

# Woodrow Wilson and the German Colonies: Between liberal principles and bargaining chips

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*A case study of Wilson's policy on the German Colonies*



Figure 1: Burt Randolph Thomas, 'He was bound to get it wrong,' The Detroit News in Review of Reviews, Vol. 59, No. 6, 570.

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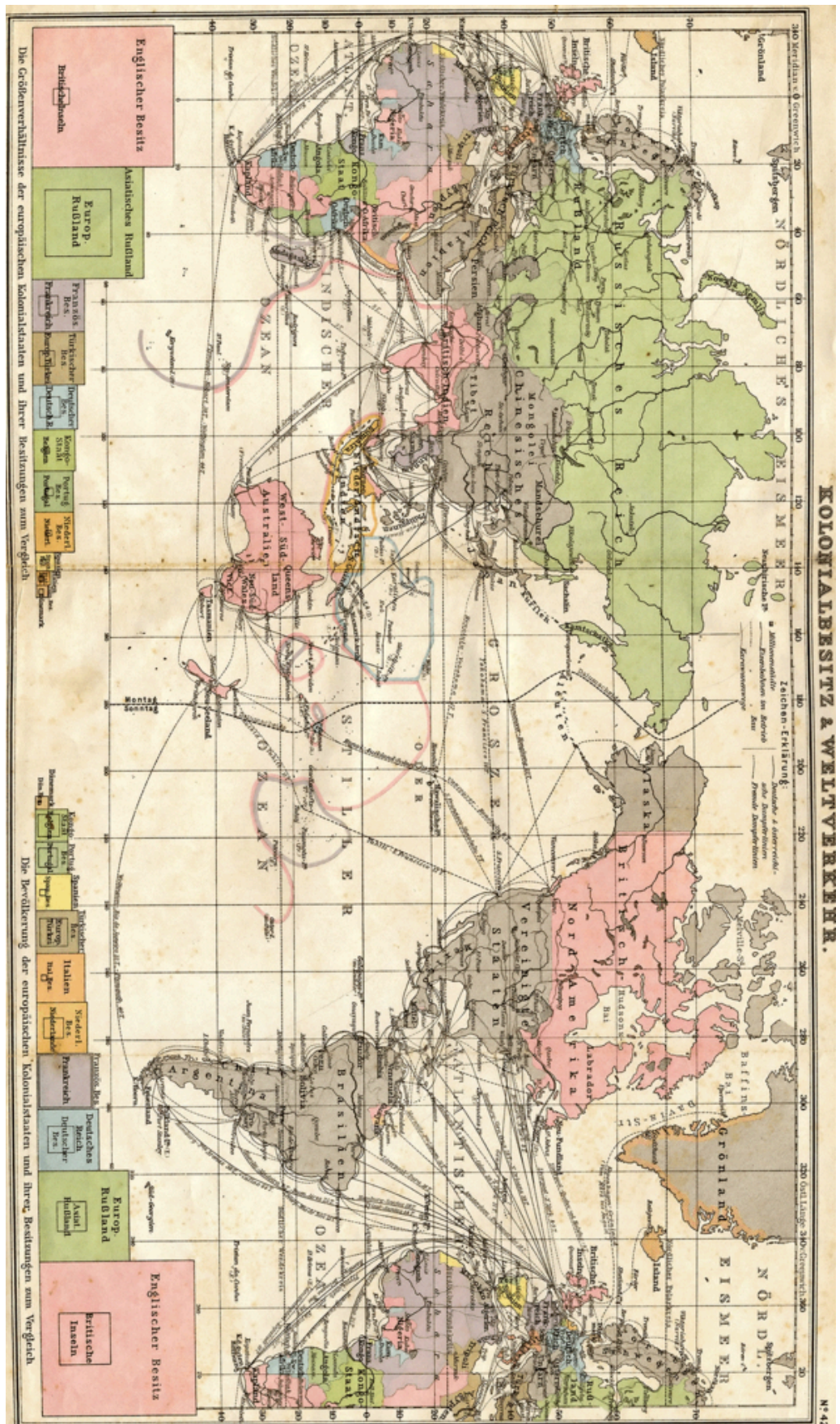


Figure 2: 'Kolonialbesitz & Weltverkehr Deutsches Reich, 1883-1920,' Bibliothek allgemeinen und praktischen Wissens für Militärärzte Band 1 (Berlin: Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong & Co 1905).

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## I: Introduction

Before the First World War, Europe was to a large extent ruled by empires. Europe counted 12 independent nations in 1914, but this number increased to 38 in 1919 as a consequence of the peace settlements after the First World War. The war destroyed the empires on the losing side, as the Russian, Austrian-Hungarian, Ottoman and German empires were dissolved.<sup>1</sup> The victors of war created peace treaties, which were signed with Germany, Austria and Bulgaria in 1919, and with Hungary and Turkey in 1920. Those peace treaties came to be known as the Versailles Treaty, although the Versailles Treaty was actually the treaty only signed by Germany. The peace treaties not only dealt with the question of war guilt and reparations, but also redrew the European political map, which consequently disrupted long-standing economic relations and created new ethnic divisions in Europe.

Many historians have seen this break-up of empires into nation-states as a consequence of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's ideas about national self-determination. The concept of self-determination was characterized by the principle that peoples could form their own state and choose their own government. Wilson introduced this idea in his Fourteen Points speech to U.S. Congress in January 1918. He saw the First World War as the consequence of the fact that Europe was not governed by people, but by power-hungry monarchs.<sup>2</sup> According to Wilson, empires were the antithesis of democracy; he argued that peoples had the right to govern themselves instead of being ruled by an emperor. He wanted to dissolve the European empires and replace them by states that were formed along national-cultural lines.<sup>3</sup>

Wilson's idea of self-determination was intended to reduce ethnic intermingling in Europe by creating states for ethnic groups. The peace settlements gave approximately sixty million people a state of their own, but left at least twenty-five million people in East and Central Europe living in minority groups. In fact, after the Great War, there were more people living in minority groups than before 1914.<sup>4</sup> Before the First World War, most ethnic groups were incorporated in multi-ethnic empires, such as Austria-Hungary. The rise of nationalism

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History. Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 369.

<sup>2</sup> Chris Thomas, "Fourteen Points," 1914-1918-online. *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, accessed November 23, [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/fourteen\\_points](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/fourteen_points).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (London: Michael Joseph and Pelham Books, 1994), 33

brought advocates of a truly national state of one people, one territory, one state.<sup>5</sup> However, the concept of self-determination did not solve ethnic problems; some of the successor states were no less multinational than their predecessors.<sup>6</sup> While Wilson's ideal had been to create more homogenous states, his idea, after many negotiations on the peace settlement, did not lead to the situation he had desired. There was a large gap between the concept of self-determination and the eventual outcome, which according to some historians was the result of European intervention during the conference. The peace settlement with Germany for instance included some very impactful articles on border realignments, which resulted in new states with German minorities. In some countries the (re)created ethnic divisions led to more conflicts, making ethnic rivalry endemic during the interwar period in many of the remapped countries.<sup>7</sup> This was due to the fact that the composition and power of ethnic groups had changed due to the creation of nation-states. According to the British historian Mark Mazower, this is one of the main reasons many people already doubted the idea of national self-determination and the creation of nations-states during the war.<sup>8</sup>

While several European empires dissolved, former German colonies and parts of the Ottoman empire were redistributed among the victors of war. Wilson's idea of self-determination was not extended to the peoples living in colonies. Some people under foreign rule had celebrated Wilson's worldview but were dissatisfied when the principle was only limited to the peoples in Europe. Critics pointed to the gap between talk of self-determination in Paris and the denial of political voice for autonomy in the European empires overseas. Political activists could have read into Wilsonianism a universal liberating agenda that Wilson never intended.<sup>9</sup>

As the historiography will demonstrate, there is a vivid debate about Woodrow Wilson's idea of self-determination and his foreign policy. One of the most interesting and most often highlighted discussions is on what Wilson aimed for with national self-determination. The concept of national self-determination played an important role throughout the twentieth century and is often linked to many problems that have occurred during that century. Within the field of International Relations, Wilson and his ideas are often

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<sup>5</sup> Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 367.

<sup>6</sup> Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, 33.

<sup>7</sup> Derek Aldcroft, *Studies in the Interwar European Economy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 41-42.

<sup>9</sup> Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 386.

identified as liberal.<sup>10</sup> Some scholars see Wilson as one of the founders of liberalism, like Kant and Smith.<sup>11</sup> However, historians have challenged this approach and some think that the U.S. President was more of a realist.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, it is relevant to study whether Wilson's ideas and applications of national self-determination were led by liberal principles, or if he was led by a more pragmatic approach. At the moment, the debate on this issue has moved to a new stage, in which scholars try to reconcile those different views.<sup>13</sup> Problematic is that those conclusions have been based mainly on European cases, without incorporating colonies and the applications of national self-determination in the mandate territories.

In fact, the former German colonies and the mandate territories are not represented very well in the historiography. There are many bookshelves filled with monographs on the Versailles Treaty and Woodrow Wilson, but the mandate system has never received that much attention, since most historians have regarded the treaty as a European or Western issue. As a result, most arguments in the debate are based on European cases. The analysis of the concept of self-determination with regard to the colonies might lead to different conclusions than the studies on European affairs. Moreover, the books or chapters that are written on Wilson and the mandate system seem to reiterate the same view. There does not seem to be an intense debate between the scholars on the mandate system. Only recently has historian Scot D. Bruce tried to alter the views on the philosophy and application of the mandates.<sup>14</sup>

Since so many scholars have discussed Wilson's ideas so extensively, it is hard to imagine that such a debate does not exist for the German colonies in particular. Especially realist historians have made little use of the case of the German colonies within the historiography on Wilson. The main goal of the thesis is to extend the realism versus liberalism debate in relation to the German colonies and their transformation into mandates. There are multiple reasons for this approach. First, whilst there are many studies on this debate, none

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Birdsall, *Versailles Twenty Year After* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941) and Thomas A. Bailey, *Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace* (New York: Macmillan, 1944).

<sup>11</sup> Torbjørn L. Knutsen, *A history of International Relations theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 214-215 and Jack Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories," *Foreign Policy* 145 (2004): 56.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War, and Peace* (Arlington Heights: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1979), Georg Schild, *Between Ideology and Realpolitik: Woodrow Wilson and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1921* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995) and Frederick Calhoun, *Power and Principle: Armed Intervention in Wilsonian Foreign Policy* (Kent OH: Kent State University Press, 1986).

<sup>13</sup> Allen Lynch, "Woodrow Wilson and the principle of 'national self-determination': a reconsideration," *Review of International Studies* 28 (2002): 419-436.

<sup>14</sup> Scot D. Bruce, "Woodrow Wilson's Colonial Emissary: Edward M. House and the Origins of the Mandate System, 1917-1919" (PhD Diss., University of Nebraska, 2013).

of them is really focussed on the mandate areas, such as the German colonies. If any new conclusions are drawn on this topic, this might change the view on the mandate system, or on the realist versus liberal debate. If the conclusion for example would be that Wilson was a mere pragmatic realist in applying self-determination to the mandate territories, this would bring a new argument for the realist school to the debate, and it may lead to a new understanding of the mandates. Therefore, the analysis will deal with Wilson's ideas, how those were used during the peace negotiations, and to what extent the outcome of the negotiations represented his ideas.

Secondly, the German colonies seem to provide a useful case study. The studies of Klaus Schwabe and Betty Miller Unterberger give a good idea of how national self-determination was applied in the cases of Germany and Czechoslovakia, but since those studies are so specific to those countries, it becomes difficult to draw a broad conclusion for the liberal versus realist debate.<sup>15</sup> Since this thesis also aims to contribute to this debate, it is more useful to study a group of countries in order to give a conclusion that is based on multiple cases. On the other hand, a study to the entire mandate system as a case study is beyond the scope of this thesis. The differences between the German colonies and the Ottoman areas were very large with regard to the Allied policy. During the war, the Allied countries had already discussed the future of the Middle East and signed secret treaties. While the future of the German colonies was still open for discussion during the peace conference, the former Ottoman empire was not. All together, the German colonies provide for both practical and theoretical reasons the best case for analysis. Those colonies included German East, Southeast and Southwest Africa, as well as islands in the Pacific, which were the Bismarck Archipelago, the German Solomon Islands, Bougainville, Nauru, the Marshall, Mariana and Caroline Island and German Samoa. Besides, Germany also held Shantung, a small territory in China.

Lastly, the Versailles Treaty and its effects have had a profound impact during the twentieth century and are therefore a topic which is extensively studied among historians. One of the trends among historians is to re-evaluate the Versailles Treaty and the peace negotiations during jubilees of the conference. Scholars try to find out if views might have changed after some time has passed. The most important publications are in that way the

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<sup>15</sup> Klaus Schwabe, Rita Kimber and Robert Kimber, *Woodrow Wilson, Revolutionary Germany, and Peacemaking, 1918-1919: Missionary Diplomacy and the Realities of Power* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985) and Betty Miller Unterberger, *The United States, Revolutionary Russia, and the Rise of Czechoslovakia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

article "Versailles after Sixty Years" by Trachtenberg and *The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 years*, which is a book with chapters by multiple historians who are specialised in World War One and its aftermath.<sup>16</sup>

Now, reaching the centenary of the Versailles Treaty, which was the outcome of the Paris Peace Conference, it is a good moment for a new study of the conference and the ideas that were proposed at that time and place. Not only because it is an interesting topic in itself, but also since some of the challenges during the Paris Peace Conference are remarkably similar to the challenges of today. While there are many more states in 2019 than there were in 1919, many groups still urge for more self-determination and the growth of the number of independence movements does not seem to be stagnating. Many former colonies have broken loose from former empires, but many ideas of 1919 are still visible. Countries in Africa are often still seen as helpless and depending on Western aid. Some of the key ideas that were at the core of the discussion for the German colonies, such as trusteeship and guidance to higher stages of development, were as relevant at the beginning of the twentieth century as nowadays. Scholars, politicians and policy advisors are still having vivid discussions about the former colonies. This thesis not only aims for new insights in the historiographical debate, but also serves to place current problems with former colonies in a historical background and analyse what lessons can be learned from 1919.

The objective of this thesis is to find out what was at stake for the U.S. during the peace negotiations and what Woodrow Wilson aimed for with regard to the German colonies. Therefore, the main question of this thesis is: how did Woodrow Wilson apply the principles of national self-determination to the former German colonies during the Paris Peace Conference? This thesis tries to link the answer of this question to the liberal versus realist debate within the Wilson historiography. In order to make this connection, a few sub-questions need to be answered. The most important sub-question is: were the principles of self-determination used as realist or liberal means for the mandate system?

In addition, in order to know whether these principles were motivated by liberal or realist ideas, it is necessary to track down the origin of Wilson's idea of national self-determination. Therefore, the second sub-questions is: what were the origins of Wilson's

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<sup>16</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, "Versailles after Sixty Years," *Journal of Contemporary History* 17 (1982): 487-506 and Manfred Boemeke, Gerald Feldman and Elisabeth Glaser, *The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).



notion of national self-determination? Since Wilson was not acting on his own, but had a large delegation that assisted him during the conference, it might be useful to analyse discussions that took place within the American delegation. Thus, the third sub-question is: how did the American delegates differ on the issues of national self-determination and the mandate system?

Finally, many historians have argued that Wilson clashed with the European leaders during the conference. In those accounts, Wilson is often presented as a true liberal, confronted with Allied Prime Ministers who based their policies on a realist approach. Therefore, the last sub-question is: how did Wilson's principles of national self-determination and the application of the mandate system relate to the ideas of his European counterparts on this issue?

In order to answer these questions, the thesis, as with most historical research, starts with an assessment of the secondary literature. The historiography gives insight in the development of the literature, leading to the current debate. This debate is interwoven with theories of international relations which leads to the theoretical framework for this thesis. This is followed by an introductory chapter on Wilson and his ideas, which is based on secondary sources. After this chapter, the thesis moves in a chronological way to the preparations for the conference and the Paris Peace Conference itself. Those chapters are mainly based on primary sources. *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, a collection of 69 volumes of primary source material about the President, are used as the backbone of the thesis.<sup>17</sup> Since those documents primarily contain minutes of conference meetings and mail between the delegates, this gives a good idea of the general aims of the American President and other representatives. Meetings and letters related to the German colonies, the mandate system and national self-determination are analysed during the chapters. The information of *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* is complemented with policy papers of the American Mission to Negotiate Peace and documents from the *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States*.<sup>18</sup>

The policy papers and meetings give a coherent overview of the processes that were at play, but do not always tell much about the intentions of the actors. Therefore, several

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<sup>17</sup> Arthur S. Link et al., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 69 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966-1993).

<sup>18</sup> Joseph V. Fuller, "The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, Volume I- XIII," *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1947).

diaries and memoirs are used that provide more insight in discussions within the American delegation. The findings of all those primary sources are combined and related to secondary sources. The analysis of the secondary sources gives the thesis a sound informative background. Finally, the findings of the qualitative analysis are placed within the theoretical framework and the findings are fitted within the debate between current theories.

## II: Historiography

From 1913 to 1921, Woodrow Wilson served as the 28th President of the United States. During this period, he presided over the progressive reform movement and the U.S. intervention in World War One. While elected on an agenda for domestic reforms, he became known for his foreign policy and had a lasting impact on the field of International Relations theory. During his inauguration, Wilson stated that 'it would be the irony of fate if my administration had to deal chiefly with foreign affairs', referring to the fact that his own training was mainly based on domestic politics.<sup>19</sup> While having been educated in domestic politics, Wilson also had a strong view on foreign affairs. He was a fierce proponent of a new world order in which states would cooperate and he criticized the balance-of-power politics in Europe. He envisioned that a new world order should be based on a set of principles in which states would work together under a 'League of Nations'. He thought that such an international organisation could peacefully settle conflicts between countries. Furthermore, he was of the opinion that the world should be ruled by nation-states instead of multinational empires and he promoted the idea of self-determination. He saw representative democracy as the best form of government to safeguard peace and security. The combination of Wilson's ideas on foreign policy, with emphasis on international cooperation and representative democracy, became known as Wilsonian ideas or as Wilsonianism.<sup>20</sup>

The Wilsonian vision is generally seen as a liberal world view. The former President is often regarded as one of the founding fathers of liberalism in international relations. His ideas for international cooperation and his defence for several human rights have been viewed as core liberal principles. Therefore, many liberals have tended to appreciate Wilson's world view. While this view of Wilson is also common among a broad public, over time it has nevertheless been the subject of fierce debate. Whereas liberals have tended to focus on Wilson's view and ideas, realist scholars tended to analyse the outcome of Wilson's view. They argue that his approach failed during the Paris Peace Conference, since Wilson's moralistic ideas did not consider the many complexities and the anarchic nature of international relations. Similarly, most realists see the rejection of the League of Nations by the U.S. senate as a failure of Wilson to understand the objections within the senate and within U.S. society.

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<sup>19</sup> H.W. Brands, "Woodrow Wilson and the Irony of Fate," *Diplomatic History* 28 (2004): 503.

<sup>20</sup> William R. Keylor, "Wilson's Project for a New World Order of Permanent Peace and Security," in *A Companion to Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Ross A. Kennedy (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 471.

This debate between liberals and realists is at the core of the historiography on Wilson's foreign policy.

The historiography on Wilson has focussed on his foreign policy, and shows some overlap with that of the Paris Peace Conference. Since the conference did not lead towards a more stable or peaceful world order, many historians have tried to put the peace treaties in historical perspective. Ever since the treaties were signed, scholars have debated the influence of the treaties on future conflicts. The historiography is very rich, but also very politicized. It would be right to quote the historian Marc Trachtenberg, who wrote on the Versailles historiography that 'this then is the result of the politicization of this field of historiography: historical writing on the peace conference has been used as a vehicle for the projection of political values, and as result our understanding of the period has been seriously distorted'.<sup>21</sup> Hence, it is of the utmost importance to look at the historiography from a neutral point of view. It is impossible to include the entire historiography on the Versailles Treaty. Therefore, the main debate about the Paris Peace Conference is analysed, after which the focus shifts towards the role of the U.S. delegation and Woodrow Wilson's foreign policy. Consequently, there is a focus on the idea of self-determination and of the mandate system within the historiography.

The topic of 'Versailles' has received attention of many historians. A few reasons for this are the richness of the source material, the historical relevance of the treaty and the fierce debates on the treaty itself.<sup>22</sup> There are several issues that caused controversy among historians, most notably the question on reparations and the war guilt clause.<sup>23</sup> In the historiography on the treaties, there are many historians who argue that the Versailles Treaty had devastating effects. As soon as the ink of the treaty had dried, commentators started to criticize the measures taken by the victor countries. The influential British economist John Maynard Keynes, who took part in the peace conference as member of the British delegation, launched his attack on what he saw as an unfair and unnecessary settlement in his book *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*.<sup>24</sup> Keynes presented France as vengeful, Britain as careless and the US as naïve during the peace conference. He also argued that the Wilsonian

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<sup>21</sup> Trachtenberg, "Versailles after Sixty Years," 503.

<sup>22</sup> Derek Heater, *National Self-Determination: Woodrow Wilson and his Legacy* (Houndmills: The Macmillan Press, 1994), 108.

<sup>23</sup> An excellent account on these questions is offered in Trachtenberg, "Versailles after Sixty Years," 487-506.

<sup>24</sup> John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1919).

principles, while having been idealistic and moderate, were rather vague and misunderstood by the other leaders during the negotiations. The misunderstandings about his ideas made it harder for Wilson to achieve a fair deal with Germany. Keynes characterized Wilson as naïve and idealistic, unable to deal with the sneaky Lloyd George and Clemenceau. The two European statesmen protected their national interests at the expense of Wilson's idealistic goals.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Keynes argued that there had been too much emphasis on the League of Nations and boundary settlements, while economic issues had been downplayed. He wrote that a Carthaginian Peace – a peace with extraordinarily harsh punitive measures – was imposed on Germany. This idea of Keynes could count on much sympathy in Germany at that time, as well as among liberals in Britain and the United States.<sup>26</sup>

Much has been written on Wilson's foreign policy and his involvement at the Paris Peace Conference. However, as noted by professor of history and international relations William R. Keylor, 'the views of most commentators on Wilsonianism were profoundly shaped by historical developments of their own time'. Therefore, it is most useful to give a chronological view of the Wilson historiography.

Most of the literature on Wilson that appeared during the 1920s and 1930s focused on Wilson's policies during the war and the peace conference. During this period, the debate was led by revisionists. The revisionist school claimed that the First World War was a consequence of European balance-of-power politics, and thus denied Germany's responsibility for the war. This revisionist school of thought was in the U.S. led by journalists and writers such as John Kenneth Turner and Walter Millis, who argued that their country had been dragged into a war that had not threatened the U.S. security. They criticized Wilson for entering the war and argued that strict neutrality would have been a better position since the interest of the country was not at stake. The revisionists denounced interference in what they saw as a European affair. Their writings provided an intellectual background for U.S. isolationism during the 1930s.<sup>27</sup> The revisionists were the sharpest critics of Wilson's plans for a safe and secure world. They argued that during the peace negotiations Wilson failed to persuade the Allies to abandon power politics. Wilson had to make many compromises and resulted in a very

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<sup>25</sup> Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, 55.

<sup>26</sup> Margaret MacMillan, "Review The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 years," *International Journal* 55 (1999): 165.

<sup>27</sup> Keylor, "Wilson's Project," 474.



moderate version of the Fourteen Points, which was Wilson's outline for a peace settlement.<sup>28</sup> The revisionists dominated the historiography until the 1930s, but they were by no means the only scholars at the time writing about Wilson's presidency and his influence on the peace settlement.

Many Americans, including members of the American delegation, wondered what had gone wrong during the peace conference. Not long after Keynes had given his critical view on the peace settlement, members of the American "Mission to Negotiate Peace" wrote down their personal experience of the negotiations. This led to a rise in publications from the American point of view by veterans of the conference during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>29</sup> The growing number of books and memoirs appeared at a time when the Versailles Treaty was blamed for many problems in Europe, such as the economic crises, problems with war reparations and hyperinflation. It was also a time of political unrest and one could see the first signs of rising nationalist movements in Europe. Hence, many of the publications that were written by those veterans of the conference had a specific point of view and often also a certain goal. The writings of former U.S. delegates and advisors, such as Charles Seymour, were a combination of history and memoir. This distinction between personal experience and scholarship was also blurred due to the fact that many of the experts at the peace conference later on had careers as scholars.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, former members of the US delegation were not the only Americans to write about their experiences. Henry Cabot Lodge, a historian and the Senate majority leader for the Republicans during Wilson's years, came with a conservative critique on the former President. Already during the War, he had urged the President for interference in Europe. In his book he argued that the President should have acted against Germany prior to 1917.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, Ray Stannard Baker sketched a more sensible portrait of Wilson as president. Stannard Baker had been a liberal journalist who, during the Paris Peace Conference, acted as a director of the press bureau of the American mission. After the conference, Wilson gave him access to all files and appointed him as his authorized

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<sup>28</sup> Ross A. Kennedy, "Introduction," In *A Companion to Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Ross A. Kennedy (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 2.

<sup>29</sup> Lawrence E. Gelfand, "The American Mission to Negotiate Peace: An Historian Looks Back," In *The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 years*, ed. Manfred Boemeke, Gerald Feldman and Elisabeth Glaser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 191.

<sup>30</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 109.

<sup>31</sup> Henry Cabot Lodge, *The Senate and the League of Nations* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925).

biographer.<sup>32</sup> It is no surprise that his book *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement* included a strong defence of Wilsonianism. Baker saw the peace conference as a conflict between liberals and reactionaries.<sup>33</sup> In his eyes, the liberals were led by Wilson, while the reactionary partisans who opted for a Carthaginian peace were led by the French president Clemenceau.<sup>34</sup> The Wilsonian principles had not been misunderstood, as Keynes had argued in his book. Instead, the Wilsonian agenda had been deliberately sabotaged by Allied delegates who had received assistance from Colonel House, who had been one of Wilson's chief assistants during the conference. House was accused of having been too close with European counterparts and for being not critical enough on European proposals. According to Stannard Baker, House and Wilson held different views, which led House to cooperate with the other Allied leaders. Stannard Baker received some severe criticism by historians and his book has been described as 'the most uncritical assessment of the President's diplomacy'.<sup>35</sup> Despite this criticism, Stannard Baker kept with his version of the story.<sup>36</sup> In fact, during the 1940s other historians and publicists would repeat Stannard Baker's line of reasoning.

In 1933, the book *Peacemaking 1919* revived sharp criticism on Wilson's program for peace.<sup>37</sup> The author was Harold Nicholson, a former member of the British delegation at the peace conference. Prior to the peace negotiations he had been passionate about Wilson's ideals, but left the conference disillusioned and critical. He criticized Wilson for violating his own principles for new diplomacy. He wrote that Wilson had imposed new borders based on the ideas of national self-determination, but that those decisions had been made in top-secret meetings of the Big Four without consultation of the peoples' will.<sup>38</sup> However, by the end of the decade, when a wave of German aggression under Hitler became visible, scholars started to re-appreciate Wilson's ideals.<sup>39</sup>

The outbreak of the Second World War created a new urge among scholars to examine Wilson's policy during the First World War and the Paris Peace Conference. Most of all, historians considered it important to understand why Wilson's ideas had failed at Versailles,

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<sup>32</sup> Gelfand, "The American Mission to Negotiate Peace," 193.

<sup>33</sup> Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, 3 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1923).

<sup>34</sup> Trachtenberg, "Versailles after Sixty Years," 487.

<sup>35</sup> Keylor, "Wilson's Project," 474.

<sup>36</sup> Gelfand, "The American Mission to Negotiate Peace," 193.

<sup>37</sup> Harold Nicholson, *Peacemaking 1919* (London: Constable, 1933).

<sup>38</sup> Nicholson, *Peacemaking 1919*, 8.

<sup>39</sup> Keylor, "Wilson's Project," 474.

and how this might be avoided after the Second World War.<sup>40</sup> This new movement tended towards the rehabilitation of Wilson, such as in *Versailles Twenty Year After* by historian Paul Birdsall.<sup>41</sup> His book was the first widely read reassessment of the peace treaties. In his writings he shared the views of Stannard Baker. Birdsall analysed the conference as a struggle between Wilsonian principles and nationalist ambitions. Besides, he held the U.S. Senate solely responsible for the failure of Wilson's postwar order.<sup>42</sup> Birdsall and Baker both admired Wilson and shared his ideals, which led to a defence of the internationalist point of view against isolationist critics.<sup>43</sup> American journalist Stephen Bonsal stated that Wilson was not accountable for the failure of the Paris Peace Conference, but that it was a failure of humanity. For this analysis of the peace conference in the book *Unfinished Business* he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for History.<sup>44</sup> At the end of the Second World War, some other works appeared with a similar kind of message. Wilson was characterized as a victim of the machinations of Henry Cabot Lodge and fellow Republicans in Alan Cranston's *The Killing of the Peace*.<sup>45</sup> Thomas Bailey, who was a historian at Stanford University, wrote the books *Woodrow Wilson and the Great Betrayal* and *Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace* in which he showed that Wilson's ideas were annihilated by 'small-minded adversaries on both sides of the Atlantic'.<sup>46</sup>

The outbreak of the Second World War had initially led to a rehabilitation of Wilson by Bailey and others. During the war, and especially after, a new school started to gain more ground. This new realist critique started with the British historian E.H. Carr, who dismissed Wilson's ideas as Utopian, and who argued that people could not live together in perpetual peace and harmony. Carr saw those ideas confirmed during the Second World War, and it inspired others to take a similar stance. The British historian also argued that power and national interest could not be replaced by principles and an international community.<sup>47</sup> He qualified Wilson as a typical liberal who was seeking to impose his abstract theories on the messy reality of international politics and without regarding the rivalry among nations.<sup>48</sup> As

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<sup>40</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 110.

<sup>41</sup> Birdsall, *Versailles Twenty Year After*.

<sup>42</sup> Keylor, "Wilson's Project," 475.

<sup>43</sup> Trachtenberg, "Versailles after Sixty Years," 488.

<sup>44</sup> Stephen Bonsal, *Unfinished Business* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1944).

<sup>45</sup> Alan Cranston, *The Killing of the Peace* (New York: The Viking Press, 1945).

<sup>46</sup> Bailey, *Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace* and Thomas A. Bailey, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great Betrayal* (New York: Macmillan, 1945).

<sup>47</sup> E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Year Crisis, 1919-1939: An introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London, Macmillan, 1939).

<sup>48</sup> Keylor, "Wilson's Project," 477.

the Grand Alliance of the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States started to break down and the Cold War became apparent, the realist critique started to gain influence.

One of the most prominent scholars of this school was Hans Morgenthau with his book *Politics Among Nations*.<sup>49</sup> According to his theory, there was no place for moral objectives in foreign policy, since one had to deal with an anarchic world order based on rivalry. Universal moral principles were seen as inadequate guidelines for foreign policy. Instead, policy had to be based on the pursuit of national interest.<sup>50</sup> This inspired many scholars to write realist critiques that dismissed Wilson's ideals as a failed solution that undermined national interest. The realist school inspired the American diplomat and historian George F. Kennan to write a stinging criticism on Wilson and Wilsonianism.<sup>51</sup> Kennan was also frustrated by the historiography on Wilson. He opposed views of Bailey and other scholars who argued that the Second World War could have been prevented by an international organisation. He was also triggered by the foreign policy of President Franklin D. Roosevelt that seemed to reflect Wilsonian ideas. Kennan became known among a broad public because of his ideas about 'containment' during the Cold War. He was both an actor and a scholar within the field of international relations, as he also became one of the founders of realism. Like Morgenthau, he condemned Wilsonianism for its legalistic-moralistic approach to foreign policy. Furthermore, Kennan blamed the former President for failing to restore the balance of power in Europe and he condemned Wilson's proposals for a new international order. Whereas Kennan argued that the balance of powers in Europe had provided stability and had prevented war from 1870 till 1914, Wilson actually saw those same European alliances as the very key factor to the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>52</sup> According to historian Thomas J. Knock, Wilson and Kennan can be seen as each other's 'chief historical antagonist'.<sup>53</sup> They had fundamentally different interpretations about foreign affairs, yet had similar experiences, not only as historians but also as actors within foreign affairs.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1948).

<sup>50</sup> Lloyd E. Ambrosius, "The Orthodoxy of Revisionism: Woodrow Wilson and the New Left," *Diplomatic History* 1 (1977): 201.

<sup>51</sup> George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

<sup>52</sup> Thomas J. Knock, "Kennan versus Wilson" In *The Wilson Era: Essays in Honor of Arthur S. Link*, edited by John Milton Cooper and Charles E. Neu, 302-326. Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, 1991, 312.

<sup>53</sup> Knock, "Kennan versus Wilson", 303.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, 303.

The scholar Robert Osgood presented a similar realist critique with an attack on what he saw as naïve assumptions that were inherited from Wilsonianism. This characterization of Wilson as a dreaming idealist who did not understand the brutal nature of international power and rivalry, endured throughout the 1950s. Cold War realities had sparked a consensus among historians and political theorists to reject Wilson's idealist notions. The only exemption during this period was Edward Buehring, who in fact argued that Wilson had actually not been much of an idealist, but rather that his policy had been cautious, realist and pragmatic.<sup>55</sup>

At the same time, the New Left opposed the American foreign policy of the 1950s and launched an attack on what they saw as the Cold War consensus.<sup>56</sup> This new school started to doubt the underlying ideas of Cold War politics, and challenged the realist consensus among most historians and scholars. This revisionist school placed Wilson in a tradition of American imperialistic expansion. American historian William Appleman Williams was one of the most influential writers in this tradition. His book *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* marked the beginning of Cold War revisionism.<sup>57</sup> According to Williams, there was in fact little difference between Theodore Roosevelt's imperialism based on *Realpolitik* and Wilson's imperialism based on idealism. President Roosevelt was known for his dollar diplomacy, which was a pragmatic approach to pursue economic interests and political stability in South America. Williams argued that Wilson's idealism was a smokescreen, because Wilson was also pursuing economic interest. This criticism of the revisionist school was completely opposed to realist critiques, which had argued that Wilson's moral principles would not stand within an anarchic world order.<sup>58</sup>

One of the fiercest revisionists was Arno Mayer. In his writings he pointed towards the close relation between domestic and foreign policy. He wrote that the war aims of the belligerents were based on their domestic tensions. Furthermore, he thought that Wilson's 'Fourteen Points' were a manoeuvre to outbid Lenin in order to gain sympathy of European populations.<sup>59</sup> In one of his later writings Mayer repeated the view of Stannard Baker that Wilson's peace proposals of self-determination and international cooperation were thwarted

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<sup>55</sup> Keylor, "Wilson's Project," 479.

<sup>56</sup> Edward Henry Buehrig, *Woodrow Wilson and the Balance of Power* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1955).

<sup>57</sup> William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Dell, 1962).

<sup>58</sup> Keylor, "Wilson's Project," 480.

<sup>59</sup> Arno J. Mayer, *Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917-1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959).



by narrow-minded Allied leaders. Meanwhile, revisionists such as historian N. Gordon Levin kept writing critical assessments about the former American president. Gordon Levin wrote a typical revisionist critique in which he portrayed Wilson as the founding father of American expansionism. Not surprisingly, his interpretation was attacked by orthodox realist thinkers, since Gordon Levin was claimed to exemplify the limitations of the New Left. According to historian L.E. Ambrosius, the revisionists failed to offer a radical interpretation on foreign affairs due to the fact that they shared many of Wilson's assumptions. Ambrosius wrote that Levin could not address a radical critique since he, like Wilson, did not see a conflict between national and international interests.<sup>60</sup> Revisionist publications would appear even well into the 1980s, when Lloyd Gardner wrote that Wilson's idealism was foremost rhetoric. Gardner argued that Wilson was at the core a pragmatist whose foreign policy was merely aimed at combating social revolutions.<sup>61</sup>

Arthur S. Link is by many historians seen as the most important scholar on Wilson of the post-revisionist era.<sup>62</sup> He spent almost all his time studying Wilson and his politics, writing multiple books, articles and a five-volume biography on Wilson. In most of his writings he tends to be relatively positive of Wilson without becoming uncritical.<sup>63</sup> Link also showed a lot of interest for Wilson's foreign policy, especially regarding the First World War. Link argued that Wilson was not the pro-Allied statesman revisionists had made him, nor was he the utopian politician as Robert Osgood and George Kennan portrayed him.<sup>64</sup> Instead, Link tried to demonstrate that Wilson had a more neutral position on foreign affairs, whose chief concern was to end the European war and to reform international politics once the war was over. Link did not denounce the Versailles Treatment and wrote that 'Wilson won a settlement that honored more of the fourteen points than it violated and which to a large degree vindicated his liberal ideals'.<sup>65</sup> Link spent his career from 1966 to 1994 on composing the *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 69 volumes of primary source material including speeches, letters and writings of Wilson.<sup>66</sup> Link was also involved in a heated debate with Kennan on Wilson's

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<sup>60</sup> Ambrosius, "The Orthodoxy of Revisionism," 203.

<sup>61</sup> Lloyd C. Gardner, *Safe for Democracy: The Anglo-American Response to Revolution, 1913-1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

<sup>62</sup> Kennedy, "Introduction," 2.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, 2.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

<sup>65</sup> Link, *Woodrow Wilson*, 102.

<sup>66</sup> Link, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*.

foreign policy. Kennan's *American Diplomacy* was followed by a response in Link's book *Revolution, War and Peace*.<sup>67</sup> In this book, Link demonstrates that Wilson was not only an ideologically motivated President, but that he was more determined than any of the Allies to restore political and economic stability. Link, in fact, concluded that Wilson was more committed to a form of realism than that he was an actual idealist. He tried to demonstrate this with the fact that Wilson used balance-of-power politics when he argued to maintain Germany as a counterweight to France and Russia, instead of disintegrating Germany. This way, Link challenged Kennan by arguing that Wilson was a realist.<sup>68</sup> Due to the work by Link, Kennan, the revisionists, and others that followed, the historiography on Wilson had become part of the Cold War debate. In this debate, realists generally attacked Wilson for not acknowledging the anarchic nature of world politics and the priority of national self-interest, while the revisionists denounced him for promoting a liberal and idealistic agenda to hide his goals of American domination.<sup>69</sup>

After the realist critique faded during the eighties, new interpretations came to the fore during the eighties and nineties. Still, this did not mean that realism was replaced by interpretations that were more favourable of Wilson. Many of the new writings took a different stance in the liberal versus realist dichotomy. There was an increase in interpretations that regarded Wilson as being not idealistic enough. Historian Georg Schild argued that, even if Wilson was driven by ideals, his ends were strongly influenced by *Realpolitik*.<sup>70</sup> Frederick Calhoun stated that Wilson in fact combined idealism and the threat of using military intervention.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, Calhoun noted that Wilson wanted to impose a very narrow kind of democracy on others, which most of them could not reject. This way, Calhoun attacked the idea that Wilson was a liberal promoter of democracy.<sup>72</sup> Realist historian L.E. Ambrosius came with a similar claim and stated that Wilson's universalist ideas did not work due to world's complexities.<sup>73</sup> International anarchy led to pluralistic societies in which Wilson's universalist ideas could not stand.<sup>74</sup> *America's Mission* by Tony Smith's was also an

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<sup>67</sup> Link, *Woodrow Wilson and Kennan, American Diplomacy*.

<sup>68</sup> Steigerwald, "Historiography," 81.

<sup>69</sup> Keylor, "Wilson's Project," 482.

<sup>70</sup> Schild, *Between Ideology and Realpolitik*.

<sup>71</sup> Calhoun, *Power and Principle*.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*, 23.

<sup>73</sup> Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft: Theory and Practice of Liberal Internationalism during World War I* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1991).

<sup>74</sup> Steigerwald, "Historiography," 82-83.

attempt to formulate a new realist critique. He argued that Wilson adapted his liberal principles of free trade, disarmament and self-determination into internationalism in order to provide national security.<sup>75</sup> Smith argued that the mission of the U.S. had become to spread the Wilsonian belief of democracy all over the world. This school of liberal internationalism gained more ground after the end of the Cold War. The influence of internationalism led Steigerwald to the idea that by regarding Wilson's ideals as practical forms of policymaking, the work of Smith provided a clever means not of rescuing realism so much, as of putting it honorably to rest.<sup>76</sup>

The end of the Cold War had a profound impact on the field of international relations and consequently on the historiography of Woodrow Wilson and U.S. foreign policy. Many scholars had not foreseen that the USSR could fall so suddenly. It led to the idea that liberalism had triumphed over communism, which was exemplified by the book *The End of History* by political scientist Francis Fukuyama.<sup>77</sup> Hence, many studies that appeared during the 1990s were written from a liberal perspective, congruent with the leading ideology of the time. In the historiography on Wilson, scholars such as Thomas Knock and Milton Cooper Jr. presented works based on a liberal framework. Even Kennan, who had been one of Wilson's most profound critics, changed his opinion after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. He wrote in a response to Knock that his realist ideas and his criticism on Wilson were shaped in the aftermath of the Second World War, when the world order was very different. One had to note that his criticism on Wilson was written in a time in which an international organisation such as the League of Nations seemed unlikely to fulfil its ambitions because of the bipolar world order.<sup>78</sup> Kennan, and many other scholars, thought that the U.S. and the USSR in no possible way could work together in one organisation. After the end of the Cold War, such a Wilsonian vision seemed much more promising. In fact, Kennan even wrote that due to changed circumstances, an international organisation was not only viable, it was even necessary. He had concluded that Wilson was a man ahead of his time.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>76</sup> Steigerwald, "Historiography," 83.

<sup>77</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

<sup>78</sup> George F. Kennan, "Comments on the paper entitled 'Kennan versus Wilson' by Professor Thomas J. Knock". In *The Wilson Era: Essays in Honor of Arthur S. Link*. edited by John Milton Cooper and Charles E. Neu, 327-329. Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, 1991.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*, 327-330.

At the end of the twentieth century, a reassessment on the Versailles Treaty was published. In this edited volume, a large number of economists and historians tried to challenge the visions of both Keynes and realist scholars. *The Treaty of Versailles: A reassessment after 75 years* is one of the most prominent revisionist accounts.<sup>80</sup> It argues that Allied differences, shifting domestic coalitions and complex negotiations led to the Treaty of Versailles as an understandable, if not inevitable outcome.<sup>81</sup>

Since the turn of the century, numerous studies have been published, many of them relying on earlier schools or authors. A prominent example is *The Versailles Treaty and Its Legacy: The Failure of the Wilsonian Vision* by realist scholars Norman Graebner and M. Bennett, who acknowledged that they were following in the footsteps of Morgenthau.<sup>82</sup> They argue that the peace settlement of 1919 was responsible for the horrific events during the period 1939-1945.<sup>83</sup> Graebner and Bennett focused especially on what they regarded as the failure of Wilson's ideas.

Historian William R. Keylor is operating from a more liberal point of view. Since the 1990's he has written numerous books and articles on Wilson, especially with regard to his ideas on International Relations. He also wrote a more neutral chapter for the book *A Companion to Woodrow Wilson*, which was edited by Ross A. Kennedy.<sup>84</sup> Twenty-nine scholars have contributed to this volume, which was published in 2013.<sup>85</sup> This book covers almost every aspect of Wilson's life and his policies.<sup>86</sup> Overall, while some scholars still fiercely defended revisionist or realist views on Wilson, it seems as if most scholars sought for a more balanced and neutral approach, such as in the volume edited by Kennedy.

It is important to note that not just Wilson's foreign policy has received much attention. There is also a historiography on his notions of national self-determination. Some of those accounts

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<sup>80</sup> Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser, *The Treaty of Versailles*.

<sup>81</sup> G. John Ikenberry, "Review The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 years," *Foreign Affairs* 78 (1999): 140.

<sup>82</sup> Norman A. Graebner and Edward Bennett, *The Versailles Treaty and Its Legacy: The Failure of the Wilsonian Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>83</sup> William R. Keylor, 'Realism, Idealism, and the Treaty of Versailles. Norman A. Graebner and Edward M. Bennett, *The Versailles Treaty and Its Legacy: The Failure of the Wilsonian Vision*,' *Diplomatic History* 38 (2014): 216.

<sup>84</sup> Keylor, "Wilson's Project," 470-491.

<sup>85</sup> *A Companion to Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Ross A. Kennedy (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

<sup>86</sup> Anthony J. Gaughan, Review, "A Companion to Woodrow Wilson, edited by Ross A. Kennedy, Wiley-Blackwell," *The Journal of Southern History* 80 (2014): 747.

have focussed on the negotiations of self-determination while other scholars such as Heater have taken a more philosophical stance on the subject. On the issue of national self-determination most historians do agree that, regardless of the intentions, the principle did not work very well. Yet, historians do differ in claiming that faults were made by the delegates during the peace negotiations.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, many commentators point to the vagueness of national self-determination and the Fourteen Points.

On national self-determination in particular, British former diplomat and politician Harold Nicolson wrote that the experts on drawing new boundaries did not have enough attention for matters of economy and transport.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, the Territorial Committees that had to develop those new policies, only looked to particular claims of certain states, instead of constructing a coherent program. A result was that various committees had started drawing new borders which eventually left Hungary with almost no territory or population.<sup>89</sup> The British commentator and realist E.H. Carr argued that the confusion surrounding the term national self-determination was a rather intellectual failure. He also appealed to the idea that the principles of nationality and self-determination did not always match in practice. In his opinion, it was blindness and arrogance of the delegates to think that state and nation would coincide as was the case in the United States or Western Europe.<sup>90</sup> This critique was inherent to the notion that Wilson did not grasp the complex realities of international relations. Other realist scholars as Graebner, Kennan and Morgenthau also directly attacked the Wilsonian principles, including the idea of national self-determination.<sup>91</sup>

The end of the Cold War gave rise to a new group of historians who lauded Wilson and his foreign policy, such as Thomas Knock in his laudatory *To End All Wars*.<sup>92</sup> More recently, scholars such as Allen Lynch have tried to combine both perspectives and attempted to give a more balanced view on Wilson's foreign policy.<sup>93</sup> Scholars also started to ask to what extent Wilson was responsible for new waves of nationalism after his ideas of national self-determination. Two important studies on this issue appeared during the 1980s. Klaus Schwabe

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<sup>87</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 110.

<sup>88</sup> Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, 130-131.

<sup>89</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 111.

<sup>90</sup> E.H. Carr, *Conditions of Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1942): 41.

<sup>91</sup> Steigerwald, "Historiography," 79.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>93</sup> Lynch, "Woodrow Wilson and the principle of 'national self -determination, 420.



studied German-American diplomacy during the peace settlement. He concluded that Wilson only wanted a modest revolution within Germany, he did not want the nation to become dismembered. According to Schwabe, he more or less 'stumbled upon the utility of self-determination here'.<sup>94</sup> Most importantly, he proposed that Wilson used the idea of self-determination in a practical manner so he would not harm the state structure in Europe. Former professor of American international relations Betty Miller Unterberger analysed the principle of self-determination in relation to Czechoslovakia and came to a similar conclusion. She claimed that Wilson for a long time did not want to dissolve the Austrian-Hungarian empire, since Wilson *de facto* wanted to sign a separate peace with this empire. It was Czech nationalism and hostility towards the Austrians that changed his opinion.<sup>95</sup> One should be reminded that Wilson believed that humans were in the long-run moving towards a cosmopolitan political union, which made questions of race of secondary importance. Whenever Wilson argued in favour of the creation of a nation-state, he did so for practical purposes.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia during the early 1990s, there was a revived interest among scholars to study the basic principle of nation self-determination.<sup>96</sup> One of those scholars was Derek Heater, who wrote the book *National Self-Determination: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy*. He took a relatively neutral position in the debate on self-determination. He claimed that the realists who distorted Wilson's principles for self-determination were as much responsible for nationalistic movements during the thirties as the idealists like Wilson. As the title of the book demonstrated, this was not only a historical account. Heater showed a clear interest for the legacy of national self-determination and demonstrated that the outbreak of the Second World War, the German problem during the Cold War and conflicts in Yugoslavia were partially the result of a distorted application of self-determination.<sup>97</sup>

The most recent book that related to this principle was *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* by Erez Manela.<sup>98</sup> In

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<sup>94</sup> Klaus Schwabe, *Woodrow Wilson, Revolutionary Germany, and Peacemaking, 1918-1919*.

<sup>95</sup> Unterberger, *The United States, Revolutionary Russia, and the Rise of Czechoslovakia*.

<sup>96</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 110.

<sup>97</sup> Richard W. Mansbach, "Woodrow Wilson, World War I, and the Present", *Policy Studies Journal* 22 (1994): 706.

<sup>98</sup> Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

this book, the author focused on how Wilsonian premises and rhetoric inspired people across the world to strive for national self-determination. Manela's book moved the discussion from the conference itself, to the (unintended) consequences in different parts of the world. The account demonstrated how people in Egypt, Korea and China embraced this Wilsonian principle and how they were disillusioned after the peace conference. According to Manela, the Americans had raised high hopes, but had no incentive to fulfil those ideals, though his main argument was that Wilson's ideas led to a Wilsonian moment for self-determination among anticolonial movements.<sup>99</sup>

However, those studies on self-determination were criticized by historian Trygve Thrøntveit. In his article he stated that the historiography on Wilson has been largely distorted by focussing on self-determination. According to Thrøntveit, Wilson relied more on ideas of self-government instead of self-determination. The key difference being that self-government only claims that the government must be based on consent by the people, whereas self-determination also means that minorities have the right to form their own state.<sup>100</sup> Therefore, Thrøntveit claimed that it was necessary to remove this concept from the foreground, 'where it has loomed too large in most historical renderings'.<sup>101</sup> He argued that scholars such as Link, Smith and Knock had misunderstood the notion of national self-determination by downplaying the importance of self-government. The idea that Wilson's concept of self-determination was more pragmatic had gone largely unexplored according to Thrøntveit.<sup>102</sup> Untberger had better understood Wilson's idea of national self-determination by regarding it as synonym to popular sovereignty.<sup>103</sup> Thrøntveit claimed that Wilson considered every state to be a nation-state. The former President saw nation-states as a product of history, instead of theory. This led Thrøntveit to the conclusion that Wilson's idea of self-government was more pragmatic than was often thought.<sup>104</sup>

Besides the historiography on Wilson and national self-determination, it is also of importance to delve into the historiography on the mandate system, since the German colonies were

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<sup>99</sup> Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 219-222.

<sup>100</sup> Trygve Thrøntveit, "The Fable of the Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson and National Self-Determination," *Diplomatic History* 35 (2011): 446.

<sup>101</sup> Thrøntveit, "The Fable of the Fourteen Points," 447.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem*, 448.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem*, 449.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibidem*, 451.

incorporated in this system. The mandates have received less attention from scholars, as most historians and political scientists have focussed on Europe. This has probably to do with the fact that the First World War and the Treaty of Versailles are among most people still seen as a primarily European issue. Furthermore, they have received much attention because of subsequent events that some historians have held the treaty responsible for. Still, it is essential to give an overview of the writings on the mandate system. Contemporaries of Wilson, such as his Secretary of State Robert Lansing as well as David Lloyd George and Georges Clemenceau also published their memoirs in the years after the peace conference. These memoirs only rarely mentioned the mandate system, and if they were, it was most often to serve as war trophies.<sup>105</sup> During the 1930s, the scholarship on the mandate system remained rather technical, with emphasis on the applications of the system, but lacking a study to the underlying philosophy and the negotiations during the peace conference.<sup>106</sup> Two other pioneers on the mandate system, Paul Birdsall and Pitman Potter wrote coherent accounts of the founding principles and negotiations on the mandate system.<sup>107</sup> They offered a view which criticised the British and French delegation for undermining the idealistic view Wilson had in mind for the colonies.<sup>108</sup> Yet, it was only after the Second World War that a growing number of historians started to analyze the motivations and the practices of the mandate system. In 1967 the historian William Roger Louis published the influential book *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies*, in which he suggested that the British delegation had an imperial agenda during the conference.<sup>109</sup> He repeated the view that Wilson was a naïve idealist, unable to deal with staunch imperialists such as Lloyd George and Clemenceau. This view was repeated by other scholars during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>110</sup> Those views, of course, borrowed heavily from the arguments of Stannard Baker and Bailey, who also thought that a well-intentioned Wilson faced severe opposition by the imperialist Allied leaders. In the last few decades, the mandates have been studied in view of this debate.

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<sup>105</sup> Scot D. Bruce, "Woodrow Wilson's Colonial Emissary: Edward M. House and the Origins of the Mandate System, 1917-1919" (PhD Diss., University of Nebraska, 2013), 3.

<sup>106</sup> Bruce, "Woodrow Wilson's Colonial Emissary," 4.

<sup>107</sup> Birdsall, *Versailles Twenty Year After* and Pitman Potter, "Origin of the System of Mandates under the League of Nations," *American Political Science Review* 16 (1922): 563-583.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibidem*, 5.

<sup>109</sup> William Roger Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

<sup>110</sup> Bruce, "Woodrow Wilson's Colonial Emissary," 6.

An example of such a study is a chapter on the mandate system in the book *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* by Margaret MacMillan.<sup>111</sup> She analyzed the mandates as a 'form of veiled imperialism'.<sup>112</sup> She defined Wilson as an idealist who could not stand up to the imperial ambitions of the European powers. A similar image is drawn in a chapter of Priscilla Roberts in the edited volume *A Companion to Woodrow Wilson*.<sup>113</sup> Again, an image appeared of Wilson and the American delegates who failed to counter the imperial desires of the European powers.<sup>114</sup>

One of the few historians who tried to alter this view was Scot D. Bruce in his dissertation "Woodrow Wilson's Colonial Emissary: Edward M. House and the Origins of the Mandate System, 1917-1919". In his dissertation, he stated that Wilson's ideals were not as progressive as is usually thought. Most importantly, he did not want to grant independence to former German territories immediately after the war. Instead, Wilson and his advisor Colonel House were in fact using idealistic rhetoric to modify traditional forms of colonialism. Bruce concludes that Wilsonianism was inherent in the veiled colonialism of the mandate system. Furthermore, Wilson and House were unable to grasp the geopolitical realities of the world order, which comes close to a realist critique.<sup>115</sup> Nonetheless, in many ways, this latest study on Wilsonianism and the mandate system seems to resemble the critique that was earlier levied by the New Left revisionists.

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<sup>111</sup> Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World*. (New York: Random House, 2002).

<sup>112</sup> Bruce, "Woodrow Wilson's Colonial Emissary," 7.

<sup>113</sup> Priscilla Roberts, "Wilson, Europe's Colonial Empires, and the Issue of Imperialism," in *A Companion to Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Ross A. Kennedy (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 492-517.

<sup>114</sup> Bruce, "Woodrow Wilson's Colonial Emissary," 7-8.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibidem*, 177-178.

### III: Theoretical Framework

As explained in the research questions and in the historiography, this thesis will try to place Wilson's application of national self-determination in a debate of realism versus liberalism. First of all, it is relevant to give a short overview of the main theories in international relations, with emphasis on realism and liberalism. Secondly, the theory underlying national self-determination is explained.

As also indicated in the historiography, the field of International Relations has since the beginning of the twentieth century been dominated by a 'grand debate' between realism and liberalism.<sup>116</sup> Both traditions give scholars a large, different perspective on international relations. According to John Ikenberry, a scholar in IR at Princeton University, most different schools and ideas within IR can be traced back to the debate between liberalism and realism.<sup>117</sup> Though constructivism and liberal institutionalism have offered new insights, they are somehow related to this larger debate. Lastly, no theory is able to capture the complexity of international politics, theories give a certain perspective.

Realism is a school that was especially influential during the Second World War and the Cold War. The realist school has had multiple periods of popularity, but has kept relevant till today. However, realism is not one single theory, but a school of theories with various types of realism, of which classical realism and neo-realism are most relevant to this thesis. All of the branches within realism share some basic assumptions. Almost all realists refer to previous philosophers such as Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes. Those 'fathers of realism' are known for their common idea that politics is about power, rather than moral considerations. Especially Hobbes argued that in a state of nature, without being governed by a ruler, one would end in a war of every man against every man. Which leads to the most important factor within realism, the state. Realism focuses on the state, which they see as a territory that strives to protect itself through an impenetrable shell.<sup>118</sup> There are three other basic assumptions that should be considered when writing about realism. The first notion is that realists see power as the central aspect of politics. Another element of realism is that people and groups are seen as egoistic, driven by self-interest. This leads to the idea that

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<sup>116</sup> G. John. Ikenberry "Liberalism in a Realist World: International Relations as an American Scholarly Tradition," *International Studies* 46 (2009): 203.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibidem*, 217.

<sup>118</sup> Torbjørn L. Knutsen, *A history of International Relations theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 252-253.

states are also driven by national interest. Lastly, the basis for realism in international relations is the idea that the world order is anarchic in nature.<sup>119</sup> The combination of those arguments has led to some very influential approaches to international relations, such as the balance-of-power theory, which claims that states will cooperate in alliances if another state becomes too powerful.<sup>120</sup> This specific theory is very important, because it was used during and after the First World War to explain the system of alliances that led to the war.

It is important to demonstrate some of the different schools within realism. Classical realists such as Carr, Morgenthau and Reinhold Niebuhr argued that states, like human beings, wanted to dominate each other. Classical realism is regarded as *the* realist tradition prior to neo-realism. This new school, led by Kenneth Waltz, wanted to revivify realism in a top-down, overarching theoretical framework. Whereas Morgenthau analysed a variety of forces, Waltz focussed only on anarchy.<sup>121</sup> Neo-realists thought that human nature could be neglected. Instead they saw international anarchy as starting point for their theory, which explained the behaviour of states.<sup>122</sup> One of their main arguments, derived from that same starting point, was that anarchy would lead to more international competition and war.<sup>123</sup>

The theories of realism are often expressed as opposed to liberalism. The liberal school of thought often refers to philosophers such as John Locke and Immanuel Kant. Furthermore, it was influenced by the economist and moral philosopher Adam Smith and, according to many scholars, Wilson. A key element of liberalism is that it sees men as equal, with natural wants and needs, which they seek to satisfy through rational ways.<sup>124</sup> In international relations, liberalism is known for having three theoretical assumptions. First of all, liberal theory relies on a pluralist view of politics, it argues that groups and individuals will have to meet different demands. Another aspect is that liberals assume that the state represents its individuals and also acts according to its preferences. The last underlying idea is that liberals argue that interdependence among states shapes the way states act.<sup>125</sup> They think that international

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<sup>119</sup> William C. Wohlforth, "Realism," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 133.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibidem*, 133.

<sup>121</sup> Ikenberry "Liberalism in a Realist World," 213.

<sup>122</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy* 110 (1998): 31.

<sup>123</sup> Wohlforth, "Realism," 137.

<sup>124</sup> Knutsen, *A history of International Relations theory*, 255.

<sup>125</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, "The New Liberalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 236-239.

cooperation is not a zero-sum game, but an agreement that is profitable for multiple states. Therefore, they have more confidence in supranational cooperation than realists do. All arguments above lead to what many liberals would see as the key argument, which is that interdependence causes cooperation and decreases international conflict.<sup>126</sup>

Liberalism, like realism, is in fact a spectrum of theories that shares some basic ideas about international relations. Political liberalism is highly related to the ideas of Immanuel Kant. He thought that two concepts could reduce the chance of international conflict. First, he came with the idea that individuals have fundamental civil rights, and are therefore equal. Secondly, he thought that sovereigns had to derive their power from the consent of the electorate.<sup>127</sup> Economic liberals deviate from the political stream, by putting most emphasis on economic interdependence. They think that free trade and economic exchange will lead to modernisation and believe that interdependence will lead to prosperity. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye provided a framework for research on interdependence and the influence of non-state actors. Keohane started with a functional theory, that shifted liberalism to explore the role of institutions in response to the anarchic situation as proposed by neo-realists.<sup>128</sup>

Neo-liberal institutionalism, often related to Wilson, argued that the spread of democracy and institutions would make the world more peaceful. This theory has argued that international institutions are the best way to promote peace and prosperity, since institutions can overcome the problems of states.<sup>129</sup> This theory is now so influential and differentiated from classical liberalism that it is most often regarded as an entirely different theory. As also stated earlier, the end of the Cold War changed historical and theoretical debates. The dissolution of the Soviet Union gave a boost to the liberal strands. Most notably, it spurred the debate on 'democratic peace'. The democratic peace theory was a refinement of the idea that democratic states were by definition more peaceful than autocratic states.

It is of importance to see how the idea of self-determination is related to this theoretical framework. The idea that a united people have the right to govern themselves and have their own state, can be traced back for multiple centuries. Eighteenth-century philosophers Edmund Burke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, without using the specific terminology, wrote

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<sup>126</sup> Susan M. McMillan, "Interdependence and Conflict," *Mershon International Studies Review* 41 (1997): 35.

<sup>127</sup> McMillan, "Interdependence and Conflict," 36.

<sup>128</sup> Ikenberry "Liberalism in a Realist World," 214.

<sup>129</sup> Walt, "International Relations," 32.

about the right for self-determination in Corsica and Poland. The idea became more prominent during the nineteenth century. During this century, this idea circulated among German radical philosophers and the word self-determination was derived from the German idea of *Selbstbestimmung*.<sup>130</sup> The nineteenth century was an age of nationalistic sentiment in Europe, during which self-determination was part of a liberal genre. In the revolutionary year of 1848, many people supported national self-determination.<sup>131</sup> However, the European empires did not want their peoples to break away and see their empire fall. While the idea did not directly lead to specific actions or new borders, it inspired liberals such as British Prime Minister Gladstone and the British philosopher John Stuart Mill. Movements towards national independence and self-determination were related to liberal demands for constitutional reform. Freedom from alien control was seen as equal to freedom from autocratic control.<sup>132</sup>

Mill thought that there was a case for uniting all members of one nationality, people with the same culture and language, under the same government. Therefore, he argued that boundaries should coincide with those of nationalities. Gladstone thought that self-determination was favourable for both domestic reasons as also for international harmony. The British Prime Minister believed that the ideal of self-determination should in principle be universally honoured. However, his idealistic vision of international harmony, made out of nation-states, was often impeded by his political pragmatism.<sup>133</sup>

Yet, those ideas of self-determination were not directly related to the notion of national independence until the First World War, although the ideas of nation self-determination had existed for a longer time.<sup>134</sup> Yet, as noted by historians Derek Heater and Eric D. Weitz, the idea of self-determination was not invented, instead it evolved.<sup>135</sup> Philosophers like Burke and Rousseau expressed their views of rule by consent, preceding the term self-determination. Nowadays, the term self-determination is frequently used, often related to demands for independence.

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<sup>130</sup> Betty Miller Unterberger, "The United States and National Self-Determination: A Wilsonian Perspective," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26 (1996): 926.

<sup>131</sup> Unterberger, "The United States and National Self-Determination," 927.

<sup>132</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 8.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibidem*, 10.

<sup>134</sup> Eric D. Weitz, "Self-Determination: How a German Enlightenment Idea Became the Slogan of National Liberation and a Human Right," *American Historical Review* 120 (2015): 462-496.

<sup>135</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 1 and Weitz, "Self-Determination," 462-463.



Within the historiography and the theoretical framework, Wilson has been described by many authors as a founder of liberalism. This thesis challenges that notion and assesses whether his policy towards the German colonies was based on liberal ideas. Since classical realism and classical liberalism are at the core of the debate, it is most straightforward to use those as a theoretical framework. However, considering that Wilson wanted the peace settlement to be guarded by a League of Nations, it is useful to see how his ideas might fit within neo-liberal institutionalism. The counterpart to neo-liberal institutionalism in the debate is neo-realism, that sees anarchy as the driving force in IR. Within this thesis, the policy of Wilson will be placed within those four different schools.

#### IV: Woodrow Wilson and 'Self-determination'

Woodrow Wilson, the future president of the United States, was born on 28 December 1856 in Staunton, Virginia. This time and place meant that he was born in one of the southern states just shortly before the American Civil War. Wilson's father was a Presbyterian minister, as well as the grandfather from his mother's side. He grew up in a very religious family and many of his Christian beliefs would prove to become moral political guidelines. Many of his contemporaries were also religious, but Wilson combined his religion with the idea of a special destiny for himself and his country. One of the only other political leaders that matched on the same level of religiousness was William Gladstone, who served four times as British Prime Minister during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Wilson studied history and political philosophy, subsequently becoming a university lecturer until he was appointed professor in Jurisprudence and Political Economy at Princeton University in 1890. Despite this title, he mainly focussed on history and political science, instead of law and economy. He did most of his research on the pursuit of the perfect government. As Wilson was a great fan of Britain and British philosophers, it was no wonder that in his dissertation *Congressional Government* he compared the American and British Constitution. In his research, he also looked at democratic processes. He wrote that democracy was a stage of development, which could only be reached if people were well-educated. He stressed that certain countries could therefore only achieve democracy if they experienced a period of political tutelage.<sup>136</sup> Still, he thought this was possible for everyone. Based on Calvin's doctrine of equal opportunities, Wilson thought that all men are in potential capable for self-government.<sup>137</sup>

Wilson's political inspiration was derived from multiple sources. Aside from his religious beliefs, he was inspired by the American Founding Fathers as well as British philosophers as Adams Smith and Walter Bagehot. His admiration for Smith and the British statesman Gladstone made him a supporter of free trade. During the early 1890s, when the U.S. had to deal with an economic depression, Wilson was in need of a philosophical compass. This compass would be the political philosopher Edmund Burke and his emphasis on law. During those times of rapid change, he turned to the conservative Burke in order to see how to maintain stability in such a period. Between 1892 and 1894, Wilson taught courses on

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<sup>136</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 6.

<sup>137</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 23.

International Law in which he combined his ideas on democracy, reform, sovereignty and the responsibility to God.<sup>138</sup>

During his period as a student and scholar, his religious belief was represented in something which scholars have referred to as the 'covenant tradition'.<sup>139</sup> American Presbyterians believed in the idea of a covenant that described a special relationship between the U.S. and the Divine Providence. The Presbyterians believed that the U.S. would be prosperous if they lived righteous.<sup>140</sup> As argued by various historians, this idea of a covenant was very important to Wilson. He wrote multiple covenants when he was a young man. Wilson used them to describe one of his best friendships, one was written for his liberal debating club and he even wrote one with his forthcoming wife Ellen Louise Axson. Those constitutions and covenants brought him order in anarchic conditions.<sup>141</sup>

In 1902, Wilson became President of Princeton University. After eight years he left Princeton due to issues with the Board of Trustees of the University. He decided to take the opportunity to run as Democratic nominee for the governorship of New Jersey. He was voted governor in 1910, but already from 1912 onwards he was setting his sights on the presidential election.<sup>142</sup> During the presidential elections of 1912, Wilson won overwhelmingly. This had not only to do with his own campaign, he greatly benefitted from a breach in the Republican party. The republicans were split between the sitting President, William Taft, and his predecessor Theodore Roosevelt. Due to the republican conflict, it was 'a foregone conclusion' that Wilson would win the elections.<sup>143</sup> While having been elected on a domestic programme, he also had a strong opinion on America's role in the world. He witnessed how the U.S. emerged as a world power and he believed that this development put the country in a position to promote its ideals.<sup>144</sup> However, as some historians argued, Wilson suffered from a certain culture-blindness. As a scholar, he had done some comparative research between the U.S. and Britain, but aside from those countries he had little knowledge of other cultures. His view was

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<sup>138</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 8.

<sup>139</sup> John Mulder, "A Gospel of Order: Woodrow Wilson's Religion and Politics," in *The Wilson Era: Essays in Honor of Arthur S. Link*. ed. John Milton Cooper and Charles E. Neu (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, 1991), 227.

<sup>140</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 4.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibidem*, 4.

<sup>142</sup> John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 140.

<sup>143</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 16.

<sup>144</sup> George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 380.

further narrowed by a burden of racism, which was common among his contemporaries. Still, it narrowed his ability to understand and respect people with other racial backgrounds.<sup>145</sup> Besides, Wilson had only paid scant attention to colonial issues. Like many Americans, he admired the model of the British Empire. This model was seen as a model based on benevolent rule and trusteeship, serving the interests of the colonised peoples.<sup>146</sup> Within this model, non-white colonies could gradually grow towards self-determination. This was also how Wilson thought about non-white colonies, including the U.S. colony of the Philippines.<sup>147</sup>

During his campaign, Wilson had denounced the 'dollar diplomacy' of Taft and Roosevelt. This policy was aimed at securing U.S. interest in South America through guaranteeing U.S. loans.<sup>148</sup> Instead, Wilson and William Bryan, the Secretary of State, hoped to guide the peoples in South America towards democracy and freedom. In practice, Wilson and Bryan used a kind of policy similar to that of their predecessors and endorsed a form of dollar diplomacy. When necessary, they used diplomatic pressure and military force and Wilson eventually used military interventionism even more than the former two presidents. Wilson and Bryan saw South American states as weak and unfortunate. They regarded the peoples in South America with a similar paternalism with which they looked upon African Americans in the U.S.<sup>149</sup>

Though South America was a major part of Wilson's foreign policy, his foreign policy would become dominated by the Great War. Inspired by nationalist sentiments, a war started in 1914 of which many people thought it would be over very soon. However, it would prove to be a long war with an enormous number of casualties. Wilson claimed for a long time that the U.S. had to stay neutral, also in order to prevent war among the mixed populations within the United States. At least as important as this domestic reason was the American long tradition of non-involvement in wars between European states, which was known as the Monroe Doctrine. This doctrine included that the U.S. would not interfere in European affairs and expected of the Europeans not to intervene in the Western hemisphere.<sup>150</sup> Overall, neutrality was seen as the most sensible stance. Neutrality, however, proved to be more

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<sup>145</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 381.

<sup>146</sup> Roberts, "Wilson, Europe's Colonial Empires, and the Issue of Imperialism," 495.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibidem*, 496.

<sup>148</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 373.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibidem*, 386.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibidem*, 156.

difficult than most politicians might have expected. Especially due to economic relations, it was in fact impossible to remain unaffected and stay truly neutral.<sup>151</sup>

Even before the war ended, Wilson had thought of a liberal peace program that would be a guideline for the post-war order. According to Wilson, the U.S. was in the position to lead the world to this new post-war order. This was partially based on the rise of the U.S. as a world power and partially on the idea that his country had a special destiny. The horrors of the war had made visible that the old European order contained many flaws. Therefore, Wilson regarded it to be the moment to show America's special destiny and build a better world. This sentiment was shared by more Americans who – like Wilson – saw it as a 'God-given' opportunity for the U.S. to become the leader of a new age. A serious debate was sparked between isolationists and internationalists. The isolationists argued that it would be better to keep true to the Monroe doctrine. Internationalism was a political strand that originated in the nineteenth century, and promoted the idea of transcending nationalism on political and economic matters. The American internationalists promoted a foreign policy of active, permanent involvement of the U.S. in international politics, a stance that Wilson increasingly adopted after his re-election in 1916.<sup>152</sup>

To a certain extent, Wilson embodied a broader movement that promoted peace and stability. Within the U.S., as well as in Europe and especially Britain, there was a new sentiment that wanted to change the old politics that had led to the Great War. There were multiple movements and parties in the U.S that promoted peace, of which the League to Enforce Peace (LEP) became the most influential organisation to promote peace and a League of Nations. The LEP mostly consisted of conservative internationalists, including the former president Howard Taft. Its members wanted American participation in a post-war League, but on the other hand did not long for disarmament or self-determination as Wilson did. The organisation attracted much public attention, even outside the U.S. The LEP also had contact with the League of Nations Society in Britain and the Central Organization for a Durable Peace in the Netherlands, which were also pro-league organisations.<sup>153</sup> During a speech for the LEP in 1916, Wilson disclosed his plan for a post-war order. At the heart of this new order, were the

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<sup>151</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 401.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibidem*, 407.

<sup>153</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 56-57.

inviolable rights of peoples and of mankind. The first of those inviolable rights was that 'every people has a right to choose the sovereignty under which they shall live'.<sup>154</sup>

The ideals that were cherished by Wilson were most often not original. As he once admitted, he did not live in isolation and used ideas that were present in the intellectual and moral atmosphere he lived in. Thoughts about the structure for an ideal peace or the idea of a war to end all wars were not uncommon in society. Some of the 'Wilsonian' ideas were already present before Wilson himself had become President. As argued by Ninkovich, the fact that Wilson became President, suggests that 'Wilsonianism was an outgrowth of normal internationalism'.<sup>155</sup> Many of the ideas Wilson expressed had often already been articulated by other American or European politicians or philosophers. However, the necessity of reforming international politics was underlined by the gruesome news from the war front. Since Wilson knew how to promote his liberal peace agenda with passion and eloquence, he became the leading spokesman for this agenda.<sup>156</sup>

In hindsight, it is not strange that a U.S. President would cherish the idea of self-determination. If one looks back to the American War of Independence in the eighteenth century, it is clear that this war was fought based on the same ideas. Robert Lansing, who would replace Bryan as Secretary of State in 1915, wrote in his memoirs that he did not like the term 'self-determination' in itself. However, with regard to the independence of the United States he thought the principle was justly applied. Lansing wrote that the war for secession had been fair and just due to British shortcomings in matters of national safety.<sup>157</sup> This idea has been highlighted in Lansing's writings, but the idea of self-determination was of course more widespread and was strongly related to the existence and the story of becoming an independent U.S.<sup>158</sup>

One of the first moments that Wilson publicly revealed his peace aims was in an address to the senate on 22 January 1917, which became to be known as 'Peace without Victory'.<sup>159</sup> In this speech, he made clear that one had to blame the balance of power as cause

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<sup>154</sup> "An Address in Washington to the League to Enforce Peace," 27 May, 1916, in Arthur S. Link, et al. *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson (PWW)*, 69 vols. (Princeton, 1966), vol. 37, 113-116, there 115.

<sup>155</sup> Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy since 1900* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999): 68.

<sup>156</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 411.

<sup>157</sup> Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations*, 97.

<sup>158</sup> Unterberger, "The United States and National Self-Determination," 927-929.

<sup>159</sup> "An Address to the Senate," 22 January, 1917, *PWW* 40, 533-539.

for the European conflict. He stated that a peace without victory was the only option to make sure that revenge would not cause another war. Instead of a balance of power, he promoted a community of power.<sup>160</sup> During this address he also pointed out some of his other aims, such as freedom of the seas and limited armaments. On the issue of nations, he said that the equality of small and great nations had to be recognized and, most importantly, that all governments derived their power from the consent of the people and that peoples themselves as a consequence had the right to form their own government.<sup>161</sup> Wilson used the idea of consent by the governed, instead of self-determination. Besides, he also stated that people should not live under a government that is devoted to a faith or purpose hostile to their own. Confusingly, he continued his speech by giving Poland as an example of a region that should be united, independent and autonomous. The latter example seemed to be more related to self-determination than to self-government. Nonetheless, the address by Wilson was the first time that a statesman had so openly and radically critiqued European imperialism and balance-of-power politics.<sup>162</sup>

During the period of this speech, Wilson attempted to reach a peace compromise between both sides. The President expected that he could mediate an end to the war due to his platform of neutrality.<sup>163</sup> His attempts did not succeed, since none of the belligerents accepted mediation by the United States. Early 1917, a series of events happened, including the German decision to start unrestricted submarine warfare, the sinking of multiple U.S. vessels, and the Zimmerman Telegram. After those events the American President decided to declare war on Germany in April 1917. Besides, by this time Wilson was of the opinion that it would only be through military intervention that he could secure a place at the peace table and have influence on the post-war order. The United States would join the war as an 'associated power', which meant that they would fight among the Allied forces without formally being part of the Allies. Already from an early stage of American participation, Wilson and his advisors wondered how far the British and French were willing to go in adhering to the U.S. wishes for a peace settlement. Wilson thought that without U.S. involvement peace negotiations would lead to a Carthaginian peace.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> "An Address to the Senate," 22 January, 1917, *PWW* 40, 536.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibidem*, 536-539.

<sup>162</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 115.

<sup>163</sup> Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century*, 55.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibidem*, 62.

Meanwhile, the USSR introduced an ideological challenge for the world powers. After the revolution in Russia, their leadership wanted a peace without annexation, in which 'national self-determination' would be key. On 29 December 1917, Leon Trotsky asked the Western Allies if self-determination would play a role in the settlement of Europe and even outside of Europe. This question by Trotsky provoked both the US and Britain to come with an answer. Lloyd George gave a speech on 5 January 1918 in which he explained that peace would not lead to annexations and that they would take national self-determination as a general principle. The Prime Minister claimed that the consent of the governed had to be the basis of international settlement, not only in Europe, but also in Arabia and the German colonies.<sup>165</sup>

Three days later, on 8 January, Wilson gave a public statement on his peace program and post-war world order. During this famous Fourteen Points speech, he laid down fourteen aims which should form the basis of a peace agreement after the war.<sup>166</sup> In Wilson's opinion the U.S. had to take the lead in order to make a just and lasting peace. Wilson accused European imperialism of exploiting helpless peoples and leading to tensions among the European countries. It would be best for people all over the world if the new order would be reformed along liberal-capitalist lines. Part of his peace program was the idea that colonial empires should eventually be dissolved and the inhabitants should be given the right to determine their own government and destiny.<sup>167</sup>

His fifth point in the speech was about the colonies. Wilson told congress that 'a free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined'.<sup>168</sup> During his entire speech, and in this particular point, Wilson did not use the word self-determination. However, it was clear that he took into account the interests of the colonial people and referred to a system in which a government had to consult the will of the people. This description may not be the same as national self-determination, but, it can be regarded as the first step towards a process of self-government

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<sup>165</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 37.

<sup>166</sup> "An Address to a Joint Session of Congress," 8 January 1918, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson* 45, 534-539. This address came to be known as the Fourteen Points speech, for the Fourteen points see Appendix 1.

<sup>167</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 412.

<sup>168</sup> "An Address to a Joint Session of Congress," 8 January 1918, 537.



and eventually self-determination. Moreover, it demonstrated that Wilson saw self-determination as a long-term objective, that could gradually be reached.

In his speech, point six till thirteen were all about territorial rearrangements in Europe and Turkey. During his statements, Wilson referred multiple times to the right of people to choose their own form of government. Besides, he emphasized the importance of territorial integrity and autonomous development. The speech was welcomed with enthusiasm among many of his political friends, such as Secretary of State Lansing. The message of the speech travelled all over the world and raised many hopes. According to Heater, Trotsky had used national self-determination to attack imperialists, while Lloyd George had replied with a remarkably modern idea about the capacities of people in the colonies. However, Heater argues that Wilson's point on 'colonial claims' was rather vague and did not specify whether it only dealt with German colonies or had a wider application.<sup>169</sup> This may have been one of the most profound reasons for the high hopes that caused the 'Wilsonian moment'.<sup>170</sup>

Nonetheless, the Fourteen Points were seen as a mild peace proposal. While the speech itself had a profound impact on the image of Wilson, it is important to note that American and British officials had already been in a transatlantic dialogue about a League of Nations and German colonies. The first reason for the British to cooperate with Wilson was that British politicians, especially from the Liberal Party, had to deal with the same liberal political sentiment that both hampered and empowered Wilson.<sup>171</sup> Britain had justified its involvement in the war based on the defence of Belgian neutrality and international law. New sentiment among liberals, especially in the U.S. and Britain, had denounced annexations. Furthermore, the conquest of German colonies in Africa was only accepted by most people since it would free African people from the brutal German rule. It was clear to most British politicians that they would have to think of a justified post-war order, therefore they were more than willing to think along with Wilson. Lloyd George also expressed this in June 1917 when he stated that the wishes, desires and interest of the native African people were the most important factor in decisions on the future government of those territories. Those ideas also fitted with the moral leadership that British politicians were keen to demonstrate.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 43.

<sup>170</sup> Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, xi.

<sup>171</sup> Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 24.

<sup>172</sup> Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 24.

A second reason for British support for the Wilsonian ideas was because it could fit with the British imperial rule. Contrary to some other colonisers, the British had made fame with a form of 'indirect rule'. Within this concept, the British cooperated and traded with local rulers. Lloyd George also emphasized this in his speech in January 1918, when he said that there were chiefs in the German colonies that could speak for their tribes. Within the British imperial rule, they handed some power to local rulers. Therefore, some kind of authority for native groups, as they understood the Wilsonian principle, was in harmony with the British view of imperial rule.<sup>173</sup> Moral leadership and the possibilities for a form of British imperial rule, led British politicians to support Wilson's ideas for more autonomy.

Although many commentators have characterized Wilson as a politician who changed the course of international politics, it is clear that Wilson was also a child of his time. His ideas for peace and an international organisation were not new, many of these ideas were during wartime already advocated by various groups. In hindsight, it seems almost self-evident that Wilson would promote the idea of self-determination. His notion of national self-determination was a hybrid form of several ideas. It was partly based on Wilson's religious ideas about the capacities of people and the development of human beings. His ideas of human development and the possibility of democratic development were based on both religious ideas as well as his scholarly work on comparative government. Furthermore, the idea of self-determination can also be traced back to liberalism and the philosophers that inspired him. He relied greatly on the works of scholars such as Burke, but also relied on the ideas of the American Founding Fathers. Like many liberals, he defended the idea of fundamental human rights, including the right to live under a chosen sovereign. It is important to note that most pre-war speeches did not indicate that he wanted states to seek independence, but rather talked about sovereignty and consent. Besides, when he spoke about independence, he saw it as a long-term objective, that could only be reached gradually. Therefore, it seems more suitable to use the idea of self-government instead of self-determination.

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<sup>173</sup> Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 25.

## V: Preparing the Conference: The Inquiry

As shown, the history about the Paris Peace Conference did not start in Paris. During the preceding one and a half year there had already been much discussion. For some U.S. officials it was clear that preparations needed to be made before the conference would start in Paris. One of these officials stated that it would be impossible for the U.S. delegates at the conference to have the full knowledge of all complex issues that could be discussed. Therefore, they composed a group of various experts to prepare for the issues that could arise during the peace conference. This group, that would come to be known as The Inquiry, was composed of 150 academics. Many of them had a degree in history, geography or (international) law. The Inquiry was directed by Wilson's chief advisor Edward House, better known as Colonel House. The organisation was supervised by the philosopher Sidney Mezes, who was also a close family member to House. In his duties, Mezes was assisted by journalist Walter Lippman as research director. Mezes wrote a memorandum to Lippmann in November 1917. In this memorandum he had drafted a list of the subjects the Inquiry should deal with. Most notably, the list was composed of areas which he expected to be a point of discussion during the peace conference. The memo listed twelve areas, from Alsace-Lorraine up to the former German colonies.<sup>174</sup>

The work of the Inquiry would be of vital importance to the negotiators at the conference and they had a lot of influence. As historian Volker Prott has argued, the task of turning Wilsonian ideas into policy and reality was delegated to 'a new species of actors', which were the professional academics who were deployed as experts before and during the conference.<sup>175</sup> The British and French delegation had a counterpart to the American Inquiry. The French *comité d'études* and the British Political Intelligence Department also collected information which they presented to their political leaders. Yet, there was little cooperation or coordination between these three teams of experts.

The Inquiry had a troubled relationship with the State department. Often, the team members sought, depending on the issue, direct contact with Colonel House, Lansing or Wilson. One of the challenges for the team was the lack of American specialists on the Balkans, Turkey and Africa. Therefore, many of the reports by the Inquiry relied heavily on second-hand

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<sup>174</sup> "Dr. S.E. Mezes to Mr. Walter Lippmann," 10 November, 1917, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States (FRUS): 1919, The Paris Peace Conference I* (Washington, DC, 1943), 16-17.

<sup>175</sup> Volker Prott, "Tying up the Loose Ends of Nation Self-Determination: British, French and American Experts in Peace Planning," *The Historical Journal* 57 (2014): 729.

sources. Furthermore, many of the experts on those areas had a personal link to one of the countries or groups involved. This resulted in a problem, since it seemed as if the experts had a 'pet nationality'.<sup>176</sup>

Besides, the experts did not always share the same opinions as their leaders. In a memorandum on the suggested peace terms written in December 1917, the Inquiry wrote just a single sentence on the American 'assets' outside of Europe. The report stated that 'the German colonies are obvious material to bargain with, as is Germany's exclusion from the Pacific and from Central and South America'.<sup>177</sup> However, this view on Germany's colonies in Africa as bargaining chips changed later on. The expert on African colonies was George Louis Beer, a historian who during his career wrote multiple books about the English colonial system. In his writings he emphasized the economic profits of the colonial system and he was a scholar of the 'imperialist school'. At the end of February 1918, Beer had finished his report on the 'German colonies in Africa'. Beer wrote that German imperialism was born out of jealousy of the British success.<sup>178</sup> He criticised the German attitude towards the natives in Africa. The natives had witnessed a decrease in their living conditions under German rule. The colonies were exploited by forced labour. Furthermore, the German colonists regarded the natives to be inferior, who had as goal to 'serve the ends of the white man'.<sup>179</sup> The colonial expert also wrote that the fate of the German colonies would depend upon dominant factors, such as the economic and military situation in the future.<sup>180</sup> At the end of the report, Beer tried to give an analysis from the standpoint of an impartial judge. He concluded that an impartial judge would agree with the arguments of the natives. Accordingly, from that standpoint one would not favour the re-establishment of German rule, since Germany had failed in her 'duties of colonial trusteeship'.<sup>181</sup> Beer did not mention the idea of national self-determination in Africa. However, his opinion on the future of the Cameroons did bear some resemblance with a mandate system. He wrote that it did not matter much 'which flag flies in the Cameroons' as long as it would be under international control whereby native rights were

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<sup>176</sup> Prott, "Tying up the Loose Ends of Nation Self-Determination, 738.

<sup>177</sup> "The Inquiry-Memorandum Submitted December 22, 1917," 22 December, 1917, *FRUS: 1919, The Paris Peace Conference I*, 45.

<sup>178</sup> George Louis Beer, *The German Colonies in Africa*, 25 February 1918, DOC 52, in *Select Reports of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace*, accessed from the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (RIAS).

<sup>179</sup> Beer, *The German Colonies in Africa*, 34.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibidem*, 70.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibidem*, 71.

maintained and the mandatory of the powers were honest in their trusteeship and imperialistic goals were renounced.<sup>182</sup>

In April 1918 the Inquiry wrote a report on territorial questions. Those territorial questions could be handled according to the principle of self-determination, such as countries on Germany's eastern border. However, African colonies and Pacific islands were placed in another category, which they referred to as 'states under belligerent occupation in which no national consciousness exists'.<sup>183</sup> In another report that described in detail the economic situation in Africa, Beer also wrote a chapter on the 'development of African civilization'.<sup>184</sup> In hindsight, although the view expressed by Beer in this chapter may look racist, during the time it was a more common point of view. In the report he wrote that 'negro people' were not able to develop themselves, this was only possible under tutelage of other peoples.<sup>185</sup> According to the author, African people could not reach the same intellectual stage due to physical limits such as their cranial structure. Though, according to Beer the 'negro' had less intellectual capabilities, he was of the opinion that African people had potential to make progress. He argued that colonial powers had hindered the conditions for the African people to reach their full possibilities. Therefore, Beer argued that exploitation by the European colonizers was not only selfish, but also counterproductive.<sup>186</sup> Nonetheless, he also saw that colonies could work, as in the case of British West Africa. Beer wrote that colonial administration did function properly in this area due to an equitable land system and a liberal labour policy.<sup>187</sup> One of the key elements was that the report described the British colonial system as the best way to secure progress of the natives and denounced the German policy. This report by the Inquiry expressed a view that in certain ways reflected Wilson's assumptions about tutelage and the development of peoples.

Research on the Inquiry and the other expert groups shows that national self-determination was a well-known idea during the preparations for the conference. However, it became an umbrella concept which was used by various experts and many ethnic groups,

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<sup>182</sup> Beer, *The German Colonies in Africa*, 77.

<sup>183</sup> "Mr. Walter Lippmann to Dr. S.E. Mezes and Mr. D.H. Miller," 17 April, 1918, *FRUS: 1919, The Paris Peace Conference I*, 73.

<sup>184</sup> George Louis Beer, *Central Africa: The Economic Aspects of the Problem*, 2 May 1918, DOC 49, 140-152, in *Select Reports of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace*, accessed from the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (RIAS).

<sup>185</sup> Beer, *Central Africa: The Economic Aspects of the Problem*, 140.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibidem*, 141.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibidem*, 142.

and was interpreted in different ways. The application of the principle was dependant on a variety of conditions besides ethnicity, such as political will, historical achievements, the degree of civilization and the ability for self-government.<sup>188</sup> Due to the unclear meaning of the concept, all expert groups interpreted the principle of national self-determination in such a way as suited them best.<sup>189</sup> To many experts of the Inquiry it was unclear whether national self-determination was a guiding principle or just one of multiple variables that was part of the peace planning. The concept was not only vague to the members of the Inquiry, but to all expert groups. Furthermore, as argued by Prott, national self-determination was more often implied in areas in which the concept of 'nationality' was a more known and widespread concept.<sup>190</sup> Consequently, national self-determination had very limited result in the German colonies due to the fact that the concept of nationality was new or unknown in those areas.

The reports by the Inquiry on the German colonies also showed how the war changed the policy options. Shortly after the Great War had started, the Allied and Dominions governments had sent troops to German colonies. The Pacific islands Samoa and Nauru were seized within months. New Guinea and many other islands in the Pacific soon followed. By mid-October 1914, all former German colonies in the Pacific had been captured.<sup>191</sup> The colonies in Africa were more difficult to seize. Togoland and Cameroon fell quite soon in Allied hands, but more interior colonies were not as easy to capture. After four years, they were able to get a grip on German East Africa. Most important, when those areas had fallen in Allied hands, they would stay in Allied hands for at least the remaining period of war.

By October 1918, when Germany showed interest for an armistice, all former German colonies and the Ottoman Arab areas were controlled by the Allies. The German leadership requested an armistice based on the fourteen points by Wilson. This to the satisfaction of Wilson, who knew that the Allies had a different view and wanted to get a victor's peace. Britain, Italy and especially France sought territorial gains at Germany's expense.<sup>192</sup> Wilson decided to send Colonel House to Europe in order to deal with the Allies. Therefore, the Colonel travelled to Europe to meet representatives of the other European powers and to reach an agreement. However, Britain, France and Italy all had some objections to the

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<sup>188</sup> Prott, "Tying up the Loose Ends of Nation Self-Determination," 744.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibidem*, 743-744.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibidem*, 744.

<sup>191</sup> Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 19.

<sup>192</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 416.

Fourteen Points, but after some explanation and mediation, they accepted the Fourteen Points as a basis for peace.<sup>193</sup> On the issue of the fifth point on colonial claims, most objections were taken away by the American commentary. The 'Official American Commentary on the Fourteen Points' claimed that, though there had been some uncertainty about this point within the French and British government, it was not the aim to re-open the entire colonial question. The principle of the Fourteen Points would only be applied to the colonial claims that had been created by the war.<sup>194</sup> According to the commentary, the future of the colonies should be decided first upon 'equitable' claims, and secondly upon the interest of the people concerned. In the document was written that the main argument to not hand the colonies back to Germany, was because of 'equitable' claims. The Germans would use the colonies as submarine bases, use the population as military force, and oppress the original peoples. Instead, according to the new principles, the new colonial power should not act as owner, but rather as a trustee. This also meant that the trustee should act in the interest of the people, which meant no militarization, an economic open door policy and improvement of the infrastructure and organisation of the colony. This important task would only be handed to a power with adequate resources in money and administrators.<sup>195</sup> In hindsight, the American commentary and the agreement were a significant moment in the evolvement of the later mandatory system.

The armistice was signed on 11 November, which was a major breakthrough after four years of war. However, this was not yet the moment to speak about the conditions of peace settlement, and the world leaders decided to postpone further discussions and organise a conference. On 27 November 1918, the American Military Attaché in London informed the War department about the British foreign policy for the conference. The British Foreign Office had not yet informed France and Italy, since they first wanted to consult the Americans. On the issue of former German colonies, they made clear to the U.S. that those could not be returned to Germany. Instead, some of those former colonies could be given to European

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<sup>193</sup> *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House* arranged by Charles Seymour, Vol IV: The Ending of the War, June 1918 - November 1919 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928), 180.

<sup>194</sup> *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 201.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibidem*, 201-202.

powers, such as Britain and France. The Foreign Office thought that the other colonies could be handed over to the League.<sup>196</sup>

While all governments started to prepare for the conference, it was in the early days still unclear if Wilson would even attend the conference at all. Many of his key advisors, such as Robert Lansing tried to persuade Wilson not to go to Paris.<sup>197</sup> They were not alone. Many American politicians thought that by attending the conference, he would not have time to handle domestic affairs. Furthermore, Wilson would be the first sitting American president to set foot on European soil. It would be quite extraordinary for a U.S. President to attend an overseas conference. Clemenceau and Lloyd George told him that he was welcome in Europe, but advised him to stay away from the negotiations. However, on 18 November, a week after the armistice, a statement was released that Wilson would attend the conference himself.<sup>198</sup> Wilson made this decision merely because of the European objections and the idea that they wanted to exclude him from the conference. Wilson feared that if he was excluded, the peace would be dictated by the Allied statesmen.<sup>199</sup> After Wilson's decision to attend the conference, he started selecting his delegation. He decided that advisor House and secretary Lansing would be part of his delegation. The two other delegates would be general Tasker Bliss, who was the former chief of the U.S. army, and Henry White, a former ambassador in Italy and France. Those five men would be the official commissioners, often referred to as chief delegates. The American President did not include prominent Republicans, such as former President Howard Taft or Henry Cabot Lodge, the senate majority leader.<sup>200</sup>

After Wilson had completed his delegation and support staff, they left the port of New York on 6 December 1918 on a ship named *George Washington*. During their journey, many of the Inquiry experts were working on various papers and maps in order to prepare for the conference. While on board, House already mentioned that the principle of self-determination might prove to be quite thorny.<sup>201</sup> One of the experts was W.C. Bullitt, who told the President that he and many of the experts were still in the dark about his ideas and the American policy.

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<sup>196</sup> "The Military Attaché at London (Slocum) to the Chief of Staff, War Department (March)," 27 November, 1918, *FRUS: 1919, The Paris Peace Conference I*, 408-409.

<sup>197</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson*, 457.

<sup>198</sup> "President Wilson to the Special Representative (House)," 17 November, 1918, *FRUS: 1919, The Paris Peace Conference I*, 136-137.

<sup>199</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson*, 457.

<sup>200</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 189-190.

<sup>201</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson*, 461.



To answer those questions, Wilson organized a meeting in which he explained his ideas for the conference. The President expressed that the German colonies should become common property of the League of Nations, and should be handed to smaller states to administer them as mandatory of the League. The aim was to let them be administered primarily in the interest of the native people.<sup>202</sup> Wilson did not only support the mandate system for the sake of the colonial people, but also to strengthen the League he had in mind. He said that 'nothing stabilizes an institution so well, as the possession of property'.<sup>203</sup> Therefore, it seems that Wilson's idea of internationalisation of the former colonies was not solely based on moral ideas, but also on the conviction that it would strengthen the League he so heartedly desired. His explanation during their journey was the first time that Wilson approved in front of the Inquiry staff on a precursor of the mandate system.

On the issue of peace making, the U.S. President stated that their country would hold the position of arbiter, since they would be the only disinterested people at the conference. He claimed that the U.S. had not entered the war for selfish reasons, as most of the European countries had.<sup>204</sup> During their meetings aboard, he also talked about the U.S. position regarding other territorial questions. Wilson described how the U.S. had brought democracy to places such as Cuba, Haiti and Nicaragua. He argued that their sole purpose had been to help the process of self-government in these Central American countries. He did not mention that the U.S. interventions were also executed in order to protect the Panama Canal.<sup>205</sup> Wilson also elaborated on the difficulties related to the territorial issues in Europe, and he said that new nations could have the form of government they wanted, but he insisted that they had to contain only those people who wanted to be part of the state.

Beer, who had written many reports on the African colonies, also wanted to know more about Wilson's aims for the conference. After writing all these reports, he now wanted to establish a concrete plan. When he spoke Wilson during their journey, he found the ideas of the President rather vague. Wilson had told him that the German colonies should become internationalised through the League of Nations. The President thought that the responsibility for administration of those colonies should be placed with some small non-imperial powers, instead of being governed by the League itself. In particular, Wilson believed that the

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<sup>202</sup> "From the Diary of William Christian Bullitt," 9 December, 1918, *PWW* 53, 351.

<sup>203</sup> *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 296.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibidem*, 291.

<sup>205</sup> MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 9.

Scandinavian countries would fit this role of administering the former German colonies.<sup>206</sup> While Beer did agree with most of Wilson's principles, he did not think this plan had much chance of success. He thought that the Scandinavian countries were not well-equipped for such a task. Those countries lacked money, resources and experience for the tutelage of backward peoples. Beer, of course, thought that only Great Britain would be able to take upon this burden. Many British politicians shared his view.<sup>207</sup>

Of all the ideas and principles that sailed with Wilson from the U.S. to Europe, the concept of self-determination proved one of the most ambiguous and most controversial ideas.<sup>208</sup> The head of the American mission in Vienna asked during the peace conference several times for an explanation of the term, but it never came. One of his own delegates, Lansing, also wondered what kind of unit the President was thinking of when talking about the application of self-determination. Lansing thought the ideal of self-determination was in some ways both hopeful and hopeless. The Secretary of State thought that it would raise hopes that could never be realised. And he feared that it would be discredited in the end, as a dream of an idealist who attempted to put the principle into force.<sup>209</sup>

The word self-determination did have different meanings to different people. Lansing and many others equated it as the 'consent of the governed', which seemed quite similar to Wilson's own understanding.<sup>210</sup> The secretary did not like the principle at all, and after the conference he regretted that the European negotiators had not persuaded the President to disavow the term. Instead, it became one of the leading principles for the peace conference. Lansing wrote that self-determination had been accepted by many political philosophers as a respectable theory for over three centuries, but that statesman had always opposed it since the principle was unpractical and would always jeopardy national safety. Lansing believed that without a clear and practical definition, the principle was dangerous for peace and stability.<sup>211</sup> The secretary said this because he thought the term was loaded with dynamite since it could also lead to requests for self-government from Egypt, Syria and Palestine.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 18.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibidem*, 18.

<sup>208</sup> MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 11.

<sup>209</sup> Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations*, 97-98.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibidem*, 96.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibidem*, 96.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibidem*, 97.

After nine days at sea, the *George Washington* arrived at France. From this point, Wilson would be welcomed in Europe as a hero. He was celebrated by two million people who gathered at the Champs Élysées to see him during his parade, while people shouted 'Vive Wilson!'. Similar – though slightly smaller – scenes occurred in Carlisle, Manchester and Milan. During this welcome tour, Wilson also made some important statements about the old world order. In Manchester, he said that the U.S. would not attend the conference to restore the balance of power, instead internationalisation would be his answer. He was opposed by Clemenceau, who told the press a few days later that he still held to this old system of alliances, that was now being discredited. Thus, from the moment Wilson had arrived in Europe, the Prime Ministers of the Allied countries would follow his moves with suspicion.<sup>213</sup>

When Wilson had arrived in Paris, he immediately called Colonel House to discuss new amendments to a covenant for the League of Nations. Much was still similar to the draft that the Colonel had written himself when he was still in the U.S., which was nicknamed the Magnolia covenant. The President had added one new feature to the covenant, the principle of the mandates. Although House was familiar with the idea, it was the first time that the President had described the mandatory states as 'residuary trustees' over former German and Turkey territories.<sup>214</sup>

In Paris, Wilson also had a private meeting with the British ambassador Lord Derby, who was horrified when the President pointed out that the League of Nations ought to control the German colonies after the peace conference.<sup>215</sup> During Wilson's visit to Britain, Lloyd George expressed the hope that the U.S. would be satisfied with a League of Nations, so that they could take away the pressure on the colonial claims. During a meeting on 30 December 1918, Wilson told Lloyd George that he did not want the colonies to be returned to Germany and he explained his idea for a mandatory system. Additionally, Wilson explicitly told him that there was a clear distinction between the German colonies that were conquered by the Dominions, and those territories that had already been under British rule prior to the war. He told that he had no plan to dispose Britain of the latter group. The English Prime Minister said that he was willing to pull back his troops from German East Africa, if they would be entrusted with the mandate.<sup>216</sup> The issue of the colonies in the Pacific proved to be even more difficult,

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<sup>213</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 197.

<sup>214</sup> *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 294-295.

<sup>215</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson*, 464.

<sup>216</sup> "Memorandum Imperial War Cabinet," 30 December, 1918, *PWW* 53, 562.

since Britain had envisioned that New Guinea could become Australian territory. Wilson, of course, had very different views on the issue.

While Wilson was explaining his view to Lloyd George, not everyone of the American delegation supported the President's ideas. Lansing wrote in his diary that during these days, he felt that while more and more groups expressed their hopes for self-determination, he became more anxious to give peoples new hope. He wondered what the effect would be among nationalist groups in Ireland, South-Africa and India.<sup>217</sup> Whereas Lloyd George saw overlap in many of the British and American peace aims, some members of his Imperial War Cabinet did not.<sup>218</sup> This cabinet had coordinated the wartime efforts for the British Empire, and thus included representatives from the Dominions. A minority, led by the Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes, thought that it was unreasonable that Wilson could tell them what to do on issues such as disarmament and colonial claims. Hughes warned that they should not find themselves 'dragged behind the wheels of President Wilson's chariot'.<sup>219</sup> Moreover, regarding the German colonies in the Pacific, Hughes had the idea that Wilson did not understand the situation and the Australian wishes. The British politician Lord Curzon expressed that this feeling was shared by more members of the cabinet. He suggested that, if Wilson would maintain this view regarding the German colonies during the conference, it would be useful for the British delegation to seek an alliance with Clemenceau.<sup>220</sup> This controversy led to a heated debate within the British cabinet on 30 and 31 December.<sup>221</sup> Nonetheless, the British PM proved to be a clever politician. He saw the American wish for a League of Nations and he told his colleagues that if they would consent with some of the most important points, Wilson seemed open to compromise on several other issues that were of importance for the British, such as the future of Germany's colonies.<sup>222</sup> In contrast to the Australian PM Hughes, some members of the Imperial War cabinet were passionate advocates of the League. Robert Cecil, the under-secretary for Foreign Affairs and Jan Smuts, the South-African statesman in the cabinet, were important cabinet members and had written several papers on the peace program. Smuts' paper *The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion of*

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<sup>217</sup> Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations*, 97.

<sup>218</sup> "Memorandum Imperial War Cabinet," 30 December, 1918, *PWW* 53, 566.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibidem*, 565.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibidem*, 566

<sup>221</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 200.

<sup>222</sup> MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 21.

December 1918 was the most comprehensive British writing on the issue. Its most original feature was the incorporation of a mandate system.<sup>223</sup>

Smuts wrote that now the great empires had vanished, it was upon the League to step in. He wrote that those empires were falling apart, and had left many territories with people that were not politically trained. He thought that 'many of them are either incapable or deficient in the power of self-government'.<sup>224</sup> He concluded that self-determination would only be a solution to the break-up of the Ottoman, Russian and Austro-Hungarian empire. Smuts wrote that a mandatory system should be applied to those former empires. For those mandates, the idea of self-determination had to be applied as far as possible. However, Smuts had excluded the German colonies from this system. With regard to the German colonies in the Pacific and Africa, which were inhabited by 'barbarians', Smuts considered it impracticable to give those people any political self-determination in the European sense. Due to the large differences in development, most European areas would be able to rule themselves quite quickly, while former German colonies in the Pacific and Africa were not.<sup>225</sup> However, Smuts had probably also left out the German colonies in order to make direct annexation by the British Empire possible, as in the case of South-Africa. By keeping this option open, the South African President still had the possibility to annex German South West Africa.

Smuts did also not want the German colonies to become internationalised and administered by the League itself, as Wilson had proposed. In Smuts view, that would enlarge the risk for this new organisation to be discredited. Therefore, the best solution would be to nominate a particular state to act on behalf of territories that needed administrative assistance, the former would be called the mandatory state.<sup>226</sup> Smuts was of opinion that the mandates as he had described them, were congruent with the principle of self-determination as far as was possible.

The idea of a mandate system was not entirely new in Britain. The English economist and social scientist J.A. Hobson, who was known for being a critic of the imperialist system, had written that a form of international trusteeship could be the first step towards phasing

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<sup>223</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 201.

<sup>224</sup> Jan Christiaan Smuts, *The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918), 11.

<sup>225</sup> Smuts, *The League of Nations*, 15.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibidem*, 30.

out colonialism.<sup>227</sup> As described, George Louis Beer had developed similar accounts based on trusteeship in his reports for the Inquiry. While the idea of mandates was a work of many minds, it was Smuts with his suggestions who would often be seen as the one with the first practical application of Wilson's ideals.

In sum, the period between the summer of 1917 and the beginning of the actual conference was crucial for the development of ideas for a peace settlement. The Inquiry started to write plans and gathered information for a peace programme. While one of the first documents still described the German colonies as bargaining material for the negotiations, the proposals of the Inquiry started to demonstrate a more Wilsonian view. However, some of Wilson's aims had been unclear, to his own personnel and to the British and French expert groups. This led to the fact that the word of self-determination became an umbrella term with different meanings. Hence, the term was used by the experts in the way that suited them best. Since many of their proposals were used by their delegation, this led to crucial differences. Therefore, this thesis also supports the writings of Prott on the importance of the expert groups in preparing the conference. It becomes clear that especially the Anglo-American dialogue on a future settlement would become important from the start.

Furthermore, it is evident that the mandate system was an idea that leaned on various backgrounds. The idea of tutelage fitted with Wilson's world view and his idea of self-government as explained in the previous chapter. He clearly placed the interests of the peoples concerned above the interests of the Western leaders. The idea of a mandate system also provided those people with as much self-government as possible. Above all, it was a practical form for his liberal ideas about national self-determination. This new analysis also proves that the idea of a mandate system did not originate from Smuts, as some historians stated. Wilson had already envisaged a mandate system that should be administered by small non-imperial powers and with a lot of authority for the League.

While the ideas of Wilson were incorporated in many of their writings, during this period one could envision that Wilson's ideas would collide with some of the Allied powers. Wilson's decision to apply self-government only to the German colonies, instead of all colonies, shows that he was aware of the limits of his power. He did not want to antagonize

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<sup>227</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 203.

the British by depriving them of their colonies or to start a discussion about the status of the Philippines as colony of the U.S.

## VI: Making a Start with the Conference

The peacemakers of 1919 were in some sense the successors of the statesmen at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Like those men, they had to rethink the borders of the European countries. Yet, Wilson was not fond of the comparison with the Concert of Vienna. According to the President, there was no historical precedent for the task they were facing.<sup>228</sup> Which to some degree is valid, since this conference would not be limited to Europe, they would also discuss the future borders in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Oceania. As stated by Margaret MacMillan, self-determination was the watchword during the conference, but this idea proved not to be a help in making decisions on new borders, due to the claims by competing nationalisms.<sup>229</sup>

It had become clear that the Allies still held to ambitious imperial goals. Meanwhile, the war and Wilson's speeches had given hope to many oppressed peoples over the world. Representatives of various nationalities had come to Paris to make a claim for racial equality.<sup>230</sup> The idea of national self-determination and Wilsonianism stood for a goal that would be almost impossible to reach. The British delegation often showed support for the idea of national self-determination, while the French were less convinced about this new principle. The French cabinet assumed that it would be difficult to establish a good and fair distribution of populations. Moreover, the French also thought that the idea of self-determination could hamper economic interests.<sup>231</sup>

The British had concluded that it would be a bad strategy to antagonize the American delegation by trying to turn the German colonies into a part of the British empire. Instead the view of general Smuts became more prominent and on behalf of the British empire the South African statesman had written a first proposal. Before the conference started, Wilson had received a draft of *The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion* by Jan Smuts. Wilson read the draft by Smuts during the first days of January and relied heavily on the document when he typed out his own 'covenant' for the conference. In his covenant, Wilson wrote about organisational structure of the League, as well as about the aims of the League including arms reduction, freedom of the seas and territorial integrity.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 28 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 310-331, there 314.

<sup>229</sup> MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, xxix.

<sup>230</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 418.

<sup>231</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 55.

<sup>232</sup> "A Draft of a Covenant for a League of Nations," 8 January, 1919, *PWW* 53, 678-686.



Whole paragraphs of Smuts' draft, especially on the bicameral structure of the League and on the mandate system, were incorporated in Wilson's covenant, although now written in a Wilsonian style and tone.<sup>233</sup> This covenant became Wilson's 'First Paris Draft', in which he wrote that supplementary provisions were necessary to deal with the former German colonies as well as the former territories of Russia, Austro-Hungarian and Turkey. Wilson thus used the proposal of Smuts, but made a significant change by adding the former German colonies in his draft. He envisioned that the rule of 'self-determination, or the consent of the governed' should be applied.<sup>234</sup> The American lawyer and member of the Inquiry David Hunter Miller was sent to Robert Cecil to see if they could harmonize the British and American plans.

On January 10, Wilson had a meeting with his Secretary of State. During this meeting, Lansing expressed his criticism on the covenant by the President. Lansing said that he had some objections to provisions written in the covenant and doubted some lines of policy, with the mandatory system being one of the main issues of disagreement. According to Lansing, the President was not willing to listen to his comments. Wilson told him that he did not want lawyers to draft the treaty. Since Lansing was a lawyer, he regarded this to be a disapproval of him by the President. This meeting led to a breach between Lansing and Wilson. A breach that, according to Lansing, was too wide and deep to be healed.<sup>235</sup>

Like Smuts had adopted the President's principle of 'self-determination' in his report, Wilson would likewise incorporate many of Smuts' proposals. The South African Prime Minister had described the League as 'the heir of Empires', which would catch Wilson's attention and which Wilson would restate in his own discussion on the League and the system of mandates. Lansing wrote later that Smuts' plan 'unquestionably had decided influence upon his [Wilson's] conception of the right way to dispose of the colonial possessions of Germany'.<sup>236</sup>

Wilson sent copies of his draft to some of his delegates and discussed the draft. After Wilson had received comments from delegation members such as Lansing and Tasker Bliss, he made some adjustments. On January 18, Wilson completed his second draft. Most importantly, he had removed Russia from the list of territories for which they had to seek a solution during the conference. Thus, after he had added the German colonies, he had omitted Russia from the Smuts proposal. With this second Paris draft, it was clear that the U.S. wanted

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<sup>233</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 202.

<sup>234</sup> "A Draft of a Covenant for a League of Nations," 8 January, 1919, *PWW* 53, 685.

<sup>235</sup> Robert Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations*, 108.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibidem*, 82.

the mandatory system to be applied to the former empires of Austria-Hungary, Turkey and the former German colonies. From a selfish point of view, as noted by Miller in his memoirs, those areas under discussion were of almost no interest to the U.S.<sup>237</sup> Most Americans would see the acquisition of African territory as a burden. The U.S. only had warm feelings for the Armenian part of the former Ottoman empire, but acceptance of an Armenian mandatory could probably lead to resistance in the U.S. senate. However, the U.S. government had some different thoughts on the islands in the Pacific. The mandatory power of the islands was not of great importance, but they wanted to prevent those islands to be used as naval bases.<sup>238</sup> The U.S. had a clear position, while the British found themselves in a more complicated position, especially since they wanted to keep the Dominions on board. Meanwhile, some of the British representatives also expressed the view that the British empire was large enough, and that it did not need new colonies.<sup>239</sup>

Furthermore, in this second draft, Wilson insisted that in no case annexation of these territories or former colonies was acceptable. Any authority other than self-organized autonomy could only be executed by the League of Nations. Wilson also claimed in the covenant that the economic policy of the territories should be based primarily upon the 'well-considered interests of the people themselves'.<sup>240</sup> Furthermore, he wrote that under the guardianship of the League, they would aim to establish a political unit that could take charge of its own affairs and make its own policies. He even added that the League should be able to release the mandates from tutelage and make them an independent state. Wilson envisioned that the people of the mandate could even write a petition to the League if they wanted to be released from their mandatory.<sup>241</sup> Bliss had made some suggestions on the mandate system as proposed by Wilson in his draft. The President had judged that it would be best if small states would act as a mandatory. Bliss thought this would be too much of a financial burden on countries with a small budget.<sup>242</sup> Therefore, the second draft noted that such expenses would be financed by the wealthier members of the League. This second draft was the final document in which Wilson explained his peace program before the conference would start.

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<sup>237</sup> David Hunter Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), 103.

<sup>238</sup> Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, 103.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibidem*, 104-105.

<sup>240</sup> "Wilson's Second 'Paris Draft' of the Covenant," 18 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 138-148, there 145.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibidem*, 147.

<sup>242</sup> "From Tasker Howard Bliss, with Enclosure," 15 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 84-88, there 85.

Therefore, some scholars have concluded that this draft was the best representation of Wilson's ideal League and it would become his outline for the coming negotiations.<sup>243</sup> This second draft was also very similar to a new draft by Cecil on the British side, the main difference being that the British draft did not provide for a mandate system.<sup>244</sup>

Though Wilson to some degree accepted comments by Lansing and Bliss, there were still many differences of opinion within the American delegation about the covenant. A residuary trusteeship as stated would be a novelty within world politics, and Lansing thought this would already stir a lot of discussion. But the idea of giving the League the character of an independent state with authority over the mandates would be even more extraordinary. Such a new idea about authority and statehood made that Lansing regarded it as 'an inexpedient and to a degree dangerous adventure'.<sup>245</sup> In Lansing's opinion, Smuts and Wilson had not yet given enough thought about the legal perplexities of the system and the revolutionary idea of authority to this international organisation. Therefore, he thought it would have been wise statesmanship to wait with further claims for the mandate system until legal experts had considered this plan within the framework of international law and policy. Lansing also judged that there was nothing idealistic about Cecil's plans.<sup>246</sup> The draft by Cecil would favour all the Allied countries, therefore Lansing was afraid that it could count on a lot of support.

Only one day after Wilson had finished this second draft, he had a meeting with Cecil and Smuts. They agreed on most guidelines of the League, but there was significant disagreement about practical applications. Smuts also disagreed with the reformulation of the mandate system, which had become too progressive. Those differences were exemplified by a Draft Convention of Lord Cecil. This draft only contained a very vague notion of the mandates and disarmament was not mentioned at all.<sup>247</sup> Meanwhile, the conference had unofficially begun on January 12 with meetings of the Supreme War Council, which was the council that formerly coordinated the Allied planning during the war. The Allied countries and the U.S decided that they would continue as the Council of Ten. This council was made of the heads of state and the foreign ministers of the U.S., Britain, France, Italy and Japan. The official opening of the Paris Peace Conference was on January 18. After an opening speech by the

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<sup>243</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 207.

<sup>244</sup> *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 299.

<sup>245</sup> Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations*, 84.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibidem*, 89.

<sup>247</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 208.

French host and once a League Commission was set up, they started with the future plans for the German colonies. Most of the Council of Ten meetings in January would only deal with the topic of the former German colonies in Africa and the Pacific.

By this time, Wilson was convinced that a system of mandates would be a fair outcome. Wilson opened the debate with a plea for the former colonies to become mandate territories under the League of Nations. The U.S. President had two reasons for proposing the mandate system. The first reason was to prevent the imperial powers from annexing the former German territories. Secondly, as the areas would formally be ruled by the League, it would strengthen the international organisation he had longed for.<sup>248</sup> During these first meetings, Wilson still got the impression that Britain, and the Dominions, as well as Japan wanted to divide the territories they had won during the war.<sup>249</sup>

During a Council of Ten meeting on 24 January, Lloyd George further elaborated on the British position. First, the British Prime Minister insisted that the former colonies should not be returned to Germany. He argued that the Germans had treated the inhabitants of the colonies very badly and he claimed that they had pursued a policy of extermination in their colonies.<sup>250</sup> As he continued his speech, he explained to the others that many of the former German colonies had been liberated by troops of the British Dominions. According to Lloyd George, there were two or three methods that had been proposed to deal with those territories. First, there was the method of internationalisation by the League of Nations. In this system, one nation would administer one of the territories as a mandatory. Lloyd George said that the British could be one of those nations to administer a mandatory. He made a comparison with the British Empire to demonstrate that the British had enough experience and resources to do this.<sup>251</sup>

The second option for those territories was direct annexation. Lloyd George explained that some of the former German colonies could be ruled by some of the British Dominions. Notably Australia, New-Zealand and South-Africa could deal with some of the territories by appointing a Minister to those places. Smuts joined in and recognized that South-Africa could rule some of those lands. He reminded the audience that South-Africa had also handed over

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<sup>248</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 90.

<sup>249</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson*, 471.

<sup>250</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 24 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 247-254, there 249.

<sup>251</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 24 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 250.

some form of self-government to the natives.<sup>252</sup> In effect, this forced the British Prime Minister and his delegation into a confrontation with the U.S. since South Africa, Australia and New Zealand opposed the U.S. extension of the mandate system and instead had envisioned territorial growth.<sup>253</sup>

From this meeting to the meetings on February 3, 'strenuous efforts' were made between the British and the American delegations to reach an agreement on the features of the League. The discussion on the mandates proved to be the chief problem.<sup>254</sup> On January 27, some of the Dominions were also present at the Council of Ten meeting. Therefore, British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour proposed to discuss the colonial question during this meeting, since the topic also mattered to the Dominions. However, before the Dominions had a chance to speak, Lloyd George mentioned that New-Zealand and Australia might have different views than Great Britain on the issue of colonies in the Pacific area.<sup>255</sup>

During the meeting, Wilson was faced with many statesmen who opposed his idea. First of all, Foreign Minister Makino of Japan asked for the territory of Shantung, a former German territory in China.<sup>256</sup> In 1897, China had granted Germany a concession in Shantung, a peninsula just underneath Beijing. During the war, this area had been seized by Japan. However, China regarded it to be Chinese territory and did not want Japan to maintain this territory.<sup>257</sup> The only power to object to this Japanese action during the war had been the United States, out of concern over the rising power of Japan in the region.<sup>258</sup> Besides Shantung, Makino also wanted to claim the German Islands in the Pacific north of the equator. Wilson replied with a claim that seems to reflect most of his ideas of self-determination. He explained to the Japanese Minister what for kind of system he had in mind in order to deal with the former German colonies. Wilson argued that a new system was necessary since 'the basis of this idea was the feeling which had sprung all over the world against further annexation'.<sup>259</sup> He continued his speech against annexation and said that other forms had to

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<sup>252</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 24 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 253.

<sup>253</sup> MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 101.

<sup>254</sup> *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 299.

<sup>255</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 27 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 283-301, there 289.

<sup>256</sup> Shantung is sometimes also referred to as Kiaochow, which is a bay and seaport within the province of Shantung.

<sup>257</sup> Roberts, "Wilson, Europe's Colonial Empires, and the Issue of Imperialism," 498.

<sup>258</sup> MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 328.

<sup>259</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 27 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 293.

be found in order to take care of the peoples living in 'these backward countries'.<sup>260</sup> Therefore, Wilson believed that the best solution was to be found in administration of these people through mandates. The mandates should be based on some principles. Those included that the mandates were not intended to exploit other peoples, nor was the mandatory system intended to exercise arbitrary sovereignty over any people. He stated that the fundamental idea of the system was that the world would be acting as a trustee, executed through a mandatory. He warned the council that 'if any nation could annex territory, which was previously German colony, it would challenge the whole idea of the League'.<sup>261</sup> Annexation of those territories would discredit both the League and the conference, according to Wilson. In order to defend his proposals, he asked two questions to the other world leaders. Wilson first asked if annexation was necessary from the point of protection. Secondly, if the answer to the first question would be negative, he asked them what part of the principle of mandate system made them reject it.<sup>262</sup>

After those questions, the delegates of the Dominions came with an answer. First, South-African Prime Minister Botha argued that in the case of South-Africa, one had to act according to other principles than the use of mandatories. He told Wilson that the natives of German Southwest Africa were happy under the rule of his government. Hughes, the Prime Minister of Australia, even made clear that he was more in favour of direct rule over those territories. Wilson opposed his view and said that the world had turned against annexations. Hughes bitterly asked why there was no plan to for a mandatory system in Europe. He stated that 'annexation was only bad when used for imperialism'.<sup>263</sup> However, in the case of New-Guinea, it would be better if it was directly controlled by Australia.<sup>264</sup> In the end, Lloyd George proposed to the delegates to consider the application of the mandatory system as a whole, before moving on to particular cases. Dr. Grayson, Wilson's physician and a close person to the President, noted that it had been a real fight during the Council of Ten meeting, 'the sharpest to date' on the issue of former German colonies. Furthermore, Grayson noted that Wilson could only count on a minority of leaders who agreed with him.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 27 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 293.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibidem*, 299

<sup>262</sup> *Ibidem*, 296.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibidem*, 299.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibidem*, 299.

<sup>265</sup> "From the Diary of Dr. Grayson," 28 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 308-309.

Wilson was probably well aware that Australia and New Zealand would bring these demands to the peace table. In December, his Inquiry had written a report in which the writers mentioned that Australia and New Zealand would probably try to claim Samoa and New Guinea.<sup>266</sup> Nonetheless, he was still rather horrified when he heard those claims. Even more, because they were also accompanied by a wish from Smuts, who was one of the key architects of the whole mandate system. It seemed as if Smuts wholeheartedly supported the mandate system, as long as it would not harm the South African claims. It is hard to tell, how far the Dominions were willing to go in this debate, but according to the British diplomat Eustace Percy 'the whole project seemed in danger of splitting on the rock of South African and Australian nationalism'.<sup>267</sup> Besides, the Dominions were supported by the French who had their eyes on a part of Syria, and the Japanese, who still held claims on Shantung.<sup>268</sup>

While the meeting of the Council had not been very effective, delegates of Britain and the U.S. held a private meeting. The U.S. was represented by House and Miller, the British were represented by Cecil. They tried to make a deal on the issue of the German colonies, mainly South-West Africa and the Pacific Islands had been mentioned. House said that he had no problem with those territories being in British hands. The President's advisor thought that the result would be practically the same. He thought that there was little reason for the Dominions to keep opposing the plan, since they would probably be able to persuade the colonies to ask for annexation in a limited amount of time. However, he objected the idea that it could be justified as conquered territory. At the very same time during a meeting of the Council, Lloyd George still justified the idea that the Dominions had a right to claim the territories they had conquered.<sup>269</sup> It seemed as if Cecil and Lloyd George were not on the same page on this subject.

The next Council of Ten meeting was greeted with more enthusiasm. Lloyd George had had an appointment with some experts after the previous meeting and was now confident that they could overcome practical issues on the issue of the former colonies. However, the Dominions had still to be regarded as a special case. Lloyd George told the Council that in his

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<sup>266</sup> William Churchill, *The Pacific Colonies of Germany*, December 1918, DOC 98, in *Select Reports of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace* accessed from the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (RIAS), 235-241.

<sup>267</sup> *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, Vol IV., 305.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibidem*, 305.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibidem*, 306.

opinion there were 'no large differences between the mandatory principle and the principle laid down in the Berlin conference'.<sup>270</sup> Considering that the Berlin conference of 1884 had come to be known as a conference where most of Africa had been subjugated to European powers, this can be regarded as a bold remark. The British Prime Minister further explained that Great Britain would not be altering her colonial regime within the British Empire.<sup>271</sup> After this statement by Lloyd George, it was one of the Dominions again that started the protest against the mandate system. Massey explained the position of the government of New Zealand on the case of Samoa. His case was countered by Wilson, who remarked that the issue should be decided in favour of the betterment of the inhabitants of Samoa.<sup>272</sup>

French Minister of the Colonies Simon then started to explain the position of France. He began his story by stating that the country was not interested in the Germans colonies of East and West Africa. However, France did see some future in the Cameroons and Togoland. Simon then started to explain that those claims were also based on the sacrifices France had made to conquer these territories. Furthermore, he proclaimed that France had some historical claims on those territories.<sup>273</sup> According to Simon, there were three possible options for the future of the German colonies. The first option would be full internationalisation. Since this option was already condemned by Lloyd George, Simon thought this option would have little chance. The second option was the mandatory system. However, Simon had heard the objections of the Dominions in the previous meetings and he was not fond of the system either. Besides, since mandates were revocable, Simon saw no guarantee for the continuance of mandates, which would give European countries little incentive to invest in these mandates.<sup>274</sup> Simon also thought that with this option, one would still have to discuss who would get which mandatory. In line of his reasoning, the third and only remaining option was annexation. However, he made clear that it would not be annexation as some colonial powers had done before. In his opinion, annexation was no longer about exploitation. The Western powers were nowadays guided by higher moral principles. Accordingly, Simon claimed that this modern form of annexation in fact had taken Wilson's points into account.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 28 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 310-311.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibidem*, 311.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibidem*, 314.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibidem*, 319.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibidem*, 320.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibidem*, 321-322.



The British delegation responded by Foreign Secretary Balfour, who claimed that too little thought had been given to the position of mandatory powers. He was still strongly in favour of the principle, but it had to be worked out. Lloyd George then claimed that most of the difficulties that were brought up by the other delegates were more imaginary than real. In fact, he thought that Simon's position more or less agreed to the League proposition.<sup>276</sup> However, this time Wilson reacted with fury. He opposed the previous speakers and told the audience that Simon had not been right in his reasoning. Wilson told them that many countries wanted to make various claims over former German colonies, but that this would be unacceptable to the world. If they would divide the German colonies, the rest of the world would regard them as selfish statesmen. Wilson said that he felt intensely that a trustworthy League was necessary.<sup>277</sup> There was an important difference between trusteeship, as meant under the League of Nations, and definite sovereignty by the mandatory state as proposed by Simon. Therefore, Wilson only saw one viable option, they had to agree on the principle of mandatory's and leave the application of this system to the League of Nations.<sup>278</sup>

The Italian prime minister mostly agreed with Wilson and added that Italy would agree whatever principle regarding the colonies as long as the principles were equitably applied.<sup>279</sup> Besides, he supported the idea of Wilson for a short adjournment for the delegates to reflect on the proposed policies and the implications. But before the adjournment, he told the Council that he was opinion that former German colonies might be added to other colonies if they ethnographically matched. He added that this should be done in accordance with Wilson's idea of self-determination.<sup>280</sup>

This episode of the Paris Peace Conference demonstrates how Wilson started to write proposals for the League and how he thought about the future of the German colonies. In his drafts, Wilson echoed some of the views that he also expressed during his speeches in 1917 and 1918. Regarding the former colonies, he described a policy based on self-government, and strongly argued in favour of government by consent of the people. However, during those first meetings with the Council of Ten, it became clear that Wilson was not in a position to

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<sup>276</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 28 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 324.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibidem*, 324.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibidem*, 326.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibidem*, 326.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibidem*, 327.

dictate the peace terms on his own. Wilson, or more generally the U.S., did not have the power to impose a peace settlement without agreement of the other Allied powers.

Wilson made clear within the Council that the time of annexations was over. He used his liberal arguments to convince the other leaders that a mandate system would be the best outcome. Nonetheless, his ideas were met with opposition. Within the Council of Ten, all powers had taken their stance on the issue of the German colonies. Italy wanted to gain as much territory as possible, but focussed on Europe and therefore only argued for a fair distribution during the discussion on the colonies.<sup>281</sup> Japan was mainly interested in Shantung and some islands in the Pacific. Therefore, the two main powers who were really interested in the division of the German colonies were France and Britain. The latter delegation was very divided on the issue, but also had to act on behalf of the Dominions. This made that the British delegation would prove the most important to convince of the Wilsonian ideas, but at the same time was also willing to think along with the American delegation.

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<sup>281</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 54.

## VII: The Compromise of Smuts

On the same day as the last meeting, 28 January, Colonel House wrote a letter to the American President. He told him that he believed that the British delegation and the Dominions were opposed to the plan he had written. Still, in the same letter, one could find that the President and Edward House were on the same page when it concerned the 'better government of the backward people of the Pacific Islands'.<sup>282</sup> The plans of House and Wilson might have been very idealistic, they still regarded some native populations as backward or inferior. In his memoirs, House also noted that the President was sometimes disturbed by changing views of the French and the British on those difficult issues. This image is confirmed by Dr. Grayson, who wrote about this day that 'another day was spent fighting over the mandatory question'.<sup>283</sup> However, the tables started to turn for the American commissioners when House came with the news that Hughes was the only one within the British delegation who still aimed for annexation instead of the mandate system.<sup>284</sup>

The day after would prove that much progress had been made. General Smuts and Lloyd George were willing to work out a plan. During the council of 28 January, Wilson had stated that the discussion on the mandates had reached a point 'where it looked as if their roads diverged'.<sup>285</sup> After this statement by Wilson, the British were keen to act.<sup>286</sup> Smuts thought that the best way to achieve an agreement would be by accepting Wilson's view on the mandates, but differentiated to three levels. He proposed to distinguish A, B and C mandates. Smuts and Lloyd George had made great concessions to the Americans and the plan could count on the approval of Colonel House, who was confident that they were now heading for the finish. President Wilson had not accepted those new concessions yet. Though their opinions were sometimes at odds, Wilson did hold Smuts in high regard and he liked the compromise on many points. He wrote to Colonel House that he hoped the compromise was Smuts' own interpretation, but Wilson thought that the compromise could also lead to difficulties with Australia and Japan. The latter could see in this document a right to claim a line of islands in the Pacific, which Wilson saw as a danger to the United States.<sup>287</sup> With regards

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<sup>282</sup> "From Edward Mandell House," 28 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 333.

<sup>283</sup> "From the Diary of Dr. Grayson," 29 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 334.

<sup>284</sup> *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 308.

<sup>285</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 28 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 323.

<sup>286</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 212.

<sup>287</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 91.

to the Pacific question, Wilson showed himself to be much more careful and in effect acted as a realist politician who was anxious about Japan's rising power.

The next Council of Ten meeting would prove to be very important. Miller would note that the final version of the mandate system would be largely based on this meeting of January 30. During the morning meeting, Wilson would again clash with prime minister Hughes of Australia. However, at the end of the day, the minority Wilson had counted on had now swung to a majority and the mandatory system had been approved, so far as it was applied to Africa and the Pacific Islands. The swing of votes was merely because Smuts had come with a compromise most parties could live with. They had not reached a consensus yet on the mandates in the Middle East. However, Hunter Miller noted in his diary that the U.S. and Allies had agreed that mandates had to differ and accordingly had to be matched on the stage of development.<sup>288</sup>

During the meeting of 30 January, Lloyd George had also spread a document in which one could find this compromise of the British and American plans. It was not only a deal between the Americans and the British, but also an agreement with the London administration and its Dominions. Only after a heated debate within the delegation of the British Empire, Hughes had accepted the new mandate system.<sup>289</sup> In the document of Lloyd George was noted that there would be three different classes of mandates, the so-called A-, B- and C- mandates.<sup>290</sup> The first class would be composed of countries that were civilized, but not yet organised. This class was only made up of Arabian countries that were civilised, but where tribes had to be prevented from fighting one another. The second class would primarily consist of 'tropical' colonies. In those areas a full mandate would be applied. The third class would exist out of countries where mandates would be applied, but which 'formed almost a part or the organization of and adjoining power'.<sup>291</sup> The description for the C-mandate was rather vague and could therefore be used for multiple territories. The British delegation had constructed this category for the Dominions so it could include Samoa, New Guinea and South-West Africa. Due to this division in mandates, Lloyd George was able to persuade Billy Hughes

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<sup>288</sup> David Hunter Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, Vol. 4 (New York: Appeal Print, 1924), 339.

<sup>289</sup> MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 103.

<sup>290</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 30 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 350-378, there 350.

<sup>291</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 30 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 350.

to agree on this compromise. It seemed as if they had reached a deal all parties could live with.<sup>292</sup>

After Lloyd George had explained the document and this subdivision in mandates, Wilson stood up to make a statement. He said to the other world leaders that he did not want this document to be leaked to the press. He thought that the press would write about him and state that 'President Wilson did not know if his ideals would work'.<sup>293</sup> Wilson expressed his gratitude in the direction of the British Prime Minister, but he then told the audience that he himself had also prepared a paper. He told them that the difficulty was to satisfy the disturbed communities over the world. Wilson said that people had accused him for being an idealist, however, he thought of himself as someone who did also spend time on the practicality of the issue. He said that 'the mandatory system was not made to satisfy Great Powers, but to care for, protect and develop the people for whom it was intended'.<sup>294</sup> If they would not give a future to these people, they would be working contrary to the principle of self-determination and the principles that were accepted by the conference.<sup>295</sup> Wilson therefore argued that it would be necessary to define the methods of self-expression of the world that would be under tutelage. In fact, Wilson tried to make clear that those methods could be different from country to country. 'In every instance the mandate should fit the case as the glove fits the hand'.<sup>296</sup>

The Council decided to take the agreement of Lloyd George as a foundation for the mandatory issue. Wilson emphasized that the first priority would be to make the League work, only afterwards did he want to have the mandates be assigned to a specific mandatory. However, Lloyd George thought that this would be a mistake, and it filled him with despair.<sup>297</sup> The proposed method by Wilson would again cause resentment among the Dominions, just after Lloyd George had tried so very hard to make them turn on the issue of the mandates. Those countries under the Commonwealth asked for fast decision making on territorial questions, partly because some of their troops were still in territories that would fall under the mandate system. They did not want to keep their soldiers any longer in those contested

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<sup>292</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 212.

<sup>293</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 30 January, 1919, 351.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibidem*, 353.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibidem*, 353.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibidem*, 354

<sup>297</sup> *Ibidem*, 354.

areas, if they had no chance to become the mandatory power. Wilson understood this request by Lloyd George and told him that they would take the British proposal as a provisional arrangement. The Italian Prime Minister was also pleased with this agreement. He agreed with this solution where former colonies would be administered by the League through mandatories. Still, he had one desire, which was fair distribution of the mandatories between the Allies.<sup>298</sup>

The only delegate who opposed this plan during the afternoon meeting was the Australian Prime Minister Hughes. He claimed that Wilson had disturbed the proposals of Lloyd George. He expressed that the Australian people wanted a fast and clear-cut decision. They did not want a settlement based on principles of which the nature was still unknown. Hughes claimed that it was impossible to agree on a mandate system, without agreement on how this principle would be applied and by whom.<sup>299</sup> However, the Australian delegation could not convince the other delegates to change their minds. In the end, they agreed on the draft by Lloyd George and adopted the scheme as designed by Smuts.<sup>300</sup>

The draft included eight points on which the delegates agreed. First of all, the draft included that former German colonies were not restored to Germany. The same principle applied to Turkey. Point three to five made clear that the people that lived in the former German colonies and the former Ottoman empire were still at an inferior stage of development, and therefore needed some kind of mandate that fitted with their need for further development. They concluded that Central Africa would be the most challenging area for development, while South-West Africa and the Pacific Islands would be regarded as special cases.<sup>301</sup> This proposal by Smuts showed some clear variance with the *Practical Suggestion* he had written in December 1918. Where he still had excluded African colonies in the latter, they were now written as areas where mandates would be applied. Still, Miller would write after the conference that those special mandates were written 'in their mildest and most milk and water form, that nearest to the annexation Smuts desired'.<sup>302</sup>

When the meeting continued, Massey, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, said that he wanted a definite statement by Wilson on clause eight, which regarded the Pacific Islands

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<sup>298</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 30 January, 1919, 357.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibidem*, 358.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibidem*, 358.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibidem*, 359-361.

<sup>302</sup> Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, 106.

and South-West Africa to be special cases, which would be administered as almost integral parts of their mandatory.<sup>303</sup> He wanted to know for sure if Wilson was willing to accept this clause. Wilson reacted agitated and asked if Australia and New-Zealand were presenting an ultimatum to him. Furthermore, he wanted to know if they saw this clause as a minimum of their concessions. The President thought that the discussions were too much dominated by those two Dominions with their specific claims and he almost lost his temper. Botha then took the word from the other Dominions. He argued that in South-Africa, he envisioned a policy of self-government. He appreciated the ideals of Woodrow Wilson, which he regarded to be 'ideals of the people of the world'.<sup>304</sup> Botha claimed that by conceding smaller things, they made the higher ideal more acceptable. After this statement by Botha, some of the other leaders replied in defence. Massey claimed he had not been threatening Wilson with an ultimatum. After this discussion, Orlando wanted to know whether the statesmen were willing to constitute provisional mandates, or if the German colonies would *de facto* witness a continuation of occupation.<sup>305</sup> Lloyd George replied that he wanted to close a deal immediately, he did not want to wait until the League would have been established. He argued that there were still many troops of the British empire in the Middle East. Therefore, he wanted a solution as soon as possible so he could take those troops away from those territories if they would be ruled by another mandatory.<sup>306</sup>

Wilson understood this British wish to a certain extent. He told the Council that many mandates would constitute a burden, not a privilege.<sup>307</sup> From his perspective, he also wanted to make clear that he and the people in the U.S. were nothing less inclined than military responsibility in Africa. He suggested to bring this question to the Supreme War Council. After this statement, the Belgium delegate, who was invited for this meeting, responded that Belgium was willing to be the mandatory for some of the mandates in Africa. Now Lloyd George replied that the question 'who should be the mandatory' was not yet a question to be discussed. Wilson was afraid that if they would start this discussion at this point, it would lead to an immediate division of Africa.<sup>308</sup> Notwithstanding that, at the end of the meeting all

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<sup>303</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 30 January, 1919, 350- 387, there 361.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibidem*, 365.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibidem*, 368.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibidem*, 369-370.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibidem*, 371.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibidem*, 374.

agreed on a communiqué that stated that they had arrived at a satisfactory provisional arrangement regarding German and Turkish territory outside Europe.<sup>309</sup>

Some of Wilson's key advisors wrote in their diaries that the U.S. and Britain were already in close accord about the new draft, even before the meeting had started. Cecil and House even agreed over a covenant for the League of Nations. The two men could get along quite well with each other. House even wrote that they sometimes agreed more than they could admit due to the wishes of their governments. While the relationship between the U.S. and Britain was fairly good, they knew that Hughes could bring trouble to this agreement. Miller also noted that after the meeting, Wilson was still angry about the stance of Australia and New-Zealand. On top of that, the resolution did not go as far as Wilson had wished.<sup>310</sup>

While a provisional agreement was made on the issue of territorial questions, they did not yet have an agreement on the League of Nations. Lansing wrote to Wilson that this could take a very long time, and he wrote a resolution with the most salient features. However, just one day later, Wilson had a meeting with Smuts, Cecil and legal advisor Miller. During this meeting, they brought the difficulties almost to a vanishing point, and a new draft of the covenant was written. Still, it turned out to be more difficult than expected. They decided to ask the British legal expert Hurst and his American counterpart Miller to write a more formal draft. Though Miller was a good legal advisor to the President, he was less of a progressive internationalist. The outcome, the 'Hurst-Miller draft', was a relatively conservative approach to the League. In this new draft, the mandate system was omitted and the clause that territorial changes had to be based on the idea of self-determination was deleted. Both lawyers envisioned that this clause could only lead to more problems.<sup>311</sup>

Wilson's advisors had to make many changes during the following days and many draft versions of the covenant were made. Even to a point that Wilson was unhappy with the many changes that still had been made. He thought that the British had taken a good many things out of the covenant.<sup>312</sup> Besides, the lawyers had written a document that was to formal in Wilson's view. After Miller had received the comments of Wilson, he wrote a 'Third Paris Draft'.<sup>313</sup> However, in order not to disturb the process and anger the British, they decided to

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<sup>309</sup> "Hankey's Notes of Two Meetings of the Council of Ten," 30 January, 1919, 378.

<sup>310</sup> "From the Diary of David Hunter Miller," 30 January, 1919, *PWW* 54, 379.

<sup>311</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 215-216.

<sup>312</sup> "From the Diary of David Hunter Miller," 2 February, 1919, *PWW* 54, 439.

<sup>313</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson*, 471.



present the Hurst-Miller draft to the commission for a League of Nations. This commission consisted of the five main powers, as well as some 'Principal powers', such as Serbia and Belgium. The League of Nations Commission had its first meeting on February 3, with the President and Colonel House as representatives for the U.S.<sup>314</sup>

Lansing was still the second representative within the Council of Ten, but he did not involve much in this discussion, also due to the contrary views with the President. Lansing preferred the traditional U.S. policy to keep aloof, instead of becoming the guardian of peoples in the Near East. Wilson saw it on the other hand as part of shared burden. After one of the meetings, Lansing explained the President his, mostly judicial, objections to the mandates. The objections were described by Wilson as 'technicalities', to the discontent of Lansing.<sup>315</sup> On the second of February, Lansing wrote a memorandum to Wilson to express his objections towards the mandate system. His memo consisted of a list of several (rhetoric) questions to the President. Most questions were on the issue of sovereignty and the difficulties with international law.<sup>316</sup> He also read the memo to Colonel House and told him that it would be better to transfer the sovereignty to one particular nation instead of the League. Colonel House was not convinced by the objections of Lansing and still held on to the mandate system. The latter would argue that the system of Smuts was a novelty and would likewise be appealing to reformers such as House and Wilson, while a more conservative thinker, like Lansing himself, would be able to see the doubtful policy of the mandate. The President and his advisor probably did not listen to Lansing's contribution because transferring sovereignty to a particular country would be too similar to the colonial situation. However, Lansing thought this argument was invalid. If the system was designed in order not to divide the spoils of war, 'it was a subterfuge which deceived no one'.<sup>317</sup>

In a meeting of 5 February, Lloyd George and Balfour again laid down their problem with the Dominions. According to some reports of the time, the discussions about this subject were even more heated within the British delegation than they were in the Council of Ten.<sup>318</sup> Especially in the case of Australia, the objections to the mandatory system had not yet been taken away. In his diary, Cecil also noted that he was worried about the trouble with the

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<sup>314</sup> "Minutes of a Meeting of the Commission on the League of Nations," February 3, 1919, *PWW* 54, 463-464.

<sup>315</sup> Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations*, 151.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibidem*, 151-153.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibidem*, 156.

<sup>318</sup> Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, 105.

Dominions on territorial integrity. Besides, he wrote very clearly that he could not always appreciate Wilson. According to Cecil, Wilson 'supports idealistic causes without being in the least an idealist himself, at least so I guess, though perhaps I misjudge him'.<sup>319</sup> Nonetheless, Wilson advocated his ideas during the meetings when possible. In one of the meetings on the covenant he made an addition to article six. The addition was that 'colonies enjoying full powers of self-government may be admitted' to the League.<sup>320</sup>

After ten meetings, on the morning of 13 February, the draft of the League of Nations Commission was ready. During the ten meetings, this particular commission had in effect merely re-worked the Hurst-Miller draft. The draft had been the basis for the commission and they had only slightly changed some of the articles. The idea of three different types of mandates as proposed by Smuts was taken over by the Commission and remained unchanged. The Council of Ten approved the product of the League Commission, which was called the 'Draft Covenant.' During one of the meetings, the council also spoke with Emir Faisal, who had cooperated with the Allies during the war in order to defeat the Ottoman Empire. They told him that a mandate system would be applied in the Middle East. Although their populations were seen as more developed than those in the German colonies, they thought that the Arabs lacked some skills and needed to grow gradually toward self-determination.<sup>321</sup>

On February 14, Wilson presented the Draft Covenant to the full conference. He first held a speech, after which he read the covenant article by article for his audience. Wilson referred to the conference as one of the greatest steps forward that had ever been taken. One of the key elements of this progress was that they stepped away from imperialism. He conveyed that the conscience of the people was leading in their decisions. He said that 'under their tutelage the helpless peoples of the world will come into a new light and into a new hope' and restated that the world was done with annexations.<sup>322</sup> Furthermore, he said that the outcome was 'a practical document and a humane document' and that they 'had many instances of colonies lifted into the sphere of complete self-government'.<sup>323</sup> Despite his own dissatisfaction with the formal language of the final covenant, many of his aims had been

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<sup>319</sup> "From the Diary of Lord Robert Cecil," 6 February, 1919, *PWW* 54, 514.

<sup>320</sup> "Minutes of a Meeting of the Commission on the League of Nations," February 5, 1919, *PWW* 54, 495-499, there 497.

<sup>321</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson*, 474. Of *PWW*.

<sup>322</sup> "An Address to the Third Plenary Session of the Peace Conference," 14 February, 1919, *PWW* 55, 164-178, there 177.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibidem*, 177.

assimilated in this covenant. Yet, aside from Colonel House and Miller, the other Americans were not kept up to date about the President's plans and the progress of the negotiations. Ray Stannard Baker, the press officer had also urged the President to keep him informed about the proposals for the League, but he ignored this request.<sup>324</sup>

All things considered, Wilson had achieved a great deal for his League. Regarding the German colonies, Wilson had forged his ideas of self-determination into the mandate system. It was only after the division in A, B and C mandates by Smuts that the American and British delegation had been able to reach a deal. During the discussion on this system, Wilson again explained his liberal agenda. He had used similar argument in the Commission on the League of Nations, though the actual influence of this commission was very limited, especially in the case of the German colonies.

While the end result had less of a Wilsonian tone than the President had wanted, he had the opportunity during the presentation of the Covenant to elaborate in his own words. Again, the term self-government proved to be key and he seemed proud that they lifted former colonies into 'the sphere of self-government'. This demonstrates that he was not seeking full self-determination for former colonies. While Wilson had used liberal arguments in order to get the Allies around, he also used some realist thinking himself. Regarding the islands in the Pacific, and especially the claims of Japan on the islands North of the equator, the President was on his guard.

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<sup>324</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson*, 475.

## VIII: The Final Covenant

After the plenary presentation of the League Covenant, Wilson left Paris and just one day after this achievement, boarded the *George Washington* and sailed back across the ocean. As House wrote in his memoirs, he sailed triumphant and with the covenant in his pocket to meet his opponents in the Senate.<sup>325</sup> Now the world leaders were done with the League covenant, they moved the discussions to another part of the conference, to write a treaty for Germany. They started to discuss new borders for Germany and economic sanctions. For a month, Colonel House would replace Wilson during most meetings.

The President was back in France by mid-March. He had endured two journeys across the ocean and a ten-day trip of advocating the League. After a first meeting with House, the President told his wife that the Colonel had given everything away he had won before his visit to the States.<sup>326</sup> The President had the idea that House was too friendly to the British delegation and that his advisor had made too many compromises during his absence. The relationship between Wilson and House turned sour very quickly. In addition, on March 19 the world leaders decided to replace the Council of Ten by the Council of Four. They excluded all foreign ministers, and the Japanese delegation.<sup>327</sup> This choice may have led to a faster decision-making process, but it also resulted in the fact that neither Lansing, House, nor any of the other Americans was kept up to date about the proceedings of the Council, which now only consisted of Wilson, Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Orlando.

Until the beginning of May 1919, the delegations at the Paris Peace Conference would not speak much about the mandates. In the period between February and May, they would mainly discuss other settlement issues such as the reparations and the Alsace. However, in April, the discussion on Shantung popped up again. Wilson firmly held to the idea of self-determination, which blocked Japanese claims on Shantung.<sup>328</sup> The Japanese protested and proposed a bargain. They would support the League of Nations, if they accepted their claim on Shantung. On April 28, the Council of Four accepted this proposal.<sup>329</sup>

In May, when the final peace proposal with Germany was almost finished, some Prime Ministers still wanted to discuss some of the aspects on the former German colonies. It was

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<sup>325</sup> *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 308.

<sup>326</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 246.

<sup>327</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson*, 485.

<sup>328</sup> Macmillan, *Paris 1919*, 335.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibidem*, 337.

also the moment that the Council of Four started to discuss the application of the mandate system in the Middle East. Lloyd George urged during a meeting of the Council of Four that the conditions of the mandates should be fixed on short term. The issue of the mandates came up since no decisions had been made yet in assigning the mandatory powers. The British Prime Minister told the others that there was great stress from the British Dominions to clarify those conditions.<sup>330</sup> However, the other leaders each had their own strategy and ideals. Wilson and Clemenceau disagreed with the British PM and the matter was postponed. According to the President there was already a tacit agreement on the assignment of mandates. However, this time, he was faced with opposition not only from Wilson but also from Clemenceau. Meanwhile, the Belgian government was also getting curious about the mandates and the implications it may had for their imperial goals. Wilson however was not willing to give them any information. He answered again that the exact position and allocation of the mandates would be postponed until the League would be set in operation.<sup>331</sup>

In a Council of Four meeting Lloyd George told the others that he urged them to settle the question of the mandates before the treaty with Germany would be finalised. However, the clock was already ticking and Wilson replied that they would not settle this issue in 48 hours. It would be impossible for the U.S. to make such impactful decisions in such a short time. Wilson also told that he would be unable to make a deal at this moment on some important questions, such as whether the U.S. would be willing to act as mandatory for Turkey. After his return to Paris, Wilson seemed to have become more aware of potential problems at home. Whereas he had considered the U.S. to become a mandatory for some of the former Ottoman regions, he now said that such action would be a political disadvantage. However, Lloyd George replied that for him it was not about Turkey, he only wanted a definite solution for the German colonies. Wilson and Clemenceau were strongly opposed to the British PM.<sup>332</sup> Nonetheless, they provisionally agreed that South Africa would be a mandatory for South West Africa, Australia for New Guinea and New Zealand for Samoa. Lloyd George stated that he was very anxious to announce the mandate system at the same time as the

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<sup>330</sup> "Hankey's and Mantoux's Notes of a Meeting of the Council of Four," 1 May, 1919, *PWW* 58, 288.

<sup>331</sup> "Hankey's and Mantoux's Notes of a Meeting of the Council of Four," 3 May, 1919, *PWW* 58, 390 - 403, there 399.

<sup>332</sup> "Hankey's Notes of a Meeting of the Council of Four," 5 May, 1919, *PWW* 58, 432- 442, there 442.

Peace Treaty. Wilson told him that he wanted to avoid the appearance of division of the spoils being simultaneous with the peace.<sup>333</sup>

The next day, the four world leaders would again have an argument on the colonies and the mandates. This time Lloyd George came with a proposal for the island Nauru. It had become clear that Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom were interested in this island. He thought it would be best to hand it over to the British Empire for the time being and make a deal later.<sup>334</sup> Again, he was met with resistance from Wilson who argued that this was not possible and who wanted an open door policy for the island. During the same day, Wilson's delegation swiftly dealt with another problem. The French delegation had added some words in the covenant in order to make it possible for mandatory's to introduce conscription and raise an army in the mandate area. President Wilson was furious about the French adjustment and the American delegation removed the line from the covenant. Even with those problems just before the finish line, the delegations still agreed on May 7 on a final distribution of mandates over the former German colonies.<sup>335</sup> While the treaty was presented to the German government, the representatives continued to argue about the distribution of other mandates. While they had settled on the German colonies, there was no agreement yet on the division of other territories, mainly in the Arab region.

On 28 of June, the Peace Treaty with Germany was finally signed in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles. After the ceremony, Wilson immediately left Paris and sailed back to the U.S. on the next day. The other statesmen would also leave Paris now the most important things had been handled. They had reached a treaty with the most important actor and they had designed a League of Nations. However, it was only in July when the delegations reached a final conclusion. On top of that, the peace treaties with Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey still had to be drawn.

On the issue of the colonies, Article 22 in the Covenant described what would happen to the former colonies and territories that had come under Allied rule during the war. Those areas not able to govern themselves, would fall under tutelage of 'advanced nations' that were willing to accept the tutelage for those people.<sup>336</sup> However, in the covenant was not

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<sup>333</sup> "Hankey's Notes of a Meeting of the Council of Four," 5 May, 1919, *PWW* 58, 432- 442, there 442.

<sup>334</sup> "Hankey's Notes of a Meeting of the Council of Four," 6 May, 1919, *PWW* 58, 483-488, there 484.

<sup>335</sup> "Hankey's and Mantoux's Notes of a Meeting of the Council of Four," 7 May, 1919, *PWW* 58, 504-514, there 510.

<sup>336</sup> For Article 22, see appendix II.

mentioned how long a mandate would last. In fact, there was no word written about how mandates would eventually end. Nor was it clear what to do if there would be a conflict between mandate and mandatory.<sup>337</sup> In the end, the mandate system was a compromise between statesmen who still held to colonial ambitions and those who wanted to place them under international control. As quoted by Heater, the article was generally vague and if there was a message, this could best be described as 'wait and see'.<sup>338</sup> Moreover, the League would finally come into existence in 1920, only afterward the mandate system could officially take off.

Ultimately, the story ended as a disappointment for Wilson. The Senate rejected the proposal for the Peace Treaty and the League of Nations. After Wilson had been succeeded by Warren Hastings, there was little incentive for most mandatory powers to keep to their promises. A Permanent Mandates Commission was set up as part of the League of Nations in order to look after the mandates. By 1920, when the commission was set up, it had already become clear that the mandate system had not given the people any right of national self-determination. While the mandates had partially been constructed to uplift backward people, those areas were not ruled different than 'ordinary' colonies.<sup>339</sup>

As Lansing wrote in his memoirs, there were large differences between Wilson's Covenant and the final League Proposal. On the issue of self-determination this was partly due to the opposition by the British Dominions.<sup>340</sup> The former State Secretary wrote that Wilson made self-determination in speech one of the leading principles, while in his acts he denied the existence of the principle. Self-determination had not been applied in the case of Poland and Czecho-Slovakia, where many people of German origin lived. It was not applied in the Chinese province Shantung, as a concession to the Japanese. It was not applied in Tyrol, as concession to the Italians. The idea was even further discredited by giving way to Russia to annex the Baltic states, Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan.<sup>341</sup> In sum, he thought that the meaning of the phrase 'self-determination' was violated by the terms and treaties of the Paris Peace Conference.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 2.

<sup>338</sup> Heater, *National Self-Determination*, 94.

<sup>339</sup> Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 10.

<sup>340</sup> Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations*, 94.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibidem*, 98-100.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibidem*, 104.

Many liberals across world were dismayed about the outcome of the peace settlement. Some of them thought that Wilson had abandoned his Fourteen Points. While liberals might have been disappointed, most disillusioned were the colonial peoples. According to some historians, there had been too little attention for the application of national self-determination in the colonies.<sup>343</sup> In rearranging the German and Ottoman empires, Wilson had to deal with Allies who followed an entirely different agenda. Wilson wanted those territories to be governed through mandates, operating under the League of Nations. According to Herring, the mandate system eventually 'proved little more than annexation in disguise'.<sup>344</sup>

As mentioned by Thomas Knock, 'the quarrel over colonies collided with the League of Nations with perhaps greater force than any other issue at the peace conference'.<sup>345</sup> As Wilson privately also thought, the Smuts agreement on the mandates was a compromise 'for dividing the swag among the Allies and having the League legitimate their title'.<sup>346</sup> The issue of the colonies was one of the fiercest debated outcomes and caused resentment among many people in (former) colonies.<sup>347</sup> Due to Wilson's commitment to the idea of national self-determination and his attack on imperial claims, made it that this 'division of the spoils' was welcomed with open arms among his supporters.

While the League Covenant had led to some criticism, it was especially the Treaty of Versailles that was viewed both by many contemporaries as well as later commentators as a harsh and short-sighted treaty. While the covenant had described the general outline for a new world order, the treaty with Germany revealed the division of its former colonies. Liberals in the U.S. were unhappily surprised by the severity of the treaty, which led to a widespread idea that Wilson had abandoned his principles during the peace conference.<sup>348</sup> The settlement on the issue of Far Eastern provisions was even less Wilsonian. The President had accepted Japanese demands for the province Shantung, since he thought the Japanese might otherwise

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<sup>343</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 426.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibidem*, 421.

<sup>345</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 213

<sup>346</sup> *Ibidem*, 213.

<sup>347</sup> Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 5 and Roberts, "Wilson, Europe's Colonial Empires, and the Issue of Imperialism," 505.

<sup>348</sup> Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century*, 73.



not have joined the League. In the opinion of many liberals, this was the kind of old-style power politics Wilson had always attacked.<sup>349</sup>

In hindsight, it is no overstatement to say that Wilson had a difficult time in Paris, where he had to negotiate with some very clever statesmen. All of them had their own views and ideas. Furthermore, and most important, all had to return home with something for their electorate. Wilson had wanted the right of self-government to be applied to a certain extent to all mandates. The mandate compromise had averted direct annexation by the Allied powers. However, the distinction between a mandate, administered by a mandatory and supervised by the League, versus a 'normal' colony would still cause a lot of controversy.

The most important features of the League of Nations and the idea of the mandate system had already been agreed and presented on the 14th of February. After that moment, they had focussed on the peace agreement with Germany. The former German colonies had only been discussed with regard to who would get what. After Wilson's journey to the U.S., his relationship with House became troubled. This led to the fact that his relationship with his most important delegates, House and Lansing, had both deteriorated. The other delegates of his commission did not play any significant role during the conference. From the beginning to the end, the President had shared his views and information with a very small circle of people. This circle only became smaller as the conference continued and the Council of Ten was replaced by the Council of Four. When Wilson boarded the *George Washington*, many members of the Inquiry were still unaware about the plans for the Conference. When they sailed home, many left Europe with a dissatisfied feeling and knew little more than on the journey seven months earlier.

Altogether, the outcome of the conference and the legacy of the mandates raised a lot of criticism. Of course, due to Wilson's rhetoric and moral appeals during the war, he had fed high hopes. Both friends and foes thought that Wilson had given away too much during the negotiations. The combination of this legacy and the fact that he kept many of his own people uninformed, launched the start of sharp criticism on Wilson and his vision. The President had started with new ideas about the world order and caused the spread of a new liberalism. Though, the legacy of the conference left many room for his critics, notably people from

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<sup>349</sup> Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century*, 73.

Wilson's own delegation. So the story ends where it started, with the genesis of the Versailles historiography, which shook up the field of international relations.

## X: Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to shed new light on the historiographical debate on Woodrow Wilson. Many scholars have referred to him as one of the founders of liberalism within international relations. In order to provide a sound judgement, one should look at his entire foreign policy. However, that task is beyond the scope of this thesis. Still, without going too much into detail, it is no surprise that some scholars have come to different conclusions. Within the debate on national self-determination, it is very clear that Wilson pursued different policies. With regard to European states, he held very different ideas and made different decisions than on the issue of the German colonies. Many cases are unique, and can therefore lead to different conclusions.

Nonetheless, one of the first conclusions of this thesis is that Wilson's principle of self-determination was and is often misunderstood. This thesis supports the view of Unterberger and Throntveit that Wilson was not a supporter of national self-determination in the sense of giving people the authority to secede from another state. Instead, Wilson often referred to the idea of self-government. In many of his speeches he argued in favour of government by consent. If one takes the view that Wilson wanted to spread government by consent of the people, he partially succeeded in this mission. In his writings before the conference, Wilson clearly showed that he wanted a world in which government by consent was the norm. He wanted this principle to be extended to the German colonies, gradually leading the peoples to independence if possible. When scholars move from the idea of self-determination to the idea of self-government, a somewhat different conclusion can be drawn. The idea of self-government may have been less radical than the idea of self-determination, it is still a liberal idea and Wilson defended it with liberal arguments. However, the lack of clear definition made the concept vulnerable to differing interpretations. Policy-makers and politicians used it how it suited them best.

In his dissertation, Bruce tried to alter the view of Wilson and the mandates. He argued that most historians had presented a flawed image by claiming that Wilson was met with heavy European resistance. Bruce stated that Wilson and House were less idealistic than often thought and that both men used idealistic rhetoric, but in fact pursued a new framework for imperialism. The first claim of Bruce is incorrect, since Wilson was met with heavy opposition by the European counterparts on the issue of the mandates, as demonstrated in this thesis. His second claim is more complex. Indeed, Wilson's idea of self-determination was less

idealistic than often presented. However, Bruce could have known this if he had made use of the writings by Unterberger and Throntveit on self-government. Besides, Wilson's arguments show that he wanted to gradually grant self-government and did not pursue a policy of imperialism.

With regard to the German colonies, and the mandate system as a whole, Wilson staunchly defended his principles. However, the occupied territories had been one of the most bitterly debated topics of the conference. The Allied powers wanted something in return for their losses during the Great War. However, it took a lot of time and meetings before they were willing to move in the direction of the U.S. President. To a certain extent, this thesis confirms the view of MacMillan and Roberts that Wilson was met with heavy resistance by the European powers. In the end, the U.S. emerged from the war much stronger, but not omnipotent. Since the U.S. was simply not strong enough to dictate the peace settlement, Wilson had to make many compromises. In negotiations with other countries, primarily with the Council of Ten, he sought to secure a lasting peace. And, above all, a peace that would be looked after by a League of Nations. His commitment to founding a League of Nations made Wilson justify many concessions. Establishing a strong League was Wilson's primary aim, and he had to make compromises to succeed.

Most decisions were made in the Council of Ten and the Council of Four. Many historians have put emphasis on the role of the European leaders. Especially the relation between the U.S. and Britain has been highlighted. As the documents of the Inquiry also show, both countries had already for a long time been in dialogue about the peace conference. The thesis therefore agrees with the writings by Prott on the importance of the expert groups. Some of the British cabinet members supported Wilson's views. However, the British position was more difficult due to their entanglement with the British Dominions, who wanted to claim some of the German colonies. While Lloyd George and Clemenceau to a certain extent may have had some imperial ambitions, the Dominions ultimately played a very influential role in the assignment of the former German colonies. Lloyd George had to take their demands into account due to their influence in the British Imperial Cabinet. Besides, the British Prime Minister had also been able to count on them during the war and the Dominions had captured some of the former German colonies. In the end, the mandate system was an Anglo-American idea. However, the decision to divide those in A, B and C-mandates was a British decision in order to keep the Dominions satisfied. Though they had a different point of view, the input

from Smuts, Cecil, Lloyd George and others was vital for the final construction of the mandate system.

Looking back at the theoretical framework, it seems difficult to say that Wilson only used liberal or realist ideas. There can be little doubt that his conviction for self-government was based on liberal arguments. It fitted neatly with his religious background, studies on policy-making and liberal world view. However, there are three examples that show that Wilson also used realist thinking. First of all, the idea of accommodating the German colonies in a mandate system was not only intended for the development of those areas. As Wilson also stated in private, by acquiring it as property, it would strengthen the League. Secondly, Wilson was frightened by the rising Japanese power in the Pacific and seemed willing to betray his own idea of self-government in order to contain this.

Lastly, the fact that Wilson did not question the future of other colonies, was because he did not want to offend the European powers. He was well aware of their power as well as his own power, which was quite limited in this matter. However, this last argument is most difficult to maintain. It is known that Wilson, like Beer and other Inquiry members, supported the model of the British Empire. As argued by Roberts, Wilson thought that some form of trusteeship was already included. This could also have been his reason not to doubt the British colonial possessions. However, while such interpretations are understandable, there is no evidence in the primary sources that demonstrates that that was Wilson's reason for excluding those colonies.

In a Memorandum by the Inquiry in 1917, the colonies by Germany were considered to be bargaining material. Wilson obviously did not see it this way, he had a more idealistic plan for those areas. However, the real 'irony of fate' in that sense is that Wilson did compromise on his ideas for the mandates, in order to establish a League of Nations. Most of all, Wilson was a neo-liberal institutionalist 'avant la lettre'. He was willing to give in on some of the demands of the mandatory powers if he could get support for this international League. If the three examples of Wilson's realist actions show something, it is that he wholeheartedly desired an international League and was willing to compromise. He wanted a strong League, and therefore argued for the mandates to become League property. He finally made a deal with Japan, to make sure that they would support his League. And he could not antagonize the British too much, since he needed their support for the League. Wilson made many

compromises in his efforts to establish a League of Nations, since he thought that only an international institution could deal with world problems.

This thesis has tried to provide new insight in the historiographical debate on Wilson. By doing research on an often overlooked group of countries, this thesis has provided new material for the discussion on Wilson. The conclusion shows many similarities with the findings of other historians on the issue of the mandate system. The thesis affirms views of those historians, but also demonstrates some arguments for Wilson as a realist. The main conclusions of this research point in the direction of some earlier writings, such as those by Throntveit, Unterberger, MacMillan and Prott. By strengthening the view of those scholars, and contradicting the findings of Bruce, this thesis has added information to the existing literature.

One of the reasons for the fact that the conclusion of this thesis demonstrates many similarities with earlier accounts, has probably to do with the fact that most research on this topic has been based on the same sources, which are in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. Although *The Papers* are the most extensive primary sources on Wilson and the U.S. delegation in Paris, they mostly contain American and British sources. The use of French, Italian or Japanese sources could provide a new angle for research on this topic. It is clear that the discussion on the future of the German colonies was dominated by the American and British delegation, but the other delegations have been overlooked and are not prominent in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. Some sources that have given a new view on this topic are the digitised sources of *Select Reports of the Delegation to Negotiate Peace* that have been digitised by History Vaults. Those documents are only digitised quite recently, and are hence not included in most writings. While those documents do not tell much about Wilson himself, they provide insight in the preparations for the conference and the peace planning. The reports by Beer and Churchill give a clear idea of the American ideas prior to the conference. More research on those documents can be done in order to understand how the American mission prepared for the conference.

As this thesis has demonstrated, the view of Wilson and his administration seemed to be influenced by the rising, and sometimes threatening, power of Japan. In fact, the U.S. policy was clearly to contain the rise of this influential player and was based in realist ideas of power. For future research, it would be useful to see if more information can be found on Wilson's stance towards Japan. While having been a member of the Council of Ten, the Japanese input

is often overlooked by historians. By analysing his ideas on Japan, one might find more arguments for Wilson as a realist politician.

## **Appendix I: President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points**

8 January, 1918:

### President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points

It will be our wish and purpose that the processes of peace, when they are begun, shall be absolutely open and that they shall involve and permit henceforth no secret understandings of any kind. The day of conquest and aggrandizement is gone by; so is also the day of secret covenants entered into in the interest of particular governments and likely at some unlooked-for moment to upset the peace of the world. It is this happy fact, now clear to the view of every public man whose thoughts do not still linger in an age that is dead and gone, which makes it possible for every nation whose purposes are consistent with justice and the peace of the world to avow now or at any other time the objects it has in view.

We entered this war because violations of right had occurred which touched us to the quick and made the life of our own people impossible unless they were corrected and the world secure once for all against their recurrence. What we demand in this war, therefore, is nothing peculiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world as against force and selfish aggression. All the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest, and for our own part we see very clearly that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us. The programme of the world's peace, therefore, is our programme; and that programme, the only possible programme, as we see it, is this:

I. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.



II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.

III. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.

IV. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

V. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.

VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest cooperation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing; and, more than a welcome, assistance also of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.

VII. Belgium, the whole world will agree, must be evacuated and restored, without any attempt to limit the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with all other free nations. No other single act will serve as this will serve to restore confidence among the nations in the laws which they have themselves set and determined for the government of their relations with one another. Without this healing act the whole structure and validity of international law is forever impaired.

VIII. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine, which has unsettled the peace of the world for nearly fifty years, should be righted, in order that peace may once more be made secure in the interest of all.

IX. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.

X. The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity to autonomous development.

XI. Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated; occupied territories restored; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and the relations of the several Balkan states to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality; and international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan states should be entered into.

XII. The Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.

XIII. An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.

XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

In regard to these essential rectifications of wrong and assertions of right we feel ourselves to be intimate partners of all the governments and peoples associated together against the Imperialists. We cannot be separated in interest or divided in purpose. We stand together until the end.

For such arrangements and covenants we are willing to fight and to continue to fight until they are achieved; but only because we wish the right to prevail and desire a just and stable peace such as can be secured only by removing the chief provocations to war, which this programme does remove. We have no jealousy of German greatness, and there is nothing in this programme that impairs it. We grudge her no achievement or distinction of learning or of pacific enterprise such as have made her record very bright and very enviable. We do not wish to injure her or to block in any way her legitimate influence or power. We do not wish to fight her either with arms or with hostile arrangements of trade if she is willing to associate herself with us and the other peace-loving nations of the world in covenants of justice and law and fair dealing. We wish her only to accept a place of equality among the peoples of the world, -- the new world in which we now live, -- instead of a place of mastery.

## Appendix II: Article 22

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilisation and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant.

The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as Mandatories on behalf of the League.

The character of the mandate must differ according to the stage of the development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions and other similar circumstances.

Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.

Other peoples, especially those of Central Africa, are at such a stage that the Mandatory must be responsible for the administration of the territory under conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience and religion, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals, the prohibition of abuses such as the slave trade, the arms traffic and the liquor traffic, and the prevention of the establishment of fortifications or military and naval bases and of military training of the natives for other than police purposes and the defence of territory, and will also secure equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of other Members of the League.

There are territories, such as South-West Africa and certain of the South Pacific Islands, which, owing to the sparseness of their population, or their small size, or their remoteness from the centres of civilisation, or their geographical contiguity to the territory of the Mandatory, and other circumstances, can be best administered under the laws of the Mandatory as integral portions of its territory, subject to the safeguards above mentioned in the interests of the indigenous population.

In every case of mandate, the Mandatory shall render to the Council an annual report in reference to the territory committed to its charge.

The degree of authority, control, or administration to be exercised by the Mandatory shall, if not previously agreed upon by the Members of the League, be explicitly defined in each case by the Council.

A permanent Commission shall be constituted to receive and examine the annual reports of the Mandatories and to advise the Council on all matters relating to the observance of the mandates.

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