Chapter X

WILSON'S VIEWS ON DIPLOMACY, FOREIGN RELATIONS, WAR AND PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION
In this chapter we will be concerned primarily with the principles which guided Wilson, while he was President, in formulating the foreign policy of the United States. Examples have been selected that reveal his ideas on Diplomacy, Foreign Relations, War and Peace, and International Organization. A detailed analysis will not be made except when such an analysis helps to reveal his ideas.

Wilson had reflected little on the problems of foreign policy before coming to the Presidency. Apart from a few general comments on the Senate's treaty-making powers and on international law he had dealt chiefly with "the machinery whereby a nation maintains itself in peace." (1) As President, however, he was forced to devote a great deal of time and thought to foreign affairs. In his attempt to work out a foreign policy we see the same approach that characterized his thought on domestic matters. He tried to judge what was morally right in each situation—what was in the interest of peace and the welfare of all. At the same time, however, he did not minimize the importance of the material interest that lay behind a nation's foreign policy. He frankly admitted that "The economic

relations of two great nations are not based upon sentiment; but they are based upon interest." (2) He realized too that what was morally right was not always practically possible. Still he tried to face each situation with a combination of moral insight and realism. Though at times we may question his concept of moral judgment, we must grant that not many United States Presidents have attempted to conduct affairs on so high a level.

Wilson did not have an easy task. In the decades since the Civil War, American economic interests had expanded in Latin America and the Far East. The war with Spain, the Venezuelan crisis, and the acquisition of overseas territory made it clear that economic expansion easily led to political involvement. Wilson clearly recognized this. He forthrightly stated, in his History of the American People, that America "had turned from developing its own resources to make conquest of the markets of the world." (3) Americans, he said, "had given themselves a colonial empire, and taken their place of power in the field of international politics." (4)

This economic expansion was vital to the nation's interest, Wilson felt. But he rejected the concomitant economic


(4) Ibid.
exploitation of smaller nations. Wilson called the programme of his administration the "New Freedom." At home the "New Freedom" meant a restoration of free competition and the prevention of large corporate interests from submerging the individual. Abroad, it apparently meant the laying aside of Theodore Roosevelt's big stick and W. H. Taft's dollar diplomacy; it implied an attempt to prevent economic exploitation of Latin America and the Far East.

But the "New Freedom" did not only mean freedom from economic exploitation. It also meant the promotion of political liberty. Without self-government and liberty, Wilson believed, world peace was impossible. If the great powers were also great democracies, the prospects for peace would be stronger. "Great democracies are not belligerent" he declared. "They do not seek or desire war." (5) He considered that it was the duty of all enlightened nations, who believed in democracy and liberty, to encourage the formation of self-government in the newly emerging nations.

The age of American territorial expansion was at an end, Wilson declared. Often in his speeches he asserted that the United States did not covet the possessions of any nation nor an inch of alien territory. (6) The territories America had already acquired, he told Congress, must be administered with a sense of responsibility, duty and justice, with a view to

(5) PPUTi The New Democracy (New York, 1926), I, 410.
(6) Ibid., 330.
leading the people toward self-government and independence. He made some difference, however, between the territories. Of Puerto Rico, he said that the United States must acquaint the islanders with the rights and privileges of the people of the United States. In Hawaii the principles of self-government must be perfected. (7) With regard to the Philippines he had earlier said that it was America’s duty to retain the Filipinos and teach the Filipinos self-government even if it meant using force. (3) As President, however, he had modified his views. He felt that constitutional government must be brought about from within not from without. It must be brought about by moral, not physical force. (9) For the peoples of the Philippines, he told Congress, America must hold the goal of ultimate independence, laying the foundations thoughtfully and permanently. (10)

Despite some change in his attitude, Wilson remained a little too prone to comment loftily on other people’s capacity for self-government. He once told a visiting British diplomat, “I am going to teach the South American Republics to elect good men.” (11) We may find his statement presumptuous but we cannot

(7) PP.: College and State, I, 77.
(3) Ibid., 427-42.
(9) PP.: The New Democracy, I, 385.
(10) Ibid., 77.
doubt that Wilson was sincere in his determination to begin a new era in American foreign policy, an era in which free democratic nations could deal with each other in mutual trust and friendship.

This idealistic goal, of course, had to be modified by economic realities, so much so that at times Wilson's policy seemed indistinguishable from the dollar diplomacy of Roosevelt and Taft. Hugh-Jones has pointed out that despite his repudiation of Theodore Roosevelt and Taft, Wilson seemed to be continuing their policies. Although he spoke of self-determination and of his desire to conciliate the Latin-American states, dollar diplomacy seemed still to hold the field, a natural consequence of the belief in the need of America for foreign trade which he shared with Knox. (12)

Convinced as he was that foreign trade was essential, he saw the Panama Canal as a life line that must be protected. This meant, of course, that the United States must retain a predominant position in Latin-America and the Carribbean. During his administration United States marines continued to keep Nicaragua in the condition of a United States protectorate. Wilson himself sent troops to Haiti, Santo Domingo and Cuba. Nevertheless, he sincerely looked forward to the goal of Pan-Americanism. It would be a "moral partnership in affairs" for

(12) Ibid., 137.
the whole hemisphere, in which there would be "no claim of guardianship or thought of wards, but, instead, a full and honorable association ... between ourselves and our neighbours." (13) "All the governments of America," Wilson said, "stand, so far as we are concerned, upon a footing of genuine equality and unquestioned independence." (14) "This," he told them, "is Pan-Americanism. It has none of the spirit of expire in it. It is ... the effectual embodiment, of the spirit of law and independence and liberty and mutual service." (15)

Such was Wilson's promise of a new hemisphere policy. Instead of bearing the whole responsibility, the United States was inviting all Latin American countries to join in defence of the Monroe doctrine. Although the Pan-American treaty did not materialize because of the opposition of the government of Chile and many Latin Americans' fears of America's policy in Mexico and the Caribbean, it created an atmosphere of genuine hope for the future and paved the way for the Good Neighbour policy of Franklin Roosevelt.

In implementing his foreign policy goals, Wilson realized that he had to work within the framework of the American Constitutional system. He had long been critical of the checks and balances on presidential power, but he had come

(14) Ibid., 408.
(15) Ibid., 409.
to feel that a strong man could function effectively by carrying with him the support of the people. He was convinced that as the United States was emerging as a world power, the President could play an increasingly important role. In 1900, in his preface to the 15th edition of Congressional Government, he pointed out that after the war with Spain, with the plunge into international politics and the administration of distant dependencies, Presidential power and the opportunity for constructive leadership greatly increased. (16) He reiterated the same view in 1907 when he asserted that after the war with Spain, the United States Presidency came to occupy a position of world leadership. "The Nation," he said, "has arisen to the first rank in power and resources. . . . Our President must always, henceforth, be one of the great powers of the world, whether he act greatly and wisely or not." (17)

Thus Wilson came to the Presidency with the conviction that the President must make and control foreign policy, governed only by the people and, his own ideas of what was right. He was inclined to be somewhat impatient with normal diplomatic channels and with the diplomat himself. Sometimes without informing the State Department he sent his own personal envoys to conduct special negotiation or to collect information he needed.


Wilson saw from the beginning that one of the main tests of his foreign policy would be in Latin America. He declared on 11 March 1913 that one of the chief objects of his administration would be 'to cultivate the friendship and deserve the confidence of our sister republics of Central and South America.' (18) He promised that his administration would try 'to promote in every proper and honorable way the interests which are common to the peoples of the two continents.' (19) He gave his assurance that 'the United States has nothing to seek in Central and South America except the lasting interests of the people of the two continents.' (20) The United States, Wilson promised, would work for 'the development of personal and trade relationships between the two continents, which shall redound to the profit and advantage of both and interfere with the rights and liberties of neither.' (21)

At the same time, however, he warned that the United States would have 'no sympathy with those who seek to seize the power of government to advance their own personal interests or ambition.' (22) The nation, he said, would prefer 'As friends, . . . those who act in the interest of peace and


(19) Ibid.

(20) Ibid.

(21) Ibid.

(22) Ibid.
honor, who protect private rights and respect the restraints of constitutional provision.' (23)

In the case of Mexico Wilson applied this principle even to the question of recognizing the government. General Victoriano Huerta had usurped power by deposing Francisco Ladero and had allowed Ladero to be murdered. To Wilson the situation was clear. The rightful rulers of Mexico had been murdered and popular constitutional government had been overthrown by an usurper. In refusing to recognize the new Mexican Government, Wilson repudiated the historic American practice of recognizing all governments in power. He set up a new standard, one of constitutional legitimacy. His action was completely contrary to the advice of Counselor John Bassett Moore, who pointed out that the United States Government had always acted in the matter of recognition on the defacto principle. "We regard governments as existing or not existing,' Moore said, "we do not require them to be chosen by popular vote. . . . Our depreciation of the political method which may prevail in certain countries can not relieve us of the necessity of dealing with the governments of those countries. . . .' He concluded that 'we look simply to the fact of the existence of the government and to its ability and inclination to discharge the national obligations.' (24)

(23) Ibid.
(24) Ibid., 349.
From our present vantage point, we might be inclined to say that Loore was right. But the Wilsonian precedent continues to linger even at the present time as the United States persists in its refusal to recognize the People's Republic of China.

His refusal to recognize Huerta's Government was in the interest of the Mexican people, Wilson felt. The Mexican revolution in his view was struggle of the masses for constitutional government. Before recognizing the Huerta's regime, therefore, he wanted to see that constitutional government was restored through free elections. He drafted a proposal based on a plan prepared by Delbor J. Half of Kansas City stating that the United States Government was ready to recognize Huerta 'on condition that all hostilities cease, and that he call an election at an early date.' (25) It must be a 'free and fair election' he said, 'secured by all proper machinery and safeguards.' (26) Huerta had pledged to hold an election by 26 October 1913 but that date was in Wilson's opinion 'too remote.' (27)


(26) Ibid.

(27) Ibid. Wilson however did not send the draft, for he was not sure he could trust Ambassador Henry Lane to serve as a mediator in the Mexican struggle. On 7 March 1913, the *New York World* had charged the Ambassador with complicity in the Huerta-Díaz Coup. To recall H. L. Wilson would have meant recognition of the new government. Wilson did not want that, so he abandoned the Half plan of mediation and sent his friend, William Bayard Hale, to investigate the situation in

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Wilson felt that he must explain his Mexican policy to the American people. Addressing a joint session of Congress, he declared that the United States wanted to help the Mexican people to find peace and establish an 'honest constitutional government.' The Huerta regime, he said, had led to 'war and disorder, devastation and confusion' and it was the duty of the United States 'to offer to assist, . . . in effecting some arrangement which would bring relief and peace and set up a universally acknowledged political authority there.' (28)

In this case perhaps Wilson's keen desire that a constitutional government be established in Mexico blinded him to reality. He thought that he knew better than the Mexican leaders themselves what the Mexican people wanted. Gradually, however, Wilson came to realize that the United States could not thrust its help on Mexico if Mexico did not want it. And therefore there was no alternative but to wait patiently and watch developments as the two sides fought out the Civil War.

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Mexico City. After receiving reports from Hale, Wilson sent John Lind, former Governor of Minnesota, as his confidential agent, to present his offer of mediation to the provisional government. Wilson's sending Lind was typical of his by-passing of normal diplomatic channels. The President had not consulted the American Embassy in Mexico City, the provisional government or the constitutionalist leaders. He let them learn of Lind's mission from the newspapers which printed a survey of Lind's instructions. Link, Wilson: The New Freedom (Princeton, 1956) 353, 358.

(28) Ibid., 361.
To prevent foreign nations from sending arms Wilson had put an embargo on exportation of arms to Mexico. On February 1914, however, he lifted the embargo to assist Carranza, the Constitutionalist party leader, in his fight to oust Huerta. Shortly after, in the seizing of Vera Cruz he realized that he had gone too far in getting involved in Mexican affairs. Admiral Mayo on his own initiative seized Vera Cruz to prevent the landing of a German ship carrying arms for Huerta. Wilson's administration supported the Admiral.

Fortunately Argentina, Brazil and Chile offered to mediate in the situation. The United States accepted and together with the other representatives worked out an agreement providing for the elimination of Huerta and a provisional government acceptable to all parties. Wilson appeared to have achieved his objective; he believed he had convinced the Latin American nations that the United States had no imperialistic designs. At the same time, however, he may have recognized the danger of interfering in the internal disputes of another nation and setting himself as a judge of what was good for it. (29)

(29) Even after Carranza came to power there was no peace in Mexico. The struggle between him and Villa kept the country in a constant state of civil war. Wilson again in 1916 worked out an agreement with Mexican representatives, but when Carranza repudiated the agreement Wilson realized there was no more he could do. At any rate, the European war was demanding more of his time and attention.
In his dealings with Colombia, Wilson had happier results. He was guided by the view that the government of a country should not hesitate to make amends to another if it was convinced that the latter had been wronged. Theodore Roosevelt's Administration had supported the revolution of 1903 which had covered the province of Panama from Colombia and secured American rights in the Canal Zone. (30) Wilson was convinced that wrong had been done to Colombia and it had to be set right. He informed the American minister at Bogotá that the United States was willing to pay $15,000,000.00 in full settlement of all claims and differences pending between the government of Colombia and the government of the United States and between the government of Colombia and the government of the Republic of Panama. (31) This gesture of friendship and goodwill brought about the signing of the treaty of Bogotá on 6 April 1914 settling the indemnity between the governments.

But Wilson had to face a strong battle against the republican senators who were opposed to the treaty. It was not ratified until after Wilson left the White House. Nevertheless, even during his administration, his efforts for the treaty were not fruitless. Wilson's support of the treaty

(30) Link, Wilson: The New Freedom (Princeton, 1956) 321. For a full account on Mexican Affairs see pages 319-416. Colombia had refused to ratify the treaty which allowed the United States to build a canal through Panama. The American government had assisted a group of revolutionaries to take hold of Panama and the new government of Panama was given recognition in 1903.

(31) Ibid., 323.
created trust and confidence throughout Latin America and raised the moral prestige of the United States.

Wilson's attitude on the question of the Panama Canal tolls also brings out his faith in justice and fairplay in relations between nations, and in the importance of remaining true to the letter and spirit of treaties. According to the Hay-Paunceforte treaty of 1901 tolls were to be charged on ships of all nations using the canal on a non-discriminatory basis. In 1912, however, Congress passed the Canal Act authorizing free passage for American coastwise shipping. Great Britain protested that the act violated the treaty.

Wilson was convinced that Great Britain was right and he asked Congress to repeal the act on 5 March 1914. The House did so immediately, but the Senate was more unwilling. Convinced as he was that the President derives his chief power from the direct support of the people, he considered resigning and 'taking the matter to the people.' (32) Three months later the Senate passed an Act of Repeal. It was, as Hughes Jones has called it, "a striking demonstration of honesty in international politics" and it "enhanced the reputation of the United States no less than that of Wilson." (33)

Wilson also was opposed to the practice of big nations, imposing themselves on weaker nations and reducing their


(33) Ibid., 146.
sovereignty to virtual nullity by attempts at political and economic domination. This was demonstrated in his attitude to China early in his Presidency. England, France, Germany, and Russia had parcelled out the once great nation into spheres of influence. They had demanded trade concessions and indemnities reducing the Chinese government to a state of powerlessness. Moreover, the Chinese people were dissatisfied with the conservative central government. Progressive elements were demanding sweeping reforms that would make China a modern nation yielding to their demands. The conservative government was attempting to carry out some of the most urgently needed reforms, particularly in government administration and currency.

To get money for these reforms the Chinese government was forced to borrow large sums from a consortium of English, German, French, Russian and American bankers. The Taft administration had expressed keen interest in participating in the consortium.

When in 1913 the American group asked the United States government's support for their participation in the consortium, Wilson refused. He saw in the plan the possibility of 'forceful interference in the financial, and even the political, affairs of the great Oriental State, just now awakening to a consciousness of its power and its obligations to its people.' (34) The provisions of the loan provided for the

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(34) John V. A. Lauterer, Treaties and Agreements with and concerning China: 1894-1919 (New York, 1921) 1025. Statements of the American government in regard to support requested by the American Group, 13 March 1913.
collection of taxes by foreign agents, a provision which, in Wilson's words, "seem to us to touch very nearly the administrative independence of China itself." (35) It was, he believed, a clear violation of the traditional United States policy of maintaining the political and territorial integrity of China.

In taking this attitude Wilson placed himself on the side of the liberals and anti-imperialists. John Dewey, writing in the *New Republic* in 1912, had strongly criticized American participation in the consortium. Dewey pointed out that participation would inevitably mean involvement in the internal struggles of China, supporting the conservative central government at the expense of the more progressive elements. Inevitably, he argued, increased foreign financial aid would "create an interest in stabilizing China politically. It would mean sanctifying the status quo and preventing the development of revolution, for a revolution necessarily means internal disorder which would adversely affect foreign investment." Thus he concluded, "a too positive and constructive development of our tradition of goodwill to China would involve America with Chinese affairs injurious to China's welfare, to that free and independent development in which we profess such interests." (36)

(35) Ibid.

Only three years later, however, Wilson's administration was forced to take the lead in forming a new consortium. By August, 1917 it became increasingly clear that the economic position of China was becoming desperate. Moreover, Japan, which had already illegally occupied a portion of Manchuria, was gaining a dangerous amount of financial control in China. Able to advance loans on a more favourable basis than the debt ridden western powers, Japan was clearly a threat to the Open Door. In view of the changed situation, Secretary of State Lansing asked Wilson to form a new consortium. (37) This time Wilson consented, and on 22 June, he invited the banker to discuss the question of organizing the consortium.

The reasons for Wilson's changed attitude are not entirely clear. It is likely that he became convinced that such evidence of American interest might contribute to deter Japan. Japan had shown little respect for the Open Door concept and had openly flouted the Portsmouth treaty in regard to the rights of China in Manchuria. (38) Her twenty-one demands clearly indicated her intention to dominate China politically. In the light of these circumstances, Wilson felt compelled to abandon


his principle of non-interference and, as a countermeasure, to initiate the formation, by American bankers, of a Four-Power Consortium for a Chinese loan. To save China at all he had to consent to give economic aid which would indirectly strengthen the existing government. Even then, however, he attempted to minimize the political involvement by excluding any terms that could give investors an opportunity to exercise undue influence over the Chinese government. In an age when many other nations were interested in China only for what they could get out of it, Wilson's China policy showed a devotion to a high level of integrity in international relations.

It is finally, of course, not for his China policy or his Latin American policy that Wilson will be remembered. The crucial test of his foreign policy came in his grappling with the problems of war and peace. At the beginning of his administration he had said it would be ironic if his administration had to deal primarily with foreign affairs, but now he plunged wholeheartedly into the fight for peace.

When the Great War began, Wilson's first objective was to keep the United States out of the conflict. He was convinced that war was degrading morally and disastrous economically. Moreover, he felt, it was a complex European power struggle, with no clear cut right or wrong on either side. The United States, he believed, could best serve the interest of all parties concerned by acting as a mediator, not as a belligerent.
He sent a number of notes to Germany and the Allies, but failing to get a favourable response, he waited for a better opportunity.

The circumstances that led Wilson to modify his neutrality and finally to call for war against the Central Powers have been adequately chronicled in several works and need not be dealt with here. Our concern is with some significant ideas of Wilson as they evolved during this period. Three days prior to the sinking of the Lusitania, Wilson had reaffirmed his desire to settle peacefully the dispute with Germany in regard to neutral rights and submarine warfare. He warned, however, that America's desire for peace should not be mistaken for cowardice. The 'example of America must be the example not merely of peace because it will not fight, but of peace because peace is the healing and elevating influence of the world and strife is not.' (39) He wrote three protest notes to Germany emphasizing that "the rights of neutrals in time of war are based upon principles, not upon expediency, and the principles are immutable." (40) "Illegal and inhuman acts," may be justifiable "against an enemy," he argued, but they are "manifestly indefensible when they deprive neutrals of their acknowledged rights, particularly when they violate the right to life itself." (41)

(39) PPPLN: The New Democracy, I, 321.
(40) Ibid., 353.
(41) Ibid., 352.
Finally, there was a point beyond which Wilson would refuse to be pushed. However, he tended to speak of "national honour" instead of national interest. On 24 February 1916 he wrote to Senator William J. Stone, "I shall do everything in my power to keep the United States out of war." (42) But, he added, he could not "concentrate any abridgment of the rights of American citizens in any respect." (43) "The honor and self-respect of the nation is involved," he wrote. As much as the Americans wanted peace, he said, they would not try to preserve it at the cost of honour. He concluded, "once accept a single abatement of right and many other humiliations would certainly follow, and the whole fine fabric of international law might crumble under our hands piece by piece." (44)

Addressing Congress, Wilson said that the United States might be forced to break diplomatic relations with Germany. The United States, he said, was a representative of all the neutral nations of the world. As such it could not remain silent while the rights of humanity were "being swept utterly away in the maelstrom of this terrible war." (45)

As war progressed in Europe, and America was getting prepared to defend the nation, "Wilson began to make it clear

(42) Ibid., II, 122.
(43) Ibid., 123.
(44) Ibid.
(45) Ibid., 150.
that America would fight if need be. "There is something that
the American people love better than they love peace," he said,
"They love the principles upon which their political life is
founded. They are ready at any time to fight for the vindica-
tion of their character and of their honor." (46)

More strongly than before Wilson began saying that
America could not stand aloof from the war in Europe. He saw
that such a war might not spare any nation no matter how much
it desired to be neutral. The only hope for world order was,
in his view "that the nations of the world must in some way
band themselves together to see that that right prevails as
against any sort of selfish aggression." (47) America's role,
he said, must not only be to bring the war to an end but to
take the lead in developing a system to prevent unjust wars.
America was in no sense a party to the present quarrel, he
said. Its only interest was in peace and in "an universal
association of the nations to maintain . . . territorial
integrity and political independence." (48)

Wilson continuously advocated that in place of the old
system of power politics there should be a concert of powers
which would eliminate entangling alliances. Furthermore, as a
guarantee for future peace and justice he proposed a "peace

(46) Ibid., 8.
(47) Ibid., 186.
(48) Ibid., 188.
without victory," a settlement based on justice rather than a dictated peace by the victor. He warned that terms "accepted in humiliation, under duress, at an intolerable sacrifice, . . . would leave a sting, a resentment, a bitter memory upon which terms of peace would rest, not permanently, but only as upon quicksand." (49)

On 2 April 1917 Wilson asked a joint session of Congress for a declaration of war against Germany. Even then, however, he appealed for calm dedication not noisy passions. "We must put excited feeling away," he said. "Our motive will not be revenge or the victorious assertion of the physical might of the nation, but only the vindication of . . . human right." (50)

Wilson continued to insist that there must be a new international order based on a partnership of democratic nations. "No autocratic government," he declared, "could be trusted to keep faith within it or observe its covenants." (51) To insure the peace of the world people, including the German people, must be liberated from their autocratic masters. "The world," he said in a phrase that became a slogan for the war, "must be made safe for democracy." (52) The fact that in the

(49) Ibid., 410.
(50) PPW: War and Peace (New York, 1927) I, 8.
(51) Ibid., 12.
(52) Ibid., 14.
aftermath of the first World War the phrase came to be repeated ironically did not detract from the value of the idea. The best of intentions does not free us from our mistakes, but since our vision is limited, we can ask no more of a man or a nation than that they have good intentions, intentions founded on an honest appraisal of the existing situation. In this sense we can only appreciate the attitude with which Wilson went into the war and the way he looked forward to a just and durable peace. As the war went on, Wilson continued to insist on the need for a just peace and an association to prevent war. Finally on 8 January 1918 he presented to a joint session of Congress a programme for a just peace, his famous fourteen points. It was an address not merely to the Congress or to the American people but to the world. (53)

It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss, in detail, the treaty of Versailles. Our primary concern here will be with the basic idea of a league of nations, and its significance in terms of Wilson's own ideas on government. Of secondary concern will be the executive-legislative relations maintained by Wilson and judged from his own ideas on the relationship of these two bodies.

Of Wilson's fourteen points, the first five dealt in general with the freedom of the seas, economic conditions, disarmament, colonies and diplomacy. These were general

(53) Ibid., 155-62.
matters in which the various powers had different degrees of interest. The other eight points dealt with particular territorial arrangements in the Ottoman Empire and in Europe. Finally the fourteenth point envisaged a plan for a general association of nations with mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity. (54)

The fourteen points though idealistic in content were nevertheless an inducement to end war. The nature of the proposals were general allowing the possibility of compromise. Wilson's pragmatic approach to problems enabled him to devise a plan that was more of a diplomatic weapon than an international charter to settle all problems. The fourteenth point was, however, closest to Wilson's long cherished ideal of a "general association of nations" to guarantee the territorial integrity and political independence of all nations. Although the fourteen points failed in securing immediate peace, they ultimately formed the basis of the peace terms.

Wilson believed that he as President of the United States, leader of the nation and leader of the party in power, was solely responsible to conduct the peace negotiations. The midterm elections had brought a republican majority to the House and Senate, and its implications were not adequately realized by him. In selecting delegates to the Conference there is no evidence that Wilson ever seriously considered

(54) Ibid., 159-61.
inviting any of the recognized leaders of the Republican Party. Henry White was, politically, a registered Republican but he had no particular prestige in party councils. (55) Senators should not be delegates, Wilson felt, because in the end the Senate had to ratify the treaty. Senators should not take part in treaty negotiations as well as act upon those negotiations as judges. (56) It is difficult to understand how he could fail to realize that participation leads to understanding. How could he expect the Senate and the Republican party to understand, to be in sympathy with the results of the conference unless some of its respected representatives participated in the difficult task of negotiating peace?

Perhaps the best index of Wilson's attitude towards the peace negotiations is contained in the closing words of his address to Congress:

I am the servant of the Nation. I can have no private thought or purpose of my own in performing such an errand. I go to give the best that is in me to the common settlement which I must now assist in arriving at in conference with the other working heads of the associated Governments. I shall count upon your friendly countenance and encouragement. I shall not be inaccessible. The cables and the wireless will render me available for any counsel or service you may desire of me. . . . I shall make my absence as brief as possible and shall hope to return with the happy assurance that it has been possible to translate into action the great ideals for which America has striven. (57)


(56) Ibid., 100.

(57) P.R.U: War and Peace, I, 323.
After departing for Europe, how did Wilson keep informed of American public opinion and other aspects of the American scene? On what basis did he make his decisions? One would assume that he had at his disposal most of the information available to a President at home. It is certainly difficult to determine what information he actually used as the basis of his decisions. In fact it appears most probable that Wilson may not have regularly consulted the papers sent to him from Washington. It is known that he received summaries of important senatorial speeches, editorials from various newspapers throughout the country and cables from J. P. Tumulty, Secretary to the President. (58) What importance Wilson attached to some critical speeches in Congress is not clear. Republican Senators Philander C. Knox and Henry Cabot Lodge had declared that if any extraneous provisions unnecessary for a peace with Germany were added, these "would surely be stricken out or amended no matter how many signatories might be appended to the treaty." (59)

Wilson did not take into account sufficiently, the Senate's reactions to the peace treaty before leaving for Versailles. Before the ideas for the League of Nations were published, only one republican senator, Senator McCumber, had defended, on the floor of the Senate, the idea of a league of


nations. (60) Another republican senator, Senator Sterling, while admitting that it was within a President's constitutional powers to exercise complete control of negotiations, opposed the drafting of the League of Nations at that time. (61)

However, in direct opposition to these warnings Wilson made it his aim to gain agreement on a Constitution for the League of Nations and have it incorporated as an integral part of the peace treaty. He made this clear in the keynote address at the second plenary session of the peace conference on 25 January 1919. (62)

Stephen Bonsal, in his book, Unfinished Business, records an interesting reaction on the part of Wilson to senatorial opposition. It seems that an article in an English paper had commented that the effect of adverse opinions voiced by so many American senators boded ill for the acceptance of the League. To this Wilson replied that "the Senators do not know what the people are thinking ... they are as far from the people, the great mass of our people, as I am from Mars. Indeed they are out of touch with the thinking, forward looking masses of people throughout the world. Naturally they cannot understand them." (63) One gets the impression that Wilson

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(60) Ibid., 1084-8.

(61) Ibid., 1319-22.

(62) PPFW: War and Peace, I, 395-400.

(63) Stephan Bonsal, Unfinished Business (New York, 1944) 49.
believed that American public opinion was itself going to pressure the Senate into accepting what he believed was the desire of the general public—a treaty including in its provisions for a league of nations. However, it is the Senate that has to ratify treaties and the President’s task has always been to persuade the Senate, by various devices open to him, to an understanding of the issues, the interest of the nation, and the general feeling of the people toward those issues.

As a professor, Wilson had written about the means of personal and presidential leadership available and as Chief Executive he had used them on many occasions. But on the issue of the treaty Wilson’s touch with the Senate had failed him.

Whatever the mistakes of the conference itself and the compromises Wilson apparently had to make, the League of Nations came into existence, which was to him of prime importance. He strongly believed that it would remedy whatever flaws or vices there might be in the treaty and would adjust itself to the changing conditions of the world.

A great deal has been written on Wilson’s part in formulating the Treaty of Versailles. They basically centre around three questions. Did Wilson betray his own programme for peace? Was Wilson’s peace programme itself faulty? What should be the principles underlying American foreign policy? Harold Nicolson, who was a member of the English delegation to the Peace Conference, has written that “The
collapse of President Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference is one of the major tragedies of modern history. To a very large extent that collapse can be attributed to the defects of his own intelligence and character." (64) Paul Airdsall, an author and a defender of Wilson's achievements at Paris, gives a completely different opinion. He wrote in conclusion, "A careful study of the record reveals an extraordinary consistency in Wilson's fight for his program under overwhelming difficulties, as well as a high degree of political intelligence in translating the abstract principles of his program into concrete details of application." (65) Thus it appears that opinion is quite divided on Wilson's role at the Versailles conference. Some seem to feel he revealed a tragic weakness of character. Others feel that he revealed a pragmatic and high political intelligence. Some argue that the fault lay in Wilson's lack of a proper understanding of the significance of economic problems in the relationships between countries.

Richard Hofstadter, a Columbia University historian observes, "Conspicuously absent from the Fourteen Points was any meaningful demand for a substantial change in international economic relations . . . the treaty and the League Covenant were an attempt, in the language of democracy, peace, and self-determination, to retain the competitive national state

(64) Theodore P. Greene, ed., Wilson at Versailles (Boston, 1957) 37.

(65) Ibid., 54.
system of the nineteenth century without removing the admitted economic source of its rivalries and animosities." (66)

This view is controverted by Etienne Lantoux, who asserts that "... while the economic defects of that settlement were, for the most part, illusory or exaggerated, ... the political defects were the really decisive ones ... in the failure, and one might almost say in the deliberate failure, to establish a true balance of power." (67) After many years of reflection on the Wilsonian peace programme Walter Lippman, one of America's most esteemed journalists today, wrote, in 1943, that Wilson's main fault was that he "identified collective security with antipathy to alliances, rather than with the constructive development of alliances." (68)

The arguments over the Treaty are not likely to end in the coming years. Undoubtedly there are elements of truth in the criticisms of various latter-day commentators on one or other aspect of Wilson's actions in respect of the Treaty and the League. But do they detract a great deal from the ideas and ideals in regard to peace, war, and international organization that Woodrow Wilson had eloquently expounded? In them one can find nothing ignoble but much that is elevating.

(66) Ibid., 71, 73.
(67) Ibid., 81.
(68) Ibid., 85.
And thus we are led to the final question—what should be the principles underlying American foreign policy? George Kennan, a career-diplomat, and Hans J. Lorgentheau, an authority on international relations, are influential contemporary representatives of one school of thought. They argue that America is naive in her moralistic approach to international affairs. Woodrow Wilson is cited by such writers as an example of an American statesman devoted to a moralistic approach. They plead for what they call realism in foreign policy. Kennan observes, "I see the most serious fault of our past policy formulation to lie in something that I might call the legalistic-moralistic approach to international problems." (69)

Frank Tannenbaum, on the other hand, strongly criticises the "realists." He feels they are trying to persuade Americans to abandon all their humanism and pacifism. He feels that friction and differences are an aspect of reality. There can be no absolute or perfect solution to these differences. Peace does not mean the absence of difficulties or serious problems but rather a continuous discussion of the issues and a continuous striving toward workable compromises. He believes strongly that workable compromises can only be made between equals. (70) Wilson's approach commends itself to him as a more suitable one for the conduct of American foreign policy than that of the realists. Echoing Wilson,

(69) Ibid., 94.
(70) Ibid., 102.
Tannenbaum writes:

... it must be a peace without victory. ... Only a peace between equals can last. ... The equality of nations upon which peace must be founded if it is to last must be an equality of rights; ... Equality of territory or of resources there of course cannot be; ... But no one asks or expects anything more than an equality of rights. ... No peace can last, or ought to last, which does not recognize and accept the principle governments derive all their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that ... no right anywhere exists to hand peoples about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property. ... I am proposing, as it were, that the nations should with one accord adopt the doctrine of President Monroe as the doctrine of the world; that ... every people should be left free to determine its own polity, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful. ... These are American principles, American policies. We could stand for no others. (71)

Wilson was not a theorist. Just as he had not worked out the details of a theory of state he likewise had not worked out the details of a theory of American foreign policy. He had a philosophy of foreign policy as well as of state. But, because he had not applied this philosophy to details he participated in compromises without fully realizing the degree to which he was compromising. However, Wilson did achieve a first step toward organizing a true world community. First steps are rarely immediately followed by success. The significance of a first step is not in its success but in the time when it was taken. It would appear that the timing of this first attempt to establish an international organization

was commendable. The degree to which the United Nations has been successful may be due in part to the twenty-five years of thought that preceded its formation. Wilson forced the world to discuss the role of a league of nations. Besides this achievement, the minor compromises of the peace treaty recede into the background. Thus it does not matter that his own nation, even, failed to support the treaty which was originally a proposal of their President. It matters only that they as a nation began to think seriously of participation in international affairs and in an international organization.

The idea of the League of Nations, of course, was not original with Wilson. What is most significant for our purposes, however, is that it is entirely consistent with his interpretation of the nature of the state and government. Wilson saw an international organization as the next stage in the evolution of political institutions. Throughout this evolutionary process community must precede political organization. A constitution is merely an instrument defining the relationships which have already been tacitly agreed upon by the community. This common agreement requires a high degree of social harmony—a general consent as to the goals of the society and a proper adjustment between individual and social welfare. In Wilson's view, the basis of this community was steadily widening. As nations developed common interests and attitudes he saw the possibility of regulating their relationships by international law and eventually forming an
international organization. His covenant of the League of Nations was based on the community he saw already existing among the nations of European background. Yet, even the League to him was no final answer. Wilson envisioned the possibility of a community that would eventually embrace the world.