was incapable of leading Cuba effectively.²⁹ Céspedes possessed a "weakness of character".³⁰ He was "without popularity, without a party, and without a program, and all at once he inherited a cabinet, a constituency, and a country in collapse."³¹ One veteran journalist thought him "too gentle to rule; honorable and intellectual – but indecisive."³² Future Ambassador to Cuba Spruille

²⁶ The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Acting Secretary of State, 5 August 1933, *FRUS*, 1933. Vol. V, 334; The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Acting Secretary of State, 5 August 1933, *FRUS*, 1933. Vol. V, 335.

²⁷ The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Secretary of State, 7 August 1933, *FRUS*, 1933. Vol. V, 336.

²⁸ Lars Schoultz, "Blessings of Liberty: The United States and the Promotion of Democracy in Cuba", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2 May (2002), 409, quoting Sumner Welles, 'Memorandum,' 1 March 1921, 837.00/2216, NARA, RG59

²⁹ Welles expressed concerned that he was exercising too much control and that Cuban politicians were beginning to resent it. This prompted a request to Washington that he be recalled during August, but the Department insisted he stay at least until the end of the month. See: Robert F. Smith, *The United States and Cuba: Business and Diplomacy, 1917-1960* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1960), 148.

³⁰ Schoultz, "Blessings of Liberty", 409, quoting Crowder, 'Recent Cabinet Crisis,' 21 April 1923, 837.00/85, NARA, RG59

³¹ Perez, *Platt Amendment*, 317.

³² Benjamin Welles, *Sumner Welles: FDR's Global Strategist: A Biography* (New York: MacMillan Press, 1997), 167, quoting Ruby Hart Phillips, *Cuban Sideshow*, (Havana: Cuban Press, 1935), 16.

Braden believed he was “a ‘boulevardier and gourmet who had lived and entertained in Paris and was more European than Cuban’.”³³

That Welles considered such a person to be a good choice to lead Cuba during this turbulent period spoke to both his misunderstanding of the political situation and his inability to comprehend why his handpicking the Cuban leader would be problematic. By appointing a close friend – one who shared Welles’ elitist characteristics and cosmopolitan profile – Welles demonstrated his narrowness of vision about who could be considered respectable and authoritative. In Welles’ eyes, Céspedes was an acceptable candidate precisely because he shared those paternalistic qualities he himself possessed. Meanwhile, to many Cubans at the time and historians since, Céspedes “represented an inoffensive compromise to the contentious groupings that were banded together into a provisional government ... It neither possessed the popularity nor promised a program. And it lasted only three weeks.”³⁴ On the night of 5 September a group of non-commissioned Cuban army officers under Sergeant Fulgencio Batista joined radical student groups from the University of Havana and seized power in a bloodless coup known as the ‘Sergeant’s Revolt’. Céspedes was overthrown and replaced with a Pentarchy of five leaders from various political factions. Within a week they had selected one of their own as the new President, Ramón Grau San Martín.

The overthrow of a second Cuban government in under a month obviously disrupted Welles’ plans, but the group that replaced Céspedes posed an even greater challenge. The Grauist government marked a significant departure for Cuban politics up to that point. It instituted widespread reforms, introducing labour reform, female suffrage, and reduced utility rates, and initiated land reform.³⁵ Most significantly, Grau unilaterally abrogated the Platt Amendment, a longstanding grievance of Cuban nationalists, a sign that Grau was determined to chart a course for Cuba that was free from undue influence by the United States. According to one historian, Grau

³³ Welles, *FDR’s Global Strategist*, 167, quoting Spruille Braden transcript, 2916-2917, Columbia Oral History Project, Columbia University, New York.

³⁴ Perez, *Ties of Singular Intimacy*, 193.

³⁵ Perez, *Platt Amendment*, 322.

was effectively “dismantling of the internal structures that had underwritten and institutionalized U.S. hegemony.”³⁶

Once again, Welles’ reaction to this popular uprising, and contravention of his ostensibly beneficent plans, was to dismiss its importance and deny its legitimacy. Welles denounced the Grauists as “the unpatriotic and futile obstinacy of a small group of young men who should be studying in the university instead of playing politics and of a few individuals who had joined with them from selfish motives.”³⁷ The people exercising influence and the government they put in place were “frankly communistic.”³⁸ Dismissing the legitimacy of the Grauists wholesale, Welles insisted the toppling of Céspedes as “not ... in any sense responsive to a social movement” nor “directed against Céspedes or his cabinet.”³⁹ Accordingly, Welles advised Roosevelt to withhold recognition based on the Wilson-era policy, which Welles had championed, of not recognizing governments in Latin America that came to power via unconstitutional means, and requested the destroyer *U.S.S. Richmond* remain in Havana harbor as a precaution.⁴⁰

Evidence to back up such assessments was minimal. Grau’s government had at least as much viability and public support as the now-defunct Céspedes government, which Welles had recognized almost immediately upon its formation only weeks earlier. Grau had the support of the army and “social unrest and violence were no greater than under Céspedes.”⁴¹ Welles’ reaction, then, was less a reaction to conditions on the ground and more a response to his own outlook and prejudices about who was behind the revolution. “As far as Welles was concerned the only groups of any importance outside of the army were the upper-class political and business elements,” groups who were not represented in any meaningful way by the

³⁶ Perez, *Platt Amendment*, 323.

³⁷ The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Secretary of State, 4 October 1933, *FRUS* 1933. Vol. V, 471.

³⁸ The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Secretary of State, 5 September 1933, *FRUS*, 1933. Vol. V, 382; The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Acting Secretary of State, 7 December 1933, *FRUS*, 1933. Vol. V, 535.

³⁹ Perez, *Platt Amendment*, 330, quoting Welles to Hull, October 16, 1933, 837.00/4206, DS/RG 59.

⁴⁰ The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Secretary of State, 8 September 1933, *FRUS*, 1933, Vol. V, 403.

⁴¹ Benjamin, *Hegemony and Development*, 151.

Graust government.⁴² Roosevelt himself acknowledged this in a memorandum sent to Francis White, the Acting Secretary of State, when he mentioned how Welles “seems to have had excellent support from all Americans in Cuba, regardless of the fact that they have been almost all put out of business.”⁴³

In a broader context, Welles’ objections channelled long held prejudices in the United States against Cuban, and more generally Latin American, aspirations for independence and autonomy that had informed U.S. policy toward Latin America during the pre-Good Neighbor era. Reactions in the U.S. to Cuban demands for greater autonomy had always been looked on with great suspicion. Many in the U.S. “could not understand opposition to [American] influence by Cuba as other than immaturity or, at the end, alien subversion.”⁴⁴ Indeed, during Welles’ posting there were “[s]ome American interests in Cuba”, traditional supporters of intervention, who were uneasy about the reforms being introduced by the new government and fearful of the prospect of social revolution, for “armed protection due to labor violence”.⁴⁵

However, Welles’ objections to Grau were not based on economic self-interest or resentment of Cuban nationalism, per se, but on his belief in the inherent instability and unconstitutionality of the Graust regime. “None of the established political parties, none of the commercial or business interests, no responsible labor organization, and only a few of the members of the professional classes supported the government,” Welles later explained.⁴⁶ It “appeared to be completely incapable of maintaining even a semblance of public order.”⁴⁷ The policy he pursued toward Grau was a product of his paternalistic belief that the plans he had devised for the Cuban people for an orderly transition from dictatorship to democracy was the greatest priority of the Cuban people and that the only people who could do so were

⁴² Smith, *The U.S. and Cuba: Business and Diplomacy*, 155.

⁴³ Memorandum from the President for the Acting Secretary of State, 27 November 1933, FDRL: President’s Official File, Box 25, OF470 Sumner Welles, 1933-45.

⁴⁴ Benjamin, *Cuban Revolution*, 4.

⁴⁵ Smith, *The U.S. and Cuba: Business and Diplomacy*, 151.

⁴⁶ Sumner Welles, *The Time For Decision* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), 198.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

those members of the elite whom Welles had favoured.⁴⁸ Deviation from his carefully laid plans, which were premised on the intention of conferring constitutional legitimacy on a preselected elite, was all the evidence he needed to dismiss Grau's takeover as illegitimate and refuse recognition.

Trump Card: The Roosevelt-Welles Connection

If Welles' paternalistic idealism laid the shaky foundations for his plans to help Cuba, then his characteristic response to adversity – appealing to higher authority – hastened its collapse. Welles' close relationship with Roosevelt added a destabilizing factor to Welles' time in Cuba. By forcing him into the situation in the first place and by offering to him the ability to pursue extraordinary measures to redress setbacks of his carefully laid plans, Welles' patronage by Roosevelt inadvertently complicated an already difficult situation. In so doing, it led to some of the most dramatic and perplexing moments in Welles' career, ones that become easier to understand when analyzed in the context of Welles' relationship with FDR and the bedrock of shared sympathy and trust it was built on.

Welles' selection for the Cuban post was not inevitable, but it was foreordained by the close relationship he shared with the man who appointed him: Franklin Roosevelt. Welles had been advising Roosevelt on Latin American affairs for five years.⁴⁹ Welles' extensive knowledge of the region was a valuable asset in its own right, but he was also familiar with Cuba specifically, having established personal contacts on the island during a brief posting in 1921-1922.⁵⁰ Welles was also familiar with the delicate process of playing midwife to emerging Caribbean democracies, having overseen the transfer of power from military to civilian authorities in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and elsewhere.

⁴⁸ Benjamin, *Hegemony and Development*, 149.

⁴⁹ Gellman, *Roosevelt and Batista*, 13.

⁵⁰ For an account of Welles' first posting to Cuba, see: Gail Hanson, "Sumner Welles and the American System: The United States in the Caribbean, 1920-1940" (Ph.D. Dissertation. State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1990), 137-74.

Perhaps more importantly, Roosevelt trusted Welles to handle the situation by enacting specific policies that were in line with the general guidelines he had set out. After nearly five years of correspondence and collaboration on political affairs, Roosevelt had grown to trust Welles' abilities and gave him his unflinching confidence. He could rely on Welles to take care of matters in Cuba without having to pay close attention to what was going on. Roosevelt had good reason to delegate this affair to someone else, as he was faced with the extraordinary economic and financial crises that beset the nation in early 1933. Indications of this line in Roosevelt's thinking emerged shortly after Welles arrived in Cuba. In June 1933, Roosevelt cabled Welles for the first time since April, contritely admitting it was because he had "been so taken up with the European situation." Significantly, Roosevelt excused his silence by explaining "all I have been able to do in regard to Cuban affairs has been to read your dispatches and dismiss them from my mind for the very good reason that you seemed to be getting the situation under control and to have the confidence of the people who count."⁵¹ Roosevelt's explanation was a tacit admission that he had more important things to deal with, but it was also an indication that the bond he had formed with Welles over the years was strong enough to implicitly trust him.

However, Roosevelt's trust in Welles to carry out his policy with aplomb unwittingly injected a destabilizing force into the Cuban situation by ignoring one crucial factor: Welles did not want to go. By all accounts, Welles was not at all enthusiastic about going to Cuba. In the months before his assignment, Welles had repeatedly expressed his hope to be appointed Undersecretary of State or, barring that, being given a desk job in Washington that would allow him to craft policy on a regional or hemispheric level. Perhaps subconsciously realizing that whomever was assigned there would face significant challenges, Welles even specifically called out an assignment to Cuba as "out of the question."⁵² Welles' feelings were no secret, either. When his appointment was announced Maryland governor Albert Ritchie, a contact of Welles', wrote with surprise "I thought that your recent appointment [as

⁵¹ Roosevelt to Welles, 24 June 1933, FDRL, President's Official File, Box 25, Folder OF 470.

⁵² 'Welles Diary', 27 January 1933, SWP, Box 265.

Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs] meant that you were not in the field for anything else.”⁵³

Perhaps because he felt he could not refuse for fear of short-circuiting his revived diplomatic career, or perhaps out of a sense of obligation to his benefactor, Welles accepted the job. Nevertheless, his disappointment was palpable. He took pains to explain that he intended to stay in Cuba only a few months, just until a stable transition of power had been completed. In a letter to Maryland senator Millard Tydings Welles insisted “I would like to let you know confidentially that my mission is to be only a relatively brief one and that I am eventually to return to the Department in my present position, but on account of the peculiar political situation in Havana no official intimation to that effect will be given out here.”⁵⁴ Once he arrived Welles was impatient to leave. Over his first four months in Cuba he repeatedly asserted that his return to Washington was imminent. In a July communication to Roosevelt, Welles estimated that he would be able to return to the U.S. by the end of September.⁵⁵ A month later he expressed his to return to Washington as soon as possible to help with preparations for the upcoming Inter-American Conference in Montevideo that December.⁵⁶

However, as noted above, events conspired to prevent Welles from leaving on time. The overthrow of Machado upended Welles’ initial plans for an orderly constitutional transition and the weakness of the Céspedes regime threatened to plunge Cuba back into chaos at any moment. With his carefully laid plans falling to pieces Welles’ haste to depart was magnified, and his instinctive reaction was to appeal to Roosevelt for deliverance. Sensing that his presence was becoming harmful to the new Céspedes government Welles requested he be recalled to Washington before the end of the month.⁵⁷ Though his cables went through

⁵³ Albert Ritchie to Sumner Welles, 24 April 1933, SWP: Box 171, Folder 1.

⁵⁴ Sumner Welles to Millard Tydings, 21 April 1933, SWP: Box 176, Folder 2.

⁵⁵ The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Acting Secretary of State, 8 July 1933, *FRUS*, 1933. Vol. V, 319.

⁵⁶ Welles to Roosevelt, 17 July 1933, FDRL, President’s Official File, Box 25/1: OF 470 Sumner Welles et. al., Folder: Sumner Welles 1933-1945.

⁵⁷ The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Secretary of State, 19 August 1933, *FRUS*, 1933. Vol. V, 368.

Undersecretary William Phillips and Hull the State Department, Roosevelt was the one who took the decision, agreeing to Welles' request but insisting he stay until at least 15 September.⁵⁸ Through this special appeal, and by dint of presidential authority, Welles' prayers seemed to have been answered.

However, on the night of 4-5 September a revolutionary cabal of students and non-commissioned army officers overthrew Céspedes. Only a few days from freedom and increasingly out of touch with the prevailing sentiments in both Havana and Washington D.C., Welles threw up his hands. In an extraordinary departure from administration policy, and from the criteria he had set down for U.S. intervention in Latin America nine years before, Welles cabled the State Department and recommended "landing of a considerable force at Habana and lesser forces in certain of the more important ports of the Republic."⁵⁹ He insisted his proposed invasion "should be construed as just as much a friendly act as the facilitating of a loan."⁶⁰ Welles even suggested that a military intervention would "most decidedly be construed as well within the limits of the policy of the 'good neighbor'."⁶¹

To say the least, Welles' opinion was not widely shared. Observers across the United States and Latin America were flabbergasted by Welles' request. Hull received warnings through his Ambassador to Mexico of concerns among that country's leadership that an intervention in Cuba would "destroy the Montevideo conference" being planned for later that year.⁶² Roosevelt received similar warnings from interested non-governmental officials like Raymond Leslie Buell of the Foreign Policy Association.⁶³ Latin American leaders were incredulous about Welles'

⁵⁸ Stephen Early to Cordell Hull Telegram, 28 August 1933, FDRL, POF, Box 25/1: OF 470 Sumner Welles, et. al., Folder: Sumner Welles, 1933-1945; The Under Secretary of State (Phillips) to the Ambassador in Cuba (Welles), 21 August 1933, *FRUS*, 1933, Vol. V, 369.

⁵⁹ The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Secretary of State, 7 September 1933, *FRUS*, 1933, Vol. V, 397; For Welles' criteria for U.S. intervention in Latin America see Sumner Welles, "Is America Imperialistic?," *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1924, 421.

⁶⁰ The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Secretary of State, 8 September 1933, *FRUS*, 1933, Vol. V, 407.

⁶¹ The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Secretary of State, 7 September 1933, *FRUS*, 1933, Vol. V, 398.

⁶² Long Distance Telephone Conversation Between Secretary Hull at Washington and Ambassador Daniels at Mexico City, 1:00 O'Clock P.M., Library of Congress, The Papers of Cordell Hull, Reel 21.

⁶³ Buell to the Pres. At Warm Springs, 24 November 1933, FDRL, President's Official File, Box: 2961-2933, Folder: Welles, Mathilde (Mrs. Sumner Welles)

justification for his proposed intervention. At the Montevideo conference a few months later Alberto Giraudy sarcastically quipped “If Ambassador Welles’ propagating the revolution ... is not intervention ... if upholding a minority group against the wishes of the people is not intervention, if surrounding the island with warships is not intervention – then the United States has never intervened in Cuba!”⁶⁴

Welles’ proposals were considered in high-level meetings between Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and other members of the State Department. Hull was adamant that “there is not the slightest intention of intervening or interfering in Cuba’s domestic affairs.”⁶⁵ Hull’s resistance was built upon his full knowledge of the diplomatic ramifications of a military intervention in Cuba as well as fealty to the policy that he and Roosevelt had worked out months earlier, of which Welles was fully aware, not to intervene. Indeed, Roosevelt had emphasized to Welles during his posting: “it should of course be made clear that request for any assistance [from the U.S.] ... originates from Cuban Government and people and is not suggested in first instance by Washington.”⁶⁶ Welles tried to work around this, leveraging his relationship with Roosevelt as best he could. He bent over backwards to make it seem like the Cuban government had asked for the intervention (which it had not) and requested specifically that the president send him instructions on how to proceed.⁶⁷ But Welles was at a disadvantage in that he did not have face-to-face contact with Roosevelt to plead his case, as Cordell Hull and the other opponents of intervention did. Ultimately, Welles’ appeals to Roosevelt could not overcome the new institutional resistance to intervention, his recommendation was rejected, and he was forced to remain in Cuba for another three and a half months.

However, it was not the last time he appealed to Roosevelt to bolster his efforts. Thwarted in his attempt to remove Grau, Welles spent the remainder of his time in Cuba trying to isolate the regime. His main tactic in doing so was to withhold

⁶⁴ Gellman, *Roosevelt and Batista*, 76, quoting Miami Herald 14 December 1933.

⁶⁵ Hull to Certain Diplomatic and Consular Missions, 11 September 1933, *FRUS*, 1933. Vol. V, 422.

⁶⁶ Phillips to Welles, 21 June 1933, *FRUS*, 1933. Vol. V, 311.

⁶⁷ The Ambassador in Cuba (Welles) to the Secretary of State, 7 September 1933, *FRUS*, 1933. Vol. V, 396-8.

U.S. recognition of the Grauist government, thus ensuring it would eventually lose the support of the military and business interests. In late November, with calls for Grau's recognition growing, Welles again called on Roosevelt for help. Having learned from his first attempt to use his relationship with Roosevelt to enact a policy suggestion, Welles this time traveled in person to meet the president at his retreat in Warm Springs, Georgia.⁶⁸ Cannily, he waited until after Cordell Hull had left to attend the Inter-American Conference in Montevideo before requesting a face-to-face meeting with Roosevelt, thus ensuring a captive and undivided audience for his appeal.⁶⁹ The resulting Warm Springs Declaration reiterated Welles' preferred policy of non-recognition for Grau, and gave additional time to the anti-Grau forces to coordinate.⁷⁰ Observers later recalled rumours that Roosevelt had wanted to recognize Grau but "said he did not see how he could recognize Grau San Martin because Welles did not like him."⁷¹ Three weeks later, only a few days after Welles left Cuba, Grau was removed from office and a new government under Carlos Mendieta, and eventually Fulgencio Batista, was installed.

Welles' experience in Cuba revealed the awkwardness of the United States' position with regard to that country, and in Latin American generally, as it attempted to reinvent itself as the Good Neighbor. By forcing Machado to resign, installing a preferred candidate in his place, and threatening American intervention when that candidate was himself overthrown, Welles abandoned any pretence of operating within the spirit of the Good Neighbor Policy. Paradoxically, and unintentionally, in doing so Welles occasioned a full-throated and public demonstration of U.S. commitment to the non-intervention, thereby laying the groundwork for over a decade of improvement in hemispheric relations.

At the crux of this apparent contradiction were the attitudes and behaviour of Welles himself. Had someone besides Welles been assigned to Cuba in 1933 – Francis White, for instance – the policies devised and the response to changing

⁶⁸ The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Sea, 20 November 1933, *FRUS*. 1933, Vol. V, 523

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Statement for the Press, 24 November 1933, SWP, Box: 176, Folder: 2.

⁷¹ Diary Entry, 7 April 1939, Harvard University, Houghton Library, William R. Castle Diaries, Vol. 37, 148.

events as they occurred would have been substantially different. An ambassador with fewer illusions about Cuba and the beneficence of the United States, and whose attention was not distracted by the prospect of immediate reassignment, likely would have seen more clearly the depth of the difficulties facing Cuba at that point and the length of time it would take to solve them. Any diplomat, save Welles, would have had less access to, and greater reservations about confronting Roosevelt about how to enact or change policy as they saw fit. The unique combination of access to power and paternalistic idealism imprinted Cuban policy with an idiosyncratic mark, leaving an indelible Wellesian imprint on the record of the Good Neighbor Policy and Cuban history as a result.

The Brotherhood: Welles' Hemispheric Idealism and the Good Neighbor Policy

Though his assignment in Cuba ended in December 1933 with Welles' eager departure, the experience had left a profound mark on him and his reputation. One contemporary of Welles, looking back at the Cuban episode, later recalled how:

“[Welles] ... had made one of the great diplomatic failures of our history, a failure that the Administration had been busily trying to get around in its South American policy for all the years since. So now Sumner goes to the other extreme, afraid that he will not be believed unless his is very violent in his change of heart.”⁷²

Whether or not this was an accurate assessment of Welles' psyche, the subsequent stage of Welles' career showed a marked shift toward policy planning on a wider scale and policy content that underlined his commitment to non-intervention. With the Cuban assignment behind him, Welles was in a position to pursue the diplomatic endeavours that he had envisioned during his years in the political wilderness. For the next ten years Welles methodically constructed much of what the Good Neighbor Policy, and Welles himself, would become famous for. As in

⁷² Diary Entry, 6 April 1939, Harvard University, Houghton Library, William R. Castle Diaries, Vol. 37, 147.

Cuba, this process was shaped by Welles' paternalistic idealism and his reliance on FDR for political support; however the addition of external threat to U.S. hegemony activated another aspect of Welles' worldview: his aversion to militarism and a preference for constitutional and multilateral solutions to diplomatic problems.

Historical assessments about Welles' role in crafting the Good Neighbor Policy have analyzed his motives, the wisdom of the policies he enacted, and the impact of the Good Neighbor Policy on Latin American relations overall. Little consensus has been reached. One school of thought has portrayed the Good Neighbor Policy as a progressive, altruistic, and generally successful modification in U.S. behaviour in Latin America, with Welles as a crucial voice in the process. Welles championed an "appreciation of Latin American sensitivities," and a belief "that only through mutual understanding and tolerance could all American peoples live together," achieved through an "open and candid attitude in conversations with Latin American officials."⁷³ His attitude informed the "anticipation of reciprocity" upon which the emblematic policies of the Good Neighbor (non-intervention and equality of sovereignty) were based.⁷⁴ Welles has also been portrayed as a representative of an ascendant school of thought regarding Latin American diplomacy and U.S. foreign policy more generally during this time. This school emphasized a "willingness to trust in the consultative system and the Good Neighbor Policy in order to right all wrongs."⁷⁵

Other interpretations of Welles and the Good Neighbor Policy have been less generous, questioning the sincerity of Welles' and the United States' ideals. In Gail Hanson portrayal, Welles' enactment of the Good Neighbor Policy "glossed over" the imperialistic rhetoric and attitudes of the United States.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, Benjamin Jules believed Welles' "main interest in multilateralism arose from the conviction

⁷³ Frank Warren Graff, "Strategy of Involvement: A Diplomatic Biography of Sumner Welles" (Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Michigan, 1971), 120-1, 156, 146.

⁷⁴ Wood, *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy*, 7.

⁷⁵ Randall Bennett Woods, *The Roosevelt Foreign-Policy Establishment and the 'Good Neighbor': The United States and Argentina, 1941-1945* (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1979), 24.

⁷⁶ Hanson, "Sumner Welles and the American System", 477.

that cooperation might transfer to other Latin American states some of the opprobrium attached to interventions."⁷⁷

To the extent that there is any acknowledgement of an improvement in U.S.-Latin American relations with the introduction of the Good Neighbor Policy, some historians have disputed how much credit can be given to Welles or the administration he worked in. Bryce Wood, in his seminal work *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy*, questioned the novelty of Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, citing similar efforts initiated in previous Republican administrations.⁷⁸ In this view, "three administrations [Coolidge, Hoover, and Roosevelt] each played a part in transforming the peaceful desires of the people of the United States into policies in which all have reason to claim some, if different, shares."⁷⁹

Regardless of when the process started, few contest the fact that once Welles was in power he had a significant impact. Irwin Gellman, who has written more extensively on Welles and Latin America than any other historian, believed Welles' "main attribute was finding answers to complicated questions, and ... fit solutions into a broad political framework established by Roosevelt."⁸⁰ This portrayal chimed with Gellman's more general assessment of Welles as one of a triumvirate that oversaw all aspects of U.S. foreign policy, along with Hull and Roosevelt.⁸¹ Meanwhile, for Randall Woods, Welles was the most prominent member in one of two camps in the State Department battling over the shape of U.S. foreign relations: Latin Americanists and Internationalists. The former, comprising Welles, Laurence Duggan, and other career diplomats, were "concerned almost exclusively with the development of hemispheric policy" while the latter camp, which included Hull, Breckinridge Long and others, "were old Wilsonians" who "tended to view United States relations with Latin America as part of a much larger whole."⁸²

⁷⁷ Jules R. Benjamin. *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 76-7.

⁷⁸ Wood, *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy*, 133-5.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Gellman, *Good Neighbor Diplomacy*, 227.

⁸¹ Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, xi.

⁸² Randall Bennett Woods, *The Roosevelt Foreign-Policy Establishment and the 'Good Neighbor': The United States and Argentina, 1941-1945* (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1979), 23, 24, 25.

The effort to fit Welles' policies into particular categories has helped elucidate broader trends in U.S. foreign policy and the processes of decision making that fed into it. However, that effort has also had the tendency to overlook Welles' own ideological motivations and the influence of his personality on these broader forces. Because of his highly personal way of conducting diplomacy and his covetous attitude toward Latin American affairs, Welles' idiosyncrasies left more of an imprint on the policies he crafted and enacted in Latin America than would a typical diplomat. Welles took matters in Latin America personally and his policies reflected that. Thus, in order to understand the trajectory and contours of the United States' policies in Latin America during this time it is necessary to acknowledge the peculiar motivations, habits, and predilections of their chief architect and most prominent advocate.

Perhaps more than any other policymaker, intellectual, or diplomat concerned with Latin American affairs, Sumner Welles infused his rhetoric with a utopian, almost romantic, sense of idealism. Welles cast the creation of good will among the nations of the Western Hemisphere in much broader terms than mere pragmatic collaboration. Welles spoke of his desire to forge "a real inter-American public opinion which will be a common heritage throughout the Western Hemisphere."⁸³ He believed that because "[h]istory and nature have inspired a feeling of continental solidarity among the republics of the Western Hemisphere ... [i]t behooves us to foster and maintain this solidarity and to develop the moral and spiritual fiber of the civilization of the Americas."⁸⁴ "The spiritual potentialities of the other American peoples," Welles wrote in a 1940 speech "are extraordinary."⁸⁵

Welles' rhetoric distinguished him from other supporters of the inter-American system. Secretary of State Cordell Hull, for instance, also spoke in lofty terms about the nobility of inter-American cooperation, but his rhetoric never matched Welles' for its invocation of spirituality. In his closing address at the Buenos Aires Conference Hull imagined that:

⁸³ "Cultural Aspects of the Buenos Aires Conference", 9 April 1937, SWP, Box: 194, Folder: 10.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ "The Importance of Latin America to the United States" 29 October 1940, SWP, Box: 195, Folder: 1.

“the very fact of the conference itself should offer to other quarters of the world an impressive demonstration of the value of concert and cooperation. Whenever twenty-one nations can foregather in such a spirit and for such purposes, whenever they can act together in due course in the cause of peace, all other nations should find profit in their example.”⁸⁶

Though ennobling, Hull’s speech paled in comparison to Welles’ pronouncements, both in its imagery and its sense of righteousness about inter-American cooperation.

Welles’ sentimental idealism was not merely for rhetorical flourish. It found practical application in the policies Welles championed that became the infrastructure of the Good Neighbor Policy. He emphasized the idea that the Inter-American conferences were a manifestation of hemispheric brotherhood that was at once the outgrowth of past allegiance and the harbinger of closer ties in the future. As Welles put it in a speech in April of 1936 referring to the reaction in Latin America to an address made by President Roosevelt, “there had already existed a community of ideas and ideals throughout the American republics” and the upcoming conference would be the truest expression of it.⁸⁷ Welles linked all aspects of inter-American cooperation to this mystical bond between the American Republics. In a speech delivered in 1936 in which he reiterated his support for building greater transportation links in Latin America, including the Pan American Highway, Welles hastened to add that “if this improvement in physical means of communication is not paralleled by an improvement in our spiritual understanding of one another, the results will necessarily be disappointing.”⁸⁸

The most prominent example of Welles’ infusing Good Neighbor diplomacy with his own poetic rhetoric was in the use of cultural diplomacy and exchange. Cultural exchanges had been part of Pan-American diplomacy since the late nineteenth century. As recently as 1923 there were extensive discussions among the Latin American states about “public health, agricultural and cultural cooperation,

⁸⁶ Hull Closing Address, 22 December 1936, SWP, Box: 182, Folder 8.

⁸⁷ “The Way to Peace on the American Continent,” 15 April 1936, SWP, Box 194, Folder 9.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

rights of women, census, and improvement of communications.”⁸⁹ However, as with much of U.S. relations with Latin America, progress in this field had stalled during the 1920s under the Coolidge and Hoover administrations. Welles sought to change that. Cultural exchange, in Welles’ view, held great potential as a means to both ameliorate hostile feelings toward the United States in Latin America and to foster a more cooperative attitude among his fellow countrymen. In a speech he delivered in 1936, Welles cited “language and cultural differences” as one of the key barriers to inter-American cooperation and he began working to rectify the situation soon after.⁹⁰

Welles saw cultural exchanges like this as an integral part of the political and economic ties he was trying to forge among the American Republics. As he wrote in 1940, “the exchange of cultural and spiritual values ... are a necessary concomitant to the other forms of relations,” like political and commercial relations, between the American Republics.⁹¹ In the lead up to the 1936 Inter-American Conference on the Maintenance of Peace in Buenos Aires, Welles extolled the virtues of social and cultural exchange as a bulwark against war; he waxed eloquent about the cultural impact of Miguel de Cervantes’ novel *Don Quixote* and its transnational appeal in a speech at Columbia University in 1936.⁹² Welles held discussions about engaging in various cultural activities, including the “commission [of a] radiogram to invite scholars and students from Argentina to the United States.”⁹³ He also pushed successfully for a litany of culturally oriented conventions, including the Convention for the Promotion of Inter-American Cultural Relations, the Convention Concerning Artistic Expression, and the Convention Concerning Facilities for Educational and Publicity Films.⁹⁴ As Undersecretary, Welles oversaw the implementation of these proposals in the U.S. under his authority, through the creation of such agencies as

⁸⁹ Frederico G. Gil, *Latin American-United States Relations* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 151.

⁹⁰ “‘Good Neighbor’ Policy in the Caribbean,” 2 July 1935, SWP, Box: 194, Folder: 8.

⁹¹ “The Importance of Latin America to the United States,” 29 October 1940, SWP, Box: 195, Folder: 1.

⁹² Address of the Honorable Sumner Welles, Assistant Secretary of State, at the Instituto de las Espanas, Columbia University, on the Occasion of the Fiesta of the Dia de la Lengua and the Celebration of the Fourth Centenary of the Founding of Buenos Aires, 27 April 1936, SWP, Box: 194, Folder: 9.

⁹³ Stephen Duggan to Sumner Welles, 13 November 1936, SWP, Box: 29, Folder: 8.

⁹⁴ “Conference Program”, SWP, Box: 184, Folder: 6.

the Division of Cultural Relations in the State Department.⁹⁵

Welles' emphasis on cultural relations, like his lofty rhetoric about the American Republics generally, underlined his desire to stimulate popular appeal for the Good Neighbor Policy as a means of ingraining it into the diplomatic fabric of the United States' Latin American foreign policy. But the push for cultural cooperation had an additional dimension that was more than a canny realization of the efficacy of soft power in ameliorating relations between hitherto hostile nations. It was a reflection of the ideas that had undergirded Welles' approach to foreign policy since he began his diplomatic career. By fusing cultural exchanges with economic and political matters, Welles created a policy framework that embodied his own idealistic and paternalistic views toward Latin America. His belief in the ineffable unity of the peoples of the Americas, and the righteousness of the U.S. taking the lead in devising ways to promote and promulgate that unity were directly descended from his earlier career rhetoric and, in turn, his formative experiences reconciling belief in turn-of-the-century American imperialism with a less belligerent mentality. In that sense, Welles' enactment of the Good Neighbor Policy was, as he wrote later in life, a playing out of the "convictions which [he] had reached as a very young man" on a hemispheric scale.⁹⁶

Because of Welles' influence the Good Neighbor Policy was more than a reinvigoration of U.S. efforts to seek tranquility in Latin America. It took on the air of a crusade as Welles sought to use his idealism to construct an international system that was in accordance with the economic, political, and diplomatic interests of the U.S. In this manner, Welles infused the policymaking of the Roosevelt administration in Latin America with a set of principles that was both more idealistic and more pragmatic than hitherto acknowledged. Moreover, it anticipated the greater salience of idealism in the diplomatic rhetoric of the U.S. as it confronted the Nazi and

⁹⁵ Phillip Leonard Green, *Pan-American Progress* (New York: Walter Freese, 1942), 87; "Remarks of the Honorable Sumner Welles, Under Secretary of State, as Guest Commentator Over the WOL Mutual Broadcasting System", 27 July 1938, NARA II, RG59, Central Decimal File, Decimal File, 1930-1939, Box: 216, Folder: 111.16 Welles, Sumner/16-33; Welles was a proud defender of the Division, as evidenced by a terse letter he sent to journalist Drew Pearson defending it against the accusation that its record was "minus zero", See: Welles to Pearson, 4 July 1940, SWP, Box: 63, Folder 13.

⁹⁶ Sumner Welles, *Where Are We Heading?* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1947), 154.

Japanese threats as well as the conceptions of postwar international cooperation that Welles himself would help plan in coming years.

Preventative Neutrality: Hemispheric Wartime Policy

Welles' accomplishments in forging inter-American unity through cultural exchanges and multilateralism left a lasting legacy for hemispheric diplomacy and for Welles himself. However, as the 1930s progressed Welles' efforts to forge solidarity assumed a dual purpose: that of defending U.S. security and protecting its neutrality against the aggression of the Axis powers. Welles' contributions were crucial. Having built up a reservoir of goodwill, Welles could coax, cajole, and convince various countries into joining the United States in its opposition to the Axis, even in the face of domestic resistance and hostile retaliation. More than this, Welles brought to this new phase of Good Neighbor policymaking his idiosyncratic anti-militarism.

Welles sublimated his anti-militarist predilections into a practical policy goal, that of hemispheric collective security. Welles' convictions about inter-American cooperation and solidarity had always envisioned the need for continental defense, but Welles tended to emphasize the deliberative processes to prevent internal conflict rather than the virtues of martial preparedness. In a speech from Roosevelt's first election campaign, Welles explained how the "defense of our seaboard" was a reason for maintaining good relations with the republics of Latin America.⁹⁷ Later in the speech, in a prescient anticipation of the threat to the Western Hemisphere that would be posed by the rise of Nazi Germany over the coming decade, Welles asserted "machinery should exist which would make possible the immediate summoning of an inter-American conference, at which the republics of the American world could determine ... what policy best behooved them in a crisis."⁹⁸ Admittedly, Welles did not specify which countries were most likely to threaten the interests of the United States, but his warnings reflected a worldview in

⁹⁷ "Latin American Relations," 6 October 1932, SWP, Box: 194, Folder: 5.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

which the best way to defend the interests of the United States was to engage in intensive multilateral cooperation.

Unsurprisingly, the vehicle Welles chose to enact this innovation in hemispheric defense was the inter-American conference system. Beginning with the 1936 Inter-American Conference for Maintenance of Peace, Welles methodically constructed a legal and diplomatic framework through which the U.S. could flex its political power in the hemisphere and bind the countries of Latin America closer together while still maintaining its neutrality and avoiding outright provocation of the Axis.

The first step in constructing this legal framework was the most important: the Convention for the Maintenance, Preservation, and Re-establishment of Peace signed at the Buenos Aires conference in December 1936. In declaring that in the event of war the countries of the Western Hemisphere would “undertake without delay the necessary mutual consultations [for] ... a method of peaceful collaboration,” the convention established for the first time the principle of collective action among the countries of Latin America in the face of external aggression and laid the groundwork for a diplomatic apparatus to prepare the hemisphere for the impact of war.⁹⁹ Welles had been instrumental in its inception. He had worked assiduously to prepare for the conference, planning negotiating strategies and editing draft conventions, often with meticulous detail. Welles also hashed out U.S. proposals about the “deceptive use of neutral flags,” and several other minute but important details that ended up being agreed to as well.¹⁰⁰

The Buenos Aires conference combined Good Neighbor diplomacy with the encroaching demands of neutrality and hemispheric defense against Axis aggression; its success stemmed in no small part from Welles’ talents and dedication. In the words of one historian, the conference marked a new phase that “converted the Monroe Doctrine from a unilateral United States policy into a multilateral policy in which all states shared in shaping and implementing actions to

⁹⁹ Convention for the Maintenance, Preservation and Re- establishment of Peace, SWP, Box: 184, Folder: 6.

¹⁰⁰ Carlton Savage to Cordell Hull, 23 September 1936, SWP, Box: 183, Folder: 7.

guard peace and security in the Western Hemisphere.”¹⁰¹ However, the broader significance of the conference arose from how it “gave to the governments of all Latin American countries a sense of participation in the framing of certain decisions affecting the hemisphere as a whole.”¹⁰²

This emphasis on mutual respect and multilateral collaboration had its origins in Welles’ speeches from the late 1920s and early 1930s and was the purest expression of the ideals of the Good Neighbor Policy as Welles envisioned them. Moreover, the passive and reactive nature of the protocols put in place underlined Welles’ predilection to avoid militarism wherever possible. By erecting a system of collective security as a prophylaxis against war, and by giving primacy to a diplomatic framework to respond to any acts of aggression, Welles infused the Good Neighbor Policy with a strain of anti-militarism that was distinctively his own.

As events in Europe escalated toward the end of the decade, Welles worked to galvanize inter-American solidarity and build on the agreements already made to address problems as they emerged. The regularly scheduled Eighth Pan-American Conference, held in Lima, Peru in December 1938, just two months after the Munich Crisis, focused almost exclusively on matters of neutrality and security. The conference adopted a resolution recommending members take actions “prohibiting the collective exercise within their territory, by resident aliens, of political rights invested in such aliens by the laws of their respective countries.”¹⁰³ It also established protocols for subsequent inter-American conferences to be convened in the event of external aggression. It would be under these protocols that three more conferences would be held, at Panama (1939), Havana (1940), and Buenos Aires (1942).¹⁰⁴

Welles’ role at these conferences varied depending on his availability, but his influence was always felt. For the Lima conference, which Welles could not attend, he still managed to have an impact, making sure the composition of the U.S.

¹⁰¹ Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 360.

¹⁰² Wood, *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy*, 338.

¹⁰³ Green, *Pan-American Progress*, 92.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

delegation was to his liking.¹⁰⁵ Welles' involvement was prevalent enough in this case for Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who did attend the conference, to explain to a companion "I had nothing whatsoever to do with the selection of the personnel of [the Inter-American Commission on Women committee]. It was all done in Washington by Mr. Wells and handed to me [sic]."¹⁰⁶

At the Panama conference the following year, held in response to the German invasion of Poland, Welles took a more active role. He "drafted telegrams calling for an inter-American consultative meeting at Panama," in order to reiterate the neutrality of the American republics behind the stance of the United States.¹⁰⁷ The Panama conference resulted in three major agreements: a Resolution on Economic Cooperation, a Joint Declaration of Continental Solidarity, and the Declaration of Panama. The first of these, designed to "protect inter-American commercial and financial relations against the immediate difficulties arising out of the war," was an effort to pre-emptively combat the economic disruptions that the Western Hemisphere had faced after the onset of World War One.¹⁰⁸ The latter two declarations established a neutrality zone in the Western Hemisphere and stipulated that "so long as [the American Republics] maintain their neutrality, a war in Europe ... should not jeopardize their right to self-protection."¹⁰⁹ All of these agreements shared a common theme of trying to create a framework for cooperation in case of war without being so provocative as to provoke retaliation.

Welles played a critical role in crafting the tone and content of these agreements, but his role in their successful implementation went beyond his tactful negotiation at the conferences themselves. Welles was instrumental in weaving the content and intent of these proposals into the larger pattern of Roosevelt's

¹⁰⁵ Welles to Messersmith, 28 November 1938, SWP, Box: 48, Folder: 5.

¹⁰⁶ A revision of material dictated in 1951 entitled "Hull", 1-2, Houghton Library, Harvard University Archives, Papers of Doris Stevens, Box: 127.3, Folder: 8th International Conference of American States – Book Notes, 1951-60.

¹⁰⁷ Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, 168.

¹⁰⁸ "Statement by the Honorable Sumner Welles, Under Secretary of State, Delegate of the United States to the Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the American Republics for Consultation Under the Inter-American Agreements of Buenos Aires and Lima, on Arrival in New York, October 11, 1939," 11 October 1939, SWP, Box: 186, Folder: 7.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

policymaking in the run up to war. In the months after the Panama conference, Welles received multiple requests from the British and French governments for clarification of the precise terms of the Declaration of Panama. In repeated meetings with British Ambassador Lord Lothian, Welles discussed various “hypothetical” questions such as the procedure for “hot pursuit” of enemy vessels into the zone, exemptions carved out for British military operations in Canadian waters, and the “serious question” of the impounding of British ships in the zone.¹¹⁰ These discussions were not merely academic, as the engagement off the coast of Uruguay of the British Navy with the German pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee* on 13 December had made clear.¹¹¹ Discussions with the French Ambassador were of a similar vein, calling attention to French concerns about Latin American protests against violations of neutrality.¹¹²

On one level, Welles’ role in crafting the apparatus of neutrality in the Western Hemisphere contributed to Roosevelt’s attempts to quarantine war to belligerent nations while simultaneously preparing the United States for the failure of those efforts and the expansion of the war onto the United States’ shores. On another level, Welles’ efforts were a reflection of a lifelong preference for policy options that downplayed the role of the military and militarism in diplomatic matters, even in the face of war. Building on his experiences forging compromise and averting conflict in the Caribbean during his early career, Welles approached hemispheric defense and neutrality policy with plans for multilateral consultative negotiation. His preference for those policies, rather than ones that emphasized militaristic elements of hemispheric defense, reflected a longstanding suspicion about aggression and force as a means of addressing diplomatic problems.

¹¹⁰ Memorandum of Conversation with Lord Lothian, 22 December 1939, NARA, RG 59, Office of American Republic Affairs, Its Predecessors, and Its Successors, Box: 3, Folder: W-Memorandum; Memorandum of Conversation with Lord Lothian, 14 November 1939, NARA, RG 59, Office of American Republic Affairs, Its Predecessors, and Its Successors, 22 November 1939, Box 3, W-Memorandum.

¹¹¹ Kenneth S. Davis, *FDR Into the Storm 1937-1940: A History* (New York: Random House, 1993), 516.

¹¹² Memorandum of Discussion with Count de Saint-Quentin, 21 December 1939, NARA, RG 59, Office of American Republic Affairs, Its Predecessors, and Its Successors, Box 3, W-Memorandum.

The Man on the Ground: Welles and Roosevelt's Pivotal Relationship

The final attribute of Welles' professional idiosyncrasies – his patronage by and reliance on Franklin Roosevelt – emerged at another one of the conferences that had been made possible by Welles' assiduous policymaking, specifically Rio de Janeiro in January 1942. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 brought to a climax the rising tension in the Western Hemisphere over the threat of war. Faced with a direct attack on its soil by a foreign power, the U.S. sought to activate the mechanisms of collective security and solidarity from the Buenos Aires, Lima, Panama, and Havana conferences and bind together the hemisphere in solidarity. However, the divisions between different countries and the anxiety over the impact of war on the hemisphere persisted. Volatile and recalcitrant forces that had always been skeptical of U.S. leadership would repeatedly frustrate Welles' efforts to forge consensus. Welles again proved his value as a negotiator and the wisdom of his investments over the past decade in fostering goodwill among Latin American nations, but as in critical moments in the past his imprint was only made possible by leveraging his relationship with FDR to his advantage.

Throughout this critical episode Welles' overriding concern was to maintain the comity and cohesion he had forged over the preceding eight years. Only days after the Pearl Harbor attack Welles began preliminary talks to hold what eventually became known as the Emergency Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Americas. Already, Welles took steps to safeguard an atmosphere of goodwill, specifically by ensuring the conference would be held in friendly territory. Conveniently, the most propitious location with regards to U.S. foreign policy objectives was also the one that had been selected at the 1940 Havana Conference for the next inter-American meeting: Brazil. Brazil had become an increasingly reliable ally of the United States over the preceding decade. Welles had formed a close working relationship with President Getúlio Vargas and former Ambassador to the United States, now Foreign Minister, Osvaldo Aranha. Brazil was also the South American country most exposed to Axis attack, Brazil's northeastern coast lying only a few thousand kilometres from

German-occupied North Africa. As a result, Brazil had a vested interest in cooperating with the United States.¹¹³

For these reasons, Rio de Janeiro offered the most fertile ground for forging inter-American solidarity and preventing disunity, a possibility Welles was keenly aware of. As Welles explained to a Salvadorian diplomat on 13 December 1941, “it would be inexpedient to suggest any change in that decision, [to hold the next inter-American consultative meeting in Rio de Janeiro] since I knew that various of the other American republics would suggest that the meeting be held in another capital and I thought that the only safe course to avoid misunderstanding and bickering was to abide by the formal decision already reached.”¹¹⁴

Standing astride Welles and his plans for hemispheric solidarity was Argentina. Perennially resentful of the power and influence of the United States, reticent to antagonize its immigrant populations from Italy and Germany, and nervous about the economic effects of severing ties with the Axis, Argentina was a source of endless difficulty for Welles at the Rio conference. Again, in an effort to stack the deck in favour of cooperation, and showing a command of Latin American affairs that had become typical of Welles by this point, he had anticipated this attitude and attempted to forestall Argentine recalcitrance with a trip to Buenos Aires by Assistant Secretary Francis White in advance of Welles’ arrival at Rio.¹¹⁵

The importance of Argentina’s amenability stemmed from a desire shared among many in the State Department for a unanimous response by the countries of Latin America to the acts of aggression by Japan and the declaration of war by Germany. There was also a concern that any show of disunity might provoke a domino effect and scupper the entire conference.¹¹⁶ An obstinate Argentina, the U.S.

¹¹³ For more on Welles’ reasoning for preferring Brazil in this instance see: Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 220-2.

¹¹⁴ “Memorandum of Conversation”, 13 December 1941, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, Office of American Republic Affairs, Its Predecessors, and Its Successors, Box 3: Memorandums of Conversations of Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, June 23, 1937 - August 2, 1943, April 22, 1940 to Present.

¹¹⁵ For Secretary Morgenthau from White, 22 January 1942, SWP, Box: 187, Folder: 4.

¹¹⁶ Welles, *FDR’s Global Strategist*, 319.

feared, might raise fears in Brazil about the security of its southern border; a weary Brazil would cause other countries to pull out as well, and so on.¹¹⁷

Ostensibly, the policy of the United States was clear. “[M]ajor emphasis,” Secretary of State Cordell Hull insisted, “should be placed on inducing all the Republics to sign a joint declaration to break off relations with the Axis Powers” because “if they would take this step, all the other steps necessary to make the hemisphere a composite unit in opposition to the Axis would come more easily.”¹¹⁸ Welles concurred with this assessment. In an interview with journalist Raymond Clapper prior to leaving Washington, Welles stated he could “shoot for all Latin-American countries breaking relations with the Axis” but that he “[c]annot go for declaration of war.”¹¹⁹ Such a declaration from the Rio conference, ideally proclaiming a breaking of ties with the Axis, would enhance the prestige of the United States, which had been tarnished by the succession of military defeats at the hands of the Japanese since Pearl Harbor.¹²⁰

However, once Welles was on the ground in Rio de Janeiro he faced unexpected difficulties. On 23 January, after spending several days negotiating a unanimous resolution along the lines outlined by Roosevelt, Hull, and Welles, the Foreign Minister of Argentina suddenly withdrew his support.¹²¹ The conference, in Welles estimation, “was thrown into a state verging upon chaos.”¹²² Acting quickly and without consulting Washington, Welles negotiated a new resolution that “*recommended* the rupture of their diplomatic relations” as opposed to a call for an outright break.¹²³ The resolution was accepted and announced to the press later that day. In procuring this compromise language Welles had, in effect, managed to arrange for the U.S. to have its cake and eat it too. A unanimous agreement had been reached but with enough caveats built in to make it clear that those countries that

¹¹⁷ Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 234.

¹¹⁸ Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Vol. II*, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1948), 1143, 1143-4.

¹¹⁹ Memo, “The Welles Latin-American trip”, 5 January 1942, Library of Congress. Raymond Clapper Papers, Personal File: Memoranda, 1942-43, Box 23.

¹²⁰ Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 224.

¹²¹ Gellman, *Good Neighbor Diplomacy*, 124.

¹²² Welles to Roosevelt, 24 January 1942, SWP, Box: 151, Folder 11.

¹²³ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

did not immediately break ties with the Axis (Argentina and Chile) were out of step with the rest of the hemisphere.¹²⁴

Others, however, did not see things the same way. Hull was livid. Welles “had not only acted without consulting me,” Hull wrote in his memoirs, “worse, he had committed his Government to an unwise agreement. He had compromised the all-important issue.”¹²⁵ He demanded Welles revise the agreement. In his diary Adolf Berle concurred, recalling “[t]he Secretary was a thoroughly angry man. He indicated that he thought Sumner had been undermining him; that he had gone over his head to the White House; that he had worked up the Rio Conference without getting authority;” Berle also agreed with Hull’s assessment that the compromise had given away too much.¹²⁶

The dispute between Welles and Hull came to a climax in a telephone conversation on the night of 23 January. After Welles refused to reopen negotiations on the resolution, Hull telephoned Roosevelt and pleaded with him to force Welles to reverse himself. Hull later explained that he considered what Welles had done to be “a change in our policy, made without consulting me, and equivalent of a surrender to Argentina.”¹²⁷ To what extent Welles had overstepped his bounds was as much a matter of perspective as of litigiousness. According to Berle, “Sumner ha[d] been running the Rio Conference pretty much on his own, without any consultation” up to that point, and so could be forgiven for not asking for Hull’s permission before making such an adjustment.¹²⁸ However, it was clear to most observers in Washington that Welles had not accomplished what he had been sent to do. Former Undersecretary of State William Castle, for instance, believed that the initial newspapers reports of a “great diplomatic victory” (prior to Argentina pulling its support for the first draft) were premature.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Peru, Ecuador, Paraguay, Bolivia, Brazil, and Uruguay all broke off relations with the Axis within days; Chile and Argentina followed suit over the next two years. See: Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 234.

¹²⁵ Hull, *Memoirs Vol. II*, 1149.

¹²⁶ Memorandum, 24 January 1942, FDRL, Adolf A. Berle Papers, Box 213, Diary January 1942.

¹²⁷ Hull, *Memoirs Vol. II*, 1149.

¹²⁸ Memorandum, 24 January 1942, FDRL, Adolf A. Berle Papers, Box 213, Diary January 1942.

¹²⁹ Diary Entry, 23 January 1942, Harvard University, Houghton Library, William R. Castle Diaries, Vol. 43, 32.

What was unambiguous was the resolution to the standoff. Facing a charge of insubordination from his superior, Welles appealed to Hull's superior for clemency. Over the telephone on the night of the twenty-third, and the next day in a long telegram, Welles explained that he had operated under the assumption that:

"the two main objectives at the conference ... should be the breaking of political, commercial, and financial relations between the Axis powers and the American Republics which had not yet taken such action, and likewise the making of every effort to prevent the breakdown of the unity of the Hemisphere"¹³⁰

Furthermore, Welles:

"took it for granted that so long as the desired objectives were attained and so long as the policy you and the Secretary of State had approved was carried out, I was entitled to have sufficient confidence ... to make it possible for me within those bounds to agree upon texts."¹³¹

According to Berle, after hearing Welles' take on the matter Roosevelt believed "the best thing to do was to let well enough alone and make what we could out of it."¹³² According to Welles, "President Roosevelt, without hesitation, ... made the following statement: 'I am sorry, Cordell, but in this case I am going to take the judgment of the man on the spot.'"¹³³

"[A] decision had already been reached," Hull recalled, and Roosevelt decided to trust Welles.¹³⁴ In doing so, Roosevelt also ratified Welles' imprint on this crucial stage in Good Neighbor diplomacy. Welles' restrained course of action and emphasis on solidarity trumped Hull's more belligerent desire to make a clean break with the Axis. That Welles achieved such an extraordinary feat over the direct and vituperative objections of his immediate superior was a testament to the strength of the bond he had forged with Roosevelt over the preceding decades. Roosevelt

¹³⁰ Welles to Roosevelt, 24 January 1942, SWP, Box: 151, Folder 11.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Memorandum, 24 January 1942, FDRL, Adolf A. Berle Papers, Box 213, Diary January 1942.

¹³³ Sumner Welles, *Seven Decisions That Shaped History* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951), 117.

¹³⁴ Hull, *Memoirs Vol. II*, 1149.

trusted Welles as he had when he (unwisely) sent Welles to Cuba in 1933. Their bond, in fact, seemed to be growing stronger, with Roosevelt now willing to overrule his chief diplomat in favour of Welles. Even after nine years in office collaborating together, that level of trust and collaborative symbiosis was remarkable. It was a clear sign that the relationship Welles and Roosevelt had forged in mutual exile years earlier was now having an impact on the foreign policy of the United States.

Conclusion:

Welles' effort to forge better relations between the United States and Latin America were animated in large part by the idiosyncratic characteristics of his policymaking that stemmed from his unique positionality in his formative years and his experiences as a young diplomat. Through paternalistic idealism, aversion to militarism, and reliance on FDR for political support, bilateral relations between the United States and Cuba, and the creation of the Good Neighbor Policy were influenced in a quintessentially Wellesian fashion.

In Cuba, Welles' paternalistic idealism largely led him astray. Welles' idealism foundered on the uncertainties and infelicities of Depression-era political unrest and political shortsightedness on his part. Blinded by his sentimental optimism about Cuba and its people, he ignored the rising political tensions around him. When Machado was overthrown Welles naïvely believed that the Cuban people would accept his handpicked replacement. Similarly, Welles refused to accept the government that overthrew that replacement because it did not conform to his ideals of legitimacy.

He also overestimated his own ability to forge consensus, leading him to invoke his powerful benefactor to come to his rescue. In some ways, Welles' relationship with Roosevelt set the entire Cuban episode in motion. Roosevelt knew he could count on Welles to take care of a difficult situation on account of their long collaboration and deep trust of one another; for the same reasons Welles, by contrast, could not refuse Roosevelt's request that he go to Cuba, despite a reluctance to take the post. Out of these two factors emerged a situation wherein

Welles opted for expediency, to complete his mission as quickly and smoothly as possible, be it either through the implementation of a seamless transition plan or the installation of a ruler via U.S. intervention.

In Cuba Welles unwittingly demonstrated the limitations of the Good Neighbor Policy, but ironically, even as he violated the principles he was sent to uphold, Welles' actions allowed Roosevelt to galvanize those principles into ironclad components of U.S. policy in the Caribbean. It was a significant, if counter-intuitive, contribution to the formative stages of Good Neighbor diplomacy and a fitting representation of how Welles' own often-contradictory personality could be reflected in the policies he enacted.

Apart from Cuba, however, Welles' idiosyncratic worldview and tactics were quite successful in bringing about a successful Good Neighbor policy. Welles' paternalistic idealism infused his rhetoric with an unctuous quality born out of a genuine conviction in multilateral collaboration and the beneficence of U.S. leadership. Beginning with the Buenos Aires conference in 1936, Welles translated those convictions into a functional diplomatic framework. Fittingly, that framework also provided the context for the other major part of Welles' worldview, his aversion to militarism, to manifest. Faced with the rising threat of war in Europe and the Pacific, Welles used the inter-American system he helped create to enact a series of protocols and policies to defend the hemisphere against aggression through collective security and economic cooperation. The climax of this effort came at the Rio de Janeiro conference in 1942, where Welles again demonstrated the importance of his close relationship with Roosevelt to his political career.

Chapter Five:
***“Sumner Welles seemed cool. War or peace, he will remain so”¹: Welles’
Policymaking in Peace and War, 1937-1943***

On 11 August 1941, Sumner Welles appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine as the subject of an extensive and largely flattering profile under the headline “The Diplomat’s Diplomat.”² Welles, *Time* wrote, was “the chief administrative officer of U.S. foreign policy” and “a field marshal” in what the article dubbed the “War of Brains” in which the United States was then engaged in its quest “to exhaust every possible means of avoiding a shooting war.”³ Comparing him to New York Giants right fielder Mel Ott, *Time* portrayed Welles as the acme of his chosen profession, having achieved success through a combination of “[p]residential choice, his own ability, background and natural stamina.”⁴ So confident in Welles’ abilities was *Time* that it prophesized “the only surprises left” in his career “are those of destiny.”⁵

Although somewhat premature in its prognostications, *Time*’s profile of Welles was an accurate assessment of the stature he had achieved by the summer of 1941. Coincidentally, his appearance on the front of one of the country’s most widely circulated magazines came amid Welles’ attendance at a secret meeting between President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill at Argentia Naval Base in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland. Although unintentional, the coincidence of an article expounding on Welles’ diplomatic acumen along with his participation in high level negotiations (in the absence of Secretary of State Cordell Hull) was a tacit acknowledgement of Welles’ power and influence.

Since becoming Undersecretary in 1937 Welles had assumed an ever-greater role in the decision-making hierarchy of the Roosevelt administration, “expanding his jurisdiction until ... he cover[ed] virtually every field,” one colleague

¹ “The Diplomat’s Diplomat,” 11 August 1941, *Time*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

remembered.⁶ Already favoured through his close relationship with Roosevelt, Welles assumed additional responsibilities as the U.S. slipped deeper into European and Asian affairs amid rising aggression by Germany, Italy, and Japan. Although his area of expertise was Latin America, Welles became involved in the direction of wartime diplomacy as the crises in Europe and Asia expanded to encompass all aspects of U.S. foreign policy. Welles' centrality to the creation, planning, and execution of U.S. wartime foreign policy grew in proportion to the worsening crises abroad and the need of the United States to respond to them effectively. Consequently, the influence of Welles' personality – his strengths and weaknesses, peccadilloes and prejudices – expanded into policies that shaped the U.S. response to the approach of war and its envisioning of the world once it was over.

This chapter explores Welles' impact on U.S. foreign policy leading up to and during the conduct of World War Two. It explores how the key aspects of Welles' policymaking – aversion to militarism, paternalistic idealism, and a reliance on the patronage of Franklin Roosevelt to achieve his aims – were fundamental to Welles' contributions to U.S. diplomatic efforts during this time. These themes appeared across multiple policy proposals, decisions, and events to which Welles was central during this period: his abortive attempts at a peace conference in 1937 and 1938, the peace mission to Europe in early 1940, the Argentinia conference in August 1941, and his involvement in postwar planning. In observing the prevalence of Welles' unique influence on these matters and analyzing its effects, this chapter draws conclusions about the objectives and intentions of U.S. foreign policy, including how Welles' influence contributed to the approach that characterized Franklin Roosevelt's diplomacy before war and to the enunciation of a specific vision for the postwar world during the period of Welles' greatest influence.

"A very definite quietus": Welles Evades War, 1937-1940

⁶ Diary Entry, 23 August 1937, Houghton Library, Harvard University Archives (HL), Jay Pierrepont Moffat diplomatic papers, Moffat Diary, 1937.

⁷ "The Under Secretary of State (Welles) to President Roosevelt, 26 October 1937, U.S. Department of State *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1937. Vol. I: General, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1954), 668.

From his promotion to Undersecretary in 1937 until the end of the 'Phony War' in April 1940 Welles' contributions to Roosevelt's foreign policymaking in Europe centred on his pursuit of long-shot efforts at peaceful mediation between belligerent powers. Crucial to this task was Welles' experience of and faith in seeking multilateral diplomatic solutions over militaristic ones in international affairs. Fully aware of the seemingly inexorable advance of aggression across the world as well as the reticence of his fellow Americans to become involved in any way, Welles developed a series of proposals to smother the militaristic impulses of aggressor nations while avoiding the sort of direct confrontation that might lead to war or a domestic isolationist backlash.

Welles' accession to Undersecretary came amid steadily worsening conditions in international affairs. Several months earlier the Japanese Empire had invaded China, launching a brutal campaign that would not end until 1945.⁸ Fears mounted that Japan's increasingly belligerent actions, stretching back to the invasion of Manchuria in 1931, would sooner or later bring it into direct conflict with the U.S.⁹ Matters in Europe were no better. The Spanish Civil War that started the previous year had escalated dramatically, shocking observers with the carnage wrought by aerial warfare.¹⁰ Meanwhile, efforts to restore international order or preserve peace floundered. The League of Nations was helpless in the face of aggression and increasingly sidelined in world affairs, not least because of the withdrawal of powerful aggressor countries like Germany, Japan, and Italy.¹¹ The final collapse of the Nine Power disarmament talks that year in Brussels – one of the

⁸ Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938: From the Manchurian Incident Through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 282-3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, See also: Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War With Japan* (Harmondsworth: Viking, 1985); William R. Nester, *Power Across the Pacific: Diplomatic History of American Relations with Japan* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997); Jonathan G. Utey, *Going to War with Japan, 1937-1941* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985).

¹⁰ For a fuller discussion of American attitudes and policies toward Spain during its civil war, see: Michael E. Chapman. *Arguing Americanism: Franco Lobbyists, Roosevelt's Foreign Policy, and the Spanish Civil War* (Kent: Ohio State University, 2011).

¹¹ See: F. S. Northedge, *The League of Nations: Its Life and Times, 1920-1946* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1986).

few international processes the U.S. was actually involved in – capped off a seemingly unstoppable march of belligerence and aggression at the expense of peace making.¹²

Amid these growing crises Roosevelt faced a dearth of possibilities for action. The U.S. public was in the throes of a surge of isolationist opinion, preventing President Roosevelt from taking even the most trivial actions to address the worsening crisis.¹³ Congressional leaders echoed public opinion, passing a series of Neutrality Acts that limited presidential authority to wage war, whether by supplying arms to belligerent nations or allowing American citizens and property to enter war zones.¹⁴ At the same time Roosevelt’s own political capital was depleted due to an ill-conceived proposal to pack the Supreme Court with ideologically friendly justices.¹⁵ Even if public opinion had supported it, the U.S. was woefully unprepared for any sort of military action.¹⁶

Because of these reasons Roosevelt was uncertain about what role, if any, the U.S. could take in bringing about peace. He understood the depth of the American public’s aversion to any sort of military conflict, yet he knew better than almost all of them just how much of a threat such a conflict would be to the United States.¹⁷ Initially hopeful for some sort of compromise between the Axis and the nations who opposed them (i.e. the U.K. and France), his optimism faded over time as it became increasingly apparent that a general war was inevitable.¹⁸ Historian Mark Lowenthal perhaps summed it up best when he called this period “the search for influence,” a time when Roosevelt attempted to increase public awareness of

¹² Andrew Webster, “The Transnational Dream: Politicians, Diplomats and Soldiers in the League of Nations’ Pursuit of International Disarmament, 1920-1938”. *Contemporary European History* Vol. 14, No. 4, (Nov. 2005), 516-7.

¹³ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 502-7; See also, Wayne S. Cole *Roosevelt and the Isolationists* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

¹⁴ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 505.

¹⁵ Ted Morgan, *FDR: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster), 478-9.

¹⁶ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War against Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 43-4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

overseas threats in a way that did not harm his moral or political standing with the American public.¹⁹

It was with this ambivalent mindset that Roosevelt turned to Welles for options. Welles had paid close attention to the worsening international situation and worried about it openly and in private. Welles fretted about “the pitiful spectacle of a great and virile race ... torn by internal warfare and rent asunder” in reference to the Spanish Civil War.²⁰ Welles recognized the gravity of the situation, seeing the threat of “fundamentally antagonistic dogmas” currently battling in Spain as “the most immediate danger to the peace of the world.”²¹ He worried in particular about Germany, believing “the Germans ... either in time of triumph or in time of defeat to go pieces nervously,” and cautioned against instigating a war of words with them.²² Welles’ analysis echoed assessments within the State Department that saw a “basic clash of ideologies” in Spain and elsewhere that portended “a reversion to the doctrine of force and of might and to an entirely different international morality than that which has slowly and painfully been built up in the last centuries.”²³

Conversely, Welles also believed that the U.S. had the ability to restore the balance to the international system that the belligerent powers had undermined. “It is apparently but too little recognized, even by our own people,” Welles insisted in a July 1937 speech to the Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, “that during these past years this Government has upon repeated occasions held aloft and proclaimed ... a broad program for world rehabilitation which ... will restore international confidence and lay those foundations of normal and just international relationships which mean peace.”²⁴ As Welles explained, it was the efforts to seek

¹⁹ Mark M. Lowenthal, “Roosevelt and the Coming of the War: The Search for United States Policy 1937-42,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 16, No. 3, The Second World War: Part 2, July (1981), 414.

²⁰ Address by the Honorable Sumner Welles before the Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, ‘Present Aspects of World Peace’, 7 July 1937, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library (FDRL), Sumner Welles Papers (SWP), Box: 194, Folder: 10.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Diary Entry, 18 March 1938, HL, Jay Pierrepont Moffat diplomatic papers, Moffat Diary, 1938.

²³ Messersmith to Hull, 11 October 1937, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland (NARA), RG 59, Subject Files 1935-62, Box: 165, Folder: Messersmith.

²⁴ Address by the Honorable Sumner Welles before the Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, 7 July 1937, ‘Present Aspects of World Peace’, SWP, Box: 194, Folder: 10.

cooperation and unity among the nations of Latin America he had spearheaded at the Buenos Aires conference the previous year that offered the blueprint for how the U.S. could address the worsening crises in Europe and Asia without risking entangling involvement in foreign affairs that might lead to war.²⁵

It was with this in mind that Welles prepared a proposal in October, 1937 for a “Concerted International Effort to Reach Common Agreement on the Principles of International Conduct to Maintain Peace.”²⁶ The details of Welles’ plan called for a conference in which five major topics would be discussed: “The basic principles which should be observed in international relations,” “The laws and customs of land warfare;” “The laws and customs of naval warfare;” “The rights and obligations of neutrals both on land and at sea;” and “The right of freedom of access on the part of all peoples to raw materials.”²⁷ He recommended Roosevelt call the world’s ambassadors to the White House on Armistice Day (11 November 1937) while simultaneously having U.S. diplomats deliver a note to the heads of government around the world calling for a conference along the lines outlined.²⁸

Welles’ memoranda outlining the proposed conference revealed the degree to which Welles’ personality and diplomatic style animated his policymaking. The suggestion to ostentatiously announce the proposed conference by surprise to an assembly of all credentialed ambassadors reflected his penchant for large diplomatic enterprises. Likely, Welles was trying to replicate the public relations success of the Buenos Aires conference the previous year, where Roosevelt’s arrival produced rapturous crowds and excellent publicity for the United States. Notably, Hull specifically objected to this aspect of the plan calling it “pyrotechnical” because of the possibility that such a large spectacle might backfire.²⁹

The proposed Armistice Day conference also reflected Welles’ aversion to militaristic solutions for diplomatic problems. Though he outlined several specific points of discussion for the proposed conference, the thrust of Welles’ proposal was

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Memorandum by the Undersecretary of State (Welles), 6 October 1937, *FRUS*, 1937, Vol. I, 665.

²⁷ Ibid., 666.

²⁸ Ibid., 668.

²⁹ Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, vol. 1 (New York: MacMillan Company, 1948), 548.

not to combat aggression, but rather to bring about “an improved world psychology.”³⁰ Welles asserted “fundamental standards which should and must govern the relations between states” were lacking, and their imposition would act as the basis for “practical agreements necessary to re-establish peace in the world.”³¹ He saw his conference as being of benefit because “the mere fact that the nations of the world today could by concerted action agree upon anything of vital importance would in itself be a material step forward.”³² Though hazily defined, the goals Welles enunciated in his draft were making a specific kind of appeal for peace: one that placed primary emphasis on the engagement of diplomatic machinery as an antidote to war.

As the proposal evolved, Welles shifted the focus of the conference more toward these nebulous goals and away from specifically military concerns. When Adolf Berle suggested he excise the discussion of “laws and customs of land warfare” and “laws and customs of naval warfare,” (“nobody believes they amount to anything anyhow,” Berle lamented), Welles eagerly took it on, leaving them out of the second draft of the proposal he showed to Roosevelt.³³ Changes to the second draft also deemphasized engaging with aggressor nations. Unlike the first, the second draft anticipated Italy and Japan were unlikely to participate.³⁴ The focus, rather, was to “strengthen the hands of the powers that are seeking to avert world anarchy.”³⁵ Though he did not specify which nations those powers might be, Welles

³⁰ Memorandum by the Undersecretary of State (Welles), 6 October 1937, *FRUS*, 1937. Vol. I, 666.

³¹ Welles Memorandum to FDR, 6 October 1937, *FRUS*, 1937. Vol. I, 665, 666.

³² *Ibid.*, 666.

³³ See, *Ibid.*, 666, 669; Memoranda dated 28 October 1937, Berle Diary, FDRL, Berle Papers, Box: 210, Folder: Diary 1937. It may be asked why, if Welles was averse to militaristic solutions, he proposed discussing naval or land warfare in the first place. The answer to this lies in Roosevelt’s Quarantine Speech, which instigated Welles’ proposal. In it Roosevelt specifically addressed customs of naval warfare (“ships are being attacked and sunk by submarines without cause or notice,”) aerial warfare (“civilians ... are being ruthlessly murdered with bombs from the air,”) and land warfare (“the invasion of alien territory in violation of treaties.”) Thus, Welles’ inclusion of these points demonstrated his awareness of military issues and his consideration of their importance insofar as they were of clear importance to the intended audience for his proposal (i.e. Roosevelt). See: <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/speech-3310>, Accessed 1 October 2015.

³⁴ Welles Memorandum to FDR, 6 October 1937, *FRUS*, 1937. Vol. I, 668; In an earlier draft Welles indicated Germany and Italy might “find it to their advantage to cooperate” but was adamant Japan would not. See: *Ibid.*, 666.

³⁵ The Undersecretary of State (Welles) to President Roosevelt, 26 October 1937, *FRUS*, 1937. Vol. I, 668

included in his proposal a mechanism that would use a “smaller group of powers” to submit proposals to the whole, leaving open the possibility for nations of all strengths and sizes to have a guiding role. He later reflected that Roosevelt believed the proposed conference “would in itself be productive of practical good and ... would have a tonic effect upon the smaller countries of Europe.”³⁶

Furthermore, the scope and concept behind Welles’ proposed conference resembled his earlier efforts to forge peace through non-militaristic means. The Conference for Disarmament and Maintenance of Peace held in Washington in 1921 offered a clear precedent for Welles’ plans in 1937. Although he was not working in the State Department at the time, Welles attended the inaugural session. Welles wrote of Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes’ speech during the “electrifying inaugural session” and the “stupendous accomplishment” he achieved in the signing of the Nine-Power Treaty.³⁷ When recalling the conference Welles praised Hughes’ approach of a “gradual but steady reduction ... of armaments” that “was to be the first step toward the negotiation of similar agreements”.³⁸ It was the model of accretive consultation and goodwill-inducing agreement from this previous conference that appealed to Welles and that he sought to emulate in 1937. Welles saw his plan as a stepping-stone to greater cooperation and agreement between nations, albeit with a more nebulous definition of progress than the strict guidelines set out in the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty.

The Buenos Aires conference of 1936 offered a further conceptual blueprint for Welles’ European peace proposals. He had actually discussed the possibility of disarmament agreements among the nations of the Western Hemisphere with Roosevelt as early as 1933, but the first concrete proposals on the subject came from Welles at Buenos Aires in 1936.³⁹ At Buenos Aires, Welles had successfully pushed for agreements on the “codification of international law” and “moral

³⁶ Sumner Welles, *The Time For Decision*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), 66.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 43

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁹ “The Monroe Doctrine Problem”, 15 April 1933, SWP, Box: 194, Folder: 6

disarmament,” with specific emphasis on the benefits of trade, anticipating the language he used in his 1937 memos.⁴⁰

Ultimately, Welles’ proposed conference did not get off the ground. After initially proposing it in October 1937 Roosevelt told Welles to shelve it; a brief resurrection in 1938 during negotiations with the British led to a similar dead end. However, the degree to which Welles’ proposal carried with it a distinctive strain of anti-militarism was detectable in the manner of its rejection. Secretary of State Cordell Hull, for instance, thought Welles’ proposed conference was “illogical and impossible” and “wholly impractical.”⁴¹ He specifically cited the extent of Germany and Japan’s rearmament as a reason for why Welles’ plan was impractical. He compared the idea, retrospectively, to the doomed neutrality policies of the Netherlands and Belgium as well as to the policy of appeasement by the British government.⁴² Worse still, Hull argued, would be how the proposed conference would “lull the democracies into a feeling of tranquility” when they should have been rearming.⁴³ It was, then, specifically the lack of a military dimension to Welles’ plans that Hull found most troubling.

Placed in the wider context of contemporaneous State Department opinion, the novelty of Welles’ negotiation-heavy, confrontation-averse approach was ever more apparent. Writing at almost the same time as Welles, Assistant Secretary of State George Messersmith wrote Hull a long memo about U.S. peace aims with a decidedly graver and more foreboding subtext than Welles’ plan. Noting the extraordinary rearmament programs of the Axis powers and the imminent threat they posed to the U.S., Messersmith called for “a long range policy” insisting “our non-involvement in war must be the formulation of a policy which does not make that war practically inevitable in the end.”⁴⁴ Although Messersmith declared “[t]he policy of the United States is definitely one of peace” he warned Hull that “if the democracies ... are not willing to defend their political, social, and economic views

⁴⁰ “Program of the Conference,” SWP, Box: 184, Folder: 6.

⁴¹ Hull, *Memoirs Vol. I*, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1948), 547.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 547-8.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 547.

⁴⁴ Messersmith to Hull, 11 October 1937, NARA, RG 59, Subject Files 1935-62, Box: 165, Folder: Messersmith.

now by all peaceful methods at their command, it is only a question of time when they shall have to defend them with force.”⁴⁵ Messersmith’s dire warning contrasted with Welles’ paean for peace both in tone and in its willingness to consider force as a necessary and possibly inevitable, albeit undesirable, option.

Ambassador to Japan Joseph Clark Grew was even more pessimistic. Grew decried the entire effort to negotiate new peace treaties because “it seems to me that the whole structure of international contracts in general and the peace machinery in particular are weakened by constantly planning to erect new machinery when the machinery already existing is ample if respected.”⁴⁶ Adding that he believed contemporary human nature to be “primitive” and similar to “that of a cave man,” Grew lamented “international treaties and acts and contracts must be regarded as ‘scraps of paper’ until they are implemented ... [n]ew peace machinery is, in my opinion, dangerous.”⁴⁷ Like Messersmith, Grew arrived at the same diagnosis about the growing belligerence and anarchy in international affairs but both men differed from Welles in their suggested remedy.

As war seemed more and more inevitable, Welles’ efforts to avoid militaristic options persisted. A few weeks before the Munich crisis began, British Ambassador to the U.S. Lord Lothian proposed to Welles “the setting up of an international committee ... [to] examine the damage caused by air raids on civilian population [sic] with a view to determining whether a military objective had or had not existed.”⁴⁸ Welles “was convinced that the idea was utterly impractical” citing, among other reasons, the impossibility of determining what a military target might be.⁴⁹ Lothian’s suggestion, Welles rightly reasoned, had the potential to involve the U.S. in the military side of diplomatic disputes during what was still technically a period of peace between the major belligerent nations. This hesitance to commit to anything beyond non-belligerence returned in early 1939 when Lord Lothian

⁴⁵ Messersmith to Hull, 11 October 1937, NARA, RG 59, Subject Files 1935-62, Box: 165, Folder: Messersmith.

⁴⁶ Diary Entry, 24 May 1937, HL, Joseph Clark Grew Papers, Diary 1937, 3197-8.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3198.

⁴⁸ Diary Entry, 4 and 5 June 1938, HL, Jay Pierrepont Moffat diplomatic papers, Moffat Diary, 1938.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* Conversely, Jay Pierrepont Moffat, who recorded this deliberation in his diary, considered the British offer “to be on the surface an invitation to join in a purely humanitarian effort.”

pleaded with Welles over dinner that British survival depended on American aid. Welles insisted, "American aid must be diplomatic" and asserted somewhat optimistically "that the strong position taken by the President during the last two or three weeks has certainly checked Italian and German aggression even if it has not halted them."⁵⁰ Not even the outbreak of war dissuaded Welles from his instinct to separate military matters from diplomatic ones. Upon returning from his mission to Europe in 1940, Welles relayed to Ambassador to Germany Hugh Wilson a "radical solution" consisting of a proposal that "bombers should be abolished and that land forces shall be equipped only with such weapons as a horse or a man can carry twenty miles in twenty-four hours."⁵¹

That Welles proposed such eccentric solutions likely spoke more to the extremity of the situation than to his belief in their efficacy. However, it fit the broader pattern of Welles' thinking over the preceding three years. Throughout the prewar and Phoney War periods Welles demonstrated a clear and persistent pattern of avoiding military solutions to diplomatic problems. This aversion emerged in different ways in response to changing circumstances but was nevertheless a consistent theme. It infused Welles' policymaking during this period, distinct from the more belligerent ideas emanating from more cynical or aggressive policymakers and diplomats. It was an integral part of Roosevelt's cautious effort to sway public opinion on foreign affairs and to seek a role in averting a world war.

The President Prefers Welles: Personal Dynamics in Roosevelt's Policymaking

As the U.S. edged closer to war Welles' value to Roosevelt for technical experience and as a diplomat and policymaker increased. However, Welles' growing

⁵⁰ Diary Entry, 4 and 5 February 1939, HL, Jay Pierrepont Moffat diplomatic papers, Moffat Diary, 1939.

⁵¹ Diary of Hugh Wilson, 16 April 1940, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library (HPL), Hugh R. Wilson Papers, Box: 4, Folder: Wilson, Hugh R. – Diary, 1940; Adolf Berle remembered the details differently. According to him, Welles' idea consisted of "an international police force, based on a European regional line, and occurring after complete disarmament." 20 April 1940, Berle Diary, FDRL, Berle Papers, Box: 211. See also: J. Simon Rofe, "Pre-war Post-war Planning: The Phoney War, the Roosevelt Administration, and the Case of the Advisory Committee on Problems of Foreign Relations," *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2012, 269.

significance in Roosevelt's plans was also based on the symbiotic understanding of one another's views that they had developed over the preceding decade. The closeness of their relationship shaped Roosevelt's foreign policymaking – both its development and its implementation – in the lead up to and over the course of World War Two. In particular, Welles' representation of Roosevelt on extraordinary foreign missions and at high profile diplomatic negotiations infused the course of those events with the dynamics of Welles' and Roosevelt's relationship and shaped their outcomes. Furthermore, the conspicuity of Welles' position engendered rivalries among his colleagues, planting the seed for future conflicts that would have greater significance still.

The first and foremost example of this dynamic came in the form of Welles' peace mission to Europe in February and March 1940. Though the mission's objectives varied and its chance of success was murky at best, one factor was constant to the mission once it came together: the presence of Sumner Welles.⁵² Welles' selection by Roosevelt to be his eyes and ears automatically instilled the mission with the dynamics of their personal relationship, shaping what the mission was and how it proceeded. Prior to announcing the mission Roosevelt had considered a number of potential emissaries, including prominent industrialist Myron C. Taylor and Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle among others, before deciding to send Welles.⁵³ Though Roosevelt left no specific record as to why he ultimately chose Welles, the decision seems to have been taken privately between the two men, underlining the salience of their collaboration in devising the mission and its objectives.⁵⁴ In his memoirs Welles cryptically explained how "[f]or various reasons, the President believed that I was the most available person within the

⁵² The aims and objectives of the Welles Mission have been meticulously explored in Simon Rofe's 2007 book *Franklin Roosevelt's Foreign Policy and the Welles Mission*. In short, Rofe argued the Welles Mission had an overlapping and evolving set of objectives – to prolong the Phoney War, to preserve Italian neutrality, and to gather firsthand information about the belligerents' war aims – and that, more broadly, "the longer-term motivations for the mission have precedents in the foreign policy-making practice of the Roosevelt Administration." See: Simon Rofe, *Franklin Roosevelt's Foreign Policy and the Welles Mission* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 9, 5

⁵³ Rofe, *The Welles Mission*, 78.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

government” for the position.⁵⁵ What ‘available’ meant was not clear, but it nonetheless pointed to the cloistered way the decision was reached. Cordell Hull concurred, noting parenthetically in his memoirs how “[s]ome time later the President expressly stated to me that Welles had come to him secretly on several occasions and pleaded to be sent abroad on special missions.”⁵⁶ Relatedly, shortly after announcing Welles’ mission, rumours spread that Hull “had not been consulted” about Welles’ trip and that he was “irate” about being left out.⁵⁷ The rumours were dismissed by those in the know, but Adolf Berle wrote in his diary that although “[t]here is not much in it [the rumours]. I think the President probably decided it on his own account,” again indicating that the decision was taken by a very tight circle around Roosevelt.⁵⁸

The sequestered nature of the decision to send Welles was reinforced once the mission was underway. According to Adolf Berle, Welles communicated his updates to the President in a cipher to which Secretary Hull was not granted access.⁵⁹ Breckinridge Long echoed this sentiment, noting Roosevelt “‘was the only person who knew why Welles had been sent abroad ... and he was the only person who would know what Welles had to say, unless he thought it advisable that other persons should be informed.’”⁶⁰ Outsiders picked up on this dynamic, as well, in the form of “press stories about Welles having a more intimate contact in the White House than the Secretary” at the time of the mission.⁶¹

However much Welles’ selection as Roosevelt’s emissary was a function of the two men’s close relationship, the fact that Welles was willing to participate in such a mission at all reflected the level of trust and support the two men had developed. In virtually every assessment of the Welles mission at the time and afterwards, the likelihood of its success was considered to be slim at best.

⁵⁵ Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 74.

⁵⁶ Hull, *Memoirs Vol. I*, 737.

⁵⁷ ‘The Washington Merry-Go-Round’, 19 February 1940, SWP, Box: 262, Folder: 2.

⁵⁸ Berle Diary, 13 February 1940, FDRL, Berle Papers, Box: 211, Folder: Diary January - March 1940

⁵⁹ Berle Diary, 18 March 1940, FDRL, Berle Papers, Box: 211, Folder: Diary January - March 1940

⁶⁰ J. Simon Rofe, “Pre-war Post-war Planning: The Phoney War, the Roosevelt Administration, and the Case of the Advisory Committee on Problems of Foreign Relations,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2012, 258.

⁶¹ Berle Diary, 5 March 1940 FDRL, Berle Papers, Box: 211, Folder: Diary January - March 1940

Ambassador to the Court of St. James Joseph Kennedy believed the mission had a “one in ten thousand” chance to succeed.⁶² According to Welles, Roosevelt gave “one in a thousand” chance for being able to effect any change during this time.⁶³

Ambassador to Germany Hugh Gibson was slightly more optimistic, giving it “one chance in twenty.”⁶⁴ That Roosevelt felt comfortable sending Welles on such a seemingly futile mission (and that Welles was willing to accept it) spoke to the depth of trust between the two men. Formed on the bedrock of their decade-long friendship as well as the sympathy and each had of the other’s strengths and weaknesses, the Welles mission demonstrated the strength of the connection between Roosevelt and Welles and how that connection could make an impact on U.S. foreign policy.

Despite the odds, the fact of Welles’ participation improved the chances for success in the eyes of some observers. Hugh Wilson believed whatever possibility of success the mission had was directly due to Welles. “Sumner is no Dorothy Thompson in temperament,” Wilson wrote in February 1940, referencing the famous journalist.⁶⁵ “He has a wise head and a cool one on his shoulders,” Wilson added, praising Welles because “he can keep his mouth shut” and “he won’t commit the United States one inch.”⁶⁶ Tellingly, Wilson also noted that given the long odds, the only real object of the mission was to “satisfy himself and the President that there is nothing that can be done usefully at the present moment.”⁶⁷ Wilson’s observation explicitly linked Roosevelt’s propensity for long-shot diplomatic gestures and the integral role Welles played in orchestrating and enacting them while tacitly acknowledging that the dynamics of their relationship were what was driving the mission’s objectives.

⁶² Rofo, *The Welles Mission* 153, n.91. Quoting Kennedy Memoirs PjL, p.578

⁶³ Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 73.

⁶⁴ Wilson Diary, 12 February 1940, HPL, Hugh R. Wilson Papers, Box: 4, Folder: Wilson, Hugh R. - Diary, 1940.

⁶⁵ Ibid. Dorothy Thompson was known as ‘the first lady of American journalism’.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Wilson Diary, 12 February 1940, HPL, Hugh R. Wilson Papers, Box: 4, Folder: Wilson, Hugh R. - Diary, 1940.

As the focus shifted from planning to implementation Roosevelt and Welles used the dynamics of their relationship to their advantage in pursuing the mission's objectives. In letters drafted to each foreign leader Welles visited, Roosevelt introduced his emissary by invoking the notoriety of Welles' proximity to power as a way to ingratiate Welles to the various leaders. "My old friend Mr. Sumner Welles ... will give you this when he has the privilege of being received by you," Roosevelt wrote to Benito Mussolini in a telegram dated 14 February 1940.⁶⁸ Roosevelt informed French President Albert Le Brun Welles was his "boyhood friend;" to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Welles was "an old boyhood friend."⁶⁹ That Roosevelt felt it necessary or useful to refer to his childhood association with Welles, which was in some ways less directly relevant to their political partnership than their later collaborations, demonstrated the salience of the personal dimension in Roosevelt and Welles' policymaking partnership during the execution of the Welles mission.

Perhaps the clearest indication of how Welles and Roosevelt's close collaboration inflected the Welles mission's diplomacy was in the criticism Welles incurred from his colleagues. Almost immediately after learning (via the press) about Welles' trip, Ambassador to France William "Bill" Bullitt excoriated the move. Harold Ickes remembered Bullitt "did not relish the idea of Welles's going over and, in effect, superseding the regularly accredited diplomatic representatives;" Joseph Kennedy seemed to feel the same way.⁷⁰ After Welles departed Europe in April, Bullitt sent a personal message to Roosevelt lamenting that he "hoped the repercussions caused here by Welles' trip would have died down completely before my return."⁷¹ Bullitt's jealousy had a further significance beyond what it revealed about the provenance of the Welles mission. Bullitt's anger toward Welles over the

⁶⁸ Franklin D. Roosevelt to Signor Mussolini, Copy of Longhand Letter, 14 February 1940, FDRL, Presidential Secretary's File (PSF), Box 76, Folder: State: Welles, Sumner: January - May 1940.

⁶⁹ Franklin D. Roosevelt to Chamberlain, Copy of Longhand Letter, 14 February 1940. FDRL, PSF, Box 76, Folder: State: Welles, Sumner: January - May 1940.

⁷⁰ Harold L. Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes, Vol. III: The Lowering Clouds, 1939-1941* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1955), 138; Michael R. Beschloss, *Kennedy and Roosevelt: The Uneasy Alliance* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980), 204.

⁷¹ Bullitt to FDR, 18 April 1940, PSF, B-43, quoted in Will Brownell and Richard N. Billings, *So Close to Greatness: A Biography of William C. Bullitt* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1987), 248.

alleged usurpation of his ambassadorial prerogatives amplified his resentment toward Welles left over from the battle for the Undersecretaryship with R. Walton Moore in 1937. By some accounts, Bullitt's intense hatred for Welles began in earnest only after this episode in 1940.⁷² Bullitt's jealousy was as much a reflection of his personality than anything else, but his observation reflected the increasingly tightknit quality to Roosevelt's policymaking during this time, and Welles' centrality to it.

That aspect of Roosevelt's policymaking complemented the highly personalized nature of his diplomacy during World War Two. Throughout his presidency, but especially after the start of World War Two, Roosevelt designated close aides to serve as his special emissary abroad. The most famous of these was Harry Hopkins who made a foray to the U.K. for an extended period in 1941 to confer and coordinate with the British government about the United States' growing effort to arm and supply the Allies, chiefly in the form of the soon-to-be passed Lend-Lease program.⁷³ Though this had much to do with Roosevelt's physical limitations and the hazards of wartime travel, the selection of men like Welles and Hopkins for these missions was a clear indication of membership in an exclusive circle around Roosevelt where many of the most important decisions were taken.

However, although Welles and Hopkins were both anointed in this fashion, they fulfilled very different objectives for Roosevelt; their respective relationships with the president influenced the roles they played and the kind of diplomacy Roosevelt assigned them to practice. Comparing Hopkins' mission to Britain with Welles' mission to Europe reveals this dynamic and provides clues as to the nature of Welles' particular relationship with Roosevelt and the role he played in Roosevelt's policymaking priorities.

Welles' and Hopkins' respective sojourns to Europe reflected the degree to which they filled different niches in Roosevelt's policymaking ecology and his personal entourage. Welles and Roosevelt planned the former's trip to Europe for

⁷² Welles, *FDR's Global Strategist*, 245.

⁷³ David L. Roll, *The Hopkins Touch: Harry Hopkins and the Forging of the Alliance to Defeat Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 78-98.

several weeks before he departed, going through several drafts of the announcement to the press and deliberating on specific objectives.⁷⁴ Hopkins, by contrast, was not informed he was going on a trip until after Roosevelt announced it, and departed two days later.⁷⁵ Hopkins was given no formal title and Roosevelt specifically denied he had “any special mission;” conversely, Welles’ trip was specifically designated a “special mission.”⁷⁶ Roosevelt’s instructions for Hopkins, as he related them to the press during a press conference, were “to maintain ... personal relations between me and the British Government” and “to say ‘How do you do?’ to a lot of my friends!”⁷⁷ Conversely, Welles was tasked with “advising the President and the Secretary of State as to present conditions in Europe” but “to make no proposals or commitments.”⁷⁸

Yet while Welles adhered scrupulously to his instructions, Hopkins evidently felt more comfortable pushing the envelope. During his 1941 stay in Britain Hopkins made several gestures indicating his sympathies and preferences. He was a mini-celebrity upon his arrival and made warm and lasting impressions on virtually everyone he met.⁷⁹ He circulated freely with members of the British government and civilians.⁸⁰ In a stirring show of support for British resolve Hopkins quoted from the Book of Ruth to assure Winston Churchill of Roosevelt’s intention to provide support.⁸¹ Welles, by contrast, deliberately kept his distance with foreign leaders, and specifically shunned audiences with local officials who had not been authorized to speak for their government.⁸² The epithets the two men earned reflected this dynamic, too. Impressed with his ability to convey information in an efficient

⁷⁴ Memorandum dated 9 February 1940, FDRL, PSF, Box 76, Folder: State, Welles, Sumner January – May 1940.

⁷⁵ Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948) 231.

⁷⁶ Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 231; Report by the Under Secretary (Welles) on His Special Mission to Europe, 26 February 1940, U.S. Department of State *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1940. Vol. 1, (Washington D.C., GPO: 1959), 21.

⁷⁷ Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 231.

⁷⁸ The Secretary of State to the Chargé in France (Murphy), 9 February 1940, *FRUS*. Vol. 1, 4.

⁷⁹ Frank Costigliola, “Broken Circle: The Isolation of Franklin D. Roosevelt in World War II.” *Diplomatic History* Vol. 2, No. 5, November 2008, 697-8.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Roll, *The Hopkins Touch*, 89.

⁸² Diary Entry, 28 February, HL, Jay Pierrepont Moffat diplomatic papers, Moffat Diary, 1940.

manner Winston Churchill dubbed Hopkins “Lord Root of the Matter,” much to Hopkins delight.⁸³ Welles’, by contrast, was referred to by frustrated journalists as “Sumner the Silent’,” implying precisely the opposite of an ability to convey information.⁸⁴

Though undoubtedly the objectives of the respective missions were different because they came at different points in the war and in Roosevelt’s understanding of what the U.S. could or should do, the form these missions took was a direct function of the individual Roosevelt had dispatched to perform it. Hopkins was the proxy for the charismatic and informal interpersonal dimension of Roosevelt’s diplomacy, while Welles was the proxy for the cautious and calculating side of Roosevelt’s strategic mind. Hopkins’ mission was specifically devised to help advance U.S. national security interests by facilitating the arming of the British, whereas Welles’ was clearly more about feeling out U.S. diplomatic strategy amid the onset of war. That Welles occupied such a niche was a clear indication of a close relationship with the president, but it also pointed to the symbiotic quality of their collaboration and how that symbiosis shaped U.S. policymaking during these crucial years. Welles’ channelling of Roosevelt’s desire to act while still keeping his options open produced an idiosyncratic eponymous long shot peace mission with multifaceted aims and goals, concocted by the two men in private and that drew directly on their long relationship to facilitate its launch. As with Hopkins serving as Roosevelt’s inimitable hail-fellow-well-met avatar in London, the Welles mission could only have happened the way it did because of the unique relationship shared by the president and the man assigned to carry out the mission.

Cooperative Competition: Welles’ Postwar Planning and the British

As U.S. involvement in World War Two grew the niche Welles occupied in Roosevelt’s policymaking circle assumed greater significance. Starting as early as 1939 Welles began drafting political objectives, sketching out settlements and

⁸³ Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 607.

⁸⁴ Rofe, *The Welles Mission*, 114.

designing diplomatic architecture for the postwar world.⁸⁵ In drawing up these plans Welles drew upon his now considerable experience in constructing diplomatic machinery to facilitate multilateral cooperation under the aegis of U.S. leadership. Welles' influence on these plans (while he was in office to enact them) was considerable and as a consequence they reflected his longstanding philosophical and ideological views about American power and its place in the world. As in Latin America during the 1920s and 1930s, Welles brought to his policymaking in the 1940s a distinct blend of paternalistic idealism, with significant consequences for U.S. diplomacy.

The first main event in Welles' efforts at global planning came in August 1941 when he was invited to accompany Roosevelt to a secret meeting with Churchill at Placentia Bay, Newfoundland. Here Welles' desire for a beneficent American hegemony manifested itself in a form that recalled his diplomatic experiences in Argentina twenty years earlier, namely in confronting the British. Anglo-American relations during the war have been described as a process of "competitive cooperation."⁸⁶ The process of creating the Atlantic Charter, and the postwar global institutions that grew out of it, has similarly been described as "an attempt to internationalize an Anglo-American vision of using institutions to entrench and extend order, prosperity, and legitimacy."⁸⁷ Perhaps no one embodied these portrayals better than Welles. Although he was dedicated to supporting Britain and resisting the Nazis by all available means, Welles was inclined to view cooperation with the British with a jaundiced eye. Welles "shared little of the president's ease with the nation's ally" and "remained consistently impervious to Churchill's charms," wrote one historian.⁸⁸ Beyond personal incompatibility, Welles saw Britain as a competitor to American postwar hegemony: "Welles's vision of an American-led

⁸⁵ Christopher D. O'Sullivan, *Sumner Welles: Postwar Planning and the Quest for a New World Order 1937-1943*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 33.

⁸⁶ See: David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937-1941: a Study in Competitive Cooperation* (New York: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 5.

⁸⁸ O'Sullivan, *Postwar Planning*, 105.

new world order depended upon the steady diminution of Great Britain as a world power.”⁸⁹

Unsurprisingly, then, when the conference began on 8 August, and Welles was assigned by Roosevelt to confer with Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Alexander Cadogan over a draft statement that would encapsulate the joint aims of the British and U.S., Welles persistently challenged British policies and prerogatives. After amicably discussing strategic matters over which there was no disagreement – the status of Brazil and Portugal, avoiding a war in the Pacific with the Japanese – Welles prodded Cadogan over the seeming incongruity between the attitude of the Ministry of Economic Warfare and Cadogan himself over U.S. policy toward contingency plans regarding Vichy-occupied French West Africa. Welles decried the “carping criticism” of the British government and press and asked Cadogan to explain his government’s position.⁹⁰ Despite Cadogan’s assurances that the British response was motivated by a desire not to offend the French, Welles complained, “the British Government could at least avoid the appearance of British official criticism.”⁹¹

Later in the same meeting Welles persisted in confronting Cadogan with prickly matters. He reminded Cadogan that a letter sent by Roosevelt to Churchill six weeks earlier asking, among other things, for assurances that the British would “make no secret commitments,” had not yet been answered.⁹² Without skipping a beat, Welles then shifted to a discussion of “the terms of the Lend-Lease Act.”⁹³ Somewhat disingenuously promising “there was no need ... to undertake a dissertation” on the matter, Welles used the occasion to launch into a detailed outline of the economic order he envisioned for the postwar world.⁹⁴ Commencing a line of thought that he would press ever more forcefully for the rest of the conference and his career, Welles insisted that the postwar world must include “the

⁸⁹ O’Sullivan, *Postwar Planning*, 107.

⁹⁰ Memorandum of Conversation with Sir Alexander Cadogan and The Under Secretary, 9 August 1941, FDRL, SWP, Box: 151, Folder: 8.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

freest possible economic interchange without discrimination, without exchange controls, without economic preference utilized for political purposes and without all of the manifold economic barriers” that he saw as being the main cause of the war.⁹⁵ He insisted the U.S. and Britain could not “possibly undertake divergent policies” on these matters, before cannily concluding by bringing up the sensitive matter of British debt to the U.S. over the preceding decades and the improved policy now in place because of Lend-Lease.⁹⁶

Welles’ treatise on free trade explicitly criticizing British economy policy encapsulated his beliefs in the efficacy of liberal trade policy and its alleged benefits. It was also a shrewd negotiating tactic. By linking trade policy with Lend-Lease and preceding it with discussion of the much criticized secret agreements of the British after World War One, Welles pressed the strategic advantage of the U.S. at these negotiations in order to undermine Cadogan and Churchill’s ability to preserve British economic dominance. Although Cadogan admitted during the meeting that he personally disagreed with the imperial preference system set up by the 1931 Ottawa Agreements, his discomfiture with Welles’ line of attack was evident. Commenting later, Cadogan said of Welles it was a “pity that he swallowed a ramrod in his youth.”⁹⁷

Welles’ effort to pinion the British reached a climax on the final day of the conference. Having agreed to release a joint declaration of aims and mutual support, later dubbed the Atlantic Charter, Welles, Roosevelt, and the rest of the U.S. delegation tussled with Churchill and his staff over the precise wording of the various clauses. Welles’ initial draft of the fourth clause of the Charter specifically called on the U.S. and Britain to seek “the elimination of any discriminations” on imports as well as to grant “access on equal terms” to raw materials.⁹⁸ When this language proved unacceptable to the British, Roosevelt instructed Welles to amend it to focus only on raw materials and to excise the portion about eliminating trade

⁹⁵ Memorandum of Conversation with Sir Alexander Cadogan and The Under Secretary, 9 August 1941, FDRL, SWP, Box: 151, Folder: 8.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ David Dilks, ed. *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan O.M 1938-1945* (London: Cassell, 1971), 399.

⁹⁸ Handwritten note and attached draft, Roosevelt to Welles, 11 August 1941, FDRL, SWP, Box: 151, Folder: 8.

discrimination.⁹⁹ When Welles' amendments still proved too much an assault on the Ottawa Agreements, which Welles admitted the clause was intended to do, Churchill litigiously invoked the need to consult the Dominions over any such commitment to alter trade relations, a manoeuvre that would take days to do and would likely scupper any agreement. Seeking to avoid such a catastrophic outcome, Harry Hopkins suggested a further redrafting of the offending clause. Now Welles took a stand. "[F]urther modification of that article," Welles declared, "would destroy completely any value in that portion of the proposed declaration."¹⁰⁰ "[I]t was a question of vital principle" and that if they could not agree to address "one of the greatest factors in creating the present tragic situation in the world" then "they might as well throw in the sponge."¹⁰¹

Such dramatic proclamations were unusual for Welles, particularly in diplomatic negotiations where he cultivated a reputation for coolness. It was a sign of Welles' depth of commitment to free trade, to be sure, as well as his tacit understanding of the high stakes of what he, Roosevelt, Churchill, and the rest of those assembled were doing; Eliot Roosevelt, the president's son, who was in attendance at the conference, wrote later that "Welles was the man who worked hardest on the Charter ... [i]t was his baby."¹⁰² But the roots of Welles' uncharacteristically passionate denunciation of the British lay in his longstanding conviction pertaining to the beneficence of U.S.-style economic hegemony and the link between that objective and the larger process of postwar planning he was undertaking at the time. Undermining the British imperial preference system was a necessary prerequisite to the U.S. displacing Britain as the preeminent global power, and a stepping-stone to the wider transformation of global politics Welles sought. For Welles, a tariff-free world was not merely an economic doctrine. It was entwined with his belief in the efficacy and beneficence of American power and the

⁹⁹ Memorandum of Conversation with Sir Alexander Cadogan and The Under Secretary, 11 August 1941, FDRL, SWP, Box: 151, Folder: 8.

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum of Conversation with The President, the British Prime Minister, Sir Alexander Cadogan, Harry Hopkins, The Under Secretary of State, 11 August 1941, FDRL, SWP, Box: 151, Folder: 8.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Elliott Roosevelt, *As He Saw It* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), 39.

necessity of displacing competing systems, like the British imperial preference system, in order to establish its hegemony.

Welles all but acknowledged this in his subsequent analysis and reflections on the Argentinia conference. In an address to the National Foreign Trade Convention two months after the conference closed, and later reprinted in Welles' 1943 book *The World of the Four Freedoms*, Welles specifically addressed the fourth clause of the charter.¹⁰³ Despite assuring his listeners that the clause "requires no interpretation" Welles proceeded to interpret its "meaning and significance" for the audience.¹⁰⁴ "The basic conception," Welles explained, was to make "restrictive and unconscionable tariffs, preferences, and discriminations ... things of the past."¹⁰⁵ Trade would no longer be "throttled by ... bilateral practices."¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, Welles conceded this desire "to promote the economic prosperity of all nations ... is a purpose which does not have its origin primarily in altruistic conceptions" but rather an acknowledgement that "no nation can prosper by itself or at the expense of others and that no nation can live unto itself alone."¹⁰⁷ The following year Welles elaborated further, noting about that same clause "[t]he access to raw materials of which the Charter speaks is access for the purposes of peace ... Access means the right to buy in peaceful trade, and it exists whenever that right is effective and secure."¹⁰⁸ In later years Welles would continue to criticize the maintenance of British imperial preference as a "regional ... national, segregation" and contend that its continuation meant "there will be no hope for the ... liberal and non-discriminatory trade policies which are the only foundation upon which a healthy and expanding international trade can be built."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ See: Sumner Welles, *The World of the Four Freedoms*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 16-27.

¹⁰⁴ "Post-War Commercial Policy," Address by Sumner Welles, 7 October 1941, FDRL, SWP, Box: 195, Folder: 2.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Address of the Honorable Sumner Welles, Acting Secretary of State, at the World Trade Dinner of the 29th National Foreign Trade Convention, 8 October 1942, FDRL, SWP, Box: 195, Folder: 7.

¹⁰⁹ "The British Commonwealth Conference' Herald Tribune Broadcasts, 24 May 1944, FDRL, SWP, Box: 199, Folder: 8.

Without directly naming them, Welles' 'interpretation' of clause four of the Atlantic Charter lumped together the imperial and autarkic economic systems of the prewar world, implicitly casting them in opposition to the multilateral, open trading world led by the U.S. that he envisioned. Thus, his confrontations with the British were not the product of a hard-nosed realist seeking to expand his country's power at all costs; Welles' idealism and belief in the righteousness of American leadership were genuine. Nor was Welles motivated purely by a belief in bringing about a postwar Wilsonian utopia; Welles had clear priorities about who should lead the world and with what values. Welles' conviction that he knew what was best for the world, and that what was best for the U.S. was best for everyone, underlay the complex machinations of his postwar planning.

Paternalistic Regionalism: Welles' Postwar Planning

Free trade and antagonizing the British was the beginning, not the end, of Welles' paternalistic vision for the postwar world. Until his resignation in 1943 Welles devoted considerable time and energy to deliberations about postwar planning, particularly the creation of a new world organization. Here, too, Welles infused discussions with his particular worldview, drawing directly on his paternalistic policymaking in Latin America over the preceding decades for inspiration. Specifically, Welles' postwar planning was characterized by an emphasis on regionalized systems of international diplomacy. As in Latin America, Welles' attempt to group smaller countries into semi-federated regional systems was directly tied to his twin beliefs in the nobility of U.S. leadership and the maintenance of its power.

The locus of Welles' policymaking was his position on the Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Policy in the State Department. As the vice-chairman of the overall committee, as well as the chairman of its sub-committee on Political Problems, Welles was in a commanding position to influence discussion and

promulgate his views.¹¹⁰ Among the many suggestions entertained during these meetings was Welles' vision for a postwar world organization based on the establishment of several regional sub-groups that would coordinate the day-to-day operations of the world organization in those areas as well as serving as a mouthpiece and arbiter for the sub-region's individual nations in international disputes or affairs.¹¹¹ As Welles explained it, the regional structure would ensure that local disputes were dealt with by interested parties, rather than meddling outside powers.¹¹² It would also have the benefit of being able to draw on local expertise and awareness of the idiosyncrasies of a given region, thus avoiding inadvertent cultural clashing.¹¹³

Yet, despite Welles' ostensibly pragmatic and altruistic portrayal, the regionalized structure he envisioned reflected the same paternalistic idealism he had advocated in Latin America for nearly two decades. These parallels were clearest, unsurprisingly, when he discussed plans for the Latin American sub-region itself. In a speech delivered on Armistice Day 1942 Welles made explicit the link between the structures, and more importantly the values, of the inter-American system and the global reordering he was undertaking. In the speech he praised the inter-American system as "the only example in the world today of a regional federation of free and independent peoples," that was "[b]ased ... on sovereign equality, on liberty, on peace, and on joint resistance to aggression." This system, Welles believed, "lightens the darkness of our anarchic world" and "should constitute a cornerstone in the world structure of the future."¹¹⁴ The peace being sought, Welles continued, "must assure the sovereign equality of peoples throughout the world as well as in the world of the Americas."¹¹⁵ By invoking 'sovereign equality' as a unifying theme, one that he had been advocating in his

¹¹⁰ Harley Notter, *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation, 1939-1945* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), 58, 96.

¹¹¹ O'Sullivan, *Postwar Planning*, 67.

¹¹² Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 379.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 378-9.

¹¹⁴ "Memorial Day Address" by Sumner Welles, 30 May 1942, FDRL, SWP, Box: 195, Folder: 5.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

dealings with Latin America since the 1920s, Welles aligned the goals of postwar peace with the values of the inter-American system.

However, as with his Good Neighbor diplomacy the 'sovereign equality' of which Welles spoke was less a tool for empowering the peoples of the world than a procedural straightjacket to restrain countries from acting too independently. The manifestation of this approach was sometimes counterintuitive. Speaking to an audience at the New School for Social Research in 1944, Welles dismissed the idea of the U.S. taking "retaliatory action" against various unnamed South American countries (almost certainly Argentina and Chile) for "not whole-heartedly cooperating in the common effort of the United Nations to defeat the Axis powers."¹¹⁶ Though such action would be, Welles said, "by no means difficult" he insisted it would be foolhardy, not least because "foreign imposition" and "interference" would inevitably produce negative results.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, because "the inter-American system as it was conceived ... [was] based upon the full equality of sovereignty of each member of the American fraternity" it "precluded the assumption of the right on the part of any American nation, or of any group of American nations, because of superior strength or power, to influence or determine the foreign or domestic policy of any other American nation."¹¹⁸

On the surface it would seem that Welles was advocating a radical form of non-intervention, denying any possibility of the U.S. to take action against a recalcitrant fellow American republic. However, Welles' prescription for the correct course of action revealed that was not the case. He called for a "kind of leadership ... which will further the permanent consecration of those tried principles of international democracy upon which the inter-American system was originally founded" to rectify the reticence of the uncooperative countries in question. "[O]nly by the common determination of the peoples of all of the Americas," Welles insisted, "can the way be prepared to make effective the tremendous contribution which the New World can offer toward the creation of an order throughout the earth capable

¹¹⁶ "The Inter-American System," FDRL, SWP, Box: 196, Folder: 8.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

of bringing lasting peace.”¹¹⁹ Rejecting outright coercion, Welles envisioned a strategy in which the diplomatic machinery of a regional system would stymie uncooperative powers through suffocating multilateralism and smothering idealism, with the unspoken, but unavoidable, assumption that this would occur under the watchful eye of the more powerful nations, particularly the U.S.

The regional system Welles envisioned would serve as the conduit for the expansion of American power in the postwar world. In the same speech quoted above “[t]hat basic principle [of regional cooperation and collective action] to me is equally applicable to any regional system which may be created.”¹²⁰ Accordingly, his plans were replicated in discussions of similar schemes elsewhere in the world. In Europe, Welles envisioned a sub-regional organization comprising the nations of Eastern Europe (Poland, the Baltic States, Czechoslovakia) and the Danube River basin (Yugoslavia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria).¹²¹ Welles foresaw the need for no fewer than four sub-regional groups in Africa and the possibility of two overlapping clusters in the Middle East and the Levant.¹²² In all these cases, the regional subgroups were to be self-policing as much as possible, “agree[ing] upon the manner in which they will make force available, should it be required to prevent the outbreak of war within that area.”¹²³ Exactly how this would happen Welles did not explain, but his forecast for how events would transpire in extraordinary situations indicated his assumption that these regional systems would operate within the bounds of what the U.S. found to be acceptable behaviour. Though regional sub-groups were to decide on how and when to apply force, Welles left open the possibility that the U.S. would have to get involved when matters escalated. He specifically envisioned the possibility that the armed forces of the U.S. could be employed outside the Western Hemisphere “when regional machinery to enforce peace broke down, or when such action by this government was necessary to prevent the outbreak of major wars which threatened the maintenance of world

¹¹⁹ “The Inter-American System,” FDRL, SWP, Box: 196, Folder: 8.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ O’Sullivan, *Postwar Planning*, 203.

¹²² Ibid., 161, 156.

¹²³ Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 382.

peace and consequently the security of this country.”¹²⁴ Thus, Welles’ regional system for world government was never as deferential to local conditions or smaller countries as he let on. For Welles, the watchful eye of the U.S. would always be upon the smaller nations of the world to ensure they acted in accordance with their own, and the United States’, best interests.

Troublingly, Welles’ paternalistic regionalization incorporated another aspect of his policymaking in Latin America from earlier in his career: his racial prejudices. In his plans for what to do with the soon-to-be-former colonies of the British, French, Spanish, and Portuguese in Africa and South America, Welles invoked a racial hierarchy to justify continued lordship by a U.N.O. designated body. For sub-Saharan Africa, Welles recommended a slow path to independence due to underdevelopment and the fact that “the Negroes are in the lowest rank of human beings.”¹²⁵ Similarly, in discussions about Latin America Welles observed “the colored races in the Guianas were as unfit for self-government as anywhere in the Western Hemisphere.”¹²⁶ Such attitudes were not uncommon in the State Department or the U.S. generally at the time, but Welles’ comfort with utilizing them to justify policy decisions belied his ostensibly magnanimous intentions for the postwar world and betrayed a vision for the postwar world order that was clearly not wholly based on ‘sovereign equality’.

Yet, despite the stereotyping of the inhabitants of certain parts of the world, Welles’ postwar planning was preponderantly progressive and humanistic. Infused in Welles’ seemingly dry vision for a regionalized constitutional postwar world order was a passionate idealism rooted in the same instincts he had applied in Latin America. For instance, Welles envisioned a postwar system that addressed not just the issues of peace and war between nations, but also matters of economic, commercial, and cultural exchange. In speeches Welles delivered between 1941 and 1943, he outlined some of the proposals he envisioned a postwar organization might take. Echoing his opening address at the Buenos Aires Conference in 1936, Welles

¹²⁴ Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 380.

¹²⁵ O’Sullivan, *Postwar Planning*, 161.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 162.

called for “the United Nations ... to set up machinery for the purpose of assembling and studying all international aspects of problems under the general heading of freedom from want,” a study that, he predicted, would address “the controversies and conflicts of policy which have so long embittered relations in the international economic field, and therefore generally, might largely disappear.”¹²⁷ He saw these plans as a direct response to the “autarchic commercial and financial policies” of the prewar period that had been so destructive, particularly for the countries in Latin America tied to the Axis.¹²⁸

Conclusion:

Welles was instrumental in guiding U.S. diplomatic affairs through the crucible of war. His involvement in wartime policy was evident at all levels, from policymaking, to negotiation with foreign representatives, to public relations. Similarly, the prevalence of his idiosyncratic worldview and diplomatic style – the paternalistic idealism, aversion to militarism, and close relationship with FDR that could be traced back all the way to his formative years – was inescapable.

The Armistice Day conference carried all the hallmarks of Welles’ diplomatic praxis. It was an idealistic attempt to appeal to the better angels of the rest of the world’s nature. It was almost entirely the product of Welles and Roosevelt’s collaboration. But most importantly, it reflected Welles’ instinct to subordinate military concerns to diplomatic ones when crafting foreign policy. While the specific details and conceptual foundation of the Armistice Day conference corresponded to a great degree with Welles’ own experience they also fit into the broader context of Roosevelt’s thinking about foreign policy at the time. Welles articulated a vision for U.S. foreign policy under Roosevelt that elided the constraints placed by domestic public opinion and a darkening international horizon. The abortive plans had drawn Welles closer to Roosevelt in the latter’s efforts to devise a global strategy for peace

¹²⁷ ‘Address of the Honorable Sumner Welles, Under Secretary of State, at the Convocation of the University of Toronto’, 26 February 1943, FDRL, SWP, Box: 196, Folder: 1.

¹²⁸ ‘Address of the Honorable Sumner Welles, Under Secretary of State, at the Commencement Exercises of the North Carolina College for Negroes’, 31 May 1943, FDRL, SWP, Box: 195, Folder: 9.

that could thread the needle of public opinion. In this manner, Welles' anti-militarism contributed to Roosevelt's characteristic caution and prevarication in the execution of U.S. foreign policy.

Welles' increasing prominence in Roosevelt's peace efforts would become more apparent as the crisis in Europe exploded into war. In his extraordinary mission to Europe Welles demonstrated the salience of his relationship to Roosevelt as both a generative and a formative influence on U.S. foreign policy. The Welles mission in its inception was a product of the close collaboration between Roosevelt and Welles, which was itself only possible due to the deep well of trust and accord the two men had developed over the previous two decades. Moreover, the relationship they shared influenced how the mission unfolded, infusing Welles' reception with a personal dimension. It also laid bare the unique position in Roosevelt's firmament to which Welles had risen by 1940. Possessing Roosevelt's confidence and trust, Welles now served as Roosevelt's proxy and confidant on diplomatic matters. In contrast to Harry Hopkins, who was also close to the president, Welles provided Roosevelt's haphazard plans with an air of consistency and gravitas; he filled a niche that Roosevelt required to plan and enact his efforts to get the U.S. through World War Two.

Welles' value as a high-level strategic visionary was visible in his efforts at postwar planning, beginning with the Argentia conference. Even before the U.S. became involved in fighting Welles set his mind to crafting a postwar world order based in part around his priorities. A fervent believer in the righteousness of U.S. leadership, Welles sought to remake the world in which the global economic and political order reflected his interpretation of American interests and values. His desire to seek U.S. economic hegemony brought him into conflict with the British at Placentia Bay insofar as the British imperial preference system did not fit in his idealistic postwar vision. Conversely, Welles' belief in the beneficence of U.S. leadership led him to fashion plans for a postwar political order that echoed his paternalistic efforts to seek U.S. dominance in Latin America. In both cases, Welles' unique style of paternalistic idealism infused his policymaking and guided U.S. postwar planning, giving it a more multilateral and less confrontational tenor.

As a result of his position, Welles' idiosyncratic perspectives became ingrained into the overall policies pursued by the United States, guiding these policies as he went along. Ranging from a latent sense of Anglophobia left over from the earliest days of his career to his paternalistically idealistic vision of a postwar world, Welles' beliefs shaped the approach of the United States to its wartime alliance relations, and ultimately the way in which the United States approached the conduct of the war itself. However, because Welles' views were so idiosyncratic, they were conditional on his continued presence in the State Department. When he was Undersecretary and close to Roosevelt Welles exerted a gravitational pull on policy, a fact that made his removal in 1943 all the more significant.

Chapter Six:

Queer in Everything He Did: Welles' Sexuality and Resignation, 1943

One of the most striking features of Sumner Welles' resignation in August 1943 was the number of reasons given for it. Among State Department officials, reporters, Washington socialites, and other onlookers, a multitude of explanations were provided for the sudden departure of the State Department's most prominent employee. *The Miami Herald* noted the State Department had been "immobilized because of the cleavage between Hull and Welles", which the latter's resignation would end.¹ Muckraking journalist Drew Pearson contended that it was an ideological purge by "the conservative or Southern wing of the Democratic Party" of "the most important and liberal pillar in the State Department."² In his diary Adolf Berle blamed "the matter of a Senate investigation of a couple of unpleasant incidents that I find it impossible to believe – but whose fame has been industriously spread by [former Ambassador to France William C.] Bullitt to others of Sumner's enemies."³ According to one account, Welles had left to care for his infirmed wife Mathilde. However, the wife of Francis Mayer, a friend of former Undersecretary of State William Castle, found this explanation wanting, and quipped that she knew "what is the matter with Mrs. Welles. She is suffering from the Wells of Loneliness." [sic]⁴

Mrs. Mayer's exquisite wit, linking Welles with Radclyffe Hall's notorious 1928 book depicting a lesbian relationship, underscored the furtive nature of the means by which Welles was forced to resign. In the absence of hard evidence, jokes, rumours, gossip, and innuendo were used to destroy Welles' reputation and

¹ 'Welles 'Resignation', *Miami Herald*, August 1943, cited in SWP, Scrapbooks/Clippings, Box 249: Scrapbook, 1943.

² 'Washington Merry Go Round', *Washington Post*, Drew Pearson, 26 August 1943.

³ "Memorandum", 1 September 1943, FDRL Adolf A. Berle Papers, Box 215: Adolf A. Berle Diary; April, 1943 - April 1944, Diary August - September 1943. Despite this, Berle expressed a naïve optimism about Welles' prospects in facing the oncoming scandal, believing: "there would be a week of unpleasant and difficult comment then complete obscurity".

⁴ 'Diary Entry, 13 October 1943, Houghton Library. William R. Castle Diaries, Vol. 46, 310.

undermine his political power. It also pointed to how sexuality had become the battleground on which the political campaign against Welles was being waged.

Welles' resignation was, to be sure, a symptom of many problems: bureaucratic dysfunction, ideological confrontation, and personal rivalry. But the catalyst and engine for Welles' removal from office was his sexuality and the discourses that surrounded it. Opponents of Welles who were in the know, whether ideological or personal, fixated on his sexuality as a reason for his disqualification from office. Contemporary observers and historians alike focused on the supposedly "lurid nature" of Welles' personal life to explicate the conspiracy that was launched against him.⁵ In the process, a mythos was born that would associate sexual non-conformity with political subversion, obfuscating the context of Welles' own actions and whitewashing the homophobia of his opponents.

This chapter explores the causes, context, and process of Welles' removal from office in 1943. In recounting the events that led to his resignation and analyzing their social and sexual significance, this chapter places Welles' sexuality in the context of 1940s-era mores about sexuality generally and the codes and habits, of the queer subculture of that era. It demonstrates how specific cultural and social circumstances relating to sex, race, and status helped germinate the investigation into Welles' sexuality that eventually precipitated his removal from office. It traces the efforts by Welles' enemies to conspire against Welles, spreading rumours about him and using his sexuality as a cudgel to besmirch his reputation and destroy his bases of political support in Washington, especially with Franklin Roosevelt. This chapter also examines the ramifications of Welles' scandal on his political career and the wider social and political history of the United States. It shows how the rumours about Welles undermined his political stature while in office and sullied his reputation thereafter. More broadly, this chapter shows how Welles' scandal became a touchstone for a political discourse that equated sexual nonconformity with subversion, reflecting short-term and long-term changes in American attitudes toward sex, power, and politics in mid-century America. Incorporating the analysis

⁵ Christopher D. O'Sullivan, *Sumner Welles: Postwar Planning and the Quest for a New World Order 1937-1943* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), x.

begun in Chapters One, Two, and Three, this chapter demonstrates how sexuality played a definitive role in shaping Welles' career and how that process influenced U.S. social, political, and diplomatic history.

Transportation and Transgression: Social and Cultural Contexts of Welles' Sexuality

The events that set in motion Welles' eventual removal from office occurred on the night of 17-18 September 1940. In brief, during the early hours of 18 September, after staying up late discussing foreign affairs over drinks with Federal Works Administrator John Carmody, Welles "inquired of one of the colored waiters as to whether he wanted to make \$15."⁶ Welles invited the waiter to his room, told him to lock the door, and then propositioned him for sex. The porter in question, a Pullman porter named John Stone, refused Welles' advances and left the room.⁷ Undeterred, Welles summoned another porter to his room to proposition him, and then another, and another, each time being refused, until he finally gave up.⁸ News of Welles' behaviour spread quickly among the crew. According to one of the porters, the "morale of the dining car crew was very much upset and disturbed" by Welles' behaviour.⁹ White House Secret Serviceman Dale Whiteside told the train staff to remain quiet about the incident.¹⁰

Additionally, a week after Welles solicited the porters on the Bankhead train, Welles took another train, from Washington D.C. to Cleveland, on which he behaved

⁶ Memorandum, 3 January 1941, NARA, RG 65, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972. Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [1 of 2]

⁷ Memorandum, 30 January 1941, NARA, RG 65, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [2 of 2]

⁸ Memorandum, NARA, RG 65, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover, Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, 30 January 1941, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [1 of 2]

⁹ Memorandum for the Director, 23 January 1941, NARA, RG 65, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover, Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [1 of 2]

¹⁰ Memorandum for the Director, 22 January 1941, NARA, RG 65, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover, Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [2 of 2]

in a manner nearly identical to that of the Bankhead train. According to the Cleveland train's staff, Welles boarded the train at night and consumed "three or four scotch and sodas" before retiring to his room.¹¹ Soon after, Welles "wanted to see a boy in Drawing Room A."¹² As on the Bankhead train, he offered various members of the crew money for sex, or as Welles put it in this case "'screwing purposes'."¹³ Welles was again unsuccessful and the porters involved were again told to keep quiet.

Although these events have been recounted in several historical works, most notably in Benjamin Welles' biography of his father, Irwin Gellman's *Secret Affairs*, and in exceptionally close detail in Douglas Charles' 2015 book *Hoover's War on Gays*, there has never been a systematic analysis of Welles' actions, what they indicated about his personality, the social context in which they took place, or what significance these factors held for the political scandal that grew out of these incidents.¹⁴ As such, crucial insights about Welles, the social-sexual world he inhabited, and the evolution of the scandal that destroyed him have been overlooked. A close examination refutes the contention that Welles' non-heterosexual contacts were incidental aberrations; also, a broader understanding of the context of Welles' encounters in 1940 reveals clues as to why and how these specific incidents metastasized into a political scandal.

To begin with, Welles' solicitation of sex might more accurately be called a negotiation. Welles began his proposition to the porters with a seemingly innocuous

¹¹ Testimony of William Goins, 16 January 1941, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [2 of 2], NARA, RG 65, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972.

¹² Testimony of Thomas Williams, 17 January 1941, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [2 of 2], NARA, RG 65, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972.

¹³ Testimony of Edorn Boston, 17 January 1941, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [2 of 2], NARA, RG 65, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972.

¹⁴ See: Benjamin Welles, *Sumner Welles: FDR's Global Strategist: A Biography* (New York: MacMillan Press, 1997), 1-3; Irwin Gellman, *Secret Affairs: Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 219-20, 391-2, 397-8; Douglas M. Charles, *Hoover's War on Gays: Exposing the FBI's 'Sex Deviates' Program* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2015), 36-68.

question: “Did [you] want to make twenty dollars?”¹⁵ A positive reply would prompt Welles to ask the porter to “take off [their] clothes and stay for 20 minutes.”¹⁶ Welles repeated this tactic *ad nauseum*, offering ever-greater amounts – up to \$100 according to one account.¹⁷ Welles also made not-so-subtle gestures that announced the subtext of his requests and the contact he sought. Welles was, by one account, half naked upon the arrival of the porter, having “on no clothing excepting the pants of his pajamas.”¹⁸ If the porter in question entered Welles’ room Welles “got up, closed the door and locked it,” a gesture both subtle enough to imply the need for privacy and unusual enough for it the porters to mention it in their accounts.¹⁹

This coy approach was characteristic of the furtive manoeuvring employed by men seeking same-sex sexual contact during this era. Born out of fears of police entrapment, the difficulty of identifying potential partners, and the potential for violent rejection, gay men of this era developed “tactics that allowed them to identify and communicate with one another without alerting hostile outsiders to what they were doing.”²⁰ Employing a series of “codes and subterfuges” men seeking sexual contact with other men during this time had “attentiveness to the signals that might identify like-minded men” through “styles of clothing a grooming,

¹⁵ Testimony of Samuel C. Mitchell, 9 January 1941, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [2 of 2], NARA, RG 65, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972; In the various testimonies collected by the FBI, Welles’ opening offer to the porter varied, usually in the \$10-\$20 range.

¹⁶ Memorandum for the Director, 23 January 1941, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [1 of 2], NARA, RG 65, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972.

¹⁷ Memorandum for the Director, 22 January 1941, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [2 of 2], NARA, RG 65, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972.

¹⁸ Testimony of Samuel C. Mitchell, 9 January 1941, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [2 of 2], NARA, RG 65, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972.

¹⁹ Testimony of Luther A. Thomas, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [2 of 2], NARA, RG 65, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972.

²⁰ George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940* (New York: BasicBooks, 1994), 187. See also, Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 107.

mannerisms, and conventions of speech” to facilitate their encounters.²¹ Gay men also “made use of a number of utterly conventional gestures ... the most common simply involved asking for a match or for the time of day.”²² Welles’ behaviour on the Bankhead and Cleveland trains replicated these tactics, indicating both Welles’ knowledge of them and his confidence in improvising variations on them in the moment.

Although Welles’ deployment of these tactics were, in this case, not directed at other gay men (as well as unsuccessful), their use indicated his familiarity with them. Between this familiarity, the apparent frequency of Welles’ encounters, and further evidence of his efforts to seek same-sex intimacy (discussed below), it becomes clear that Welles’ desire for same-sex sexual contact was not an aberration. Rather than being a louche display of alcoholic excess, as other authors have implied, Welles’ actions were at the very least well rehearsed and, in light of evidence presented earlier in this thesis, a sign that he had been pursuing these sorts of contacts for decades.²³

Welles’ behaviour was consistent with the intricate world of cruising and illicit contact engaged in by other men of this period. Yet, in important ways Welles’ behaviour deviated from the patterns of gay subculture observed by authors studying this period in U.S. history. These deviations were specific to Welles and the peculiarities of the situation in which he was placed on the Bankhead and Cleveland trains. Upon closer analysis, these deviations reveal clues about why Welles’ behaviour on these trains (which, as stated above, were likely not the only times Welles sought these sort of contacts) exploded into a scandal.

²¹ Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 180, 188.

²² *Ibid.*, 188.

²³ For Welles’ earlier signs of same-sex desires, see Chapter One; Both Christopher O’Sullivan and Irwin Gellman directly linked Welles’ pursuit of same-sex intimacy with his consumption of alcohol. Benjamin Welles implied the same while adding that stress was a likely cause of Welles’ behaviour as well. Numerous other authors, in brief summaries of this episode of Welles’ career, have echoed this analysis. See: O’Sullivan, x. Gellman, 56. Welles, 2. There is the further issue of the judgmental language used by these authors, carrying the implication (however unintentional) that same-sex intimacy is undesirable. This is a further avenue for historiographic rehabilitation of Welles but it is outside the scope of this thesis.

The most significant deviation of Welles' behaviour from the more typical encounters of gay men seeking sex in this period was in the location Welles chose for his encounter. In general, gay men of this era "made tactical decisions about the safest places to meet," usually places that were sufficiently well trafficked so that potential partners were plentiful but the anonymity of the crowd was maintained.²⁴ Welles, clearly, did not employ this tactic. He chose a confined and highly conspicuous space to pursue his desires – an overnight train carriage carrying the president of the United States.

The reasons for this were manifold and they were by-products of the unique positionality Welles occupied on account of his aristocratic background, his wealth, and his stature as a public figure. As a prominent diplomat – he was, in 1940, Acting Secretary of State – Welles occupied an exceptionally elite position in American social hierarchy. This placed additional obstacles between Welles and his ability to seek same-sex intimacy. His notoriety prevented him from attending parties or frequenting establishments that were specifically for queer people.

Conversely, Welles was also limited in his ability to seek more discreet locations. Within the subculture of gay men, those who occupied a higher social rank often found certain avenues closed to them. As George Chauncey noted, "[s]ome men, particularly those who were professionally successful in jobs that required them to pass as straight, found it astonishing that anyone in their circles would *risk* going to a tearoom [a public bathroom used for sex], given the threat of arrest and the availability of alternatives to men highly integrated into gay society."²⁵ However, for Welles such integration into gay society was also impossible. As a public official, it was far more difficult – and even more important – for Welles to maintain the anonymity on which many same-sex sexual encounters were based during this time. Thus, the choice of a railway carriage staffed by porters renowned for their discretion and obsequiousness, with the protection of, but not direct oversight by, the Secret Service, was not an altogether bad idea.

²⁴ Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 189.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 199. Emphasis original.

However, the location Welles chose and the manner in which he pursued his desires contained countervailing dynamics that simultaneously offered Welles his opportunity and exposed him to danger; those dynamics would also initiate the process by which Welles' behaviour became a scandal. The Pullman porters who were the objects of Welles' desire on the Bankhead and Cleveland trains were not the typical 1940s-era railway employees. Pullman porters were extraordinarily well trained, particularly if they were a "private car porter" assigned to "special cars and assignments, such as serving presidents, visiting dignitaries, entertainers, charter groups, and the like."²⁶ For the trains used to carry Franklin Roosevelt, special porters were specifically assigned for their loyalty, professionalism, and discretion ("[p]orters who served on FDR's train ... knew how crippled he was long before the public did," historian Larry Tye astutely observed).²⁷ Between the years of service, the 127-page training manual issued to them, and the higher-than-average wages (plus tips) they received, "Pullman porters also climbed near the top of the Negro social ladder ... the aristocrats of Negro labor."²⁸

These unique attributes of the Pullman porter – professionalism and discretion – operated at cross purposes when they came in contact with Welles on the Bankhead and Cleveland trains. In some respects, it is understandable why Welles believed that he would be able to proposition the Pullman porters with the expectation of getting what he desired and with no repercussions. Pullman porters were renowned for their obsequiousness and their willingness to perform extra tasks for requested by customers.²⁹ "Porters worked for tips: they had to hustle and force themselves to swallow a thousand and one indignities a day and worse. For this they were lampooned as Uncle Toms."³⁰ Porters also regrettably endured countless minor humiliations at the hands of their passengers, including "being

²⁶ David D. Perata, *Those Pullman Blues: An Oral History of the African-American Railroad Attendant* (Ruthven, IA: David D. Perata Studios, 1996), xx.

²⁷ Larry Tye, *Rising from the Rails: Pullman Porters and the Making of the Black Middle Class* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), 76-7, 183. Memorandum for the Director, 22 January 1941, NARA II, RG 65, Box 24, Folder: Wells, Sumner (deceased) [2 of 2]

²⁸ Tye, *Rising from the Rails*, 77.

²⁹ Tye, *Rising from the Rails*, 93

³⁰ Jack Santino, *Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle: Stories of Black Pullman Porters* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 70.

asked to bark like a dog or let a young boy ride him like a horse.”³¹ Beyond this, the circumstances and style of the Pullman porters lent itself to exploitative and intimate interactions while underscoring the expectation of discretion. Several former Pullman porters and historians writing about them have commented upon the antebellum plantation aspect to porters’ treatment as well to the fact that the porter “was friend and confidant to a class of wealthy white passenger, and at the very least, he witnessed their behaviour, their sins and indiscretions, and sometimes their tragedies.”³² For all these reasons, Welles might have had a reasonable expectation of success in pursuing a clandestine sexual contact through payment and stealth.

However, unbeknownst to Welles, the Pullman porters were, in fact, the most hazardous potential partners to solicit for a clandestine rendezvous. One aspect of the Pullman Company’s employee discipline and training included the use of “undercover agents” (also called “spotters” or “spies”) to observe and test the porters’ work performance.³³ Usually their focus was on standards of service such as cleanliness or taking of fares, but “[m]any were of a sexual nature: female spotters, for example, would attempt to lure unsuspecting porters into their drawing room.”³⁴ Furthermore, as Pullman porters tended to be highly trained and well regarded within the black community – “[p]aragons of the community [and] sophistication” in one historian’s estimation, they were less likely to risk their jobs, even for an exceptional tip.³⁵ As one Pullman (not on the Cleveland nor the Bankhead trains) remembered, “this job is business to me, I gotta wife and two children and I know if I steal, if I fuck around with the women, I’m gonna get fired. What I’m gonna tell my wife?”³⁶ Add to this the habit of Pullman porters gossiping among themselves about passengers, and the likelihood of Welles being exposed for making such an advance grew substantially.

³¹ Tye, *Rising from the Rails*, 93.

³² Santino, *Miles of Smile*, 81. Perata, *Those Pullman Blues*, xiii.

³³ Tye, *Rising from the Rails*, 103. See also, Santino, *Miles of Smiles*, 27.

³⁴ Perata, *Those Pullman Blues*, xxiii.

³⁵ Tye, *Rising from the Rails*, 77.

³⁶ Perata, *Those Pullman Blues*, 97.

The dynamics elaborated above were reflected in the F.B.I. investigation into the Bankhead and Cleveland train incidents. On both trains, news of Welles' behaviour spread quickly among the train staff.³⁷ On both occasions the train conductor and the Pullman conductor (two separate individuals with separate jobs on Pullman trains) were informed, all but guaranteeing a report would be made to their superiors at the journey's conclusion.³⁸ The incredulity and skittishness of the porters was also reflected in the testimonies of the porters on the Bankhead and Cleveland trains whom Welles propositioned. When one porter who had been propositioned by Welles was "kidded" by the train's baggage master for having "turned down fifty dollars to suck a nice, clean dick," the porter in question "replied that he would not accept five thousand dollars to do such a thing."³⁹

Thus, faced with the porters' baseline objection to having gay sex, the oddness and gossip-fuelling notoriety of Welles' offer, their extensive training and awareness of Pullman-employed 'spies', the fear of professional repercussions, and the conspicuity of serving on a presidential train, Welles' attempt to procure sex from Pullman porters in September 1940 confronted an exceptionally formidable wall of opposition and suspicion. The fact that these conditions existed when Welles solicited the Pullman porters all but guaranteed that his relatively well-practiced and furtive approach would not be held in confidence behind a screen of Pullman porter discretion. In the weeks and months after the incidents, stories about Welles became part and parcel of Pullman porter lore and were passed up the chain of command. When the F.B.I. started its investigation of Welles and began accumulating the documents that would become the political weapons of Welles' enemies as they conspired to remove him from office, they had plenty of testimony to draw upon.

As reports about Welles trickled back to government officials in the White House and the military, Roosevelt launched an investigation into Welles, the results

³⁷ Memorandum for the Director, 22 January 1941, Testimony of Dale B. Whiteside, NARA II, RG 65, Box 24, Folder: Wells, Sumner (deceased) [2 of 2]; Testimony of William Goins, 16 January 1941, NARA II, RG 65, Box 24, Folder: Wells, Sumner (deceased) [2 of 2]

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Memorandum for the Director, 23 January 1941, Testimony of Elmer C. Stephens, NARA II, RG 65, Box 24, Folder: Wells, Sumner (deceased) [1 of 2]

of which F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover delivered personally to Roosevelt in January 1941. After consulting with Hoover and members of the army tasked with presidential security, Roosevelt agreed to assign a bodyguard to Welles to keep him from repeating his actions.⁴⁰ Satisfied that Welles behaviour was not likely to be repeated the report was returned to Hoover's Personal and Confidential File for safekeeping and was quietly buried.

Enter Bullitt: A Scandal Begins

Had the knowledge about Welles' behaviour and the F.B.I. report been kept within the confines of the Oval Office and the highest echelons of the F.B.I. and military, the course of Welles' career and of American foreign policy might well have been very different. Instead, information about the incident fell into the hands of someone dedicated to destroying Welles' career. Over the course of the next two and a half years a conspiracy grew that revealed not just the personal animosity felt by many toward Welles, and the depth of the fissures that had plagued the State Department since Welles' arrival, but also the portentous gravity of wartime-era Washington D.C. politics and the salience of discourses about sexuality within that context and in Welles' professional life.

The central figure in the conspiracy to oust Welles was former Ambassador to France William C. Bullitt. Bullitt was a career diplomat with a list of accomplishments longer and more distinguished than any other figure in the State Department, save Welles and Hull. He had served as an attaché to Colonel Edward M. House during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, during which he was dispatched to Russia to assess "possibilities with the Bolsheviks for ending the war

⁴⁰ Undated Report, Yale University Archives, William C. Bullitt Papers (WCBP), Series VI, Box 210, Folder 218

in Russia.”⁴¹ He spent the 1920s abroad, touring in France and Germany, and writing a psychoanalytical biography about Woodrow Wilson with Sigmund Freud.⁴²

Like Welles, Bullitt was a polarizing figure. He was popular with some groups, particularly abroad. A French editorial in 1936 praised his “youth, finesse, cosmopolitan experience and vast knowledge of European affairs.”⁴³ Others disliked his pomp and arrogance. Adolf Berle once commented that, “[h]e had a great deal of ego in his cosmos” while Henry Stimson called him a “wretched, selfish, disloyal man.”⁴⁴ He was introduced to Roosevelt through Colonel House, who recommended that Bullitt work on Roosevelt’s campaign as a foreign policy adviser.⁴⁵ Bullitt’s contributions consisted of a few policy notes on European politics and a \$1000 donation.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, he was valued enough by Roosevelt to be selected as the first American ambassador to the Soviet Union following recognition of the regime in 1934.

Welles and Bullitt were acquainted through mutual contacts in the State Department and, after Welles’ appointment as Undersecretary, through diplomatic and personal correspondence. In the early years of their acquaintanceship, Welles and Bullitt’s interactions were outwardly cordial. They exchanged pleasantries and personal information as freely as if they were old friends. They helped each other in personal matters, including Bullitt’s arranging for Welles’ son to spend six weeks in France learning French.⁴⁷ They even exchanged personal gifts, notably a collection of rare plants and seeds (both men were avid gardeners).⁴⁸

⁴¹ Michael Cassell-Blackburn, *The Donkey, the Carrot, and the Club: William C. Bullitt and Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1948* (London: Praeger, 2004), 35.

⁴² Sigmund Freud and William C. Bullitt, *Woodrow Wilson: A Psychological Study* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1999); for a fuller account of Bullitt’s activities during the years 1919-1933, see: Will Brownell and Richard N. Billings, *So Close to Greatness: A Biography of William C. Bullitt* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 103-38

⁴³ Brownell and Billings, 189, quoting *L’Europe Nouvelle*, 17 October 1936.

⁴⁴ Jordan A. Schwarz, *Liberal: Adolf A Berle and the Vision of an American Era* (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1987), 30; Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, 310.

⁴⁵ Orville H. Bullitt ed., *For the President Personal and Secret: Correspondence Between Franklin D. Roosevelt and William C. Bullitt* (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1973), 17.

⁴⁶ Bullitt to Roosevelt, 14 September 1932, Yale University Archives, WCBP, Series I, Group 112, Box 70, Folder 1780.

⁴⁷ Bullitt to Welles, 5 August 1938, WCBP, Series I, Box, 88, Folder 2265.

⁴⁸ Welles to Bullitt, 30 October 1939, SWP, Box: 51, Folder: 2.

Despite this outward display of probity, Bullitt grew increasingly resentful of Welles' rising prominence. Bullitt's dislike of Welles, according to historians Will Brownell and Richard Billings, "grew in proportion to his frustrated ambition;" over time events conspired to aggravate that frustration substantially.⁴⁹ After being reassigned to Paris following Roosevelt's re-election in 1936, Bullitt found himself increasingly marginalized. Partially, this was a function of Welles' newfound influence over Roosevelt as Undersecretary. Bullitt, like Welles, had grown accustomed to going over the heads of his superiors in the State Department to appeal to Roosevelt directly. Bullitt's insubordination was no more appreciated by Hull and others in the Department than Welles' was, but it was tolerated as Roosevelt valued Bullitt's insight.⁵⁰ However, Welles' access to the president trumped Bullitt's influence, and when the former became Undersecretary the latter was overruled.

Welles' anointment as the president's favourite, and Bullitt's resentment of that fact, was reinforced by his close relationship with former Counselor of the State Department R. Walton Moore. Bullitt nursed a grudge against Welles for being promoted to Undersecretary over Moore in 1937. Bullitt's loss of this bureaucratic fight was a personal blow as well as a professional one. Besides being a political ally, Moore was a personal friend and his being outmaneuvered by Welles compounded Bullitt's antipathy. Bullitt's anger reached fever pitch in 1941 with the sudden death of Moore and the bequeathing to Bullitt by Moore all information he had obtained regarding Welles and the Bankhead train incident, supplementing information he had obtained from the Southern Railway on his own.⁵¹

Bullitt's efforts to discredit and ultimately destroy Welles with his knowledge of the incident initially failed. This was in part due to his lack of evidence, but also because of the amount of protection still provided to Welles by the president through their close relationship, Bullitt found it impossible to gain traction for his

⁴⁹ Brownell and Billings, *So Close to Greatness*, 293.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 190.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 295; Memo entitled 'Typed Copy of Judge Moore's Handwriting', undated, Yale University Archives, WCBP, Series VI, Box 210, Folder 218. Exactly how Moore became aware of the Bankhead Train incident is unclear. See: Brownell and Billings, *So Close to Greatness*, 294.

campaign. Possessing only Moore's notes on the matter, Bullitt met Roosevelt in April 1941 to make the case that Welles' actions made him susceptible to blackmail and could be an embarrassment to the administration if they ever got out, but Roosevelt rebuffed him.⁵² Welles was already under surveillance to protect him from being blackmailed, Roosevelt reported, and according to Bullitt, "he did not believe that any newspaper would publish any information about this matter."⁵³ In a subsequent meeting, Roosevelt added that he needed Welles and that having Welles and Hull work together was beneficial.⁵⁴ "Cordell Hull and Welles made a good team," Roosevelt insisted to Bullitt. Bullitt was not sympathetic. He said Welles was "subject to blackmail" and implored Roosevelt to "remove him from a position in which he was familiar with all the secrets of the Government of the United States."⁵⁵ To cap it off, Bullitt ominously warned that "Welles' criminal activities were known to most of the officers and many of the clerks and even messengers in the Department of State ... and that it turned the stomachs of decent men to be under the orders of such a person."⁵⁶ However, despite Bullitt's plea, Roosevelt did nothing. For the time being, Roosevelt's favour protected Welles from Bullitt's attack. Without outside support, Bullitt was unable to penetrate the protective shield provided by Roosevelt and the stature of high office.

Undeterred, Bullitt set about attacking Welles by other means. Over the next two years, Bullitt participated in a stealth campaign of hearsay, spreading the rumours about Welles as widely as possible. Although it took some time to come to fruition, Bullitt eventually succeeded in corralling enough power behind him, in the form of cabinet officers and senators who were made aware of the rumours, to force Welles' resignation. Bullitt was aided by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, whose antipathy for Welles had grown since the row over the Joint Declaration at the Rio Conference in 1942. Hull had been made aware of reports about Welles as early as

⁵² Brownell and Billings, *So Close to Greatness*, 295.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Supplement to Memorandum of a Conversation with the President on November 18th dictated November 22nd, 3 December 1941, Yale University Archives, WCBP, Series VI, Box 210, Folder 217.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

November 1940 through R. Walton Moore, but he never acted upon the information until Bullitt provided an opportunity to attack Welles indirectly.⁵⁷

Bullitt's campaign began to show results by early 1943. In January 1943 Bullitt received word from Cordell Hull that "a number of Senators were talking about this scandal and a number of Senators' wives had talked to Mrs. Hull about it."⁵⁸ That same month, Bullitt reported to Hull that Senators Walter George of Georgia and Josiah Bailey of North Carolina were aware of the rumours about Welles and were prepared to approach Senator Tom Connally of Texas, a major figure in the Senate, to raise the matter on the Senate floor.⁵⁹ Attorney General Francis Biddle added fuel to the fire by telling Bullitt and Hull "J. Edgar Hoover had told the President that it was dangerous to the safety of the United States to have in high office ... this man who was open to blackmail and that he knew that Welles was being blackmailed."⁶⁰

Armed with new political muscle and approaching a critical mass of dissemination, Bullitt made a breakthrough in April 1943 when Senator Ralph Owen Brewster of Maine met with F.B.I. Director Hoover and had a lengthy discussion about Welles.⁶¹ As a member of the powerful Committee on Appropriations as well as the Special Committee to Investigate the Defense Program, also known as the Truman Committee, Brewster quietly made preparations for a formal Senate investigation.⁶² By June, Hull had issued the president an ultimatum insisting that Welles had to go, citing Welles' "degeneracy," the possibility of blackmail, and the likelihood that any postwar agreement would founder in the Senate so long as Welles was still employed.⁶³

⁵⁷ Memo entitled 'Typed Copy of Judge Moore's Handwriting', undated, Yale University Archives, WCBP, Series VI, Box 210, Folder 218.

⁵⁸ Bullitt Memorandum, 5 January 1943, Yale University Archives, WCBP, Series VI, Box 210, Folder 219.

⁵⁹ Bullitt Memorandum, 15 January 1943, Yale University Archives, WCBP, Series VI, Box 210, Folder 219.

⁶⁰ Bullitt Memorandum, 5 January 1943, Yale University Archives, WCBP, Series VI, Box 210, Folder 217. Emphasis original.

⁶¹ Bullitt Memorandum, 27 April 1943, Yale University Archives, WCBP, Series VI, Box 210, Folder 219.

⁶² Welles, *FDR's Global Strategist*, 344-345.

⁶³ Bullitt Memorandum, 2 June 1943, Yale University Archives, WCBP, Box 210, Folder 218.

Crucially, Welles lacked any ability to combat the spread of the rumours against him. Confined as he was to the State Department, Welles had made few friends in Congress who would vouch for his character and refute Bullitt's claims. Possessing in the president all the political support he needed, Welles had never cultivated a deep well of goodwill or support that he could draw upon when his character was impugned. The only ostensible defense of Welles came from sympathetic members of the press who pushed back against the reports of trouble in the State Department by lauding Welles and castigating Hull. Drew Pearson, for example, defended Welles and attacked Hull and Bullitt in his weekly political column, "Washington Merry-Go-Round" Pearson attacked Hull for his jealousy of Welles, his plodding style, and for attributing Welles' removal to Roosevelt's acquiescence to the "conservative or Southern wing of the Democratic Party."⁶⁴ Though some of these accusations gained traction, they were insufficient to blunt the attacks on Welles or save his political career.

The escalating scandal around Welles laid bare the harsh realities about the power dynamics in the Roosevelt administration during this time. It also demonstrated the degree to which Roosevelt had become isolated and politically weakened by 1943. Exhausted by over a decade in the Oval Office, demoralized by a poor showing in the previous year's midterm election, drained by over two years of intense pressure dealing with World War Two, and facing an unprecedented fourth term, Roosevelt was physically and emotionally worn out by 1943. Within a year he would begin showing aggravated symptoms of heart disease.⁶⁵ He was also increasingly isolated emotionally as members of his inner circle, including Missy LeHand, Harry Hopkins, and others, had died or moved on.⁶⁶ The increasing pressure over Welles came at the precise moment when Roosevelt was least able to muster the strength to defend him, and ironically, at the moment when he needed loyal allies like Welles the most. As knowledge of the rumours surrounding Welles slowly crept through the corridors of power in Washington, it created an aura of

⁶⁴ 26 August 1943, Drew Pearson, "The Washington Merry-Go-Round", *Washington Post*

⁶⁵ See Frank Costigliola, "Broken Circle: The Isolation of Franklin D. Roosevelt in World War II", *Diplomatic History*. Vol. 32, No.5, 708.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 679.

scandal, even though the details were neither fully known nor possible to publically acknowledge. As the rumours spread, they laid bare the existing divisions in the State Department and reinforced the polarization that Welles had engendered throughout his tenure.

Escalation: Social Washington and the Rumour Mill

The insidious growth of the rumour mill that was the engine of this growing scandal had a palpable impact on the social and political world of Washington D.C. and had a detectable impact on Welles' ability to do his job. Throughout his career, but especially since his elevation to the post of Undersecretary of State, Welles had always kept a lavish social calendar. Possessing access to the highest levels of government on a daily basis he was familiar with the most important people in Washington D.C. and could draw these people together almost at whim. Such a social standing had important implications for Welles' political power. It created a captive audience through which Welles could promulgate his political plans, forge alliances, and ostracize opponents. It also reinforced and combined existing impressions about Welles as a political operator.

As Assistant Secretary of State and later Undersecretary Welles organized high profile social events several times a year. The guest list would typically include members of the cabinet, congressional leadership, senior sub-cabinet officials, Welles' allies in the State Department, high level members of the press, businessmen, and so forth.⁶⁷ For anyone else, such a guest list would be found only for evenings with the president or a foreign head of state; however this kind of guest list was quite common for Welles' parties. In addition to the parties he threw, Welles was a central figure in a quasi-official group of senior government officials known as

⁶⁷ Dinner - The Honorable Sumner Welles, Assistant Secretary of State, in Honor of Members of the Official Commission of the Social-Economic League of Cuba, August 12, 1935, NARA, RG 59, Records of the Chief of Protocol, Box 1: Social Functions; Social Functions Given by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 1933-44.

the 'little cabinet', a veritable who's who of government power brokers; Welles was one of its most active members.⁶⁸

The impact of the rumour campaign against Welles that occasioned his resignation had a dramatic and negative impact on the social events he held or attended. Prior to August of 1943, which is to say prior to the time when Welles' behaviour on the Bankhead and Cleveland trains became grist for the rumour mill, the social functions Welles hosted were high-powered and well attended. Cabinet officials, ambassadors from major allies, high ranking military figures, and at times even the president or vice-president had attended the events Welles planned. Guest lists for these events were kept by the Social Secretary of the State Department, who kept meticulous notes of who was invited, who attended, and who declined the invitation – or in the lexicon used by the secretary, sent their “regrets.”⁶⁹ Any absences were diligently recorded and occasionally profusely excused with notes and personal calls of apology. Before 1943 the average rate of acceptances to declinations for events hosted by Welles was 4:1.⁷⁰

However, as Welles' scandal began to spread the picture changed. The number of “regrets” sent steadily climbed through early 1943, before rising sharply in August 1943, with nearly half the invited guests declining the invitation.⁷¹ Moreover, the guests who declined included all the highest-level officials in Washington, in particular members of the U.S. Senate, who were most likely to be

⁶⁸ See: SWP, Box: 46, Folder: 9: Little Cabinet Dinner, 1938.

⁶⁹ “Suggested List of Guests to be Invited to the Luncheon to be Given by the Under Secretary of State in Honor of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Panama – Pan American Room, Mayflower Hotel, Tuesday June 8th. At 1 P.M.” NARA, RG 59, Records of the Chief of Protocol, Box 5: Social Functions; Social Functions Given by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 1933-44

⁷⁰ This figure was arrived at by calculating all the accepts/regrets data from a set of sixteen guest lists that were identifiably connected to events hosted by Welles. The source material for this data can be found in NARA RG 59, Records of the Chief of Protocol, Box 1, Box 3, and Box 5.

⁷¹ “List of Guests Invited to the Dinner to be Given by the Under Secretary of State in Honor of the Visiting Delegation from Emergency Advisory Committee for Political Defense, of Montevideo, On Friday Evening, August 6, 1943 at the Mayflower Hotel”, NARA, RG 59, Records of the Chief of Protocol, Box 1: Social Functions; Social Functions Given by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 1933-44; “List of Guests Invited to the Dinner to be Given by the Under Secretary of State in Honor of Major General Eurico Gaspar Dutra, Minister of War of Brazil, On Friday, August 20, 1943, at the Mayflower Hotel”, NARA, RG59, Records of the Chief of Protocol, Box 3: Social Functions; Social Functions Given by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 1933-44.

privity to the rumours of the impending Senate investigation of Welles.⁷² Welles' social calendar for the remaining weeks of his tenure was drastically curtailed. His formerly lavish and lively parties became hollow affairs, weighted down by the silent implications of Welles' impending political exile. The RSVP lists showed Welles descending from a social hub to a pariah.

Welles' social life and professional life existed in a reciprocal relationship, each providing an indicator of the other. The extent of Welles' success was evident in the frequency and opulence of his social functions. Conversely, the centrality of these functions to Welles' professional life was demonstrated by the reaction in social circles to the rumours about Welles in 1943. The rumours destabilized the apparatus of Welles' political power by undermining the medium that he had utilized to his advantage since the beginning of his career. In that sense it was ironic that the same interplay political power that helped Welles master the Washington D.C. social circle also led to his downfall.

Climax: Welles Resigns

Through late 1942 and early 1943 the rumours about Welles spread from person to person in the State Department and the rest of the federal government. Breckinridge Long was told of the rumours as early spring 1942. Welles stated they were a "malicious lie" and Long professed to believe him. But according to Long's account, the rumours persisted and took hold before Welles or Roosevelt could get a handle on them again.⁷³ Long wrote that Welles "was accused of a highly immoral bit of conduct" that has caused "the Administration ... the White House ... the State Department" to suffer.⁷⁴ However, despite having knowledge of the incident in 1942, Long made no mention of the issue until August of 1943. According to Bill Bullitt, by

⁷² "List of Guests Invited to the Luncheon to be Given by the Under Secretary of State in Honor of his Excellency Senor Dr. Don Leon DeBayle, Ambassador of Nicaragua, On Monday, June 14, 1943, in the Carlton Room of the Carlton Hotel at 1:15 P.M.", NARA, RG 59, Records of the Chief of Protocol, Box 5: Social Functions; Social Functions Given by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 1933-44

⁷³ Fred L. Israel, ed., *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long: Selections from Years 1939-1944* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 324, 325.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 324, 325.

April 1943 “practically everybody in Washington did know it [the rumours]” and Cordell Hull had called on Roosevelt to “get rid of Welles.”⁷⁵ Pressure continued to mount on Roosevelt over the summer while rancour toward Welles reached a crescendo.⁷⁶

When Welles’ resignation finally came on 16 August 1943 it was something of an anti-climax. So widely had the rumours spread, and so effectively had Welles’ political power been undermined, Welles’ departure was all but foreordained. Although Roosevelt had offered Welles a roving ambassadorship, beginning with a special mission to Moscow, Welles’ political career was effectively over. Moreover, the reasons for Welles’ resignation were by this point an open secret. Adolf Berle mourned the loss of Welles whose departure was “occasioned by Mr. Hull.”⁷⁷ Rexford Tugwell found himself in a “depression” over Welles’ departure and later expressed a hope that Welles would give “useful pointers” to anyone writing a book critical of Hull.⁷⁸ Edward Stettinius, Welles’ successor, was more discreet when he wrote in his diary that he and Hull had discussed Welles’ “very personal private situation” during a meeting shortly after Welles’ resignation.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, in a private conversation with Bill Bullitt, Hull gloated to him “[n]o matter how much either of us suffer, neither of us ever did a more righteous act or a greater public service than kicking that son of a bitch into the open spaces.”⁸⁰

The rumours about Welles eventually spread outside of the Washington D.C. bubble. In the weeks leading up to Welles’ departure the F.B.I. became aware of discussions by senior congressmen pertaining to Welles’ status *vis à vis* the USSR. A

⁷⁵ Unsigned Memoranda, 25 April 1943, Yale University Archives, WCBP, Series VI, Box: 210, Folder: 219.

⁷⁶ In an account by Bill Bullitt of a conversation between him, Cordell Hull, and Mrs. Cordell Hull, Mrs. Hull was reported to have said “All you men are terrible. You protect each other even when you commit crimes. I don’t see why you or Cordell hasn’t had this man put in jail or shot him.” Unsigned Memoranda, 25 April 1943, Yale University Archives, WCBP, Series VI, Box: 210, Folder: 219.

⁷⁷ Diary entry, April, 1943- April 1944, FDRL, Adolf A. Berle Papers, Box 215.

⁷⁸ Letter, Rexford Tugwell to Welles, 29 October 1943, FDRL, Rexford Tugwell Papers, Cont. 29, General Correspondence We-Z; Letter, Tugwell to Welles, 5 October 1951, FDRL, Rexford Tugwell papers, Cont. 29, General Correspondence We-Z.

⁷⁹ Thomas M. Campbell and George C. Herring, eds., *The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius, Jr. 1943-1946*(New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), 9.

⁸⁰ Memorandum of Bill Bullitt, 21 June 1944, Yale University Archives, WCBP, Series VI, Box: 210, Folder: 219.

memo signed by J. Edgar Hoover related the spread of rumours about Welles' removal from office among individuals at the Warner Brothers Studio in Hollywood who had allegedly been informed by a Los Angeles police officer who had, in turn, heard the story from an "eastern Senator" (almost certainly Owen Brewster of Maine).⁸¹ According to one of Hoover's agents, the discussion of removing Welles had come up "as a result of various demands being made by Russia" and that "Russia had Welles sewed up."⁸² The subsequent letter from Hoover to General Edwin Watson recounted an allegation that "Communist sympathizers" in Los Angeles with connections in Washington had heard of the Welles story.⁸³ Although it was unlikely these supposed sympathizers were genuinely connected to the Communist Party, or that Russian agents had any plans to use any knowledge of Welles they may have had as leverage, the fact that these claims were made by members of the federal government demonstrated the power and influence of the rumour mill in Welles' downfall and the ability for a scandal to escalate far beyond the bounds of anyone to control it.

The Bankhead Train incident had not only ended Welles' career, but it also begat broader changes in how scandal was dealt with in Washington thereafter. By the time Welles had resigned all the protections and etiquette that had worked to his advantage beforehand had collapsed.⁸⁴ Even in the press, hints about the nature of Welles' scandal emerged, albeit obliquely. An article in the *Washington Times Herald* catalogued the various official reasons for Welles' departure, dismissing each of them in kind. The article concluded, however, with a quotation from Danton

⁸¹ Memorandum for the Attorney General, 14 September 1943, NARA RG 65, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [1 of 2]

⁸² Untitled Memorandum, 2 September 1943, NARA RG 65, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [1 of 2].

⁸³ Hoover to General Watson, 14 September 1943, NARA RG 65, Box 24: File 156, Washington Field Division -- Misc. Info to File 164, Wiretapping, Use of in FBI, Office of the Director, J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential Subject Files, 1924-1972, Hoover O+C Files #157 Wells, Sumner (Deceased) [1 of 2].

⁸⁴ For more on the changing social and sexual mores of wartime Washington and their intersections with the Federal Government, see Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton, University Press, 2009), 137-73.

Walker, a Washington journalist, who said "[w]hatever printed reasons are given for the Sumner Welles 'resignation' one thing definitely is certain, and that is, the inside story will never come out."⁸⁵ Cornelius Vanderbilt made similarly sly references in a gossip column to the nature of the Welles scandal and the degree of distortion it had undergone as news of it disseminated. Vanderbilt, in a column titled "Our Town Seems Tranquil But Gayer" found it "amazing how many people who actually know nothing about the inside facts claim to know all. I even hear a well-known dowager say it was a case of 'cherchez la femme' which everyone in Washington knows it isn't."⁸⁶ A Washington political gossip columnist writing under the name Cholly Knickerbocker made the clearest reference to the resignation's sexual back-story. Knickerbocker wrote that "[i]n the social salons from Newport to Palm Beach it's no secret that 'Bill' Bullitt, in connivance with State Secretary [sic] Cordell Hull brought about Welles' downfall. But the inside story is s-o-o-o- hot that it would burn the paper on which it was printed."⁸⁷

Such (relatively) direct reference to the sexual dimension of Welles' resignation was unprecedented in Washington D.C. at the time. It marked a shift in how the media interacted with the politicians they covered and, more importantly, how sexuality was discussed. The explosive potential of the Welles' scandal, not totally realized as Welles resigned before it could fully come out, opened a crack in the decorum that had hitherto suppressed discussion of sexuality and power in a frank way. It opened the door to a more rigorous and vigilant perspective on sexuality in government and laid the groundwork for a far wider investigation into sexuality in government later in the decade during the Lavender Scare.

⁸⁵ 'What Are the Real Facts In The Welles Case?' *Washington Times Herald*, 2 September 1943, cited in 'Scrapbook, 1943' SWP, Box: 249, Scrapbook, 1943. Emphasis original.

⁸⁶ 'Sampling N.Y. After D.C.' by Cornelius Vanderbilt, *New York Post*, 31 August 1943, cited in 'Scrapbook, 1943' SWP, Box: 249, Scrapbook, 1943.

⁸⁷ "Cholly Knickerbocker Observers", SWP, Box: 249, Scrapbook, 1943.

The Final Curtain: Welles' Lavender Legacy

The conspiracy that removed Welles from office ended with Welles' resignation, but the rumour mill that had been its *modus operandi* had considerably greater longevity. After a brief period of popularity as a public intellectual, Welles' downward spiral accelerated in the final years of the 1940s, spurred by personal misfortune and the virulent reappearance in Washington political circles of the rumours that had led to his resignation. However, unlike in 1943 Welles had no political cover or friends in powerful places to defend him against the attacks.

As the 1940s progressed attitudes toward sexuality and masculinity in the United States began to shift. Following a decade of economic uncertainty and political instability in which men in particular found their status challenged and undermined by broader forces, Americans' views about sexuality and masculinity started to ossify. As historian Douglas Charles put it:

"If during the 1930s gays were regarded as threats to home, family, and society at large amid the Great Depression and advent of the New Deal, that perceived threat was refocused and magnified during the 1940s and wartime. Gays were no longer perceived as simply a criminal or societal threat but now a national security threat, and concerns mounted that enemies of the United States were working to disrupt the country from within."⁸⁸

Previously accepted, or at least tolerated, transgressions of norms of gender and sexuality were now placed under intense scrutiny. Even the smallest hint of sexual abnormality became suspect.⁸⁹

By the late 1940s political winds had changed and the political context in which Welles operated became considerably more hostile to him personally as well as to what he represented. As a prominent former member of the Roosevelt

⁸⁸ Charles, *Hoover's War on Gays*, 36.

⁸⁹ Evidence of this change in attitudes can be found even in the investigations of the Bankhead Train incident. When questioned as to why he had turned down Welles' proposition for sex, one Pullman porter allegedly replied, "You have to work three years to become a carpenter or a bricklayer but it takes only one suck to make a cock-sucker." Testimony of John S. Kissock, Memorandum for the Director, 23 January 1941, NARA II, RG 65, Box 24, Folder: Wells, Sumner (deceased) [1 of 2].

administration and the State Department, and as a figure whose reputation had been tarnished by accusations of sexual impropriety, Welles engendered enormous suspicion. In an atmosphere in which even a hint of abnormality was interpreted as subversion, Welles became a large and conspicuous target. The combination of these suspicions and political discourses pushed Welles out of the public sphere completely and rendered him a virtual pariah in Washington D.C. for the rest of his life.

The first major episode occurred in December of 1948, when Welles nearly died of exposure after collapsing in a field near his house. Welles was seriously injured, losing several toes and fingers to frostbite, and spent several months recuperating. The event was widely reported and covered by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, among others. The *Post* devoted two pages to describing Welles' ordeal, the circumstances of his collapse, and the final years of his service in the Department before his resignation.⁹⁰

The coverage was notable for its attention to detail as well as a subtext of intrigue and ambiguity. All the papers that covered the event published multiple, often conflicting explanations of what had transpired. The *New York Times* reported that "there were indications that [Welles] ... had had a heart attack."⁹¹ The *Washington Post* also speculated about a heart attack, but paid more attention to Welles' suffering from insomnia and his habit of taking "customary nocturnal walks."⁹² The *Post* further added that Welles was conspicuously far from his home when the accident occurred, publishing a helpful, albeit crude, drawing of the area to illustrate.⁹³

Many outlets speculated about a political motive to Welles' accident. Drew Pearson, Welles' friend and a syndicated columnist, dubbed the episode "Hull's

⁹⁰ 'Sumner Welles Found Unconscious In Field; Toes, Fingers Frozen', *Washington Post*, 27 December 1948. Cited in FDRL, FDR Memorial Foundation, Series I, Box 27: IV.A.4. – Welles, Sumner to IV.A.6. – Yalta Conference, Folder: IV.A.4 – Welles, Sumner.

⁹¹ 'Welles, Stricken, Lies in Field of Hours in Icy Weather' by Jay Waltz, 27 December 1948, *The New York Times*.

⁹² 'Sumner Welles Found Unconscious In Field; Toes, Fingers Frozen', *Washington Post*, 27 December 1948. Cited in FDRL, FDR Memorial Foundation, Series I, Box 27: IV.A.4. – Welles, Sumner to IV.A.6. – Yalta Conference, Folder: IV.A.4 – Welles, Sumner.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

'Revenge,'" noting that Welles had had "a bottle of sleeping pills in his pocket" at the time of the accident.⁹⁴ All the major papers mentioned the suicide of Lawrence Duggan, one of Welles' closest allies in the State Department, which had occurred only a week before, although no explicit connection was made between the two events at the time. However, a little under a year later the *Chicago Tribune* tied Welles' accident to Duggan's suicide as well as the deaths of Harry Dexter White and Walter Marvin Smith and the disappearance of Noel Field – all prominent figures in the trial of Alger Hiss, at which Welles testified as an expert witness.⁹⁵ Reading between the lines, it was clear that there were doubts as to the veracity of Welles' account of the evening, and although it could not be printed, there was something suspicious about the whole affair.

Less reputable news outlets seeking to discredit the New Deal by *ad hominem* attacks on its proponents explored more bluntly what those suspicions were at the time and in years after. Unburdened by journalistic integrity, several tabloid publications depicted Welles' accident as a homosexual tryst gone awry.⁹⁶ One account purported that Welles "almost died of exposure when a Negro farm hand, jealous because of his attention to another, slugged him."⁹⁷ Another salacious report, published several years later, blamed Welles' accident his being "in search of forbidden satisfaction".⁹⁸ Unlike the reporting of the accident at the time, these accounts were graphic and unrestrained in their descriptions of Welles as a homosexual. It was part of a trend that would see Welles being invoked by authors as an example of the infiltration of the State Department by "powerful homosexual diplomats."⁹⁹

⁹⁴ The Washington Merry-Go-Round, 'Welles' Mishap Hull's 'Revenge' by Drew Pearson, *Washington Post*, 1 January 1949. Cited in FDRL, FDR Memorial Foundation, Series I, Box 27: IV.A.4. – Welles, Sumner to IV.A.6. – Yalta Conference, Folder: IV.A.4 – Welles, Sumner.

⁹⁵ 'Strange Deaths Weave Pattern in Hiss Spy Case' by Walter Trohan, *Chicago Tribune*, 13 December 1949.

⁹⁶ Though there is no evidence to indicate these outlets were aware of the fact, just under two years earlier the FBI received information during a "routine investigation at the State Department" that Welles had attempted to proposition a soldier who was based near his Oxon Hill, Maryland home. Memorandum from Guy Hottel to the Director, 3 February 1947, FBI Subject File: Sumner Welles.

⁹⁷ Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer. *Washington Confidential*. (New York: Crown Publishers, 1951), 97

⁹⁸ 'We Accuse Sumner Welles', p.63, *Confidential Magazine*, Vol. 4, No. 2, May 1956

⁹⁹ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 67.

Welles was prominently featured, though not by name, in the book length exposé *Washington Confidential* in 1950 as a “high State Department official [who] was a notorious homo.”¹⁰⁰ *Washington Confidential* was the bestselling book in a series published by the muckraking journalists Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer detailing lurid accounts of the underworlds of New York City, Chicago, and Washington D.C.¹⁰¹ They described Washington D.C. as “the dizziest – and this will amaze you, as it did us, the dirtiest – community in America.”¹⁰² The city was “a cesspool of drunkenness, debauchery, whoring, homosexuality, municipal corruption and public apathy, protected crime under criminal protection, hoodlumism, racketeering, pandering and plundering, among anomalous situations found nowhere else on earth.”¹⁰³ They impressively catalogued the queer geography of D.C. before turning their attention to Welles. Lait and Mortimer accurately recounted the Bankhead Train incident in detail as well as the successful suppression of information about it by FDR. Even though it had been ten years since the incident took place and seven years since Welles’ resignation, information about the Bankhead Train incident was still widely disseminated and had now passed into the realm of popular lore. Welles’ reputation was taking on mythical proportions.

The re-emergence of rumours about Welles’ sexuality coincided with the advent of widespread fear among politicians in Washington D.C. about homosexuals in government. It was spurred on by sensational reports about high-ranking government employees – notably Alger Hiss and Klaus Fuchs - passing sensitive documents to the Soviets, and a desire by newly empowered congressional Republicans to embarrass the Democrats and President Truman. A wide ranging investigation of ‘subversion’ in the U.S. government began in 1947 as fears about sexual nonconformity fused with anxieties about “fortifying the American

¹⁰⁰ Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer, *Washington Confidential*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 1950, 1951), 97.

¹⁰¹ <http://www.librarything.com/bookaward/New+York+Times+bestseller>, Accessed 28 August 2014.

¹⁰² Lait and Mortimer, *Washington Confidential*, ix.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

‘character’” to uphold their new role as the “torchbearers for Western civilization.”¹⁰⁴ Among the targets for this crusade were members of the State Department who were alleged to be pro-Soviet or otherwise possessed unsavoury characteristics.

As the investigation into ‘disloyalty’ in the State Department metastasized into a full-blown witch-hunt, Welles was indirectly fingered as the originator and cause of the “‘rotteness.’”¹⁰⁵ Welles’ scandal was remembered widely enough to be invoked by columnists and congressional investigators as they attempted to cast aspersions on existing State Department employees. “Blame is on the permission of one man to rig a whole hierarchy of misfits in the State Department’,” alleged columnist Robert Ruark, while another columnist wrote of “‘an old family friend of Roosevelt’s’” who was to blame for the recent problems.¹⁰⁶ Welles’ persona was invoked as the acme of the stereotypical ‘subversive’ character that was presently denoted as suspicious: an elite, East Coast, wealthy aristocrat, willing to negotiate (with the Soviets) rather than take a hard line.¹⁰⁷ Lingering memories about Welles may also have spurred a major alteration of the U.S. Constitution. According to one account, during the drafting of the twenty-fifth amendment, the decision to place the Secretary of State further down the list of presidential succession was taken in part out of after-the-fact resentment about how close Welles had been to president Roosevelt, and how his elevation to Secretary of State would have put him second in line under the previous system.¹⁰⁸ Thus, the legacy of Welles’ scandal had lasting impacts on the political discourse in the United States, specifically around the subjects of sexuality, loyalty, and the State Department.

In 1956 came a bizarre codicil to the ongoing saga of Welles’ sexuality as a matter of public consumption. Eight years after his accident and thirteen years after his resignation, Welles was featured on the front page of a salacious political tabloid,

¹⁰⁴ Naoko Shibusawa, “The Lavender Scare and Empire: Rethinking Cold War Antigay Politics,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 36, No. 4, (September 2012), 751.

¹⁰⁵ David. K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 67, quoting Robert C. Ruark, *Washington Daily News*, March 23 and 23, 1950.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 67, quoting Westbrook Pegler, *Washington-Times Herald*, March 26, 1950.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁰⁸ Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, 392-3.

Confidential. Entitled “We Accuse Sumner Welles” the article described how Welles was “a man who would now be classified as a security risk, came to dominating [sic] American foreign policy.”¹⁰⁹ Though inconsistent with details, the article was the most direct connection ever made between Welles and the Lavender Scare. It explicitly cited Welles as the first instance of queer people as security threats infiltrating the State Department. Furthermore, the article was an implicit sign of the political potency of such accusations, coming as it did during a presidential election year when a former ally of Welles, Adlai Stevenson, was on the Democratic ticket.

However, by the time of Dwight Eisenhower’s re-election campaign Welles was already a bygone figure. The feverish atmosphere of the Lavender Scare had ruined Welles’ public reputation all over again, only more completely and with more lasting effects. Welles lost his contract broadcasting for the *Herald Tribune*. His publisher refused to accept any more manuscripts from him and his speaking schedule was reduced to a few intermittent appearances at Zionist organizations. Despite the passage of time since his removal from public office, Welles could not escape the legacy of the scandal that forced his resignation. Rumours about Welles’ sexuality dogged him for the rest of his life and took their toll on his public standing as well as his physical and mental health. His body failing him, Welles retired permanently to private life, spending his last years in obscurity until his death in 1961.

Conclusion:

Welles tendered his resignation to Roosevelt on 16 August 1943. He thanked Roosevelt for his patronage and, notably, for the “friendship and kindness you showed me in our last talk.”¹¹⁰ Roosevelt had little option but to accept Welles’ resignation, in light of the ultimatum issued by Hull and the political reality of the situation. It was a stunning turnaround for Welles and marked a sudden and definitive end to his career in public service.

¹⁰⁹ ‘We Accuse Sumner Welles’, p.14, *Confidential Magazine*, Vol. 4, No. 2, May 1956.

¹¹⁰ Letter, Welles to FDR, 16 August 1943, SWP, Box: 152, Folder: 4.

However, while the crescendo of events that led to Welles' resignation stemmed from an extraordinary sequence of improbable events, the circumstances surrounding it were not altogether surprising. Throughout his career Welles attracted attention, some of it positive but much of it negative, about his sexuality. From explicit incidents of sexual indiscretion such as his first divorce, to subtler but no less persistent commentary on his manner of dress, speech, comportment, attitude, and professional demeanour, discourses about sexuality pervaded Welles' career. Long before stories of the Bankhead Train incident became semi-public knowledge, colleagues and enemies of Welles connected criticisms of Welles to his sexuality, infusing Welles' actions with a subtext of sexual non-conformity. Remarkably, Welles internalized these discourses about sexuality and deployed them to his advantage. This strategy shaped how he interacted with allies and adversaries in the department. It garnered him the attention, admiration, as well as the enmity of many of his colleagues and it would have a profound effect on his career, ultimately leading to its end.

The saga of Welles' sexuality intersected with some of the most significant aspects of American politics during this time. Roosevelt's efforts to protect Welles by burying his scandal showed the extent and the limitations of his political influence, notwithstanding their close bond and Roosevelt's sympathy for Welles' situation. The dynamics of Roosevelt's hold over Washington were also evident, as Welles' increasing vulnerability to attack came as a result of Roosevelt's declining capabilities, both political and physical. Welles' scandal reopened the harsh divisions in the State Department that had been fomented over a decade. In his single-minded effort to destroy Welles, Bill Bullitt gave testament to the level of enmity Welles could engender in those whom he had outwitted or overruled in his quest for power. Bullitt and Hull's efforts to undermine Welles slowly through back channels revealed another little-understood aspect of wartime Washington: the power of informal networks, particularly those of spouses, was real and widely felt.

The Bankhead Train incident was a flashpoint in Welles' career and the catalyst for the much wider persecution of queer people by the federal government

during the Lavender Scare.¹¹¹ With Welles' departure, the State Department lost one of its most prominent and erudite members. The policies Welles stood for – broadly internationalist idealism, hemispheric solidarity, and cooperation with the Soviets – went into eclipse. The impact on Roosevelt himself was profound as well. Roosevelt lost the only member of the State Department he truly liked or trusted. Without Welles' counsel, Roosevelt's execution of foreign affairs became even more single-handed, a workload which he was unable to maintain as his health deteriorated. Welles' departure also foreshadowed a substantial shift in attitudes toward the State Department and the influence of men like Welles in it. Within a few years, as foreign policy setbacks mounted and World War turned to Cold War, the State Department became the focus of an intense campaign to root out suspected 'deviants' be they ideological or moral. Welles' scandal had laid the groundwork for this purge and Welles himself unwittingly provided the straw man for it.

¹¹¹ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 65-7.

Chapter Seven:
Fading Luminary: Welles' Post-Resignation Career

In 1947 journalist John Franklin Carter published, under the pseudonym Jay Franklin, a book with the alliterative title *The Catoclin Conversation*.¹ It imagined a deep and meandering conversation between Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Ernst Hanfstaengl, a German *émigré* who worked as an intelligence agent for the Allies during World War Two.² The fictional conversation explored topics ranging from American war aims to German national psychology. The book was written as a cheeky repartee between the participants that bore only passing resemblance to the figures themselves or any conversations they ever had. Nevertheless, it was popular. The recounting of recent world events struck a chord with an American public still trying to figure out the ramifications of their wartime experiences and what kind of world they now inhabited.

The book's success and whatever air of legitimacy it possessed were due at least in part to the forward written by former Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles. Four years after his resignation Welles was a prominent public intellectual. His broadly internationalist and avowedly Rooseveltian take on inter-American cooperation, US-Soviet relations, the United Nations Organization (U.N.O.), and the creation of a Jewish national homeland was in high demand. His own bibliography included four books, *The Time for Decision*, *Where Are We Heading?*, *World of the Four Freedoms*, *An Intelligent American's Guide to the Peace*, and a fifth, *We Need Not Fail*, was about to be completed. Welles' books sold well, with *The Time for Decision* reaching the top place on the *New York Times* bestseller list.³ Additionally, since his resignation Welles had delivered dozens of lectures, radio addresses, and speeches on a variety of foreign policy topics. *The Catoclin Conversation*, though technically fiction, fit nicely into the niche Welles had carved out for himself: an ardent

¹ Jay Franklin, *The Catoclin Conversation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947).

² Steven Casey, "Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ernst 'Putzi' Hanfstaengl and the 'S-Project', June 1942-1944," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 35, No. 3, July (2000), 339.

³ 'Book awards: New York Times bestseller'.

<http://www.librarything.com/bookaward/New+York+Times+bestseller>. Accessed 24 August 2014.

internationalist, still closely associated with the policies and ethos of Franklin Roosevelt, expounding on “the probable nature of ... post-war relations.”⁴

However, within another few years Welles’ reputation would again be in tatters and the views he espoused on American foreign policy increasingly eclipsed by the rising tensions of the Cold War. This transition reflected a profound shift in Americans’ attitudes toward their foreign relations. It signalled the end of a brief period in American history where an unprecedentedly wide variety of options for how to conduct the nation’s foreign policy were considered.⁵ Welles’ marginalization was both indicative of and fuelled by a reactionary trend that indicted liberals, queer people, and anyone associated with the Roosevelt administration for alleged weakness, disloyalty, and subversion. As he stood at the nexus of those identities, Welles came in for particularly vehement abuse. The consequences for Welles’ career at the time, and for the evolution of American political and diplomatic history, were significant.

Nevertheless, before he faded entirely from the public spotlight, Welles made a significant contribution to the political discourse in the United States over the shape and trajectory of postwar U.S. foreign policy. His observations and arguments provided a uniquely well-informed glimpse into the tumultuous challenges that the U.S. faced as the country transitioned from World War to Cold War. Welles’ attitudes reflected the changing circumstances of the time as well as the long-held principles that had informed his actions while he was still in public service. His observations and recommendations revealed a great deal about his own thinking as well as that of those around him, particularly Franklin Roosevelt, whose death in April 1945 left many unanswered questions about U.S. foreign policy intentions. Before a second round of public humiliation pushed him permanently into private life, Welles outlined a view of the postwar world that was in some ways similar to yet nonetheless distinct from the policies pursued by U.S. government. As a result, Welles’ works comprised a notably comprehensive catalogue of points of

⁴ Franklin, *The Catoclin Conversation*, xiii.

⁵ Frank Costigliola. *Roosevelt's Lost Alliances: How Personal Politics Helped Start the Cold War* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2012), 421.

comparison and contrasts with extant policy decisions and an intriguing counterfactual take on U.S. foreign policy in the early Cold War era.

This chapter gives a detailed account of Welles' post-resignation professional activities. Returning to the themes addressed in Chapters Two, Three, Four, and Five, this chapter identifies how Welles' paternalistic idealism, aversion to militarism, and reliance on FDR influenced his political thinking and writing during these final years of his career. Specifically, this chapter examines the gradual marginalization of Welles and his ideas as the U.S. transitioned from World War to Cold War in the 1940s and 1950s. It shows Welles' declining influence on policymaking and public debate because of his removal from office and, after April 1945, the death of Franklin Roosevelt. It explores how Welles' paternalistically idealistic vision for Latin America and the U.N.O., which he had pursued doggedly throughout his career, was overshadowed by a more aggressive and confrontational approach to foreign affairs. Finally, this chapter shows how Welles' collaboration-focused, militarism-averse policymaking became increasingly anachronistic as relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated, and how Welles attempted to adapt to the massively transformed international situation around him.

Departing Giant: Welles' Resignation and American Public Opinion

Welles' post-resignation career is the least studied area of his professional and personal life. In the seven scholarly accounts of Welles' life and career, comprising hundreds of pages, a total of thirty-six pages are devoted to Welles' career after 1943, the longest being the penultimate chapter in Benjamin Welles' biography of his father. According to the younger Welles, this period in his father's life was "initially marked by success as an author, syndicated columnist, radio broadcaster and lecturer" when his "views were widely sought and his prestige was intact."⁶ Other authors largely concurred with this assessment. Irwin Gellman noted Welles' many radio broadcasts, his emergence as a strong proponent of the U.N.O.

⁶ Benjamin Welles. *Sumner Welles: FDR's Global Strategist: A Biography* (New York: MacMillan Press, 1997), 357.

and a Jewish national homeland.⁷ Christopher O'Sullivan underlined the importance of Welles' first book, *The Time For Decision*, as an example of his enduring popularity.⁸ All three authors also acknowledged the persistence of scandal, rumour, and character assassination in Welles' post-resignation life, in particular the duelling memoirs between Welles, Cordell Hull, and Bill Bullitt.⁹ However, as with many periods of Welles' career, over-emphasis of the personal tragedies that befell Welles have glossed over the persistence of key themes in Welles' professional thinking and praxis. In particular, Welles' post-resignation career highlighted the salience of those themes that had animated his entire career – paternalistic idealism, anti-militarism, and a reliance on FDR for political patronage.

In the aftermath of his resignation from the State Department, Welles entered a new phase of his professional life. Although he left under a cloud of suspicion and amid extensive gossip among the Washington D.C. political elite, Welles quickly found his footing in the immediate aftermath of his resignation. After a brief recuperation at his home in Bar Harbor, Maine, Welles stayed true to the workaholic tendencies he demonstrated while in the State Department, keeping up a dizzying pace of public engagements and radio broadcasts while publishing several books on international relations.

The continued verve in Welles' public appearances and profile during these years can be attributed, in part, to the outpouring of support he received. As soon as the news of his departure was announced, hundreds of letters from every corner of the country began to pour into the White House, praising Welles "the only real brains" in the State Department, demanding his reinstatement, and castigating President Roosevelt for allowing Welles to resign.¹⁰ Welles drew support from a wide array of sources: doctors and lawyers, farmers and labourers, Democrats and Republicans, ordinary Americans and prominent officials. The letters in support of Welles outweighed the negative responses twenty to one and were matched by an

⁷ Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, 389-91.

⁸ Christopher D. O'Sullivan, *Sumner Welles: Postwar Planning and the Quest for a New World Order 1937-1943* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 228.

⁹ Welles, 367-9, Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, 391-4, O'Sullivan, 229-32.

¹⁰ Mr. and Mrs. L.F. Norris to Welles, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library (FDRL), Sumner Welles Papers (SWP), Box: 95, Folder: 2.

overwhelming chorus of praise for Welles among the country's editorial pages, even among those supportive of Hull.¹¹

Many saw Welles' dismissal as a victory for conservatives, "southern reactionaries," and for Cordell Hull's "elderly and petty meddling."¹² Echoing the media coverage of Welles' resignation, particularly editorials in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, concerned citizens speculated about a conspiracy to silence liberal voices in the administration, citing the recent confrontations between the president and prominent liberals like Henry Wallace and Milo Perkins.¹³ Some letters even included suggestions for Welles to pursue political office, by returning as Secretary of State or through a run for congress, specifically as Senator for Maryland.¹⁴ The support was undoubtedly a welcome boost to Welles' bruised ego during this difficult adjustment.

Evident in the letters supporting Welles, and even in some of those opposing him, was the degree to which Welles and, more importantly, his ideals commanded respect among the U.S. public. The breadth and depth of support for Welles expressed in his fan mail reflected the high stature Welles had in the public eye at the time, as well as the popularity of his foreign policy beliefs among a broad swath of Americans. Besides praising him for his work ethic and patriotism, those supporting Welles singled him out for embodying the ideals of the Atlantic Charter and the Good Neighbor Policy. There was a widespread feeling of respect and admiration for the former Under Secretary of State. Welles' supporters praised his abilities as an individual but placed specific emphasis on the causes that he championed, in particular the creation of a postwar world organization. In general,

¹¹ FDRL, President's Official File (OF), Box: 16 OF Department of State, OF Resignation of Sumner Welles (Pro); 'Mr. Hull Under Fire', *The Wall Street Journal*, 31 August 1943; 'Keep Welles, Mr. President!', *New York P.M.*, 26 August 1943; 'Why Was Sumner Welles Fired?', *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 30 August 1943; 'Sumner Welles', *The New York Times*, 27 September 1943. All sourced in SWP, Box 249: Scrapbook, 1943.

¹² H.A. Overstreet to Franklin Roosevelt, 26 August 1943, FDRL, OF, Box: 16, Folder: OF 20 Resignation of Sumner Welles (Con) "O"; Mrs. A.C. Cartwright to Franklin Roosevelt, 27 August 1943, FDRL, OF, Box: 16, Folder: OF 20 Resignation of Sumner Welles (Con) "C".

¹³ Mrs. Alice Hawthorne to Franklin Roosevelt, 7 September 1943, FDRL, OF, Box: 16, Folder: OF 20, Resignation of Sumner Welles (Con) "H"; Bryan Marin to Franklin Roosevelt, 29 August 1943, FDRL, OF, Box: 16, Folder: OF 20, Resignation of Sumner Welles (Con) "M".

¹⁴ Jerome Robinson to Welles 27 August 1943, SWP, Box: 95, Folder 5.

Welles embodied much of the wartime optimism among some in the U.S. public toward cooperation with the Soviet Union and the creation of a more peaceful world at the war's end. The outrage over Welles' dismissal, and the outpouring of support for him, tapped into a small but growing constituency that wanted to see the foreign policies of the United States redirected towards a more internationalist view. For one prominent advocate of this point of view, Clark Eichelberger, Welles' resignation was particularly disappointing. "[T]he worst news coming out of Washington for the internationalists," historian Andrew Johnstone wrote of Eichelberger's outlook at this time, "was the resignation of Sumner Welles;" as "one of the most eloquent and committed internationalists in the State Department" his departure was "a great loss to the movement."¹⁵

Perhaps because he perceived the significance of his departure to the cause of the internationalists, Welles spent much of his post-resignation career promoting and promulgating the internationalist views for which he was famous. Particularly in the first two years after his resignation, Welles was in high demand. He gave an average of one or two major speeches each month in 1944 and 1945, typically to prominent social clubs on the east coast and in the Midwest, and occasionally to universities and civic associations. Beginning in 1946 he delivered weekly radio addresses for the *Harold Tribune* as well as occasional speeches on the Blue Network, and WJW Enterprises. On top of this, Welles managed to publish several monographs on world affairs, including his best selling quasi-memoir *The Time for Decision*, which *Time* magazine called "a sprightly prose" that "plant[ed] himself flat-footedly on the issues which he holds to be important."¹⁶ Welles also published two collections of speeches, and edited an encyclopedic almanac cataloguing every country in the world and its postwar status entitled *An Intelligent American's Guide to the Peace*.

¹⁵ Andrew Johnstone, *Dilemmas of Internationalism: The American Association for the United Nations and US Foreign Policy, 1941-1948* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 74.

¹⁶ 'Books: The Welles Plan', *Time*, 24 July 1944.

Such opinions about Welles and U.S. foreign policy in general were only one voice among many in the final months of World War Two.¹⁷ But the outpouring of support for Welles upon his resignation was a clear sign of the receptiveness of the U.S. public to ideas about internationalism, cooperation with the Soviet Union, and other policies that Welles had become emblematic of. It revealed the readiness among a surprisingly broad cross section of Americans for a dramatic reorientation of their country's relationship with the outside world, particularly in comparison to the isolationist sentiments of the preceding decade. It also indicated the U.S. public's expectations about what kind of peace settlement would be reached upon the conclusion of hostilities. Besides being a supporter of the wartime alliance, Welles had been the preeminent advocate of a postwar settlement that would embody the ideals spelled out in the Atlantic Charter, the 'Four Freedoms' speech, and elsewhere. Welles' departure was one of the first signals that the rosy optimism of the wartime alliance might not long endure after the cessation of hostilities. Moreover, it indicated that the postwar world might, despite the best of intentions, not correspond to the idealistic hopes that had launched the wartime effort in the first place.

Ever thy Good Neighbor: Welles on Inter-American Policy After 1943

Although he touched on a wide variety of topics in his post-resignation writing and speeches, there were several themes in Welles' writings that reoccurred persistently. Three subjects in particular – negotiations over the postwar settlement, inter-American cooperation, and relations with the Soviet Union – dominated Welles' commentary. He touched on all three topics in his first public address following his resignation, delivered on 16 October 1943. To an audience at the Foreign Policy Association of New York City Welles called for “the British, Soviet,

¹⁷ See Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 162-210; for broader context on the breadth of opinion in the United States about foreign policy during the closing months of World War II; See also: Wilson D. Miscamble, *From Roosevelt to Truman: Potsdam, Hiroshima, and the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Patrick J. Hearden, *Architects of Globalism: Building a New World Order During World War II* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2002).

Chinese, and United States governments [to] arrive jointly at a clear-cut and specific agreement in the near future upon certain basic principles ... within the framework of the Atlantic Charter."¹⁸ Such an agreement would entail, "the formation of an Executive Council composed of representatives of the United Nations, which should remain in permanent session, with power to resolve such political or other questions as may be referred to it by the United Nations."¹⁹ Commensurate with that, Welles recommended "we must imperatively strive to secure ... that full measure of understanding with the Russian people and their government."²⁰ Finally, Welles insisted, "it is likewise indispensable that if we are to achieve our own security every nation of the Western Hemisphere must also obtain the same ample measure of assurance as ourselves in the world of the future."²¹ On this point, he added, "I am a convinced believer in the efficacy and in the need for the permanent continuance of the existing inter-American regional system which has been brought into being by the free will of the twenty-one sovereign American Republics."²²

Welles' opinions and criticisms of Latin American policy reflected two aspects of his post-resignation career: the persistence of his paternalistic idealism about that critical region and the frustration he felt now that he was no longer part of making U.S. policy toward it. Welles' speeches about Latin America took on a conspicuously egocentric and melodramatic tone. At every opportunity, Welles exalted the inter-American system that he had set up during the 1930s as "by far the most highly perfected and most soundly conceived regional system which has existed in modern times."²³ Although not crediting himself by name for its success, Welles proclaimed that that inter-American system had kept the Western Hemisphere safe during the escalating crises in Europe during the late 1930s and had created a consensus ideal of "a democratic form of government ... will guarantee to [the countries of Latin America] precisely the same individual liberties as those

¹⁸ 'Address by the Honorable Sumner Welles at the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Luncheon of the F.P.A', 16 October 1943; SWP, Box: 196, Folder: 4.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ 'Speech at the New School for Social Research', 29 May 1944; SWP, Box: 196, Folder: 8.

which we today enjoy here in the United States."²⁴ "As we all know," Welles crowed about the inter-American system, "it had the added advantage of being a system which worked."²⁵ Welles' praise for the inter-American system bordered on the histrionic. In a speech delivered in 1946, Welles claimed that by 1943 "every inter-American controversy, as well as every cause for controversy, had either been solved, or was in process of peaceful solution."²⁶

At the root of such rhetoric was Welles' intense frustration with the direction being taken by his successors in the State Department with regards to Latin American diplomacy. When Welles left the State Department in 1943 Latin American affairs were in a delicate, but tenable situation. Every country except Argentina had declared war or broken off diplomatic relations with Germany.²⁷ Welles' last minute compromise at the Rio de Janeiro conference in January 1942 had preserved inter-American cooperation and helped ensure that local conflicts between the American Republics were settled by negotiation, or at least put on the back burner.

However, within a few months of Welles' resignation tensions among the countries of the Western Hemisphere and with the United States began to grow. A military coup in Argentina in early 1944 brought to power a pro-fascist president whose renewed avowal of neutrality was taken by the State Department as a virtual declaration of allegiance with the Axis.²⁸ Tensions mounted further when the United States instituted a series of economic sanctions and trade restrictions on Argentina and unsuccessfully attempted to get the British to do the same.²⁹ The State Department also rebuffed Argentina's attempts to have the Governing Board of the Pan-American Union call for "an inter-American meeting in order to consider

²⁴ 'Speech at Lafayette College, Easton, PA', Speech, 24 June 1944, SWP, Box: 196, Folder: 9.

²⁵ 'Address at Annual Dinner of the Americas Foundation', 12 October 1944, SWP, Box: 196, Folder 11.

²⁶ 'Address to the Pan American Association', May 24, 1946, SWP, Box: 198, Folder: 4.

²⁷ Gaddis Smith, *American Diplomacy During the Second World War: 1941-1945* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1966), 29-30.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁹ Randall Bennett Woods, *The Roosevelt Foreign-Policy Establishment and the "Good Neighbor": The United and Argentina 1941-1945* (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas), 144-150; Arthur P. Whitaker, *The United States and Argentina* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 130.

Argentina's situation in relation to the rest of the hemisphere" in October 1944.³⁰ The State Department's justification for this refusal was tied to its desire not to upset the upcoming United Nations Conference of International Organization, but it was also an attempt to keep Argentina diplomatically isolated. For his part, Welles attempted to push back against the worsening situation by "presid[ing] over a secret meeting of Latin American officials at his home in Bar Harbor, Maine" in September 1944 to discuss "the need for an inter-American conference on postwar problems and on the state of Argentine-American relations."³¹ Sadly for Welles, his criticisms and appeals fell on deaf ears. The idealism that Welles had brought to U.S.-Latin American relations through the inter-American system was quickly dissipating.

The death of Franklin Roosevelt on 12 April 1945 created further distance between Welles and the policymaking world inside the State Department. Despite the extent and virulence of the rumour campaign that had forced him to resign, Welles continued to harbour hope that he might be reinstated into the State Department at some later date and had carried on occasional correspondence with Roosevelt.³² But with Franklin Roosevelt's death, Welles' only advocate and conduit to power was eliminated. Compounding the difficulty was Welles' distant relationship with the incoming president, Harry Truman. Welles and Truman were acquainted but seemed to share a mutually low opinion of each other. Writing of Truman in 1947, Welles observed how FDR was "replaced by sincerity, a devoted patriotism, and the best of intentions, but these were backed, unfortunately, by neither knowledge, experience nor strength."³³ Truman's view of Welles was unclear, but like most prominent officials in Washington he was at least aware of the real circumstances behind Welles' resignation. Truman, in fact, was likely better informed about certain aspects of Welles' resignation, as it had been the Senate committee he chaired which had begun preparations to investigate Welles at the

³⁰ Woods, *The Roosevelt Foreign-Policy Establishment*, 160-1.

³¹ Woods, *The Roosevelt Foreign-Policy Establishment*, 159.

³² See: SWP, Box: 152, Folder: 5.

³³ Sumner Welles, *Where Are We Heading?* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1947), 287.

behest of Cordell Hull. Whatever the reason, Truman rebuffed any suggestion that Welles might return to government service.³⁴

Thus, within less than two years of his resignation two of the key pillars of Welles' policymaking had crumbled. Without the access to power that had facilitated his influence on policymaking, Welles' idealistic belief in maintaining harmony among the American Republics was superseded by the necessity of maintaining a united front against the Nazis, and with it a more confrontational attitude toward nations that did not immediately comply with U.S. wishes. Welles' overriding sense of duty and leadership toward the countries of the Western Hemisphere was eclipsed by an attitude that was more transactional and based on a narrower conception of U.S. interests in Latin America. Welles' frustration, then, was understandable, as his departure had occasioned a dramatic reorientation of U.S.-Latin American relations.

The World We Have Won: Welles on the United Nations Organization

A similar pattern of alienation was mirrored in the second major topic on which Welles focused during his post-resignation public speeches – the formation and constitution of the postwar world organization. As with his pronouncements on Latin America, Welles' speeches on the U.N.O. revealed his attempt to continue promulgating his particular paternalistically idealistic view of the world, while simultaneously acknowledging the need to adapt to the changing circumstances around him. Specifically, Welles sublimated his idealism into overtly patriotic appeals while also advocating for a pragmatic approach to the construction and constitution of a new postwar organization.

As a committed internationalist and an acolyte of Franklin Roosevelt, Welles had especially high hopes for the potential of a world organization. Because of his involvement in the early planning stages, and his idiosyncratic penchant for erecting

³⁴ Truman received several letters from constituents in 1945, 1946, 1948, and 1951 suggesting he employ Welles in some capacity. In every instance Truman's secretary politely thanked the writer for their letter and carefully sidestepped the question of Welles' suitability. See: Harry S. Truman Presidential Library (HSTL), Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, Box 1520: 652-661, Folder 661.

constitutional structures to solve international disputes, Welles paid particularly close attention to the preparations and negotiations that took place during 1944 and 1945 that eventually led to the creation of the U.N.O. Reflecting his longstanding policymaking preferences, Welles' initial pronouncements about the as-yet-uncreated world organization centred on a call for a regional structure. In his perfect world, Welles envisioned a United Nations that operated along broadly federalized lines, with a central executive presiding over a handful of semi-autonomous regional organizations. These organizations would in turn do the hard work of making peace and settling dispute.³⁵ These plans were essentially the same as those that he had devised in the Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Policy in the State Department, which he chaired from 1940-1943.

However, after his resignation Welles' ability to actually influence policy vanished and the structure of the U.N.O. took a very different form. Increasingly influenced by the thinking of figures like Cordell Hull, the proposed postwar international organization scrapped the idea of regional security organizations operating under the aegis of a new supranational organization championed by Welles.³⁶

Notwithstanding his criticisms about its structure, once the basic outline of the U.N.O. had been agreed to Welles became one of its most ardent advocates. Throughout the late 1940s Welles used his public appearances, addresses, and books to convince Americans to see the U.N.O. as a critical component of U.S. foreign policy, and warned against the pitfalls of withdrawing from international affairs as the country had done following World War One. Tellingly, Welles' adopted an idealistic rhetoric of consensus building, cooperation, and American patriotism to make the U.N.O. sound as inoffensive and unobjectionable as possible.

A key tactic in this regard was to portray the support for the world organization in the most ecumenical way possible. In many of Welles' speeches in 1944-1945, Welles explicitly staked out a position of self-proclaimed impartiality,

³⁵ "Address to be Delivered by Sumner Welles at the Meeting of the United Nations Council of Philadelphia" 4 October 1944, SWP, Box: 196, Folder 10.

³⁶ Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, vol. II (New York: MacMillan Company, 1948), 1647.

non-partisanship, and moderation. Recalling the Republican opposition to Wilson that doomed American entry in the League of Nations in 1919, Welles placed great emphasis on achieving bipartisan support. In a speech in May 1944, Welles cautioned that the "gravest mistake" the U.S. made after the previous war was "to permit the vital question of whether the United States, in its own interest, should participate in a practice form of international organization, to become a question of party politics."³⁷ Somewhat prematurely, Welles reported a few months later that, "[w]e should all of us feel satisfied that there is today every indication that these basic questions which involve the very life of our country will not be debated on any partisan grounds."³⁸

Welles deliberately appealed to the patriotic instincts of his listening audience. On several occasions, Welles invoked the debates over the U.S. Constitution at Philadelphia as an example of how the work being undertaken by the negotiators at Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco were merely the first step in a long, unfinished process to create a functioning world order. In an attempt to assuage doubts about the ability of the major powers to come to an agreement over the issue of equality of sovereignty among the various participants of a new world organization, Welles insisted that the problems being worked out were "intrinsically no more difficult than was the conciliation of similar problems which arose when the people of the United States determined to pass from the Articles of Confederation to our present constitutional form of government"³⁹

As the U.N.O. Charter began to take shape, and teething problems with the organization began to emerge, Welles blended his patriotism with pragmatic appeals. As the U.N.O. Conference approached in May 1945 Welles liberally invoked the memory and writings of the Founding Fathers and endorsed the concept of an "International Bill of Rights", which was part of the discussion during the early

³⁷ 'Copy of Scheduled Talk by Sumner Welles, Former Under-Secretary of State, on 'The Shaping of The Future', at a meeting sponsored by The New York Times, Thurs. May 18, 8:30 p.m. in The New York Times Hall, 240 West 44 St., with Mrs. Anne O'Hare McCormick, Chairman, 18 May 1944, SWP, Box: 196, Folder: 6.

³⁸ 'The Part the United States Can Play', 4 October 1944, SWP, Box: 196, Folder: 9.

³⁹ 'The American Opportunity', 24 June 1944, SWP, Box: 196, Folder: 9.

stages of U.N.O. Charter negotiations.⁴⁰ He praised a proposal by Roosevelt for incorporating the "self-same principles of democracy as those which we have proved to be both wise and feasible in our own national federation."⁴¹ Yet, at the same time, Welles insisted to his audience that it was "all the more imperative that the Charter can be thrown open to thorough-going revision in the not distant future."⁴²

These uncharacteristically broad appeals to patriotism underlined Welles' support for the concept of the U.N.O. and his conviction that it could only succeed if Americans learned to accept it as a legitimate tool of their country's foreign policy. It was also an indication of the degree to which Welles was subtly adapting to the changing circumstances around him. As it had in previous years, Welles' idealism was filtered through the political events of the time, in this case emerging as a more robustly patriotic yet pragmatic form of internationalism.

Welles' second tactic for pragmatically broadening support for the U.N.O. was to call out those opponents whose opinions Welles' found to be odious or counterproductive. Curiously, these opponents were not necessarily opponents of internationalism. One frequent target of Welles' criticism was the so-called world organization 'perfectionists'.⁴³ These 'perfectionists', in Welles' view:

"insist that it would be better for this nation not to enter any International Organization unless it is an Organization based upon their own projects. It is these individuals who may, I think, at this critical moment be most likely to prevent the achievement of that ultimate end which they themselves, in great part, sincerely desire to attain -- namely international cooperation"⁴⁴

⁴⁰ "Speech to the United Nations Council", 4 October 1944, SWP, Box: 196, Folder: 10.

⁴¹ "The American Opportunity", 24 June, 1944, SWP, Box: 196, Folder: 9.

⁴² "Text of Broadcast by Sumner Welles Over Station WMAL, Washington D.C., 10:00 P.M., Tuesday, May 15, 1945", SWP, Box: 200, Folder: 8.

⁴³ For a discussion of the varying opinions among those advocating for a world organization during this period see: Andrew Johnstone, "Americans Disunited: Americans United for World Organization and the Triumph of Internationalism" *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1, (February 2010), 1-4, 9; See also: Robert A. Divine, *Second Chance: The Triumph of Internationalism in America During World War II* (New York: Atheneum, 1967).

⁴⁴ "Book Author Lunch", 17 October 1944, SWP, Box: 196, Folder: 12.

However, in a telling act of balancing his attacks, Welles spent equal time attacking isolationists. "If this country of ours is to survive," Welles wrote in 1944 "[i]t must obliterate the international inferiority complex fatally harmful to the vital interests of America during the past quarter of a century and which stems from our deeply rooted and traditional isolationism."⁴⁵ He equated the hard line anti-Soviet voices, then gaining traction in the State Department and in the public sphere, as "old time isolationists." This reflected a broader re-evaluation of the international scene in the postwar world that Welles would develop over the coming years; by 1947 he would boldly declare: "isolation as we used to know it is dead."⁴⁶

Tellingly, Welles placed himself between these two extremes on the spectrum of U.S. foreign policy debate. He occupied a middle ground that, Welles believed, enjoyed widespread public support and would permit the U.S. to take a leading role in shaping the postwar world without prompting concerns about sacrificing American sovereignty to foreign powers. In this manner, Welles intuited the delicate balancing act that would be required to ensure public support for the U.N.O. Welles understood that in the tumultuous final months of World War Two, the U.S. public's view on international affairs was highly fragmented, with some Americans eagerly anticipating an American-led postwar world order, some others receptive to new ideas, and some fearfully recalcitrant to any further expansion of U.S. involvement abroad. This tension between overlapping and often conflicting constituencies required careful manipulation in order to protect the U.N.O. from succumbing to the same lack of American support that had doomed the League of Nations. Because of this single-minded, idealistic dedication to seeing a successful world organization created with broad American support, Welles adapted his beliefs to his audience, yet the underlying motivations remained consistent with his long-standing idealistic and paternalistic beliefs.

The Haunted Wood: Welles on the Soviet Union

⁴⁵ "Address Before Academy of Political Science", 15 November 1944, SWP, Box: 197, Folder: 2.

⁴⁶ "Prospects for a World Organization", 11 October 1944, SWP, Box: 201, Folder: 1; "Address by Sumner Welles at Dinner of the United Nations Association of Maryland", 5 December 1947, Box: 198, Folder: 12.

In addition to its function as a new instrument in U.S. foreign policy in the postwar world, Welles also saw the benefit of the U.N.O. in its ability to facilitate good relations between major powers in the postwar world. Like many observers at the time, Welles understood that of these relations, none was more important than the one between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. As with his pronouncements on the U.N.O., Welles' assessment of U.S.-Soviet relations reflected many of the broader trends in U.S. foreign policy making as well as public opinion. Welles began his post-resignation career as an ostensibly pro-Soviet voice. However, in short order Welles began to sour on the Soviet Union. Welles never fell clearly into the camp of either hardliners or Soviet apologists, once again staking out a middle ground that forecast a wider shift in American views of the Soviet Union. But Welles' tentative evolution underlined the fungibility of opinions about the Soviet Union among liberal, and especially Rooseveltian voices, at the time. It also gave clues as to how Welles tried to adapt himself and his beliefs to a rapidly changing world, one from which his style of diplomacy, with its preference for constitutional solutions over militaristic ones, was increasingly alienated.

Despite his travels, his profession, and his worldly demeanor, Welles was not well acquainted with Russia. He had never visited the country, even as Undersecretary of State, and was not close with anyone who had been there. Welles had the misfortune of having "poor relations with the State Department's Russia specialists."⁴⁷ Welles was responsible for eliminating Robert Kelley's post during a departmental reorganization in 1937.⁴⁸ The only other major State Department figure with experience in Russia was former American Ambassador to the Soviet Union William Bullitt, a man who also felt cheated out of a job by Welles. Conversely, according to Christopher O'Sullivan, Welles, alongside Eleanor Roosevelt and Henry Wallace, formed a bloc that believed "Washington should seek better relations with Moscow."⁴⁹ Alongside them, Welles also considered Laurence Duggan to be a close

⁴⁷ O'Sullivan, *Postwar Planning*, 181.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 182.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 181-182.

ally, whose views were consistently pro-Soviet; (Duggan, as it happened, was at that time acting as an agent for the Soviet government.)⁵⁰ Thus, Welles' perceptions of the Soviet Union, such as they were, were founded more vague impressions than firsthand experience while his second-hand information tended to come from voices that were more sympathetic than not to the regime.

Beginning in 1940, Welles became more closely involved with Soviet-American relations, bringing his views of the Soviet Union into the spotlight. When the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed Welles declared it "sheer expediency,"⁵¹ and warned that it had the potential to seriously undermine the security of the United States. Welles commented on the disillusionment many Americans felt about the "extraordinary volte face of the Communist Press" in the United States that resulted from the non-aggression pact.⁵² Welles also expressed outrage over Russia's annexation of the Baltic States and its invasion of Finland during the Winter War.⁵³

However, Welles' opinions on the Soviet Union changed as the exigencies of war forced the two countries closer together. After the fall of France in June 1940, Welles opened negotiations with Soviet Ambassador Oumansky "to offer subtle inducements to improve relations with the Russians and to explore further the relationship between Moscow and Berlin."⁵⁴ The negotiations, as it turned out, were unfruitful, but reflecting later, Welles believed the negotiations "offered the Soviet government concrete evidence of our willingness to give reasonable consideration to their point of view and to bring about an improvement in Soviet-American relations".⁵⁵ This was something of an understatement, as it was during these negotiations that Welles revealed to the Russian minister American intelligence about Hitler's planned invasion of Russia in June 1941.⁵⁶ In fact, the negotiations can

⁵⁰ John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr. *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 201.

⁵¹ Sumner Welles, *The Time for Decision*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), 169

⁵² *Ibid.*, 169.

⁵³ O'Sullivan, *Postwar Planning*, 182-183.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁵⁵ Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 170.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 170-1.

rightly be seen as an almost desperate attempt to engage with the Soviet government, whose friendship might one day be used to counter German power in Europe. Welles recognized the awesome power of the U.S.S.R. and its potential – indeed, necessity – to contribute to a stable world order; he was eager to court that potential at all costs. In that vein, he maintained the optimistic belief that relations with the Soviets would ‘soften’ their more repressive sensibilities, and so pursued negotiations in spite of repeated rebuffing.

Welles’ professional experience with Soviet-American relations, while no doubt informative for him, did not seem to provoke any newfound interest in the country or inspire a need to openly re-evaluate Soviet-American relations. He emerged with largely the same impressions he had going in, seeming to learn little that gave him any better insight into Soviet intentions or motivations. Welles was frustrated with Soviet intransigence, but still optimistic about future relations. Once he had left government employment, however, a more fully formed view of the Soviet Union began to emerge.

The crux of Welles’ renewed interest in the Soviet Union came over Soviet participation in the postwar world organization. Welles acknowledged that relations with the Soviets were critical to establishing long-term peace in the postwar world. He espoused a view common at the time, and to which he attributed to Franklin Roosevelt, that:

“if during the early years of the postwar period any open conflict with the Soviet Union could be prevented, if the United Nations was given the opportunity to prove its efficacy, and if peace -- even a precarious peace -- could thereby be maintained, living standards in the Soviet Union would rapidly rise, her commercial ties with the outside world would certainly become more important to her, the present walls of isolation which surround Russia would gradually be broken down, cultural and intellectual ties with the West would steadily grow, and the Russian people themselves would eventually recognize, through increasing freedom of information, what the real intentions of the American people are, that these intentions hold no shadow of a threat to the welfare of the Russian people, and that the true

interests of Russia could best be served by international cooperation ... time would be on the side of world peace”⁵⁷

More pragmatically, Welles admitted that the Soviet Union would be militarily dominant in large sections of Europe at the end of hostilities and saw a framework for ongoing negotiation and consultation as the best mechanism to ensure peace and enhance the likelihood of a postwar settlement favourable to the U.S.

That pragmatic optimism coloured most of Welles’ initial post-resignation writings about U.S.-Soviet relations. For most of 1944 and 1945 Welles consistently portrayed the Soviet Union as friendly, noble, and trustworthy. In the Soviet Union, Welles wrote, “the Soviet government today is guided by the popular will” and its “people ... are satisfied that their government is devoted to the popular interest.”⁵⁸ Welles was confident that “in the immediate future the foreign policy of the Soviet government will continue to represent what the people want.”⁵⁹ However, as a keen observer of international relations, Welles was quick to develop concern over perceived changes in Soviet behaviour. Welles became concerned over the failure of the Soviets to adhere to the commitments they made at Yalta and their ignoring of the authority of the U.N.O., exemplified in incidents such as the dispute over oil concessions in Iran and, more prominently, in supporting Communist insurgents in Greece and Turkey. The increasing tensions that resulted from these incidents challenged Welles’ idealistic outlook and complicated his view of the postwar world built on cooperation rather than renewed militarism. Welles felt these actions violated the letter of the agreements as well as the spirit of documents such as the Atlantic Charter, which had set out principles for international behaviour, yet Soviet disregard of these principles dampened, but did not extinguish, Welles’ enthusiasm. “I regard it as a delusion ...” Welles wrote in 1946:

⁵⁷ “American Foreign Policy in the Postwar World”, 16 May 1947, SWP, Box: 198, Folder 10: Phillips Academy, May 16, 1947.

⁵⁸ Welles, *The Time for Decision*, 309.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

“... that democracy and communism cannot simultaneously exist in the same world, provided the advocates of the communist form of government are willing to confine the enforcement of their own political beliefs within their own sovereign jurisdiction, and do not undertake to force their political system upon peoples who are unwilling to accept them.”⁶⁰

This relatively benign castigation of the Soviets reflected a reticence to confront too openly the country Welles still believed could be a peaceful partner. Even as he moved toward a more hardnosed posture *vis à vis* the Soviet Union, Welles still retained some of the optimism of his earlier years keeping open the possibility of avoiding military conflict. As late as 1947 Welles credited the leaders of the Soviet Union with “success in forming and in controlling public opinion within Russia,” to which he attributed the inability of the Soviet leaders to comprehend the United States’ foreign policy making process.⁶¹ Despite the nation’s evident flaws Welles insisted, “Soviet Russia represents one of the greatest attempts to attain human betterment that the world has ever known.”⁶² He praised the Soviet government for giving “health, education, economic security, and the hope of happiness to one hundred and eighty millions of human beings who had previously known only misery.”⁶³ Anticipating post-revisionist historians by several decades, Welles explained in his 1947 book *Where Are We Heading?*:

“Because of the present intransigence of the Soviet Union, it has become the tendency in the Western world to place the entire blame for the tragic collapse in peacemaking at the door of the Soviet government. It would seem to me far more realistic to admit that the blame for the present disaster should be shared by the government of the United States.”⁶⁴

Welles maintained his optimism about the possibilities for world peace, even as his optimism about the Soviet Union faded. In this way, Welles attempted to adapt his longstanding aversion to militarism to the rapidly changing global

⁶⁰ “The English Speaking Democracies”, 21 October 1946, quoted in Sumner Welles, *The Search for World Peace* (Winnipeg: Stovel Company Limited, 1946), 32.

⁶¹ Welles, *Where Are We Heading?*, 315.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 313.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

circumstances. Welles' shift in attitude anticipated the formation of the Cold War consensus on foreign policy that dominated American politics for much of the following four decades. Although still firmly on the left side of the political spectrum, Welles delineated the contours of what liberal attitudes about the Cold War mindset would become: hoping for cooperation with the Soviets, and willing to work for it, but ultimately unwilling to tolerate continued abuse and deceit from the Soviet government in foreign affairs.

Welles' assessment of the early Cold War period was not only a proxy for broader public attitudes, it was also informed by his peculiar professional and political circumstances. These were, in turn, a manifestation of the impact of the legacy of Franklin Roosevelt on Welles, and on U.S. foreign policy making in general. As someone who had been part of the Roosevelt administration, Welles was privy to many of the high level negotiations with the Soviets during World War Two. He was aware of the capacity of the Soviets for cooperation and was intimately familiar with Roosevelt's opinion that the Soviet Union could be tamed through persistent negotiation. Consequently, when the Soviet Union reneged on various agreements and became implacable, he was more willing than most other liberals to voice his criticism. Conversely, his exile from the State Department, and eventual relegation to the sidelines of Democratic Party politics, rendered him an outsider to the Truman administration, and more willing to calling out the administration for what he perceived to be its mistakes.

However, as tensions over postwar settlements increased Welles slowly lost all hope of a peaceful coexistence between the two great superpowers and his longstanding hope for a less belligerent approach to U.S. foreign relations became increasingly anachronistic. In 1947 Welles predicted dire consequences from an agreement to allow Soviet access to the Italian port of Trieste.⁶⁵ He predicted that a war between the Soviets and the United States would "destroy the remnants of our present civilization."⁶⁶ Presciently, he outlined how he believed Soviet and American relations would unfold in the absence of any improvement. "The result" he wrote

⁶⁵ Welles, *Where Are We Heading?*, 123.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 312.

“will be two worlds rather than one ... compelled to engage in an armament race, especially in the fields of aviation, of atomic weapons, and of scientific and biological warfare ... The United States will head a bloc of Western powers ... opposed by an ever more powerfully armed Soviet Union surrounded by her satellites.”⁶⁷

The optimism of his former years was now absent, replaced by palpable anxiety about the course of international affairs. By 1951, with the advent of the Korean War, Welles’ attitudes had hardened still more as his optimism over continued great power cooperation at the U.N.O. vanished completely. Welles now conceived of Soviet-American relations as “the great contest that is being waged between the free nations who would preserve human liberty and the Communist tyranny that would destroy every vestige of human liberty.”⁶⁸ In a drastic change of course from previous pronouncements, Welles ominously cautioned against Americans being “timid, hesitant, and confused, weakened by divided counsels, and unwilling to persevere in their search for a free and peaceful world”.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, Welles’ found himself increasingly alienated from domestic supporters of cooperation with the Soviet Union. He scorned Henry Wallace’s run for the Presidency as a radical, defamatory extension of FDR’s New Deal vision. In the weeks leading up to the 1948 election, Welles wrote to a friend: “the non-communist voter who votes for Henry Wallace must be a low grade moron.”⁷⁰

By the 1950s so much had changed for Welles in the time since his resignation that he could be forgiven for looking back wistfully on what had gone wrong. In his final book Welles reflected on his time in and out of office while giving prescriptions for the United States’ seemingly endless diplomatic problems. Speculating on what might have been he briefly set out “to try to imagine what Franklin Roosevelt would have done if he had lived out his final term as

⁶⁷ Ibid., 312.

⁶⁸ Sumner Welles, *Seven Decisions that Shaped History* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951), 231.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Welles to Pearson, 14 August 1948, SWP, Box: 147, Folder: 2. Welles made no public endorsement in the 1948 election. He expressed his belief that governor Thomas Dewey would defeat Harry Truman, though this was hardly a minority opinion. Welles lamented the return of the right wing that Dewey’s victory would inaugurate, but considered him a superior candidate to Truman particularly on foreign affairs.

President.”⁷¹ In Welles’ opinion, the first mistake that Roosevelt would have avoided was the withdrawal of American forces from Eastern Europe, and “fail[ing] to insure unimpeded access to Berlin.”⁷² Welles implied that Roosevelt would have used this leverage to obtain a lasting postwar accord from the Soviets at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, which Truman failed to do.⁷³ Additionally, Welles believed Roosevelt would have avoided the mistake of “permit[ing] his representative in China to pave the way for a repetition of the same tactics [used in Eastern Europe]” that allowed a Communist takeover of that country.⁷⁴ Notably absent from Welles’ retrospective prescriptions is any mention of the U.N.O. With the benefit of hindsight, Welles could see no active role for the institution that he had so firmly believed in, and had done so much to construct. Faced with the reality of Soviet expansionism and unfaithfulness, Welles’ prescription was a tacit repudiation of his long-held belief that a world organization would resolve outstanding disputes between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.

The omission was a testament to how prominently the idea of the U.N.O. had figured in Welles’ thinking prior to 1945. Whereas in 1943 Welles saw an international federated super-state as the best way to ensure self-determination in Eastern Europe, in 1951 his prescription was the presence of American troops. The “influence of the Western powers” over the Soviets was now dependent on reversing the “headlong demobilization of the American armies overseas”, rather than by negotiated settlement.⁷⁵ Welles’ aversion to militarism, which had inspired his policymaking for decades and had rendered him one of the premier voices for internationalism, cooperation, and world peace during his time in office, was cast off amid the tumultuous reordering of the world into a bipolar Cold War confrontation.

Conclusion:

⁷¹ Welles, *Seven Decisions*, 202.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Welles, *Seven Decisions*, 202.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

The diminishing returns of Welles' post-resignation career made clear several key themes in Welles' career and the evolving American political landscape in the late 1940s. Welles' gradual fading into obscurity revealed the extent to which he had relied upon the patronage of Franklin Roosevelt and the trappings of that the office for his power and influence. Without the status accorded by his title, Welles was unable to reach an influential audience or generate support for his ideas. Without Franklin Roosevelt alive to advocate for the ideals they shared, Welles was increasingly relegated to the margins of political discussion.

Yet, before his decline was complete, Welles illuminated many of the key themes that had guided his career and his belief system. Once he was free to speak as he wished, Welles articulated a unique and compelling vision for the United States in the postwar world. His initial fervent belief in the U.N.O. underlined his commitment to the idealism that had inspired Roosevelt, and Wilson before him, to refashion the world according to (supposedly universal) American principles of democracy, self-determination, and political freedom. His curious blend of Wilsonian idealism and paternalistic concern for Latin American concerns offered a counterpoint to the hardening attitudes of emergent cold warriors who were increasingly fixated on U.S.-Soviet relations. On those relations, Welles' transition from a sympathetic proponent of cooperation to a quasi-post-revisionist placed him within the broad spectrum of the Cold War consensus, although with greater discomfiture with the militarism that came with this increasingly confrontational stance. Where Welles ended up, *vis à vis* his contemporaries indicated the direction that he and Roosevelt envisioned while they were still working together and gave some clues as to how Roosevelt might have acted had he lived longer.

However, by the time Welles had completed his transition there were few Americans interested in listening to him. Welles' decline in power coincided with the rise of a cacophony of opinion-makers in newspapers and journals around the country fixated more and more on the emerging confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. As tensions with the Soviets rose Welles' idealistic rhetoric carried less and less salience in public debate. Soon, the entire edifice of Welles' foreign policy thinking and the assumptions underlying it came under attack. Rising

paranoia and suspicion of infiltration cast a pall over Welles and the legacy of his time in the State Department. As the U.S. shifted from World War to Cold War, Welles found himself increasingly relegated to the fringes of political debate and, eventually, shunned from public life.

Conclusion:

In an editorial published shortly after his death on 24 September 1961 the *New York Times* wrote that Sumner Welles “was in the best sense a diplomat of the old school, when diplomacy was personal and professional ... There is no fear that he will be forgotten, for he made his mark on the history of the twentieth century.”¹ Though generous, the *Times*’ estimation was only half true at best. Welles had made his mark on the twentieth century but he did so as much in spite of his diplomatic accomplishments as because of them. The *Times* tacitly acknowledged as much in the two-page obituary of Welles it published the same day, which recounted at length Welles’ bitter feud with Cordell Hull, his many marriages, his cutthroat competition for the job of Undersecretary of State in 1937, and his nearly fatal 1948 accident alongside his career highlights.² To the extent that Welles was not forgotten over the ensuing decades, it was the rumours about his personality and sexuality as much as the notoriety of his professional conduct that echoed down the ages.

This thesis has argued that sexuality affected Welles’ career beyond merely helping to bring about its end. Through exploration of Welles’ formative years this thesis has shown how Welles’ sexuality shaped his personality and his interactions with the wider world. This had specific and significant implications for Welles’ emergent worldview and the processes by which he acquired and exercised political power later in life. Demonstrating this link is more than an act of historical rehabilitation of a figure too long castigated because of his sexuality. It provides a fresh interpretation and explanation of the motivations and attitudes of a man whose personal influence on U.S. diplomacy and politics for over a quarter of a century was substantial, the legacies of which can be felt to this day.

The world Welles entered at birth was profoundly suspicious and contemptuous of same-sex sexual attraction and non-normative masculinity. Besides the legal prohibition and cultural taboo against homosexuality, Welles was confronted from an early age with a hierarchy of masculine identities in which

¹ ‘Sumner Welles’, 25 September 1961, *New York Times*, p.32.

² ‘Sumner Welles, 69, Diplomat, Is Dead’, 25 September 1961, *New York Times*, p.1.

aggression and competition occupied the highest rank. These values were inculcated into him at a series of elite educational institutions, most prominently Groton Preparatory School. Groton's heady mix of *noblesse oblige*, muscular Christianity, and American nationalism presented Welles with clear guidelines for comportment and ironclad values to live by as well as infusing him with a haughty sense of certitude.

However, it also presented him with a dilemma, for Welles was incapable of living up to the exacting standards of the Grotonian ideal. Alienated by his sexuality, his physical frailty, frequent absences, and interest in less stereotypically robust pursuits like art and lachrymose poetics, Welles passed through Groton on the margins of that school's social and cultural life. Such conspicuous marginalization at such an early age complicated Welles' efforts to fashion himself in the mould of his peers and their idols such as Theodore Roosevelt. Welles' response was twofold. On a personal level he developed an austere exterior persona to insulate himself from alienation and victimization by his peers, the consequence of which was a professional persona for which he would become notorious and which conveniently placed him above reproach (until 1943). Secondly, Welles developed a distinctive outlook by embracing the Grotonian ethos of *noblesse oblige* while downplaying its jingoistic and pugilistic aspects. That synthesis was the germ that eventually grew into the paternalistic idealism and aversion to militarism that would come to define Welles' diplomatic worldview and policymaking for the next half century.

The influence of Groton and the broader aristocratic world around it on Welles, as well as the influence of the alienation Welles experienced on account of his sexuality while inhabiting that world, had another major influence on the course of Welles' career: it occasioned his friendship with Franklin Roosevelt. Welles and Roosevelt shared a specific set of experiences that helped them forge an unusually close bond. Each was raised in small and cloistered aristocratic world with strict rules of comportment that few outsiders understood. As well, while inhabiting this rarefied world each in his own way traversed a treacherous path along the margins of hegemonic masculinity. For Welles, it was his sexuality; for Roosevelt, his disability. By coincidence, major steps in these respective journeys occurred only a

few years apart; Roosevelt's onset of polio and ensuing paralysis in 1921 came just three years before President Calvin Coolidge used Welles' divorce from his first wife to force Welles from office, prematurely ending his diplomatic career.

These twin tragedies produced circumstances in which the two men found opportunity and sympathy in collaborating to bring about one another's political revival. Welles and Roosevelt filled a niche in one another's professional lives, the absence of which would have dramatically transformed their respective fortunes. Their compatibility came from their complementarity rather than their similarity. In Welles' "solemn demeanor" and methodical intellect Roosevelt found a useful counterpoint to his own irreverence and effervescent creativity.³ Conversely, Roosevelt's charisma and perspicacity supplemented Welles' tendencies toward rigidity and aloofness. Together they made a formidable team, greater than the sum of their parts.

Welles' relationship with FDR, along with his emergent aversion to militarism and his paternalistic idealism, comprise three distinct identifiable examples where sexuality can be said to have had a direct influence on his professional life. Combined with the scandal that emerged following his solicitation of sex on the Bankhead Train in September 1940, and the legacy it beget over the ensuing years, sexuality clearly had a significant, enduring, and formational influence on Welles' career. More importantly, acknowledging the role sexuality played in forming Welles' worldview and establishing, and then destroying, his political power, is essential to understanding why Welles' career unfolded the way it did, the motivations behind his policymaking, and his role in the diplomatic and political history of the United States in the early and mid twentieth century.

Paternalistic Idealism:

Welles emerged out of his formative years with general attitudes about life and broad parameters of action that had been influenced by his sexuality and

³ Irwin Gellman, *Secret Affairs: Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 68-9.

experience on the margins of hegemonic masculinity. Groton had instilled Welles with a sense of *noblesse oblige* and a belief in the righteousness of American global leadership and civilization. However, Welles' confident outlook was tempered by pathos resulting from his marginalization on account of his sexuality; out of this dynamic emerged a desire to seek consensus rather than confrontation. This would eventually evolve into a worldview that sought to expand American power through the most beneficent means, employing idealistic and utopian rhetoric to gain appeal.

However, additional inputs were required before they galvanized into a coherent worldview. These inputs came into play during the first decade of his career as a diplomat after joining the State Department in 1915. Provided with a front row seat to global affairs as the United States avoided, entered, and emerged victorious from World War One, Welles witnessed his country assume its place as a great power while simultaneously advocating transformational change to the global order under the auspices of President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. Welles embraced these changes eagerly. A belief in the beneficence and righteousness of American leadership, especially in Latin America, became a defining feature of Welles' worldview.

The manifestation of these beliefs was filtered through Welles' own underlying belief system and the idiosyncrasies of his situation at the time. Relocated by choice to Latin America, Welles interpreted Wilson's call for a world organization as an opportunity to activate the "almost dormant moral force which is contained in the political spirit of the American republics."⁴ For Welles, the Wilsonian call to action was an appealing one because it offered a less belligerent way to achieve the expansion of the civilizing leadership of the U.S., especially in Latin America. Although American involvement in the League of Nations was rejected, Welles preserved the spirit behind it and incorporated it into his later policymaking. His abortive attempts to play midwife to a union of Central American republics in 1919-1921, and his preference for establishing constitutional order as solutions to the political problems in the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and elsewhere

⁴ 'Welles Diary', 7 August 1919, SWP, Box: 167, Folder: 3.

were examples of the Wilsonian influence on Welles being filtered through his own experiences and attitudes. Besides illuminating the origin and formation of Welles' beliefs, observing the influence of Welles' paternalistic idealism in this way shows the mutability of Wilsonianism in its early years.

Welles articulated these views more clearly over time. This process began with Welles' brief collaboration with Charles Evans Hughes, who provided a professional exemplar and a rhetorical reservoir for Welles' own diplomacy. During the 1920s, under Hughes' guidance until 1924 but on his own thereafter, Welles' worldview began to crystallize. Beginning with his riposte to Samuel Inman in his 1924 *Atlantic Monthly* article 'Is America Imperialistic?' and continuing through his speeches and writings in the 1920s and 1930s, Welles articulated his view of U.S. foreign policy based around a paternalistic attitude toward Latin America and an idealistic belief in the beneficence of U.S. power.

Once returned to a policymaking role under Franklin Roosevelt after 1933, Welles' paternalistic attitudes toward Latin America assumed greater significance. In Cuba, where he was assigned to bring about the end to a political crisis, Welles' idealism begat a myopia about the depth of unrest on the island and a naivety about the solutions he proposed. Handpicking an unsuitable candidate to replace President Gerardo Machado for little reason besides his eminence, and then refusing to consider recognizing the government that overthrew him only three weeks later, Welles demonstrated how his paternalistic desire to do what he thought was best for the Cuban people could too easily manifest itself as patronizing elitism, with disastrous results for U.S.-Cuban relations.

Yet, despite the setback in Cuba there was an upside to the certitude of Welles' beliefs. Provided with a wider stage on which to act Welles' idealism took a form more in line with the beneficence of his intentions. From 1936 onwards Welles articulated a vision for inter-American cooperation more optimistic than any American in such a position had described before. It undergirded his efforts to expand U.S. influence in the region, but it also provided the foundation for the reciprocity and collaboration that would keep Latin America within the orbit of the Allies before and during World War Two. Whatever the Good Neighbor Policy did to

improve relations between the countries of Latin America and the U.S. was due in large part to the collaboration, respect, and goodwill upon which Welles based his policymaking.

Beyond Latin America, Welles' idealism gave definition to the plans he drew up for a world order after the conclusion of World War Two. Like his policies for various parts of Latin America during the 1920s and 1930s, Welles' plans for a postwar world were based on creating regional organizations, collaboration between smaller powers and larger ones, and high-minded proposals for U.S. stewardship across the globe. Welles' postwar plans synthesized his belief in the efficacy of U.S. leadership to bring about peace and advancement with nationalism as fervent as that of Theodore Roosevelt. The most curious manifestation of this synthesis came in the development of a notable strain of Anglophobia in Welles' diplomacy. Jealous of British prerogatives in Latin America and envious of their global hegemony, Welles developed a distinctively skeptical view toward British influence, particularly in the Western Hemisphere. This view complicated negotiations between himself and his British counterpart at the Argentina conference in August 1941, despite the spirit of cooperation and general accord between the two country's respective leaders at the time.

Sadly, Welles' idealism about the postwar world did not last. Once removed from the State Department his influence on Latin American policy and the creation of a world organization plummeted. Although he kept promulgating his views in books and radio broadcasts, his ideals seemed increasingly out of step with world as it stumbled from World War to Cold War.

Viewed through the lens of paternalistic idealism, Welles' policymaking for the postwar world and in Latin America takes on a new light. Welles was more than a pie-eyed idealist. His vision for a world order was based on firm convictions about U.S. power and its capacity to do good across the globe, as well as the inherent superiority of American civilization. The paternalism inherent in these views has been often mistaken as cynicism masquerading as goodwill; Christopher O'Sullivan wondered whether it was "an idealistic smokescreen" that "camouflage[d] his real

aims.”⁵ O’Sullivan’s metaphor captured the essence of Welles’ beliefs but missed the mark as to their origins and intentions. Rather than a smokescreen, Welles’ idealism was genuine, but ingrained in the fabric of that idealism was a paternalistic belief that Welles, and the United States, knew what was best for the world and, given the opportunity, had every right to take action to bring it about.

Anti-Militarism:

Regardless of the justifications for them, Welles’ policymaking throughout his career was based on a belief in the inherent value of multilateral institutions and collaborative approaches to harmonize diplomatic relations as opposed to more belligerent and militaristic strategies. The clues to this strand of Welles’ thinking were evident in his early life and career. Conspicuous in his isolation during youth on account of sexuality, Welles was suspicious of macho aggression. More inclined to artistic and academic pursuits, Welles eschewed the muscular Christianity of Groton Preparatory School and even pursued a vaguely bohemian lifestyle in the brief period between graduating from university and joining the State Department.⁶

Yet even after Welles’ life came into focus, the aversion to militarism remained. While stationed in Japan Welles found himself unimpressed with the increasingly militaristic rhetoric of the Japanese. Welles’ aversion to militarism was further augmented by his experiences dealing with the U.S. military in the Dominican Republic. Infuriated by the obstinacy and bullheadedness of U.S. military governor admiral Samuel Robison, Welles developed an abiding suspicion and skepticism of the capacity of military officials to create foreign policy or conduct diplomacy. This skepticism laid the foundation of a broader critique Welles would make in subsequent years about the inefficacy of U.S. policies in Latin America, based primarily on the overutilization of military power at the expense of respectful bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

⁵ Christopher D. O’Sullivan, *Sumner Welles: Postwar Planning and the Quest for a New World Order 1937-1943* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), xiv.

⁶ Benjamin Welles, *Sumner Welles: FDR’s Global Strategist* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 26-9.

In turn, the view of an U.S.-Latin American relationship devoid of military intervention that Welles developed in his early career would provide him with the tools he needed to help the U.S. defend its interests against foreign aggression later on. As the threat of Nazi infiltration and wartime disruption grew during the late 1930s Welles assembled the nations of Latin America into a cooperative system of overlapping protocols, directives, and procedures to help them, and the United States, avoid being drawn into unwanted aggression. At a series of conferences he attended himself or influenced from Washington, Welles constructed a prophylactic barrier that served the dual purpose of institutionalizing U.S. leadership in the hemisphere while protecting against fascist interlopers to the Americas. The collaborative element Welles brought to this effort was largely his own doing, but it fitted perfectly, as well as helped define, the cautious tiptoeing approach to wartime foreign policy that President Roosevelt adopted during the awkward years prior to U.S. entry into World War Two.

Outside of the Western Hemisphere, however, Welles' aversion to militarism encountered rougher seas. A passionate desire to seek a peaceful resolution to the growing belligerence in Europe and Asia during the 1930s, which was shared by a broad swath of Americans at the time, led Welles to entertain ideas with little chance of success. Using much of the same rhetoric he had applied with success in Latin America, Welles received a cool reception to his proposal of a peace conference on Armistice Day in 1937. Throughout the State Department and across the world Welles' optimistic hope for bringing about an "improved world psychology" was met with skepticism, if not outright derision.⁷

As war approached Welles grasped at ever fewer straws with increasingly improbable proposals for a peaceful settlement. Undoubtedly part of this impetus was a sensible desire to explore any potential option to avoid a war that nobody wanted to happen. But detectable in the pattern of Welles' behaviour was a repeated unwillingness to entertain militaristic options as part of his proposals. In this

⁷ Memorandum by the Undersecretary of State (Welles), 6 October 1937, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1937, Vol. I: General, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1954), 666.

respect, Simon Rofe's observation of "the absence from Welles' diplomatic toolbox of the ability to resort to the use of military force" was apt.⁸ In Welles' view, use of the military was simply not considered viable or legitimate in proper diplomatic relations, therefore he was incapable of drawing upon it as a means to achieve his ends. It is worth noting that in the sole exception to this rule – his request to Franklin Roosevelt in September 1933 for a military intervention in Cuba to restore Carlos de Céspedes to power – Welles' attempt to use military force was both disastrous and rejected outright, further underlining his lack of aptitude with military force.

Welles' aversion to militarism placed him in an awkward position once the U.S. became involved in global conflicts after 1941, first against the Axis and later against the Soviet Union. With the thrust of U.S. foreign relations shifting from diplomatic negotiations to military engagements, Welles along with the rest of the State Department took something of a back seat to events as they unfolded during the early years of the war. Because Welles was removed from office before its conclusion, he was no longer in a position to translate his views into policy. Nevertheless, as a political commentator in the postwar years Welles found himself marginalized as confrontation with the Soviets increased. Unwilling to let go of his optimistic hopes for a postwar world organized under American aegis, he insisted the U.S. and the Soviet Union could cooperate and that to the extent there was any disagreement, the causes were to be found on both sides. Yet even Welles was unable to maintain his optimism during the later 1940s, reluctantly acknowledging the need for military preparedness as the result of a succession of failed policies and lost opportunities following the death of Franklin Roosevelt.

Presidential Patronage:

That Welles focused on Roosevelt's death as the catalyst for the demise of peaceful cooperation in the postwar world held special significance, for it had been

⁸ J. Simon Rofe, *Franklin Roosevelt's Foreign Policy and the Welles Mission* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 17.

Roosevelt who had been the lynchpin of Welles' political career. Primed by their shared upbringing and respective crucibles in adulthood to appreciate one another's inner strength, Welles and Roosevelt operated together in a singular fashion. No other figure in Roosevelt's entourage resembled Welles with respect to the longevity of their partnership, the variety of their collaborations, or the unique properties of their personal connection. To say Welles was closer to Roosevelt than any other is inaccurate; to the extent that can be said of anyone, other examples such as Harry Hopkins are more convincing.

However, to say that any single individual was close to Roosevelt in the first place also mischaracterizes the dynamics at work. Throughout his life – as an only child, as a rising political star, as a man suddenly curtailed in his physical capabilities due to polio, and then as president – Roosevelt invariably assumed a position of supreme centrality in the universes within which he operated. Around him circled many people with varying degrees of proximity dependent on time, personality, circumstance, and political expediency. Welles was one of these satellites, but his orbit was an eccentric one. He crossed boundaries and violated valence circles in his quest for greater influence, accumulating power – and enemies – the closer to the centre he got.

With their political careers in disarray, Welles and Roosevelt collaborated together in the 1920s to make a mutual comeback. Here Welles' longstanding familiarity with Roosevelt and their shared experience of exile, due directly to matters of physicality and masculinity, occasioned the start of their partnership. Roosevelt relied on Welles' advice and counsel, mostly on foreign policy, but with a familiarity that indicated Welles occupied a unique, if not privileged, place in Roosevelt's entourage alongside members of the Brains Trust and long-time contacts like Louis Howe and William Bullitt. Once in office, the unique properties of Welles' position translated almost immediately into political competition, fomented by Welles' desire for promotion and Roosevelt's need to juggle multiple competing interests and parties. Foreshadowing the rest of Welles' time in office, his close relationship with Roosevelt gave him access to power over and above what he could have expected, but also left him exposed to jealous counterattack.

With respect to policymaking, Welles' relationship with Roosevelt produced mixed results inasmuch as there was policy success but at great political cost, mostly to Welles. In Cuba in 1933 Welles' close relationship with Roosevelt left him little option but to accept a position he did not want and little oversight to prevent him from making mistakes. The consequence of this informality was a disastrous situation in which Welles violated his principles and his instructions by making a request to Roosevelt for military intervention to restore the Céspedes regime. Wisely, Roosevelt denied Welles' request, though he did acquiesce later to a request from Welles to deny recognition to the government of Ramón Grau San Martín – a request Welles made by flying in person to Roosevelt's retreat in Warm Springs, Georgia. Ironically and paradoxically, Welles' rash behaviour ended up giving the Roosevelt administration an opportunity to demonstrate beyond a doubt that its pledge to no longer intervene militarily in Latin America would be kept.

Welles' reputation suffered temporarily but his bond with Roosevelt endured. The double-edged nature of their partnership so amply demonstrated in Cuba re-emerged nine years later, when Welles again appealed to Roosevelt for acquiescence on a policy decision at the Buenos Aires inter-American conference in January 1942. In this case Welles' opponent was Secretary of State Cordell Hull and the consequences far more damaging to Welles' career. In appealing to Roosevelt to let stand the last minute compromise he had forged at the conference, Welles demonstrated how the trust and personal connection he had with the President could have dramatic results for U.S. foreign policy. However, it was also the watershed for Hull's final push to purge Welles from the State Department on account of Welles' "disloyalty" to him.⁹

Hull's campaign against Welles was ultimately successful because he was able to knock out the central pillar of his political support: Franklin Roosevelt's patronage. With Roosevelt's continued willingness to protect and promote him, Welles was nearly invincible. Once that willingness was vanquished, however, Welles was helpless. Despite their personal fondness for one another, Roosevelt was

⁹ Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Vol. II*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton), 1230.

not able to overcome the political obstacles that had been built up in part by the favour he had shown Welles over the years. Once Roosevelt died, Welles was precluded forever from meaningful political influence and his career as a public intellectual withered soon after.

Sexuality:

Although the influence of sexuality on Welles' political career could be traced back to his earliest days, the flashpoint came at the end in the aftermath of his solicitation of sex on the Bankhead and Cleveland trains in 1940. The investigation of Welles that stemmed from the events of the night of 17-18 September 1940 revealed characteristics about Welles that put the questions about his sexuality in a clearer light. Familiar with the intricacies of cruising as well as the habits of gay men of this period, Welles' same-sex sexual object choice was evidently the manifestation of a lifetime of experience. Hardly the result of inebriation, exhaustion, weakness, or immorality, Welles' behaviour on the Bankhead and Cleveland trains was a genuine expression of a desire for intimacy from a man whose opportunities to seek out such intimacy were practically nonexistent, given his personal celebrity and general public disapproval of the time. Historians writing about this episode in Welles' life have generally portrayed it unsympathetically. Writing in a world in which same-sex relations are not criminalized, same-sex marriage is widely recognized, and opportunities for same-sex intimacy are no more than a smartphone application away, it can be tempting to castigate Welles for the apparent indiscretion of his propositioning. But in light of the broader societal context of the time, Welles' actions should more properly be seen as the act of a desperately lonely individual who took one of the only opportunities available to him to seek a brief moment of sexual intimacy.

Insofar as Welles' actions can be seen as a consequence of improvident inebriation, it is in the physical location and profession of his chosen objects of desire. Though Welles was likely not consciously aware of this, his choice of Pullman porters was an especially poor one. Trained to reject such advances, and to report

any such irregularities for fear of negative consequences, the Pullman porters Welles propositioned were perfectly positioned to preclude the possibility that Welles' advances would remain discrete. Taken together, Welles' familiarity with the customs of gay male subculture and the conspicuity of his behaviour to the highly trained staff of the Pullman porters on the Bankhead train all but ensured Welles' actions would not escape notice. These specific circumstances, beyond the mere fact of Welles' queer sexuality, brought the genesis of the report that would be used by Welles' political enemies to force him from office.

The manner in which that forced exile proceeded and its consequences, revealed the peculiar dynamics of the intersection of sex, power, and politics in Washington D.C. during this period. Welles' career was destroyed not by the publication of the F.B.I. investigation report, but by a complex web of rumour and innuendo that slowly metastasized into an irresistible political force. The growth of this rumour campaign could be witnessed in the retrospective diaries of those in the know as well as in Welles' own job performance; Welles' ability to remain at the centre of the political-diplomatic social nexus he had crafted for himself was destroyed by the rumour campaign, with his guest lists drying up almost to obscurity by July 1943.

Even Welles' resignation could not stop the scandal's growth. As years passed and Welles remained out of office, fevered accounts of what had happened in 1943 to remove Welles, and of the misfortunes that befell him thereafter, continued to surface. So deeply ingrained did Welles' scandal become in Washington that it emerged as a blueprint for paranoid conspiracies about subversive infiltration of the federal government during the Cold War. Though never acknowledged publicly, Welles himself became the archetype of the "cookie pushers in striped pants" whose presence supposedly threatened the integrity of the U.S. and its governmental institutions.¹⁰ At the core of these stereotypes and delusions was a not-so-subtle effort to posthumously discredit Franklin Roosevelt and his foreign policy; with

¹⁰ David. K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 65, 70, quoting Philip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers* (New York: Rinehart, 1942; reprint, New York: Pocket Books, 1960), 232-60.

Roosevelt dead after 1945 it was both impossible and unseemly to attack him directly. Welles provided a useful alternative.

Because of its tragedies and its ironies, it is tempting to draw comparisons between Welles' story and those of others who faced similar prejudices. An obvious analogue can be found in the case of British cryptologist Alan Turing. Like Welles, Turing was exceptionally gifted and indefatigably dedicated to his chosen profession.¹¹ Both men undertook significant tasks to help their respective countries face down the apocalyptic challenge of Nazi Germany and in so doing took some of the first trailblazing steps toward envisioning a world transformed by the very efforts they had made. Yet the most salient homology came from the shared, albeit separate, experience of seeing their genius and sacrifice disregarded because of their same-sex attraction.

But in many respects Welles' story is singular. He was a distinctly queer individual in his outlook, in his professional demeanour, and in the way he transgressed norms of gender whilst maintaining a fastidiously austere exterior. His sexuality was an integral part of his personality. Because of his chosen profession, that link was sublimated into foreign policy at critical moments of U.S. diplomatic history. Analyzing Welles' sexuality illuminates aspects of the complex phenomena that lie behind the creation of foreign policies in a specific period of American history while providing greater understanding about how sexuality, politics, and power intersect throughout American history. For that reason alone, never mind his enormous contributions to his country and his dedication to his job, we should remain grateful to Welles for having lived the life he did.

¹¹ See: Andrew Hodges, *Alan Turing: The Enigma* (London: Vintage, 1992).

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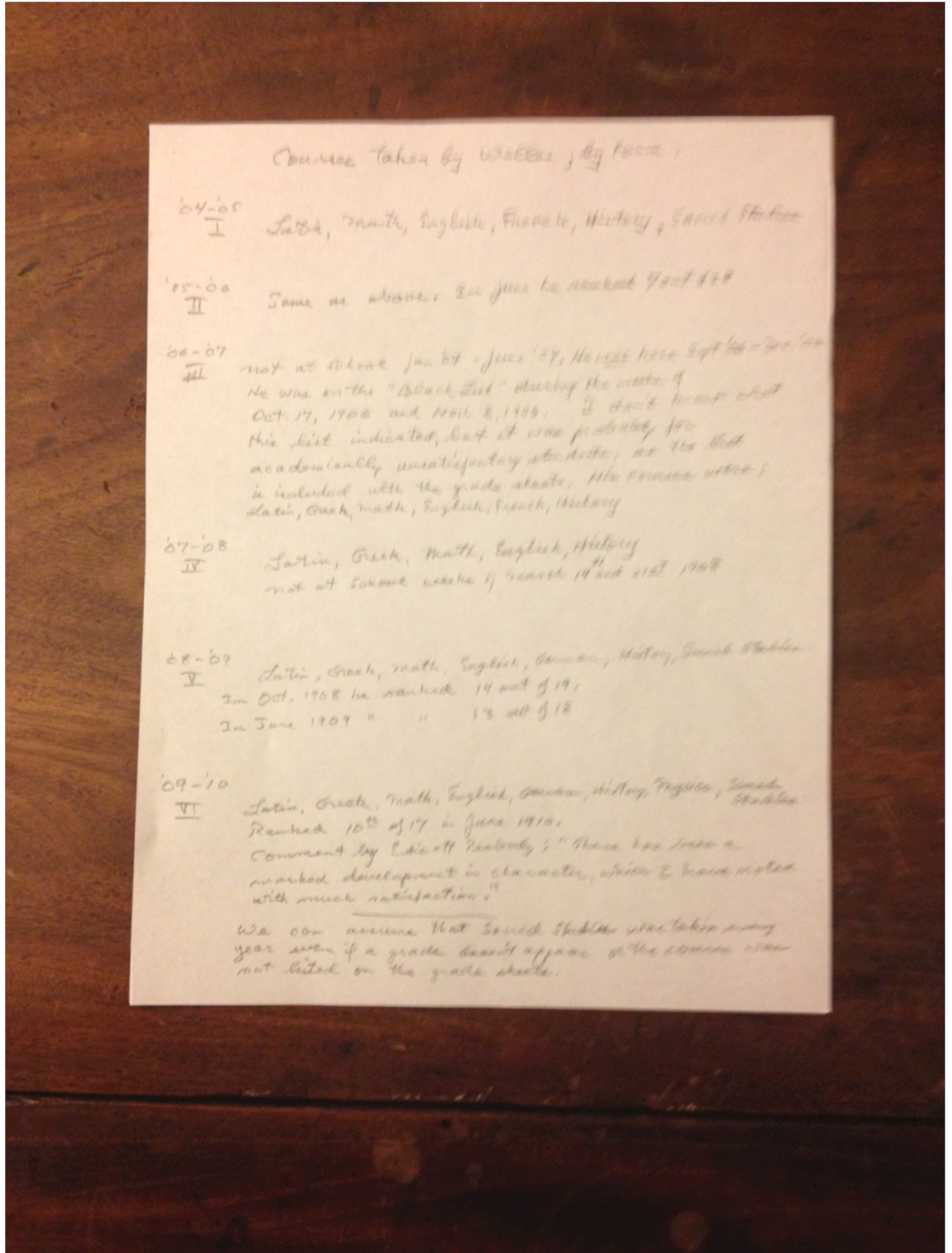
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Appendix:



Courses Taken by Wallace, by Term:

'04-'05
I Latin, Math, English, French, History, Sacred Studies

'05-'06
II Same as above. In June he ranked 7 out of 17

'06-'07
III not at school Jan 07 - June '07. He was here Sept 06 - Dec '06. He was on the "Black List" during the weeks of Oct. 17, 1906 and Nov. 8, 1906. I don't know what this list indicated, but it was probably for academically unsatisfactory students; as his list is included with the grade sheets. His courses were: Latin, Greek, Math, English, French, History

'07-'08
IV Latin, Greek, Math, English, History
not at school weeks of March 14 and 21st, 1908

'08-'09
V Latin, Greek, Math, English, German, History, Sacred Studies
In Oct. 1908 he ranked 14 out of 19,
In June 1909 " " 13 out of 18

'09-'10
VI Latin, Greek, Math, English, German, History, Physics, Sacred Studies
Ranked 10th of 17 in June 1910.
Comment by Edie H. Peabody: "There has been a marked development in character, which I have noted with much satisfaction."

We can assume that Sacred Studies was taken every year even if a grade doesn't appear on the course was not listed on the grade sheets.

June 1910 called: VI Form Year '09-10
10th out of 14 - "marked development in character"

Feb 1910 5th of 10 "dollar"

Dec 1909 14 of 18 "a little better"

Oct 1909 11 of 18 "going well"

Oct. 1904 I Form Year '04-'05

1st of 26

Febr. 1905

3 of 26

March 1905

4 of 27

II Form Year '08-'09

Oct. 1908

"working well"

May 1909

4 of 12

June 1909

13 of 18

Abstracts from correspondence by
father or mother when Welles was in
school:

Oct. 2, 1904: From father: Stanford White [distinguished
New York architect] says he uses the Cooper
Hewitt light "in his private office only" and
is pleased with it. In no way hurtful to the
eye (See enclosed photocopy. Note the
black edging of paper indicating mourning -
I don't know who had recently died.)

Sept. 29, 1905: Illegible (on the copy) note by Peabody
reads "Miss Burnett [nurse] Please give this
boy milk with an egg in it on Fridays at recess.
Please let me know if he does not come
for it. E.P."

Jan. 6, 1906 About Pink Eye.

May 10, 1906 About charges for typing lessons and
drawing lessons.

Sept. 3, 1906 Eye examination - This is the start of
his III Form year. He had to leave
at mid year.

Sept. 18, 1907 - Sumner returned to Groton "after
working over his health & his eyes for
nine months (!) We hope he is
strong enough to stand school life."

From the Grotomian, the School magazine:

Oct. 1909 : Wallace is a Chapel usher,
Wallace is football manager.

Jan. 1910 : Wallace is rowing #2 on the first crew (at
practice in the gym.)

March 1910 : Wallace is not mentioned as a member of
the crew

April 1910 : Again, not mentioned

Dear Chris Parker,

Here is a lot of stuff for you to digest!
Just ask me if you want help with anything.

I believe the Reading Prize was simply given to the boy who had read the most books in the year, from this I suppose only that Wallace liked to read, despite his eye problems.

I cannot find any references to his participation in drama, music or literary work. Of course everyone had to play some sort of athletic game in the fall and spring: Football, Baseball, Rowing, but unless one was on a "school" team he would never be mentioned or appear in a team photo. In the Winter Term no formal sports were required, though some kind of exercise had to be done.

In Wallace's day records were not kept as they have been since the 1920's, so the information I have gathered for you has come from various places rather than from a complete file on Wallace.

You will also note that except for the brief replies my wife consents to do for me by email, I must handwrite because I can never obligate to learn to type, much less operate a computer! Good luck with all I enclose, Douglas Brown

R.S.
I cannot tell what Wallace's father did for a living. Many things may be explained by Tom Wallace in his book about Sumner.

(Benjamin) Sumner Welles, Jr. '10

Died Sept. 24, 1961

{ Sons Arnold '36 d. 2002
Ben 134 d. 2002 }

Entered First Form Sept. 1904

"Away nearly all of III form year"

I 1904-'05

II 1905-'06

III 1906-'07

IV 1907-'08

V 1908-'09

VI 1909-'10

— away half the year because of eyes.