Chapter One

The Wilson Legacy, Domestic and International

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In the one hundred years since Woodrow Wilson took office, his ideas and actions have cast a long shadow over American domestic and international politics. His successes and failures as governor of New Jersey and as a two-term President of the United States (as well as president of Princeton University) were vigorously debated in his day and have been almost continually thereafter. Throughout the presidencies of Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover and the Republican-dominated Congresses that followed Wilson's time in the White House, Wilson's achievements, failures, and grand visions hovered over the politics of this so-called "New Era."

Discussions over the meanings and outcomes of Wilson's ideas and actions have led to him becoming a standard bearer for several hotly contested – and often vaguely defined – sets of political positions. The one point of consensus amongst scholars, politicians, and citizens from the 1920s through the present has been that Wilsonian progressivism and internationalism decisively shaped American domestic and international politics and history. In domestic affairs, Wilson helped to bring about significant new economic reforms, such as the establishment of a federal income tax and the Federal Reserve. In international affairs, Wilson brought the US into World War I, idealistically campaigned for a global effort to "make the world safe for democracy," and championed the League of Nations.

So wide-ranging was Wilson's influence that his name has become both an adjective and a noun (an "ian" and an "ism"), with each word refining two distinct schools of thought. "Wilsonianism" may be the more influential, if slightly less used noun form of his name; it usually refers to an idealistic liberal internationalist foreign relations stance premised on such notions as self-determination, economic globalization, and collective security. Lloyd Ambrosius has defined Wilsonianism as "epitomiz[ing] the liberal tradition in American foreign relations" (Ambrosius 2002: 1). Wilson's efforts

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to achieve a "peace without victory," to proclaim terms to resolve the war and to establish a new global order in his Fourteen Points in January 1918, and to promote the League of Nations are fundamental to the meaning and ramifications of Wilsonianism and thus to its legacy. Indeed, Wilsonianism has had such national and international traction that Frank Ninkovich (1999) has deployed the adjective form "Wilsonian" to make the bold case that the dominant paradigm for the US role in the world after 1921 generated a "Wilsonian century." As Ninkovich astutely notes, "a study of the Wilsonian century points beyond Wilsonianism to a concern for understanding a process in which a world full of strangers has become a global society" (Ninkovich 1999: 291). Such views have not been the province of admirers alone. Wilson's influence was so profound that even arch-critic Henry Kissinger ruefully noted in 1994 that, "Wilsonianism has survived while history has bypassed the reservations of his contemporaries" (Kissinger 1994: 30).

Despite the use of "Wilsonian" in terms of foreign relations as Ninkovich and others have applied it, in adjective form "Wilsonian" is exceedingly common in historical scholarship and has been used just as often, or more so, to refer to Wilson's style and school of politics in the domestic arena. In such usage the term "Wilsonian" operates as a label for a constellation of particular views about reform politics and progressivism intertwined with the successes and failures of the Wilson years in government. Nevertheless, domestic Wilsonian views were knotted together with Wilsonianism as an international vision, as this chapter will explore.

The chapter will examine these and related themes as part of the broader process of studying, evaluating, and invoking Wilson and the long shadow he cast over the presidencies and era profiled in this volume. We start with Wilson's actions and efforts during his lifetime, briefly exploring the election of 1912 and his time as president, while also delving into the resulting reactions and responses of his day. Next we turn to the major strands of interpretation after Wilson left the White House as they developed in the Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover years. A focus here will be on the dramatic battles over the "lessons" of the Wilson years as prismed through the lens of revisionist and counter-revisionist historical scholarship during the period from 1921 through 1933, and after. Throughout this chapter the central emphasis lies with changing interpretations of the legacy of Wilson in sections organized around the main historiographical themes of both Wilsonianism and Liberal Internationalism and the "New Freedom" program and Wilsonian Progressivism of that era that endure to the present.

This chapter illustrates but cannot exhaust the comprehensive body of scholarship on the subject of Wilson's legacy. Ultimately, it is important to note that Wilson's ideas and actions, along with the domestic and international historical developments during his presidency from 1913 through 1921, set the political parameters for liberal progressivism at home and abroad. In turn, his views and actions served as rhetorical and conceptual touch points – generally negative and easily attacked for political purposes – for the Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover administrations. The major shift in American domestic and foreign relations enacted by Wilson was something that the Republican administrations of the 1920s into the 1930s rejected, at least rhetorically. In this way Wilson became a foil. Nevertheless, he had established the main operating features for federal government regulation and revenue generation and the US role in the world even for those staunchly opposed to all things "Wilsonian."

Wilson, who had to deal with the rejection of his beloved League of Nations and the ensuing health problems he experienced from that time until his death, would no doubt be gratified by this legacy. As a historically oriented intellectual who published widely on Anglo-American political and legal history, he had sought to make a lasting mark on the world. From his childhood he was fascinated with oratory and debate. By college he was "absorbed in the study of politics" and often made out cards reading "Thomas Woodrow Wilson, Senator from Virginia" (Link 1947–65: 1:5–6). Wilson attended Law School at the University of Virginia and earned a PhD in political science at Johns Hopkins University, working as a professor at Cornell, Bryn Mawr, and Wesleyan before going to Princeton and eventually serving as its president. Yet a close look at his writing from his school years reveals an aim for more than a place in law or academia. Wilson noted in several private letters while he was in graduate school, for example, that the law was not for him, and thus he shifted to doctoral work; he wanted to "make myself an outside force in politics" and struggled with his own "terrible ambition, a longing to do immortal work" (Link 1966–94: 3:405; Blum 1956: 15). Thus his early biographers and admiring friends tended to describe him as "always headed for politics" and perhaps for the presidency, but of course this path was far from certain (Blum 1956; Link 1947–65: vol. 1). Indeed, more recent scholarship has called this teleology into question (Heckscher 1991; Thompson 2002; Cooper 2009).

Research on the Wilsonian legacy and Wilson's own views of his impact have depended in part on the availability of his private papers. Early scholars did not have access to his collections and later scholars had to travel to Princeton to view these voluminous files. The best early work was done by Ray Stannard Baker, Wilson's official biographer, who produced the first multi-volume account of Wilson's life and times during the 1920s and 1930s based on interviews and close contact with Wilson, his family, and friends, as well as unfettered access to his papers (during Wilson's lifetime he only made the papers available en masse to Baker). Scholarship on Wilson significantly advanced after Arthur Link completed a magisterial multi-volume and extensively annotated compendium of Wilson's writings and reciprocal correspondence entitled *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (1966–94). The volumes dealing with the World War I years did not appear until the 1980s and 1990s, and have made possible more fine-grained understandings of the most contested issues about Wilson's vision of a "new world order" and more holistic understandings of Wilson's developing thought. The archival richness accessible in these volumes helped to fuel post-Cold War work on Wilsonianism and has been central to a renewed interest in a wide array of topics – on missionaries, on pacifism, on economic theories and political philosophy, on human rights, and on nationalist movements around the world, among other topics – that can now more easily incorporate a deeper understanding of Wilson's views and actions (Ambrosius 1991, 2003; Berg 2013; Cooper 2003, 2009; Heckscher 1991; Thompson 2002; Manela 2007; Throntveit 2011, forthcoming).

Wilsonian Historiography

The historical profile of Woodrow Wilson and the Wilsonian legacy cannot be characterized as sequential so much as it has been richly sedimented. At least three main layers of analysis have been most prominent in the development of accounts of

Wilson's legacy since he left the White House in the spring of 1921. As with many historical cases, the highly charged present-day implications of the life, ideas, and actions of Wilson have continued to add urgency to archival research and interpretations, revitalizing Wilson's ideas and making them relevant to contemporary concerns while at the same time often unmooring them from their own place and time in order to find Wilson, Wilsonian, or Wilsonianism applicable in the present.

The first main layer of Wilson historiography revolves around a deceptively simple related dual question: how "progressive" was Wilson and how "progressive" were his reform efforts? Critics in his own era and those thereafter – including scholars, thinkers, and politicians from both the political left and right – have noted the reforms enacted particularly between 1913 and 1916, hearkening to their essential "progressiveness" or, conversely, seeing them as a half-measure far from "authentic" progressivism. Much of this scholarship has explored the concept of a Wilsonian approach to politics and reform and has emphasized the limits of the progressive reforms and the president's own reform impulses. Evidence here abounds and is premised either on a positive assessment of even the most modest changes made under the Wilson Administration (Berg 2013; Blum 1956; Cooper 2009; Heckscher 1991; Link 1957; Thompson 2002), as of historical significance despite the grander expectations for reform of many of the era's progressives, or underscores several more critical lines of reproach. With respect to the latter, one argument highlights the corporatist and capitalist effects of Wilson's mixed record on regulating the economy (Sklar 1988; Kolko 1977); another, complementary and widely shared criticism lies with Wilson's relative lack of effort on social justice issues and retrograde perspectives on women's suffrage and on race, as well as his willingness to severely curtail free speech during wartime (virtually all of Wilson's best biographers suggest this to some degree: Link, Blum, Thompson, Heckscher, Cooper, Berg); another line of criticism, often building on those already laid out, places emphasis on Wilson's lack of progressive bona fides until at least 1909, suggesting an exceedingly gradual process of coming to the progressive cause (Eisenach 1994).

A range of scholars rightly point out that much of the early 1913 legislation already was in the works before Wilson's election, thanks to the legacy of Teddy Roosevelt and the struggles of progressives in and during the Taft Administration, and have shown that the most radical reform legislation of 1913–15 was pushed largely at the state and congressional levels, not from the White House (Kolko 1977; Sklar 1988; Eisenach 1994). Others disagree. They argue that Wilson should receive more credit for supporting reformist efforts as chief executive (Blum 1956; Link 1957; Cooper 2003). Further, historians have also wrestled with the question of what "happened" to progressivism after World War I. On this issue, emphases have varied. Progressivism during World War I and throughout the 1920s has been found to be "limited," or a case of surprising "endurance"; its perceived "demise" has been rejected, and all the while there has been a "search for" progressivism during the era (Link 1959; Filene 1970; Rodgers 1982).

A second important theme in the historical scholarship addresses the question: how idealist and moralistic was Wilson? Admirers as well as detractors along with more neutral observers have attempted to determine how best to understand Wilson's idealism and moralism. Waves of scholars and thinkers have sought to pin down the fundamental values at the core of Wilson's politics and have emphasized not just the

appearance of idealism and moralism in his rhetoric but also as they were or were not embodied in his political actions. Since the critical scholarship by figures such as Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and historians Walter Millis and Charles Beard that first emerged in the 1920s and 1930s, this theme has been largely aligned with disputes over – and criticisms of – Wilsonianism's liberal internationalism and its idealistic, moralistic, and seemingly universalizing features. To understand Wilson's underlying approach here, scholars have turned to his religion as formative, sometimes depicting Wilsonianism as a sort of "Presbyterian," or liberal Protestant foreign policy (Gamble 2003; Magee 2008; Preston 2012).

For Andrew Preston the "Wilsonian Creed," embodied by the Fourteen Points, "represented the perfect combination of right and might that underpinned the Christian concept of a progressive crusade" (Preston 2012: 275). Malcolm Magee (2008) and Richard Gamble (2003), in this way, also sought to cast Wilson as a "Christian statesman." In such a reading of Wilson, his policymaking revolved, at least in part, around a Presbyterian (he was an elder) view of "church order," trying to accomplish God's work in a time of crisis. According to Magee, the "distinction between secular and religious" that many scholars tend to impart with hindsight is mistaken: "it simply did not exist in Wilson's mind" (Magee 2008: 13). Therefore Wilson's foreign relations were centered around a belief that, as Gamble suggests, many liberal theologians at the time agreed with: "permanent peace required righteousness; righteousness would require war" (Gamble 2003). Thus Preston along with Gamble and Magee emphasize the "redemptive" purposes of the war as envisioned by Wilson and like-minded co-religionists and Americans.

Others have portrayed Wilsonian moralizing more in terms of its centrality to the hubristic, world-changing "militant liberalism" of his internationalism, the notion that the US had a mission to transform the world (McDougall 1998). Revisionists during the 1920s and 1930s, and a wide array of realist-oriented historians thereafter, have tended to explain Wilsonian moralizing along the same lines as Walter McDougall, casting it as hubristic and naive, a worldview content in its own self-righteousness and ill suited to power-based international relations (Kissinger 1994; Ambrosius 1987, 2002; McDougall 1998). At the same time, most scholars, both critical and admiring, have made the point that Wilson's idealistic and moral language was deeply popular; the problem for Wilson, of course, was that his lofty and compelling vision was undermined by the reality of the concessions he made in curtailing civil liberties at home during wartime and in the vindictive peace compromises he agreed to in Paris to secure the creation of the League of Nations. Thus, Wilsonian idealism, moralism, and communal ethos, as well as wartime and postwar repression and tumult generated near-opposites in reaction – the return to a less moralistic, more materialistic, and more individualistic drive in the "normalcy" of the Harding years. Repression, too, was reined in.

Third, a perhaps impossible question that has transfixed academics from various fields as well as historians is: how much did Wilson's fragile health influence his psychology and politics? Particularly in the years after his death in 1924, as more information about his health and strokes came to light, scholars have sought to determine what roles personality, psychology, and changes in his health played in determining political outcomes in his lifetime. Sigmund Freud even undertook to psychoanalyze Wilson, in collaboration with William C. Bullitt, Jr., who had been

Wilson's aide at the Paris Peace Conference (Freud and Bullitt 1967). Freud and Bullitt's findings seem both crude as well as harsh, blaming Wilson's "parental alienation" and childhood as a prime source of his later bad behavior as a husband and man, as well as spending significant ink on Wilson's religious beliefs, which Freud excoriated as irrational. Nevertheless, these beliefs were so deeply held, the book concluded, that they made Wilson less likely to register facts than to revere opinions and absolutes, leading to his intransigent yet fraught personality which manifested these contradictions and tensions in the form of more than a dozen "documented" breakdowns. (Erik Erikson called the highly speculative book an "embarrassment to psychoanalysts" in a 1967 *New York Review of Books* review. He suggested that the book's writing style seemed an "incongruity" with Freud's own, hinting he was perhaps only an "alleged" co-author; Freud had died almost thirty years before the book appeared.)

Medical professionals, psycho-historians, and others also have weighed in on the sources, symptoms, and effects of multiple strokes on Woodrow Wilson's character and politics. All of these efforts have sought to understand what historian John Thompson (2002) suggests are the "two Wilsons" – one, a brilliant, realistic figure, well versed in the politics of compromise; the other an idealistic, moralizing, stubborn politician, unwilling or unable to bend in most cases. This "second" Wilson was particularly dominant (and largely absent from politics) after a major stroke in the fall of 1919 when he was greatly weakened and bedridden. Deteriorating blood flow in the form of several minor strokes, followed by one major one during his whistle-stop pro-League campaign in 1919, appears to have aggravated his non-comprising stance regarding the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and Covenant of the League of Nations, and as a result made him unwilling to accept any reservations on ratification. The first major study by a neurologist, Edward Weinstein (1981), examined key moments in Wilson's life when his behavior became more erratic and his decisions increasingly stubborn. At such moments Weinstein inferred from the documentary evidence that Wilson's arteriosclerosis worsened; this, in turn, heightened his psycho-physiological responses, making him uncharacteristically obstinate, limiting his flexibility as a thinker and political leader, and further undermined his health (Weinstein 1981). Several works (1956, 1984) co-authored by Alexander and Juliette George, though artfully written, were more scathing in their assessments of Wilson's personality.

The Georges used Freudian-derived psychological diagnoses (and later challenged aspects of Weinstein's neurologically informed claims) to argue that the better interpretation of Wilson suggests that he suffered from a damaged personality with an Oedipus complex, which led him into intractable personality conflicts with father figures (most notably with Henry Cabot Lodge during the "League Fight"). Originally met with wide acclaim, such speculative psychological inquiries have gone out of favor in the historical profession, with good reason. Further, such inferences as those the Georges made were delivered a strong blow when Arthur Link completed the *Papers*, revealing a *longue durée* view of Wilson's health that illuminated a series of minor strokes throughout his early life that gradually increased until the stroke that largely incapacitated him in fall 1919, casting notions about a sudden shift in personality into question.

The newest biography of Wilson (Berg 2013) uses recently discovered material from Wilson's doctor, Cary Grayson, and combines it with insights drawn from other

archives and neurological evidence to accentuate the deceit that prevented the American people from understanding the extent of Wilson's illness in the final eighteen months of his presidency. The best new scholarship agrees that political missteps and intractability in the Paris negotiations and the League Fight exacerbated – and were exacerbated by – his weak heart and arteriosclerosis, leading to the major stroke(s) that left Wilson bedridden at the most critical time in his political life. Together these events combined to undo Wilson's signal goal of establishing a world organization to "make the world safe for democracy" thereby permanently blotting the internationalist Wilsonian legacy (Berg 2013; Cooper 2009).

Progressivism on the March: Wilson's New Freedom, Roosevelt's New Nationalism, and the Campaign of 1912

Wilson's was a transitional time. He was born shortly before the beginning of the Civil War and he lived until five years after the end of World War I. As August Heckscher acutely observed: "As the first Southern President since the Civil War, he initiated and carried through a program of domestic reform unprecedented in American history. He mobilized a war effort of unparalleled scope and complexity … [and] led the European powers in establishing the first modern organization of sovereign states." Wilson also was a man of intense contradictions. A "popular professor" who was "dour"; an "affectionate" husband who was ""harsh and vindictive" to his enemies; a man who was "self-righteous" in his righteousness (Heckscher 1991: 2). These character traits were very much in evidence as Wilson ran for the presidency in 1912, an upstart politician with a scant three years in office as governor of New Jersey.

When the immensely popular Theodore Roosevelt lost the nomination of the Republican Party to incumbent William Howard Taft in June 1912, he helped to form the insurgent Progressive Party to continue his run for the presidency. Wilson's rapid rise to the presidency can be explained, in part, by this decision by Roosevelt. This single maneuver split the Republican and progressive votes and brought the Democratic Party into the White House for only the second/third time (Grover Cleveland served two non-consecutive terms, 1885–89, 1893–97) since the Civil War (Milkis and Mileur 1999; Milkis 2009).

Roosevelt's progressive platform called for "A Contract with the People," and its planks heightened the stakes for progressive politics via the political positions he termed (borrowing from intellectual and journalist Herbert Croly) the "New Nationalism." The Progressive Party added to this platform women's suffrage and legislation to prohibit child labor. Wilson and the Democrats shared many of these planks with Roosevelt. The main point of difference between what Wilson termed his "New Freedom" and Roosevelt's "New Nationalism" was their divergent views about controlling corporate monopolies. Wilson tended to view monopolies and corporate consolidation as, at best, a modestly beneficial evil of the modern American economy; at worst, Wilson judged monopolies to be inherently inimical to the existence of free competition and oppressive to both the American worker and consumer. Thus, according to Maureen Flanagan, he sought immediate reform to eliminate monopolistic trade practices. Roosevelt, in contrast, believed that monopolies could be tamed by strong federal regulation (Flanagan 2007; Milkis 2009).

Wilson, once elected, put a program into practice that significantly increased federal power to regulate interstate industry – more indeed than Roosevelt had advocated – and also created new initiatives for social reform designed to place human rights and the dignity of labor above property rights. At the same time, many states as well as the federal government promulgated a variety of progressive legislation, including women's suffrage, child labor laws, workers' compensation acts, direct election of US senators, the national primary, and a host of other reforms. Wilson supported many of these, but what has been called his "Southern blind spot" to social justice was enormous. Biographers over the last half-century – from Arthur Link and John Morton Blum to John Thompson and John Milton Cooper, Jr. – have observed this in terms of Wilson's lack of sympathy for women's suffrage and his reassertion of segregation in the federal bureaucracy in Washington DC. Moreover, his willful inattention to African Americans' disenfranchisement and injustices in political, cultural, and commercial walks of life amounted to far more than a "blind spot": he was "deeply racist" in his thoughts and politics and "apparently comfortably so," as Gary Gerstle recently has argued (Cooper 2009; Gerstle 2001). But Wilson's elevated rhetoric and rousing ideals of active federal regulation coupled with his renewed effort to ensure social justice (primarily in terms of labor and consumer rights) continued as a potent political philosophy for decades. These ideas would almost immediately be excoriated as "Wilsonian" or "progressive" by the Republican administrations of Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover, but they were also embraced – whether under those terms or on their own merits – and came to be embodied in the programmatic policy vision of later twentieth-century liberal administrations, most notably in the New Deal liberalism of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and, to a lesser extent, in Lyndon Baines Johnson's forceful policies on civil rights and the "War on Poverty" (Hofstadter 1948, 1955; Kennedy 1999; Cooper 2009).

Wartime Wilsonianism

On the eve of American entry into the war in the spring of 1917, Jane Addams remarked, "This will set back progress for a generation." Even Woodrow Wilson shared aspects of this sentiment, as have later historians (Kolko 1977; Eisenach 1994; McGerr 2003; Lears 2009). "Every reform we have won," Wilson remarked privately, "will be lost if we go into this war." Indeed, some of the most prescient critics perceived this as well and had made just such a case from 1914 through 1917. The passage of the Espionage and Sedition Acts in 1917 and 1918 severely curtailed free speech, as did wartime patriotic organizations and various arms of the state, such as the Committee on Public Information, which Christopher Capozzola (2008) has shown sought to define modern citizenship homogenously in terms of an attenuated pro-war "Americanism." Still, some aspects of Wilson's centralization of powers and job growth within the context of wartime mobilization programs became a model for the New Deal's fight against the Great Depression in the 1930s and for Franklin Roosevelt's mobilization policies during World War II (Sparrow 2011).

During the war Wilson was also the first, or at least one of the first Western statesmen of world stature to speak out openly not only against European imperialism but also against newer forms of economic "informal imperialism," yet this idealism often

seemed hypocritical to both domestic and foreign observers. Cultural critic Randolph Bourne was unconvinced by such universalizing rhetoric and the paradoxical idealism of a world to be transformed by US power to make it more peaceful and democratic. He and other pacifists and antiwar activists rejected pro-war propaganda, of course, as well as the subtle arguments of progressives like John Dewey – and intellectuals at *The New Republic* – who claimed the moment constituted a "plastic juncture" which the US could use to carry out a reformist battle of enhanced democracy at home and abroad. As mobilization and the draft amplified the war effort at home, and free speech and dissent was curtailed, Bourne wrote, "American liberals who urged the nation to war are … seeing their liberal strategy for peace transformed into a strategy for a prolonged war." Bourne's criticisms prompt us to recognize that the war might have burned itself out more rapidly if America's liberals had not initially lent their sanction to it (Nichols 2011: 166).

Such a line of argument was taken up almost immediately after the war and lent credence to the criticism of a wide array of journalists, intellectuals, politicians, and historians. From W.E.B. Du Bois and John Dewey to Jane Addams and Walter Lippmann, many of Wilson's most prominent liberal collaborators rapidly recanted. Where once "liberalism threw itself into the work of cleaning the Augean stables, and its reward came in the achievements of President Wilson's first administration," V.L. Parrington eloquently noted in 1927, with the war "the green fields shriveled in an afternoon. With the cynicism that came with post-war days the democratic liberalism of 1917 was thrown away like an empty whiskey-flask" (Parrington 1927: 412).

Postwar Politics, Progressivism in Decline

Liberals were not the only disillusioned ones. As Michael McGerr describes, in the wake of the Senate rejection of the League in 1919 and 1920, and eyeing the election of 1920, "Republican orators portrayed the horrors of a society in chaos, disordered by war and Wilsonianism." It was much simpler for Republicans to "attack the progressive war effort than to detail an alternative vision. In a famous phrase, Harding vaguely promised the nation 'not nostrums, but normalcy.'" Pundits in the 1920s – and scholars thereafter – have emphasized that the meaning of normalcy was unclear but it was appealing and clearly a reaction to the events, ideas, and apparent tumult of the Wilson years that preceded it. These changes represented a dramatic shift in political philosophy. "Republican leaders," McGerr insists, "had begun to rehabilitate that progressive anathema, 'individualism'" (McGerr 2003: 311). As seen in mainstream politics and in much of popular culture, personal prosperity, consumerism, autonomy, and an intensely individual ethic in large measure replaced the public discourse of wartime sacrifice along with the communitarian and social justice elements of progressivism.

In the years just after Wilson left office the battle over the League of Nations, along with Wilson's imprudent casting of the elections of 1918 and 1920 as "referenda" on his politics, loomed large. Most historians subscribe to the view that the election of 1920's groundswell for the Republican Party represented a turn away from much of the domestic policy and foreign relations of the Wilson era. Some historians, while agreeing with this interpretation, seek to place added emphasis on

the profound contingency of the League "moment." In this vein a tragic fact seems clear: "Had Wilson died, the Democrats would probably have agreed to the reservations" (Blum 1956: 197). In this scenario, with Wilson in shrouds, the US would likely have joined the League of Nations (with the Senate's reservations amended to the ratified Covenant). Wilson lived, of course, enfeebled by strokes, and held strong to his belief in the righteousness of the League. To work toward those ends Wilson even briefly considered running for president again in both 1920 and 1924, though his close advisers and Democratic Party insiders recognized that he was too physically weak to withstand campaigning, much less the stress of the presidency (Berg 2013; Cooper 2009).

Throughout the Harding years, however, Wilson hung on. He lived on S Street in Washington in virtual seclusion, often bedridden; his efforts at resuming the practice of law and articulating new political principles in various publications were largely thwarted by his debilitated and deteriorating state. His reputation paralleled his physical condition, and continued to sink through 1924 when he died. John Milton Cooper argues that Wilson, even enfeebled, was not without strong views during these years. In fact, he held Harding's "intellect in contempt." In a conversation with journalist Ida Tarbell, Wilson recalled meeting with Harding as part of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and claimed that, "nobody [but Harding] asked such unintelligent questions" (Cooper 2009: 589).

Even so, Harding's views on Wilson's legacy prevailed. "We have been played for a bunch of suckers," wrote Harry Elmer Barnes in a widely shared assault on Wilsonian diplomacy. Correspondingly, noted Parrington, after the roiling debates over ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, the American people rapidly sought to cast off the specter of the wartime years. The preference, he said, became "to make merry over democracy" and to reject as "preposterous" concerning oneself with social justice (Parrington 1927: 412). As H.W. Brands recently summed up the zeitgeist: "the postwar decade was … a time of reaction against the idealism of the Progressive Era …When Wilson died, Americans mourned him respectfully for a moment, then made him a scapegoat for their collective disillusionment" (Brands 2003: 135–136).

Indeed, the national soul-searching related to the origins and outcomes of the war, and particularly anti-Wilson vitriol, had waited a decent interval – but it would be unleashed with vehemence by Wilson's death in 1924. Journalists and historians were major figures in publicly reexamining the US "road to war" from 1914 to 1917 and rethinking the role of intellectuals in the war effort. By 1924, as Peter Novick found, many thinkers and historians recognized their own culpability in supporting the war. These efforts resulted in "disillusionment [that] was deep and widespread" (Novick 1988: 129). This grappling with their own support for – or acquiescence to – the Great War is poignantly evidenced in the personal correspondence and writings of prominent historians such as Merle Curti and Carl Becker, for example, and in the revisionist histories of the period (Adler 1951; Novick 1988).

Scholarly interpretations as well as memoirs by those who knew and worked with Wilson began to appear in abundance by the mid-1920s. They explored debates over the US response to World War I, Wilson's wartime diplomacy, and efforts to establish the League of Nations. The parameters of a realist critique of Wilsonianism emerged at the same time that an idealist school of advocates developed to take up Wilson's

internationalist mantle. Several lines of criticism followed, falling into broad camps of more hawkish and more dovish analyses of what Wilson ought to have done.

Sidney Fay was among the first to lay out a strong case and he did so even while Wilson was alive, in *American Historical Review* articles in 1920 and 1921 debunking the "legend" of the "Potsdam Conference" of July 5, 1914. In these three "New Light on the Origins of the World War" essays, Fay drew on newly released Russian, Austrian, and other documents to overturn a widely circulated conspiratorial anti-Wilsonian, anti-German claim that Germany's ambassador let slip to the US ambassador to Turkey that the war had been calculated in advance. Instead of German militarists triumphing over civilian diplomats and internationalists, Fay argued that a close reading of the evidence showed that virtually no German militarists or diplomats sought war in early summer 1914. Russian and Austrian actions and stratagems forced the Kaiser's hand and thereby precipitated the crisis. As Fay concluded, "Germany had war forced upon her, not, of course, by England, as has been so commonly believed in Germany, but by her own ally and by Russia." However, Fay was quick to state that the new documents and his analysis "do not in any way relieve Germany of the main responsibility" (Fay 1920: 52).

A wave of revisionist claims followed these findings and assertions. New evidence was uncovered in US and international archives. Innovative and polemical studies, in turn, found domestic and international audiences of citizens and scholars eager to learn the "real" story of the origins of the Great War. Historian Harry Elmer Barnes, in fact, wrote that it was Fay's scholarship that awakened him from "dogmatic slumbers" (Barnes 1972: 392).

Henry Cabot Lodge produced the first major attack along more hawkish lines by both a scholar and political adversary of Wilson's, for Lodge, of course, had helped lead the Senate rejection of the Treaty and the League. In *The Senate and the League of Nations* (published in 1925, the year after he and Wilson died) Lodge first made the case that Wilson should have acted more vigorously and earlier against German usurpation of neutral rights in the Atlantic and aggressiveness on the Continent. Second, Lodge maligned Wilson's idealistic stance on the League as not only unworkable and hopelessly naive in terms of the power intrinsic to international relations but also, and perhaps worse in his view, inimical to fundamental American principles such as the Monroe Doctrine. Third, Lodge criticized Wilsonian intransigence regarding the reservations by which the Treaty with the League Covenant might have been orchestrated to pass via a compromise. In this final critique has rested much of the debate regarding the outcome that Wilson once termed "breaking the heart of the world," and from which quote John Milton Cooper, Jr., titled his magisterial analysis of the so-called "League Fight" (2003).

Barnes, similarly, drew on new documents and the latest scholarly insights to produce a book entitled *The Genesis of the World War* (1926), which focused on European politics to argue cogently against the German-blame consensus. Barnes laid out a strong case for Russia, France, Serbia, and Austria as central culprits, more or less in that order, for bringing about the world war, with Germany and England being less culpable. Fay's *Origins of the World War* in 1928 went beyond Barnes' schematization of culpable parties but still laid out one axiomatic position: Austria "was more responsible for the immediate origins of the war than any other power" (Fay 1928: 547–548).

In the succeeding scholarship Germany as well as Austria tended to receive the lion's share of the blame and, as such, revisionists continued, like Lodge, to fault Wilson for not stemming the tide of this aggression earlier. They also attacked him for being duped by British propaganda, or else for getting involved at all. In this latter camp, C. Hartley Grattan's *Why We Fought* (1929) placed the strongest emphasis on a predisposition among American policymakers and the populace to favor the Entente and the British in particular, which resulted in a rush of financial and material aid. Grattan and others showed some of the ways in which Allied propaganda had been profoundly more effective in influencing American public opinion than similar German efforts. In addition, these accounts were inflected with postwar disillusionment, which was frequently tinged with anti-Wilson sentiments. Bernadotte E. Schmitt argued briefly in a review article in the *Journal of Modern History* in 1929, and more intensively in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Coming of the War, 1914* (1930), that the origins of the war lay with the belligerents of the Triple Alliance but were most directly attributable to the "tradition of the balance of power, which had found expressions in the creation, development and conflict of two great diplomatic groups, the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente" (Schmitt 1930: 8). Much of this copious scholarly and popular "origins of the war" writing also was shot through with what the *New York Tribune* termed "blame-mingling" and blame-mongering with strongly anti-German as well as anti-Wilsonian undertones.

Wilson's own perspective and admirers were not entirely absent, however, and they continued to push for more "accurate" and favorable assessments of the man, his major achievements, and his aims. They lamented, too, that his ideas about international engagement and domestic reforms seemed to have gone by the wayside in the 1920s and into the 1930s. Former Wilson aide Joseph Tumulty explained in his preface to *Woodrow Wilson as I Know Him* (1921) that after eleven years observing Wilson he wrote the book to set "misapprehensions" right and to reveal how Wilson was "ahead of us all in his thinking," solicited and took in "all the facts" from "many advisers," and did not "lack human warmth." Tumulty wished readers to see Wilson as a "man whose public career was governed not merely by a great brain, but also by a great heart" (Tumulty 1921: xii–xiii).

Ray Stannard Baker, Wilson's appointed biographer, issued the first two volumes of his *Life and Letters* in 1927. For years a follower and friend of Theodore Roosevelt, after a meeting in 1910 Baker became an acolyte of Wilson's. Baker's volumes were highly favorable to the president, focusing on his life and accomplishments as those of a "great statesman." But, as Merrill Peterson (2007) suggests, attention to these volumes did not meet the expectations of Baker or his publishers, a likely sign of flagging interest in Wilson.

Josephus Daniels began his later biography of Wilson along similar lines to that of Tumulty. "As the only surviving member of Woodrow Wilson's cabinet during his occupancy of the White House, privileged to be admitted to personal and political friendship," wrote Daniels, who had been Secretary of the Navy from 1913 through 1921, "I have felt the compulsion – 'looking back to glory' – to record from an inside seat the story of how he won every battle for the domestic reforms embodied in his New Freedom and strengthened international friendships" (Daniels 1944: vii). Forty years later, a major Republican figure who had served in the Wilson Administration

and deeply admired Wilson published a laudatory biography of him as well. Herbert Hoover, who of course was associated with the entire era of normalcy himself, opined that "[Wilson] was a man of staunch morals. He was more than just an idealist: he was the personification of the heritage of idealism of the American people. … He was a born crusader. … We may be proud of that crusade even if it did fail to bring peace to mankind" (Hoover 1958: xxvii).

(Re)Viewing Wilson: The Interwar Years

Harding and Coolidge celebrated "individualism" as often as they could. Unlike Wilson, who had talked of shared burdens in his New Freedom, Harding and Coolidge barely talked of sacrifice in this postwar "New Era." Writing in 1929 Calvin Coolidge assessed the landslide election of 1920 as a providential act of rebirth. Indeed, Coolidge went so far as to argue that, "The radicalism which had tinged our whole political and economic life from soon after 1900 to the World War period was passed" (Coolidge 1929: 136–137).

Much of the scholarship (re)viewing Wilson in the 1920s and into the 1930s rejects the simplistic transformation that Coolidge suggested occurred on his watch. While historians would likely agree with the Vermonter that there was a marked contrast between Wilson and Democratic Party politics at least from 1913 through 1916 and the Harding and Coolidge Republican politics of the 1921–29 era, they have also highlighted continuities tying these periods together. In his major work on the Progressive Era, Michael McGerr contrasts Harding and Coolidge, whom he sees as both emphasizing laissez-faire economics and individualism, to Hoover, whom he depicts as more Wilsonian. "Influenced by his experiences in the Wilson government," McGerr writes, "Hoover tried to promote collaborative 'association' between government and business" (McGerr 2003: 315). As Commerce Secretary from 1921 through 1928, Hoover often offered hybrid public-private solutions to social and economic problems, such as during his remarkably effective orchestration of relief from the Great Mississippi River flood in 1927.

In this case, as Pete Daniel has explained, Hoover was masterful in bringing to bear humanitarian relief and organizational techniques that he developed first in Belgium and Europe, and as head of the US Food Administration during World War I. In his rapid, largely successful, and widely acclaimed response to the Mississippi flood Hoover brought together the Red Cross, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Coast Guard, local and state leaders, civilian volunteers, and religious groups, over an affected area of ten states with more than a million refugees (Daniel 1977). Scholars of the flood, however, have shown that the efforts were insufficient and inhumanely distributed at the expense of African Americans in the region (Barry 1997).

Coolidge oversaw the flood relief efforts, and they serve to underline Selig Adler's insight of a mismatch between the public image of Coolidge and his actual policies, both domestic and international, despite his reputation as a "Puritan relic in an age of jazz, flappers, and speakeasies" known for "laconic parochial platitudes on foreign affairs." Coolidge, indeed, conducted "concealed departures from isolationist tenets, made in response to Big Business' needs overseas" marking him as "broader" in his outlook than Harding (Adler 1965: 80–81).

Harding, however, deserves credit for carrying one progressive tenet further than his predecessor was willing to: women's suffrage. Wilson had never really warmed to it (as iconic photographs of suffrage protests in front of the White House gates demonstrate) while Harding supported the effort. Political historians, such as William Leuchtenberg (1958, 2009), suggest that his 60 percent landslide victory of 1920 is in part attributable to the new votes of women supporting him for his stance on the issue. Women's suffrage was not the only Progressive Era legacy that carried on to influence the 1920s. Civil service reform and veterans' bonus issues also flared up then and seemed to remind many Americans directly of the Wilsonian legacy that made such issues necessary and incendiary (all the more so). More discussion of what happened to these Progressive Era reforms in the Republican Era is in Chapter 2.

All the same, historians have embraced the "normalcy" narrative that "essentially the Republicans gutted the economic accomplishments of the Progressive Era by cutting the hated income tax, ignoring organized labor and the poor, and allowing big business to dominate federal regulatory agencies" (McGerr 2003: 315). While such a view simplifies a great deal of the contingency and nuance, overall it is basically accurate. Alan Dawley confirms, "postwar progressivism was a more compressed affair, resting primarily on the quests for world peace and economic justice." In part, he suggests, Wilson was his own worst enemy. In 1919, confronted by "unprecedented class and racial disorder at home," Dawley notes, "the Wilson administration turned its back on progressivism's highest ideals – social and economic justice, civic engagement, internationalism – and ordered the suppression of popular discontent" (Dawley 2003: 335–337). Yet, while the Wilson administration itself failed the progressive test of the 1919–21 period, a longer historical view illuminates the resurgent impact of Wilson's ideas. Thus, despite the calamitous domestic policies and challenges at the end of the Wilson presidency progressivism did not "collapse" in the 1920s; instead, Wilsonian politics later flourished, especially in the New Deal. One of the connecting threads was the "associationalist" emphasis (cooperative, voluntary partnerships between business and government) of the 1920s, often linked with Hoover's outlook and actions. This approach reveals aspects of the consumerist economic models that informed the policies as well as the economic and social thought of the 1930s and that, in turn, were integral to the interventionist, reformist developments of the New Deal (Lessoff and Welskopp 2012; Amsterdam, forthcoming).

Periodization has been crucial to understanding the Wilsonian legacy in the 1920s and thereafter. "Few decades in American history are as sharply separated from the events that preceded and followed them as the decade of the 1920s," observed Barry Karl astutely. For historians, Karl notes, "the twenties seem to erupt." He goes on to detail that with the end of the war in 1918 "the decade begins. The decade ends with a similar abruptness: the Crash occurs in October 1929 and the Depression begins. Certainly part of the illusion of sharp separation is underscored by the distinction between Woodrow Wilson and Warren Harding, the one a heroic, even tragic, leader, the other a party politician ultimately associated with one of the more corrupt periods in American history" (Karl 1983: 50). Alternative accounts present Harding (who has been most maligned) and Coolidge as not nearly as culpable for the excesses and corruptions of their administrations, such as notorious scandals like Teapot Dome (Ferrell 1985, 2006; Sibley 2009).

The crash and Depression also affected contemporary historiography, and while new defenders of Wilson emerged, the volume and vitriol of his attackers were much greater. As William Widenor aptly put it, this was an era of "advocacy history" that hardly added any "new information or argument" (Widenor 1980: 267n). The favorable treatments emerged from Denna Frank Fleming's brief 1930 book and more influential and longer work of 1932, *The United States and the League of Nations, 1918–1920*. In these and other writings Fleming and his allies argued that the congressional opponents of Wilson (such as Henry Cabot Lodge and William Borah) were overly partisan and put the GOP over the nation's best interest. W. Stull Holt agreed, finding narrow, intractable partisanship as the cause behind the Senate's actions. In Holt's conclusion, the only defense that League opponents could legitimately muster was the "desire to return to the traditional policy of isolation." While he blamed Wilson for holding on to Democratic votes that might have passed a League with reservations, Holt assigned far more culpability to Lodge, and concluded that never again should a "deadlock between the President and the Senate over a treaty involving really crucial foreign problems" be permitted (Holt 1933: 306–307).

In the ensuing years the focus on the "League fight" became less prominent, as Thomas Bailey (1947), Lloyd Ambrosius (1987), and Robert Ferrell (1985) have observed. The stakes of the battle diminished with time, in part because the League seemed impotent to stop either the cataclysm of the Depression or the successive, burgeoning crises of the 1930s. Instead, a new debate emerged in the scholarship on World War I, focused on the economic motivations for the US role in the war and the influence of private financial interests, namely, banks, as well as the munitions industry. And here the splenetic tone was the dominant one. H.C. Englebrecht and F.C. Hanighen's *Merchants of Death* (1934) and George Seldes' *Iron, Blood and Profits* (1934) made powerful polemical cases that profit motives drove the US into a war of choice. Walter Millis' "effort of interpretation rather than research" on this topic became the popular best-seller entitled *Road to War* (1934), and laid out similar claims.

Millis suggested that Wilson's foreign policy was one of "belligerent pacifism" that was more receptive to British rather than German neutral rights infractions and was deeply influenced by special interests, all of which conspired to bring on an actual armed conflict that could have been prevented. Millis derided Wilson's "amateur diplomat" adviser Colonel House and lauded William Jennings Bryan's pacifist internationalist sensibilities, while rejecting the "futility" of the Wilsonian dream of "peace without victory" as well as world peace (Millis 1934). C.H. Grattan produced a comparable interpretation in his *Prelude to Chaos* (1936). These years also marked the opening of a series of high-profile investigations of the arms traffic led by Senator Gerald Nye, which by the mid-1930s had re-centered the public discourse of how and why the US became involved in World War I on the insidious role of financial interests. These congressional hearings suggested that the Wilson Administration had let commercial interests profit greatly in the war, a particularly pernicious and popular interpretation in light of the deepening economic disaster of the Depression years.

Culminating the revisionist reproaches to Wilson in these years were the works of Charles Beard, whose brief but powerful *The Devil Theory of War* (1936) adeptly began with the findings of the Nye committee by arguing that it is impossible to "conceive the cause of the war in terms of some person or persons and some action of actions standing alone" (Beard 1936: 14) Rather, Beard painstakingly sought to show

how "war is our own work" and though Wilson and Wilsonian diplomatic and economic relations were central problems exacerbating the US role in the war, the main challenge lay with a lack of public debate and the insidious influence of money. Ultimately Beard's politics deeply influenced his history. He sought to prevent FDR and the US from further engagement in the brewing crisis in Europe, and thus he trumpeted an isolationist-inflected desire to keep the US out of power politics. Yet, as Warren Cohen (1967) has explained, like other interwar foreign policy skeptics Beard often and vigorously invoked the lessons of World War I and the Wilson years. Beard even echoed lofty Wilsonian aims as he argued in 1936 that the nation should go to war only "for grand national and human advantage," via open democratic deliberation and debate, unlike the sort of secret and constrained policy debates and politics beholden to the so-called "merchants of death" of the Wilson years (Beard 1936). Thus, in a different context and two decades later, Wilsonianism was used to attack Wilson's own policies.

Wilsonianism and Liberal Internationalism (as seen in the 1920s and after)

While Beard might have conceived the possibility of "grand national" purposes for war, under Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover visions of a more directly involved US role in the world of the sort articulated by Wilson seemed atavistic at best and naive and dangerous at worst. This would only seem more clear as the world crises of the 1930s developed and intensified. Historians have established how an isolationist stance became all the more thoroughly embedded in the politics of those who led the charge against Wilson in the Senate, figures such as "Irreconcilable" (to the League) Idaho Republican Senator William Borah, staunch anti-Wilsonian Massachusetts Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, and other prominent figures (Jonas 1969; Doenecke 1979; Widenor 1980; Knock 1992; Cooper 2003). These positions on the "proper" US role in the world also were often couched in terms of economic objectives and progress, dictating more private sector and non-governmental internationalism rather than the politico-military muscle or expansionist (sometimes billed as humanitarian) interventions that had been much more characteristic of the decade after the Spanish–American War and leading up through World War I (Nichols 2011).

Yet it is crucial to note that visions of American foreign policy in the 1920s tended to be neither Wilsonian nor unilateral. As Warren Kuehl and Lynne Dunn have shown in their work on internationalists and the League of Nations, agents of the United States, both public and private, took an active leadership role in promoting international cooperation in East Asia and Europe as participants on various League committees without the US ever formally joining the League (Kuehl and Dunn 1997). Thus, as Kristen Gwinn and I have detailed, American pacifist internationalists, such as Emily Balch and Jane Addams, led the charge at the international non-governmental level through organizations such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) enacting measures that would prevent future conflicts – a decidedly Wilsonian goal yet effected by means largely non-Wilsonian (Gwinn 2010; Nichols 2011).

Robert Johnson has argued in the *Peace Progressives and American Foreign Relations* (1995) that such efforts as the Washington Conference to set international naval arms

limitations and the broader global "outlawry of war" movement represent points at which Harding and Coolidge were pulled into the efforts of peace progressives such as Hiram Johnson, George Norris, Burton Wheeler, and Gerald Nye, as well as WILPF leaders such as Addams, and the efforts of peace movement legal internationalists such as Elihu Root and Nicholas Murray Butler. Peace progressivism – generally a foreign policy vision that opposed "political commitments involving Western European states" and sought to "achieve a more peaceful world order through an active American foreign policy along reformist lines" – was ascendant from roughly 1919 through 1930. Such a perspective, according to Johnson, represented an "alternative to Wilsonianism, not an evolution of it" (Johnson 1995: 303, 314–315).

These peace progressives shared some common ground with Borah and his fellow isolationist Irreconcilables. Both had an unwavering faith in legal means as a method to settle international differences, as promoted by Hughes, Root, and others, though for figures like Borah legal internationalism could never permit "permanent entanglements." The shining example of these efforts, bringing seemingly opposed isolationists and internationalists together, including many of those identified by Johnson as peace progressives, was the Kellogg–Briand Pact to outlaw war, signed by more than 100 nations by the end of 1928 (Nichols 2011).

Building on such a view of the non-Wilsonian yet engaged nature of US foreign relations in this era, Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman (2013) recently argued that the 1920s Republican paradigm represented a worldview premised on "self-restraint." Americans applauded their government's refusal to join the League, pleased that Harding and Coolidge stood as counterweights to more robustly Wilsonian interventionism. With the outlawry of war movement advancing as well, Hoffman concludes that, "American goals remained much the same as they were in 1918, but policymakers rejected military means of advancing them." The US throughout the 1920s, she underscored, "might applaud collective security, but it refused to be an enforcer or umpire" (Hoffman 2012: 211). Yet, "by exercising leadership without responsibility," Frank Ninkovich commented, "American statesmen of the decade [1920s] attempted to construct a world without politics," a perspective that, compared with Wilson's, was "positively utopian" (Ninkovich 1999: 81). More on this topic is in Chapter 3.

The basic contours of this interpretation of the US gradually stepping back from world leadership have been well established since the revisionists wrote in the interwar years. The subsequent historiography has largely differed on where to place emphasis on engagements abroad and when, where, and how to assess blame on Wilson. Scholars such as George Herring have emphasized "involvement without commitment" as characterizing most US projects abroad under Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover (Herring 2008). In his synthetic account Herring proposes that the era lacked an imposing "Wilson-like figure" or central theme and thus it defies easy categorization as a period of isolationist retrenchment. Most Republican leaders rejected collective security and entangling alliances while seeking to use the private sector wherever possible to "implement solutions developed in Washington" (Herring 2008: 436).

Nevertheless, long-standing interpretive models still make their presence felt in shaping these new studies. Earlier scholars who emphasized the pivotal role of economics in American foreign relations, such as William Appleman Williams, aimed to dispel facile understandings of the "alleged isolationism of the 1920s." Williams, and many of his

students and adherents, such as Henry Berger, who edited a major compendium of William's writings, concluded that American "corporatism" was the major development of the 1920–32 period. This mode of interaction was conscious and profit-driven, Williams asserted; it aligned public and private interests, seeking to connect social order and prosperity at home to the enactment of similar ends abroad, as part of a larger endeavor to promote a US corporatist, economic imperialism worldwide (Berger 1992: 81, 85).

Just as waves of scholarship have aimed to overturn depictions of a fully isolationist US role in the world in the 1920s, innovative recent work also has sought to emphasize a multiplicity of "Wilsonianisms" from which the US gradually distanced itself after 1919, as its leaders also shed the mantle of global leadership Wilson had endorsed and came to personify. As Erez Manela (2007) persuasively demonstrated, Wilson's rhetoric of "national self-determination" generated widespread appeal in much of Europe – as evidenced by the nearly 2 million people who greeted Wilson when he arrived in Paris in 1918 – but also in Korea, Egypt, China, India, Ireland, and beyond.

The Wilsonian language of "self-determination" was adopted and adapted to serve various nationalist and anticolonial projects that clearly had not been Wilson's original intent. As Egyptians, Indians, Chinese, Koreans, and others developed their own (sometimes conflicting) Wilsonianisms toward their own nationalist ends, Manela contends that at the Paris peace negotiations they "glimpsed the promised land of self-determination, but enter into it they could not." In part, this was because even Wilson did not back them up; their diverse anticolonial agendas threatened the more powerful nations he needed to assuage to gain endorsement for the League. Still, anticolonial movements, Manela shows, "embraced the language of self-determination that [Wilson] brought to prominence, refashioning their goals and identities in its image even as they recast its meanings in theirs" to shape the history of the succeeding decades (Manela 2007: 225). When considering the high ambitions and varied interpretations, appropriations, and expectations that Wilsonian language elicited, it is not surprising that they led to profound disillusionment and harsh reaction against Wilson afterward, both at home and abroad.

The series of international crises beginning when Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and culminating in the events that led to World War II exposed the failings of the international system and the League, as well as the fallacies of the so-called Republican internationalism of the preceding years without, however, reviving the idealistic internationalism of Wilsonianism. Within and between states, competing nationalisms made enemies of fellow citizens and allied countries alike, undermining international comity and underscoring the seemingly misguided idealism of Wilson's dream of collective security and a peaceful world (Nichols 2011). As economic and foreign relations scholars have amply demonstrated, in the scramble of the Depression each country did what it could to make socioeconomic progress, often by protecting domestic markets. Here protectionist isolationism took hold in the form of certain American policies designed to address the Depression, focusing on adhering to the gold standard and building on the long-standing US tradition of restrictive tariffs. The most notable such move was the Smoot–Hawley Tariff Act (1930), which increased duties on more than 20,000 goods and exacerbated destructive international escalation and retaliatory protectionist legislation (Eichengreen 1996; Eichengreen and Temin 2000).

Lloyd Ambrosius has argued persuasively that Wilson's ideas and efforts continued to be a paramount force in the politics of the Harding and Coolidge years even as those leaders and many fellow Republicans sought to use him as a foil and to distance

themselves from any policies that smacked of being "Wilsonian." As he points out, under Harding, Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes' view generally held that the "question of debts is irrelevant to the question of German reparations." After 1924, however, under Coolidge, and with Frank Kellogg as Secretary of State, the US began to play an assertive role in the European debt issues. Kellogg assessed the proper American government global role as one of "support," particularly to US nationals, and to "maintain the Open Door." However, the private role of US agents was another matter altogether. The US "played a decisive role in the revision of the repatriations settlement through the Dawes and Young plans of 1924 and 1929," argued Ambrosius, "but without sacrificing its tariff and debt policies" (Ambrosius 2002: 106). Condoned by the Coolidge Administration and empowered by Congress as well as Britain and France, the banker Charles G. Dawes and the businessman Owen D. Young developed a final settlement of the "German reparations problem" (Schuker 1976). If the means were not Wilsonian, certainly the ends – international stability – met that classification.

Perhaps one of the most perceptive analyses of Wilsonianism in foreign policy was written on the eve of World War II. In a ground-breaking book, E.H. Carr (1939) argued that Wilson's aspirational aim that "If it won't work, it must be made to work" for the League amounted to a central and widely shared intellectual failing of the era. As Norman Graebner (1964) observed, Wilson's views pervaded the writings of many of those statesmen who followed him and led to a legal fetishism in US foreign policy. Carr detected and rejected this idealistic-legalistic and seemingly deterministic aspiration to achieve world peace through a supra-national organization embodied in that remark, which Wilson had issued en route to the negotiations in Paris.

The passage of time, according to Carr, proved Wilson was wrong. The "course of events after 1931 clearly revealed the inadequacy of pure aspiration as the basis for a science of international politics" (Carr 1939: 9). In a similar interpretive slant, recent events have continued to inflect analyses of the Wilson legacy. Andrew Bacevich, for example, emphasized the Wilsonian tradition evident in the rhetoric and actions of George W. Bush. Members of the Bush Administration thus saw themselves as "heirs" to Wilson's project of seeking to "implement American principles and policies on a global scale," according to Bacevich, and Bush, like Wilson, rejected the view that some might perceive these "U.S. aspirations as imperialistic." Ominously linking Wilson and Bush and drawing on historical insights, Bacevich warned that it is "precisely when those who tout American indispensability mean what they say that the danger of hubris looms large" (Bacevich 2002: 116). Thus, according to Carr and to subsequent realist critics of Wilson such as Walter Lippmann, George Kennan, and Hans Morgenthau, up through the scholarly assessments of Ambrosius and Bacevich, the historical lesson was clear: aspiration should not govern international relations.

The "New Freedom" and Wilsonian Progressivism

On the domestic front, Stephen Skowronek, whose work seeks to clarify the expansion of national administrative capacities from the late nineteenth century through the interwar era, rejects simple characterizations of a turn "away" from federal administrative capacities during the 1920s. Yet Skowronek suggests that Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover compare unfavorably by many measures to Wilson (Skowronek 1982: 175–176).

John Thompson, John Morton Blum, and John Milton Cooper, Jr., among other historians, have argued that Wilsonian reforms paved the way for subsequent initiatives, such as those of Franklin Roosevelt, who emphasized the obligations of citizens to the central state, and transformed the Democratic Party into a "party of reform."

Taking up the adoring tone of earlier historians who also praised Wilson's legacy, Cooper argues that "In some ways, [Wilson] wrought even more impressive feats" than FDR or Lyndon Johnson, because he had neither the cataclysm of a national depression that Roosevelt grappled with to spur him on, nor the deep legislative mastery that Johnson developed after years in Congress (Cooper 2009: 213). Such a comparison also reminds of us of contrasts between the Republican administrations of the era. Hoover, of course, had more of a Wilsonian mindset than he is sometimes given credit for. As David Kennedy remarks in his authoritative *Freedom from Fear*, Coolidge rejected Herbert Hoover's bold plans for federally financed river control projects (particularly in the arid west) both because of their cost and the expansion in scope of the government's responsibilities they entailed. And while Hoover sought a US-led moratorium on German debt repayments during his term in office, Coolidge resisted all such initiatives (reportedly quipping "they hired the money, didn't they?") and preferred private solutions (Kennedy 1999).

Conclusion

Taken together, international "Wilsonianism" and domestic "Wilsonian" efforts generated an enormous body of both critical and laudatory literature. The persistent use of the terms in the popular press as well as by scholars attests to the enduring strength of the Wilson legacy for analysts of both foreign and domestic politics. Wilson was perhaps the most significant transitional figure in the White House since Lincoln. He took a party based on machine politics in the wake of the Civil War, rooted in southern conservatism, and shifted its basis to be far more progressive, both domestically and internationally.

In an astounding turn of events that foreshadowed the century of political realignments to come, Wilson's two terms in office radically altered the orientation of the Democratic Party, which after 1913 began to assume the mantle of reform while Republicans from Harding to Coolidge to Hoover became more conservative in outlook. Heralding a "return to normalcy" and the status quo were central to the Harding campaign in 1920 and to the Coolidge years, in a direct contrast to the transformational and fraught end of the Wilson presidency. Though Wilson's legacy might have seemed precarious to observers in the 1920s, by the 1930s that impression was beginning to shift. The impacts of his ideas and activities continue to absorb historians and to influence contemporary debates over the proper role of the US government at home and abroad.

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