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Woodrow Wilson's principled preaching on United States foreign policy, 1913–1917

Roger E Carey
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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WOODROW WILSON'S PRINCIPLED PREACHING
ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY, 1913-1917

by

Roger E. Carey

Bachelor of Arts
Earlham College
1989

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

**Master of Arts Degree in History
Department of History
College of Liberal Arts**

**Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
August 2003**

UMI Number: 1416246

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Thesis Approval

The Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

July 21, 2003

The Thesis prepared by

Roger E. Carey

Entitled

Woodrow Wilson's Principled Preaching on U.S. Foreign Relations, 1913-1817

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in History

Joseph A. Fry
Examination Committee Chair

Debi Shastri
Dean of the Graduate College

Eugene R. Moehring
Examination Committee Member

[Signature]
Examination Committee Member

[Signature]
Graduate College Faculty Representative

ABSTRACT

Woodrow Wilson's Principled Preaching On U. S. Foreign Policy, 1913-1917

by

Roger E. Carey

Dr. Joseph A. Fry, Examination Committee Chair
Professor of History
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Woodrow Wilson based his ideals and actions as president on principles shaped by his religious beliefs. While Wilson scholars have examined his idealism, few have traced the religious roots of the principles that formed his ideology. During the period of American neutrality from 1914 to 1917, he made numerous public speeches that afford insight into his religious beliefs, their relationship to his understanding of presidential leadership, good government, and especially foreign policy. Wilson believed that good leaders used oratory to inform the people of important issues and guide them to support the best policies. His speeches reflect what he thought the public needed to know to approve his plans and undertakings and the concepts he used to gain that approval. Thus, the speeches provide unique insight into how Woodrow Wilson justified U.S. foreign policies and actions.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are several individuals to thank for their help with my thesis and degree program. I want to thank my committee members for their assistance and input in helping me to improve both the quality and expression of my thoughts. In particular, I want to thank Dr. Eugene P. Moehring and Dr. Joseph A. Fry for their significant aid in improving my writing skills via various class papers. Along with Dr. Andrew Kirk and Dr. David Tanenhaus, they have offered good advice and modeled excellence in the classroom and research.

As my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Fry has opened up the vista of U.S. Diplomatic History for me, encouraged my first faltering steps in the field, and provided an incredible example in all things historical. I hope someday to teach, write, and mentor as well as he does, but I set my sights on a very high mark.

Finally, I want to thank my son Nicholas for sacrificing time with his dad so I could meet deadlines, and my daughter Rebecca, who was born in the middle of my program and helped me write my thesis by sharing toys as I typed. Most importantly, I want to thank my wife Coralyn for supporting me, proofreading, and inspiring me to pursue history as a vocation as well as a hobby.

INTRODUCTION

Historians have analyzed Woodrow Wilson's foreign policy decisions, and the basis for those decisions, for more than eight decades. Although he had an almost exclusively domestic focus at the beginning of his presidency, Wilson guided the United States through one of only two wars termed "World" in its scope. His diplomatic actions in Mexico, Haiti, and other areas, his pursuit of neutrality with Europe, his actions during World War I, and his postwar peace negotiations in Paris make him one of the most active foreign relations presidents on record. Depending on the historical school analyzing his policies, Wilson ranged from the man who defined twentieth century foreign policy to the planter of the seeds of its destruction.

Recent scholarship has emphasized the importance of ideology in understanding U.S. foreign relations. While Wilson scholars have examined his idealism, few have traced the religious roots of the principles that formed his ideology. During the period of American neutrality from 1914 to 1917, he made numerous public speeches that afford insight into his religious beliefs, their relationship to his understanding of presidential leadership, good government, and especially foreign policy. Wilson believed that good leaders used oratory to inform the people of important issues and guide them to support the best policies. As the importance of the issue or policy at stake rose, so did the importance of speaking on it. Wilson's speeches reflect what he thought the public needed to know to approve his plans and undertakings, and the concepts he used to gain

that approval. Thus, the speeches provide unique insight into how he justified U.S. policies and actions.

The main thesis of this study is Woodrow Wilson based his beliefs and actions as president on principles shaped by his religious beliefs. His oratorical efforts to inform and persuade revealed the religious character of Wilson's principles. When discrepancies between his speeches and other sources appear, periodic analysis is provided and resolution attempted, but my main goal is to recount his views as he conceived and expressed them. To examine Wilson's actions and how they compare to his professed motives would require a study of his private communications, the writings of individuals involved with Wilson and U.S. policy at the time, various records of U.S. actions in the time period, and other materials beyond the scope of this study. The focus is Wilson's public expressions in his speeches of his principles and the religious basis for them as they relate to U.S. foreign policy.

The first chapter begins by exploring the impact Wilson's family and upbringing had on his religious education. His minister father significantly shaped his worldview and stimulated Woodrow to oratorical excellence. As an adult, Wilson maintained a Protestant Christian faith that closely linked belief with action. He thought of service to America as a religious obligation. When he applied these concepts to foreign relations, Wilson found that good leaders needed religious faith, and served by bring the country, and by extension the world, closer to God. Persuasive oratory provided the leader with a method to guide people to the goal. Directed by the president, the nation could fulfill its divine duty to spread the blessings of American-style democracy to the world. Thus,

American policy and actions by definition benefited any recipient nation. Wilson cited American actions as proof of this benevolence.

In the second and third chapters, the focus shifts to Wilson's public speeches from the first inaugural address to his call for war with Germany, centering on those principles he considered foundational and how he applied them in foreign policy. He stressed neutrality as a means to a mediated peace, and peace as a prerequisite to elevating the nations to God, the divine purpose and goal of America. Changes brought about by the European war required an organization to preserve peace and protect the rights of men. Wilson presented his version of preparedness as a means to ensure the protection of the United States as it pursued its God-given duty. As the period of neutrality ended in 1917, Wilson's speeches continued to reflect his dependence on religiously based principles, and even in his call to war, those ideals dominated his thoughts.

CHAPTER 1

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AS A SOURCE OF PRINCIPLES

Wilson's father, the Rev. Dr. Joseph Ruggles Wilson, was the most significant early influence in his life. From his father, Wilson learned the religious teachings that formed the foundation of his life. He also received significant encouragement in writing and speaking that continued until his father's death. Wilson's religious beliefs reflected a particular stream of religious thought that prompted him to action, and carried profound implications for the United States. He thought that visionary realists with unconquerable confidence based on Divine Providence made good leaders, that the power of the president reigned supreme in foreign relations, that an educated and informed minority ruling for the majority led to the best government, and that America's destiny was to lead the world to a democratic form of government which he closely linked to conversion to Christianity. These components of Wilson's personal ideology were rooted in his religious beliefs: the essential goodness and perfectibility of man, God's special choosing of and destiny for America, the necessity of religious service as a sign of belief, and the linking of personal and national salvation.

Family Influence and Upbringing

Woodrow Wilson was born with a heritage of Presbyterian ministers on both sides of the family. Dr. Joseph Wilson, Woodrow's father, was an ordained minister in the

Presbyterian Church. After moving to the antebellum South in pursuit of teaching opportunities and as a Southern sympathizer, Dr. Wilson helped form the Presbyterian Church in the United States (the Southern branch of the Presbyterian church). Appointed to the position of Stated Clerk, he served with distinction from 1865 to 1898. The office of Stated Clerk is the highest-ranking permanent job in the Presbyterian system. This individual is responsible for the daily operation of denominational affairs whenever the various graded courts are not meeting. The Clerk preserves and organizes all official paperwork from all over the denomination and, depending on the sect, can be responsible for denominational publishing concerns, and receipt and delivery of monies for mission work both at home and abroad. Only significant and respected members of the denomination are selected for this task.

Joseph Wilson also spent time at Columbia, South Carolina, as a seminary professor before moving on to other pastorates. Woodrow Wilson grew up in an atmosphere of significant religiosity, where Christianity was real and observation of Presbyterian distinctives a regular part of life. Woodrow Wilson saw this as the core foundational experience of his life, and relished, “the unspeakable joy of having been born and bred in a minister’s family.”¹

An episode from his uncle James Woodrow’s life is instructive to further grasp the specific nature of the Presbyterianism of Wilson’s boyhood environment. Dr. James Woodrow was a professor of natural science appointed to a chair at Columbia

¹ Arthur S. Link, David W. Hirst, John E. Little, et al, eds., Papers of Woodrow Wilson, 69 vol., (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966-1993), Volume 16, page 350. Hereinafter PWW and cited as 16:350. The standard work on Wilson’s youth, education, and development before his political career is John M. Mulder, Woodrow Wilson: The Years of Preparation, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978). Mulder’s work and several essays by Link constitute the major, recent scholarship on Wilson’s religious views.

Theological Seminary designed to demonstrate the lack of conflict in religion and science. In 1884, he published an endorsement of theistic evolution, which drew a frenzied response. The Seminary dismissed Dr. Woodrow from his position, although an ecclesiastical trial acquitted him of heresy charges.² Dr. Woodrow admitted to differing with traditional interpretations of the Bible and the Westminster Confession of Faith.³ Both Joseph and Woodrow Wilson fervently backed Dr. Woodrow, not merely because he was family, but because they agreed with his theology.

Woodrow Wilson's specific theological views best fit that division of U.S. Presbyterianism called New School. American Presbyterianism split in 1837 over doctrinal issues. These issues entered the Presbyterian Church in 1801 when the Plan of Union allowed Congregational and Presbyterian churches to exchange pastors and plant churches on the frontier. The Congregationalists brought with them a system of doctrine called New England Theology, which they derived from Jonathan Edwards. This system differed from traditional Calvinism at some points, but not all. Many of those who argued for the New Measures of Charles G. Finney found affinity with the Congregationalists. The resultant blend of theologians and pastors, referred to as New School Presbyterians, split from the more orthodox Presbyterians, termed Old School. The Civil War served as a unifying call in the South between the two groups, particularly since the New School had made few inroads there. The Northern Presbyterian divisions reunited between 1868 and 1870, but unlike the southern church, New Schoolers remained a significant force. Both Northern and Southern churches shifted in a more

² A.H. Freundt Jr., "James Woodrow" in Dictionary of the Presbyterian & Reformed Tradition in America, D.G. Hart and Mark A. Noll, eds., (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 279-280; Franklin Steiner, The Religious Beliefs of Our Presidents: From Washington to F.D.R., (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995), 51.

³ A sub-biblical doctrinal standard for Presbyterians.

liberal, less orthodox direction, with the North about forty years ahead of the South due in part to the greater degree of New School influence.⁴

The New School's freedom from a strict orthodoxy, and affinity with social justice and progressive ideals, better fit the Presbyterianism of Woodrow Wilson, despite the lack of New School influence in the South. As a ruling elder in the Northern Presbyterian Church, Wilson was exposed to New School ideas. In any event, Dr. Wilson's influence on his son was not limited to religion. Father also influenced son significantly in the realms of writing and speaking.

Historians have debated the nature of the relationship between the younger Woodrow Wilson and his father.⁵ While some have cited evidence of a loving relationship, and others a struggle filled resentful interaction, nearly all agree Joseph R. Wilson exerted a tremendous formative influence on Woodrow. Early letters from Dr. Wilson to young Woodrow expressed growing approval of Woodrow's writing skills, including specific types of advice to follow when writing, that young Woodrow condensed and rewrote to preserve for future use. Woodrow's innate abilities prompted his father to write in 1878 that the fault would be Woodrow's if he did not become a great writer.⁶ As Woodrow's writing matured, he and his father offered each other compositional aid. By 1884, Dr. Wilson was asking his son's assistance in drafting an important address. This interaction

⁴ David B. Calhoun, Princeton Seminary, Vol. 1, Faith and Learning 1812-1868, (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 213-219.

⁵ See Sigmund Freud and William C. Bullitt, Thomas Woodrow Wilson: A Psychological Study, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), 6-10, 54-66, 94, 104-105; Alexander L. George and Juliette L. George, Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Personality Study, (New York, NY: John Day, 1956), 3-14; Mulder, Preparation, especially 29-85; and Ray Stannard Baker, Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters, Volume 1, "Youth" (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co, 1927-39) 1-107. Curiously, Link's five-volume biography does not deal with the father-son relationship.

⁶ Joseph R. Wilson to Woodrow Wilson, Oct. 24, 1878, PWW, 1:422. Hereinafter JRW and WW.

continued until Dr. Wilson's death in 1903, and Woodrow depended on it as a tool to continually sharpen his writing abilities.⁷

Joseph Wilson exerted a significant influence in Woodrow's life in other areas, such as early encouragement for his son to develop oratorical expertise. He recommended that Woodrow base all oratory on a foundation of truth that listeners could understand, focusing on his extemporaneous skills. When Woodrow's speeches received good reviews, his father wrote or spoke of his joy at Woodrow's oratorical success.⁸ In addition to a devotion to the well-spoken word, the two men shared struggles with depression, and Woodrow learned from his father both his work ethic and a tendency toward painstaking self-denial.⁹ His father's influence shaped much of Woodrow's early views and ideas.¹⁰

Adult Religious Beliefs

Woodrow Wilson embraced the religion of his parents and upbringing as an adult. His religious thought can be divided into two major categories: his beliefs about specific theological issues, and his sense of the implications of religious beliefs. Wilson's views on two theological topics, human nature and Providence, illustrate his general orientation. Traditional Presbyterians maintained that man, because of Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden, possessed a nature inclined to evil. Thus, whenever offered a choice, man would choose evil over good. Wilson disagreed and viewed people as essentially good by nature, an idea more consistent with his endorsement of evolutionary thought and the

⁷ JRW to WW, December 17, 1884, PWW, 3:549; Interview by Ida Minerva Tarbell, December 3, 1916, PWW, 16:325.

⁸ JRW to WW, October 19, 1878, PWW, 1:421.

⁹ JRW to WW, January 25, 1878, PWW, 1:346.

¹⁰ Mulder, Preparation, 29.

New School Presbyterianism of his adulthood. While delivering his speech “Democracy” in 1891, he summarized his belief in humanity’s essential goodness by describing Americans as honest, sincere, and wise.¹¹

Wilson agreed with much of the orthodox Presbyterian position concerning Providence. The Westminster Confession of Faith stated that God’s ordering of all events established the legitimacy of secondary causes, such as men’s actions. At the same time, men were responsible for their actions.¹² Wilson argued in “Government by Debate” that Providence blesses a country, but man could curse a country. While he had complete faith in Providence’s ordering of events, the necessity of man doing his duty was the wisest way to proceed. Every man had the duty to be saved, and thereby link himself to the plans of Providence.¹³ In describing such a role for Providence, Wilson’s understanding reflected the Old School environment of his youth.

The support of both orthodox and unorthodox positions in his personal system was not lost on Wilson. As he explained it, “Unorthodox in my reading of the standards of the faith, I am nevertheless orthodox in my faith.”¹⁴ The flexibility in theology necessary for Wilson to be a Presbyterian is more consistent with a New School construct, rather than the traditional, rigidly orthodox Old School position. The implications of his theology also fit the active-in-the-world focus of the New School rather than the spiritual emphasis of the Old. Wilson found two specific implications in his religion; it required action, and it was linked to the nation.

¹¹ “Democracy,” December 5, 1891, PWW, 7:356.

¹² Westminster Confession of Faith, (Glasgow, Scotland: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1988), 33-38.

¹³ “Government by Debate,” December 4, 1882, PWW, 2:254.

¹⁴ WW Journal entry, December 28, 1889, PWW, 6:462.

For Wilson religion without action was unthinkable. Anyone doing any job anywhere needed to have the attitude that religion encompassed all work. This attitude was a goal for which Christians should strive. A job in the public eye carried even greater obligations. Others could see the obedience of the worker and glorify God as a result. Wilson linked a good providential outcome to the performance of duty. Action was evidence of religious faith; therefore, not only pleasing God, but also salvific status was action based. Wilson's Christianity had service for the sake of the love of God as a motive to do right. The desire to action was consistent with orthodox Presbyterianism, which taught the actions of spreading the faith and perfecting oneself through increasing obedience to the law of God were duties of every Christian. Wilson took this teaching a step further in two different directions. First, he extended perfection of self beyond Presbyterian norms. As a rule, Presbyterians taught that perfection increased throughout one's lifetime, without ever reaching total perfection, much like the concept of a limit in calculus. Holiness / Methodist groups espoused a specific event in the Christian's life after which the person had achieved perfection. However, it was possible to lose this perfection. Presbyterians emphasized the effort / journey, while Holiness / Methodists emphasized the goal. Wilson in an address at Oberlin College, one of the homes of the Holiness / Methodist view, emphasized the need to pursue the goal of Christian perfection. As with most religious concepts, Wilson saw this as an action. The scope of this action was the second different direction Wilson pursued: the reason for this pursuit of perfection was to make America's thoughts Christian, and the thoughts of the world America's thoughts.¹⁵

¹⁵ News report of an address on "Americanism" at Oberlin College, March 22, 1906, PWW, 16:341.

The idea of Christianity and America as somehow linked, or that Christians had some unique or specific goal for America was hardly a new concept with Wilson. He linked the church and society, holding that while the church's main job was to save souls, its secondary job was purification of society. The church could accomplish this goal not by organizing against vices, or forcing good behavior by eliminating sources of temptation to bad behavior, but by "kindling light in which no vice can live."¹⁶ By this method, love transformed the poor and vicious members of society, leading Wilson to conclude, "Individual salvation *is* national salvation."¹⁷

In the process of linking the church and society, Wilson saw the strongest parallel with religion in patriotism. He thought that every man should be a religious man, and the duty of the religious man was patriotism. Thus, for Wilson the religious man's motives were socialized in working for the country. Wilson linked love of God and service to men, especially service in the form of service to the country. The sense of duty that patriotism embodied concerned itself with the improvement of society by focusing on service to that which is greater than man, much in the same way religion concentrated on service to God, who is higher than man. In both situations, raising up others along with the individual was the highest good. For Wilson, service to God in religion and service to country in patriotism were virtually indistinguishable.¹⁸

Leadership and Democracy

Wilson's philosophy concerning the nation was not restricted to specifically religious issues. He developed during his teaching career specific ideas about the nature of

¹⁶ Notes for a religious address, January 17, 1900, *PWW*, 11:376-377.

¹⁷ Notes for a religious address, March 28, 1897, *PWW*, 10:198. [Italics in the original.]

¹⁸ "Religion and Patriotism," July 4, 1902, *PWW*, 12:474-476.

leadership and the details concerning how government operated. His view of government was based in religion. A statesman needed to have biblical faith in order to tell the truth in public service. Otherwise, the statesman would lie, since neutrality did not exist.¹⁹ Wilson saw the goals of political and individual development as synonymous: to move toward a relationship with God. In society, this was accomplished by the triumph of reason over passion, of slow resolutions based on consideration of choices, rather than crude, hasty, or reactionary action.²⁰ Government work, like all work, served God. The men who best served God were those men with an unconquerable confidence based on Divine Providence. To resist such men was foolish, not only because all the might and power of God was behind them, but because in men who were rendered greater than the world around them could be found the salvation of church, community, and state.²¹

Aside from the religious qualifications, Wilson had specific ideas about what kind of men made good leaders, and how they led. He contrasted the leader and the literary man. A good literary man was an idealist, a man unable to deal well with the pragmatic concerns of reality. A good leader, by contrast was a realist, concerned with pragmatic accomplishment. Thus, a good literary man would make a bad leader, and vice versa. It is ironic that an obviously literary man, who historians describe as the supreme U.S. idealist in the twentieth century, finds the idealist to be a poor leader, while undoubtedly viewing his own record as one of superb leadership! For Wilson a leader was a visionary who saw only his own vision, and no others. Such a perspective allowed the leader to remain free from distractions that could impede the carrying out of the leader's vision.

¹⁹ "A Christian Statesman," September 5, 1876, PWW, 1:188-189.

²⁰ "A Treatise on the Modern Democratic State," December 1, 1885, PWW, 5:90.

²¹ Religious address at Trenton, NJ, October 23, 1912, PWW, 25:456.

Vision of this type emboldened a leader, and a free nation loved a bold man who vigorously pursued what he thought and said.²²

To Wilson, how a leader led was at least as important as the kind of man leading. Political leadership was leadership in conduct. Those who observed the right conduct of leaders glorified God, a desirable outcome given Wilson's religious convictions. As would be expected from his father's influence, Wilson deemed communication of primary importance. Self-governance occurred via public speech. Those who ruled in democracies did so by reasonable persuasion. Thus, Wilson thought orators necessary for self-government.²³ The content of these orations was simple, and the thoughts and ideas direct. Wilson asserted the morality aimed at by the speaker should be large and obvious, without subtle meanings or hints. New information was detrimental to the speaker's cause. What the public already knew, perhaps stated slightly differently, was best. "*Persuasion is a force, but not information; and persuasion is accomplished by creeping into the confidence of those you would lead.*"²⁴ In order to change the mind of the public, a leader had to give many speeches over an extended period.

Wilson examined a specific leader, the President, in some detail. He compared the early days of the republic with his own time, and concluded that when foreign relations issues became leading questions of the day, the President of necessity became the

²² "Democracy," December 5, 1891, PWW, 7:360-361. For historical analysis critical of Wilson as an idealist, see Lloyd Ambrosius, Wilsonian Statecraft: Theory and Practice of Liberal Internationalism during World War I, (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc, 1991), 1-66. For a more positive appraisal of Wilson's idealism, see John Milton Cooper, Jr., The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983), 260-261, 271, 307, 310, 314, 337; and Tony Smith, America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 102-109. For an attempt to merge the two perspectives, see Arthur S. Link "The Higher Realism of Woodrow Wilson," in The Higher Realism of Woodrow Wilson and Other Essays, (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971), 127-139.

²³ "Government by Debate," December 4, 1882, PWW, 2:270.

²⁴ Commencement address "Leaders of Men" at University of Tennessee, Knoxville, June 17, 1890, PWW, 6:652. [Italics in the original.]

nation's leader. With the shift in national perspective due to the Spanish-Cuban-American War, any new situation requiring foreign policy would require leadership that only the executive branch could provide. The President was the master of the United States and ruled America, and thereby determined a large part of the destiny of the world. According to Wilson, the nation before 1898 had been domestically focused and incapable of foreign relations in any significant international sense. That situation changed permanently in 1898. The office of President, as it had developed historically, did not require actual experience, Wilson argued, as much as a character and qualities of mind that the country desired in its government. The power of the President in foreign affairs had few checks or balances. Only the Senate had any input through its yes / no vote on treaties, and even then the president shaped the treaties. Therefore, the President had control, and the government in foreign affairs had to follow his lead. "He need disclose no step of negotiation until it is complete, and when in any critical matter it is completed the government is virtually committed. Whatever its disinclination, the Senate may feel itself committed also."²⁵ If the Senate, or any other specific group or special interest, approached the President on an issue, their voices were not the voices to which a President should listen. Wilson thought that the President must listen to and focus on the voice of the great masses to lead and serve them. If he did not, a President would face universal criticism and discontent.²⁶

For Wilson, listening to the voice of the masses did not mean the masses governed, or decisively influenced government. He thought the masses had little to do with formal governance. Majorities in fact ruled nothing. The minority in power manipulated

²⁵ "What is Constitutional Government?" March 24, 1908, PWW, 18:120.

²⁶ Address to the Periodical Publishers Association of America in Philadelphia, February 2, 1912, PWW, 24:129.

majorities. This process meant that men were essentially clay in the hands of the leaders, and correlated with Wilson's understanding that the minority used gradual persuasion to gain the confidence of the masses.²⁷ Based on this analysis of the masses, government came from the small groups of men in power. The difference between the majority and the minority, other than size, was that the small groups knew how to govern, and the average man did not. If progress was slow, it resulted from the need to yield to too many less-capable people. In light of these restrictions, the goal in politics was to accomplish the practical.²⁸ Wilson held that reform would fail if the nation was unprepared. To make reform practical required persuading the majority to follow the minority's changes. Listening to the voice of the masses equipped a leader to communicate the direction in which the majority needed to move. Leadership committed to a cause that operated in this fashion would not compromise the practical requirements needed to accomplish reform.²⁹

Wilson also devoted significant attention to the formation of democracies.³⁰ He saw democracy thriving, and on the cusp of prevailing, all over the globe. This tendency toward a common type of government, the American type, demonstrated for Wilson the

²⁷ Commencement address "Leaders of Men" at University of Tennessee, Knoxville, June 17, 1890, PWW, 6:650.

²⁸ "Patriotism," Worcester, MA, January 30, 1902, PWW, 12:263; WW to Allen Wickham Corwin, September 10, 1900, PWW, 11:573.

²⁹ Commencement address "Leaders of Men" at University of Tennessee, Knoxville, June 17, 1890, PWW, 6:659, 663.

³⁰ Viewpoints vary concerning what Wilson attempted to accomplish and what he actually did. For several perspectives, see Lloyd E. Ambrosius, Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy in American Foreign Relations, (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002); Lloyd C. Gardner, Safe for Democracy: The Anglo-American Response to Revolution, 1913-1923, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1984); N. Gordon Levin, Jr., Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1968); Arthur S. Link, Wilson The Diplomatist: A Look at His Major Foreign Policies, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957); Thomas J. Knock, To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Amos Pearlmuter, Making the World Safe for Democracy: A Century of Wilsonianism and Its Totalitarian Challengers, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997); and Tony Smith, America's Mission.

inherent superiority of the American system. Democracy's future depended on the presence of both local liberty and international federation, with the proviso that local liberty was required first. Liberty required law. Wilson held that law contained and placed boundaries on liberty which enabled liberty to function, in much the same way that the boundary of the engine allowed steam to function. In addition to law, democracy needed unfettered public opinion. He believed that an important difference between a free and unfree government was the authority of public opinion. If both law and public opinion played appropriate roles, liberty emerged and democratic self-government developed.³¹ Two other requirements existed in Wilson's mind for the formation of democracies. First, active pursuit of obedience to the law of liberty, or law of service and order, was required. A democracy was not a thing of being, but of doing. Just as religion required action, so did formation of governments. Wilson thought that a good providential outcome, democracy, was linked to deeds. Second, democracies required a long span of time to form correctly. A state could not safely develop by revolution. He thought that self-government was not a gift. A group of people earned it over a long period of obedience to those in authority, during which a community formed under just laws and sympathetic administration.³²

Although Wilson preferred persuasion to further the development of democracy, he recognized that force was necessary on occasion. While war was inherently neither noble nor admirable, Wilson admitted that the cause or causes of a war could be noble or admirable. Likewise, he thought while wars were bad for the economy, there was no more glorious way to die. The crux of the matter for Wilson was the cause of the fight.

³¹ Woodrow Wilson, *The State*, (Boston, MA: D.C. Heath & Co., Publishers, 1903), 581; "The Art of Governing," November 15, 1885, *PWW*, 5:53; "Democracy," December 5, 1891, *PWW*, 7:364.

³² "Democracy," December 5, 1891, *PWW*, 7: 365, 358; "Constitutional Government," *PWW* 18: 104.

If the cause were a good and worthwhile one, then Wilson would fight. Once the cause in Europe after 1914 was clear, the duty of the United States would be clear as well. He wanted the United States to have a reputation for icy cold mastery of self-control, reasoning that this type of enemy was the most feared. For Wilson, the use of force was a last resort, used when all other options had been exhausted. Even then, America would not act as an aggressor, but to contain aggression. Wilson viewed America's history as fighting repeatedly for the rights of humanity. Thus, Wilson approved of a "right vs. wrong" war, in which neutrality was impossible, and all of mankind united against an abuser of human rights.³³

Wilson linked his support of democracy to his view of America's future. He held unquestioningly to the concept of a guardian destiny for America, a concept consistent with his understanding of Divine Providence. Wilson stated his view of America's destiny at a young people's religious meeting in 1905: "...[the] mighty task before us...is to make the United States a mighty Christian nation, and christianize the world."³⁴ Seven years later during a campaign speech he asserted that God had at the country's inception implanted visions of liberty, and the task of the United States was to show other nations how to "walk in the paths of liberty."³⁵ Wilson based his views of America, democracy, governing, and leadership on religion, specifically Protestant Christianity.

³³ Speech accepting a Statue of Philip Kearny, November 11, 1914, PWW, 31:561; Diary of Colonel House, February 14, 1913, PWW, 27:113; Remarks to the Associated Press in New York, April 20, 1915, PWW, 33:40; Notification to Powers, January 31, 1914, PWW, 29:207; Campaign address in Buffalo, NY, November 11, 1916, PWW, 38:588; Non-partisan address in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38:541.

³⁴ Speech at a young people's religious meeting, November 20, 1905, PWW, 16:228.

³⁵ Campaign address in Jersey City, NJ, May 25, 1912, PWW, 24:443.

Pre-Presidential Foreign Policy Views

Wilson used his personal ideology in formulating specific foreign policy perspectives before his presidency. Examining the relationship of the United States with France and Great Britain during George Washington's presidency, Wilson asserted that the correct view, the view of neutrality, prevailed only because Washington held the standard high enough for all to see.³⁶ Wilson's analysis of Washington's action indicated his belief in the necessity of persuading the majority. When he explored the acquisition of Texas, Wilson criticized the secret negotiations involved. As he assessed the Mexican War, Wilson condemned U.S. tactics and foreign policy, calling President Polk's foreign policy "ruthless aggrandizement" and foreshadowing his reluctance to intervene in Mexico during his first term as president.³⁷ Wilson approved Grover Cleveland's policy regarding Hawaii, citing Cleveland's "rare courage." Cleveland had resisted pressure to annex Hawaii from imperialistic-minded members of the foreign policy public and opposed the acquisition of colonies. Reflecting his understanding of the importance of a leader's communication, Wilson criticized Cleveland for bluntly speaking his mind and holding nothing back during the crisis with Great Britain over the eastern boundary of Venezuela.³⁸

Wilson decided as early as 1891 that America's future lay in interaction with the international community, not in the relative isolation of earlier years. After the Spanish-Cuban-American War, he argued the United States could no longer remain provincial in world affairs. Involvement in international affairs would subject America to criticism

³⁶ Woodrow Wilson, George Washington, (New York: Frederick Ungar reprint 1963, originally printed 1896), 296.

³⁷ Woodrow Wilson, Division and Reunion: 1829 – 1889, (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1897), 149-154.

³⁸ "Mr. Cleveland as President," January 15, 1897, PWW, 10:102-119.

without regard for how such commentary affected American sensibilities. He thought that all would be well if the U.S. government remained open and free rather than secretive in the face of criticism, since only pent up forces caused damage. With such a government, the United States could enjoy success in post-war dependencies like the Philippines, if it withstood international criticism. Agreeing with his friend Fredrick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis, Wilson believed that 1898 had marked the end of a domestic era. As he reminded his audience at the New York Democratic Club in early 1912, events of 1898 marked the shift of the United States to committed international participation. In light of these changes, the best U.S. policy avoided any return to pre-1898 foreign relations.³⁹

Immediately after the fighting stopped in the Spanish-Cuban-American War, Wilson assessed the whole affair. He was convinced that the United States fought for ideological reasons, that America had become involved due to outrage as the country witnessed transgressions of American ideals in Cuba. Concerning the speed and timing of U.S. involvement, Wilson suggested that a calm, slow assessment of the situation would have been best, and that U.S. actions were justified, but hasty. Two years later he had changed his mind, arguing that the United States actually had proceeded deliberately, not rushing to war despite an appearance of haste. He considered the war a just one, proof that America was not merely a group of warmongers. Finally, he suggested that the world was transformed, since the United States now participated in a part of the global competition to possess the world. This competition to possess the world raised the

³⁹ "Democracy," December 5, 1891, PWW, 7:348; Newspaper report of speech "Liberty and its uses" in Brooklyn, NY, January 14, 1900, PWW, 11:374-375; Address on the Tariff to New York Democratic Club, January 3, 1912, PWW, 23:641; William Appleman Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1959), 71.

question of what to do next with the territory gained, a question Wilson deemed primarily moral. He later concluded that Providence had willed the change in America at the time of the Spanish-Cuban-American War. The war had been “a war of impulse,” not in the sense of a hasty decision, but a war for which the United States was unprepared. Wilson concluded that U.S. motives in both Cuba and the Philippines were the same: to serve both countries by showing them the way to liberty.⁴⁰

Wilson did not initially favor taking the Philippines, but once annexed, the islands not only constituted a place to advance liberty, they also provided an opportunity for hot-blooded young men to serve their country.⁴¹ He held that the Philippines should be granted self-government, but only when they were ready. If the Filipinos accepted U.S. governmental standards, then America would collaborate with them. The motive prompting the United States to acquire the Philippines was the same impulse that had led to expansion in Louisiana, although Wilson thought the types of expansion – intra vs. inter continental – were different. In 1904, a group favoring Filipino independence attempted to gain Wilson’s support. He replied that insufficient time had passed for the Filipinos to learn the lessons of democracy from those Americans among them, and he refused to have his name associated with an anti-imperialist league.⁴²

⁴⁰ Woodrow Wilson, *A History of the American People*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1901), Vol. 10, p. 161; Memorandum “What Ought We To Do,” August 1, 1898, *PWW* 10:574-576; Political essay “Democracy and Efficiency,” October 1, 1900, *PWW*, 12:18; “Statesmanship of Letters,” November 5, 1903, *PWW*, 15:41.

⁴¹ For an interesting analysis of the “hot blooded” concept Wilson referred to, see Kristin L. Hoganson’s *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998) 9, 158

⁴² Report of a speech on “Patriotism” in Waterbury, CT, December 14, 1899, *PWW*, 11:298-299; “Democracy and Efficiency,” October 1, 1900, *PWW*, 12:19; News report of address to University Club of St. Louis, April 29, 1903, *PWW*, 14:33; WW to Edward Warren Ordway, February 20, 1904, *PWW*, 15:175.

Wilson envisioned the U.S. role in the Philippines as one of direct involvement leading to the development of Filipino self-government. In China, Wilson thought the United States had the same role to play, but in an indirect manner. He perceived America acting when no one else would to maintain an open door in Manchuria. Wilson saw similarities in Panama and Puerto Rico. The Louisiana impulse applied in Puerto Rico, and America could guide the island to self-government just as it was doing with the Philippines. In general, Wilson considered the activity in these countries the natural result of the closing of the frontier. The consequent expansion of the United States outside the continental United States meant America could continue as it had before the frontier closed, because to Wilson American expansion was axiomatic. Moreover, when he considered the beneficial effects of spreading American democracy, Wilson viewed the United States and its influence as a "...sort of pure air blowing in world politics, destroying illusions and cleaning places of morbid, miasmatic gases," resistant to democracy.⁴³

Between the Spanish-Cuban-American War and Wilson's first run for the presidency, the country's focus had turned inward with domestic concerns dominating the national agenda. During the 1912 presidential campaign, the Democratic Party listed nothing in its platform concerning foreign policy. Wilson only mentioned foreign affairs from a domestic commercial point of view. The one exception to this came in his speech

⁴³ "Democracy and Efficiency," October 10, 1900, PWW, 12:18; News report of address in Montclair, NJ, January 28, 1904, PWW, 15:143; Address on Conservation in Indianapolis, October 3, 1912, PWW, 25:316.

accepting the nomination, in which Wilson addressed the issue of self-government in the Philippines, and expressed his “we hold their country in trust for them” concept.⁴⁴

Foreign Policy as President

Once Wilson’s first term as president began, actual foreign policy decisions tested all his ideology and interpretations of prior U.S. foreign policy. His religious views continued to form the basis of his ideology. Christianity functioned to raise up both the self and others, and the ultimate source of peace for Christians was Jesus Christ. The parallels between patriotism and Christianity remained: “[Both] make [a man] forget himself and square every thought and action with something infinitely greater than himself.”⁴⁵ Wilson continued to blend God and humanity as focal points for action. In Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1916, he ended his address with a reference to a Bible passage, ““after the wind, after the earthquake, after the fire, the still small voice of humanity.”” Such use of the Bible remained a common characteristic of Wilson’s speeches.⁴⁶

Wilson explained his general understanding of several concepts that shaped foreign policy early in his first term. He described basing foreign policy decisions on commercial issues as a dangerous approach, an understandable position given his primary domestic goal of reforming big business. Moreover, Wilson felt that great spiritual forces were at work in Europe, especially after the war started in 1914, and the United States

⁴⁴ Edwin Doak Mead to WW, August 10, 1912, PWW, 25:19; Diary of Oswald Garrison Villard, August 14, 1912, PWW, 25:24-25; Nomination acceptance speech, August 7, 1912, PWW, 25:4-16; Address in New York to the National League of Commission Merchants, January 11, 1912, PWW, 24:33.

⁴⁵ Remarks to the Gridiron Club, December 11, 1915, PWW, 35:343.

⁴⁶ Address in Charlotte, NC, May 20, 1916, PWW, 37:83; Interview by Ida Minerva Tarbell, October 3, 1916, PWW, 38:325. Wilson’s uncited Biblical allusion is not a specific passage in the Bible, and the closest match, 1 Kings 19:10-12, describes Elijah the prophet’s encounter with God according to traditional Hebrew and Christian interpretation, not humanity as Wilson asserted.

had to act in accord with those forces. He preferred America to function as peacemaker for the world:

We are the champions of peace and concord...it is our dearest present hope that this character and reputation may presently, in God's Providence, bring us an opportunity such as seldom has been vouchsafed any nation, the opportunity to consol and obtain peace in the world and reconciliation and a healing settlement of many a matter that has cooled and interrupted the friendship of nations.⁴⁷

He remained committed to doing whatever was necessary to maintain moral influence in foreign relations, thinking that influence provided a way to peace. He believed that a certain type of man would rise up, and save the world through service. Wilson based his belief in the United States peacemaking ability on the multi-ethnic composition of the U.S. population. Due to the presence of citizens from all the countries at war in the United States, only America understood all the conflicting nations and could thereby mediate a peace.⁴⁸

Although the two primary foreign policy concerns of Wilson's first term were Mexico and the growing trouble in Europe, his policies also addressed other nations and problems. When the issue of delivering promised loans to China appeared in 1913, he refused to back the previous administration's loan policies out of fear of so upsetting the financial and political situations that the infant democratic process in China might be endangered.⁴⁹ Wilson's reverence for democracy and America's destiny to lead other countries to democracy shaped his China policy, requiring him to withhold the promised loan, lest democracy not advance. As time passed, and thereby his criteria of extended learning for those governed was increasingly met, Wilson favored advancing toward self-

⁴⁷ Annual Message to Congress, December 8, 1914, PWW, 31:422.

⁴⁸ Remarks to the National Press Club, May 15, 1916, PWW, 37:51; Non-partisan address in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38:539; Remarks to the Associated Press in New York, April 20, 1915, PWW, 33:39.

⁴⁹ Statement on the pending Chinese loan, March 18, 1913, PWW, 27:193.

government for the Philippines and Puerto Rico.⁵⁰ As in China, he expected morality to guide policy in Panama, and Latin America. He looked forward to eventual spiritual union between the United States and Latin America, based on increasing mutual understanding as Latin America adapted greater degrees of constitutional liberty. He believed that the consent of the governed differed between the United States and other countries during his life, but at some point in the future Latin America's people would understand democracy as Americans did in his time. At that point, true fellowship would be possible with both parties viewing democracy in the same way.⁵¹

Mexico proved to be a critical area for foreign relations for Wilson, who fit his responses to the changes occurring in Mexico during his first term to the dictates of his ideology. In 1913 after he took office, Wilson expressed U.S. interest in Mexico's self-government and its constitutional stability, offering U.S. assistance to achieve a peaceful outcome. Mexico rejected U.S. assistance. Wilson concluded that America needed to wait and not give material aid to any side, since the morally right side would win. Thinking he based his views on early American history, he claimed that to rob the democratic side in the Mexican revolution of the opportunity to struggle toward a more democratic form of government would be to deny Mexico the benefit of active pursuit of obedience to the law of liberty. Wilson viewed this opportunity as one of the requirements of the formation of a democracy. Thus, America had an obligation to study governmental situations in general, and Mexico in particular, to ensure that neither Americans nor other citizens could be deprived of the right to opportunities necessary for

⁵⁰ Annual Message to Congress, December 8, 1914, PWW, 31:417; Annual Message to Congress, December 7, 1915, PWW 35:303.

⁵¹ Address on Latin American Policy in Mobile, AL, October 27, 1913, PWW, 28:448-449, 452; Statement on relations with Latin America, March 12, 1913, PWW 27:172; WW to Allen Wickham Corwin, September 10, 1900, PWW, 11:573.

constitutional government. Unless changes in the progression of the revolution removed those opportunities altogether, the United States needed to wait and see if Mexico could work out its problems independently.⁵²

By the end of 1913, multiple policy failures convinced Wilson that withholding aid from both sides would not end the civil war. To prevent some outside, perhaps European, force from becoming involved, as well as to ensure the defeat of Victoriano Huerta, Wilson approved a change in U.S. policy to permit shipping materials to the anti-Huerta Constitutionalists led by Venustiano Carranza. This decision reflected both Wilson's willingness to actively apply the Monroe doctrine, and, the importance of respecting constitutional government, even when a group only professed allegiance to such concepts. Wilson earnestly desired that other countries respect the United States. In accordance with his professed willingness to use force only when the cause was right, he allowed use of military force only to ensure the respect of the United States.⁵³ Wilson eulogized the Americans killed during the occupation of Veracruz in Mexico with his highest honor – they did their duty, ensuring respect for the United States. Wilson also thought that other nations should be encouraged to respect the Mexicans America

⁵² Address on Mexican Affairs, August 27, 1913, *PWW*, 28:228-231; Draft of an Address to Congress, October 31, 1913, *PWW*, 28:480-481. For analysis of Wilson's Mexican policies, see two works by Mark T. Gilderhus, *Diplomacy and Revolution: U.S. – Mexican Relations Under Wilson and Carranza*, (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1977) and *Pan American Visions: Woodrow Wilson in the Western Hemisphere, 1913-1921*, (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1986), along with Devlin, *Too Proud to Fight*, 117-127 and 495-496; Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1972); Levin, *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics*, 20-21, 44-45; Link, *Wilson The Diplomatist*, 17-24; and articles by Kendrick Clements, "Woodrow Wilson's Mexican Policy, 1913-1915." *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (Spring, 1980) 113-136; and Linda B. Hall and Don M. Coerver, "Woodrow Wilson, Public Opinion, and the Punitive Expedition: A Re-Assessment." *New Mexico Historical Review*, Vol. 72, No. 2, (April 1997), 171-194.

⁵³ For a detailed examination of Wilson's use of force in carrying out foreign policy, see Frederick S. Calhoun, *Power and Principle: Armed Intervention in Wilsonian Foreign Policy*, (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1986) and *Use of Force and Wilsonian Foreign Policy*, (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1993).

supported, which was consistent with his view of America as the leader of the world in the drive toward democracy. Everyone should follow the leader.⁵⁴

In 1915, when the Constitutionalists engaged in more infighting than democracy building, Wilson warned that unless the fighting within the group ceased, the United States would become militarily involved. Internal conflict led to lawlessness, and liberty required law. He argued for compliance with his demands, since although America was not at war with Mexico, various factions received U.S. support. Overt support of the defenders of democracy, not military action, remained the right cause at the time. Wilson based his decision not to intervene at that time on his aversion to compulsion. He thought compulsion required a long-term investment, as in case of the Philippines. Some countries might then accuse the United States of self-serving imperialism, and he firmly believed such action to be immoral, and at odds with America's special destiny. Wilson envisioned a noble limit: "We will aid and befriend Mexico, but we will not coerce her; and our course with regard to her ought to be sufficient proof to all America that we seek no political suzerainty or self-control."⁵⁵ In contrast to subsequent historians such as William Appleman Williams, Wilson believed only physical force constituted coercion, and therefore thought his policies consistent with his professed ideology.⁵⁶

By 1916, Wilson discerned little choice other than force, since the lack of a stable Mexican government rendered diplomacy impossible. Liberty, and hence democracy, without law was impossible. To avoid threats to U.S. citizens and lands, Wilson

⁵⁴ Notification to Powers, January 31, 1914, PWW, 29:207; Address to Congress on the Mexican Crisis, April 20, 1914, PWW, 29:474; Memorial Address, May 11, 1914, PWW, 30:13-15; WW to Walter Hines Page, June 4, 1914, PWW, 30:143.

⁵⁵ Press Release on Mexico, June 2, 1915, PWW, 33:303-304; Annual Message on the State of the Union, December 17, 1915, PWW, 35:295-296.

⁵⁶ Williams, Tragedy, concerning economic factors in U.S. foreign relations.

determined to clear all armed forces from the Mexican states bordering the United States.

He would have declared war at this point, but his ideology restrained him since there existed no legal government in Mexico. The will of the people to form a democratic government was being ignored. His goal over his first term remained the same: a stable, constitutional Mexican government. According to Wilson, U.S. military activity, such as the pursuit of Pancho Villa, in a foreign country did not constitute intervention. He defined intervention as, "... an attempt to determine for the Mexican people what the form, the circumstances, and the *personnel* of their government shall be, or upon what terms and in what manner a settlement of their disturbed affairs shall be effected."⁵⁷

Despite such definitions, Wilson's war-like actions undoubtedly constituted imperialistic activity, given the inevitable impact such dealings had on the people of Mexico as they sought to form a government. When Wilson accepted the Democratic nomination in 1916, he asserted that U.S. policy toward Mexico had accorded with principle, respecting the sovereign authority of both Mexico and the United States. Thus, America's policy sought to encourage the emancipation of the Mexican people without denying Mexico the right to choose and direct in a legitimate constitutional fashion their own leaders and government.⁵⁸ As historian Thomas Knock has observed, Wilson knew that some of his actions regarding Mexico conflicted with his ideology. He believed such actions were necessary to accomplish his overarching policy goal of a government with which any similar future U.S. action would be unnecessary. Wilson approached the conflict in Europe with similar assumptions.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Draft of an Address to a Joint Session of Congress, June 26, 1916, *PWW*, 37:303. [Italics in original.]

⁵⁸ Nomination Acceptance Speech in Long Branch, NJ, September 2, 1916, *PWW*, 38:133.

⁵⁹ Knock, *To End All Wars*, 84.

Wilson's attitude toward the war in Europe went through two distinct stages. When the war began in 1914, he was primarily concerned with domestic reaction. He wanted to avoid divisions among the U.S. population based on European heritage. He called for a national day of prayer and supplication because of the war, and thereby sought to unite the country and keep the United States neutral. Wilson believed that the United States' ability to mediate a peace depended on two factors. The first was Europe's perception of the United States as neutral and at peace, ready to mediate. His desire for this role reflected not only his belief that the president of the United States was the only instrument of government with any significant power to make foreign policy decisions, but his view that slow, reasoned choices should decide such matters instead of passionate, hasty ones. Wilson's course of action also mirrored his inability to ascertain a "right cause," one consistent with his perception of American ideals, for U.S. involvement in the European war. The second factor Wilson saw shaping U.S. ability to mediate a peace related to the multiethnic makeup of the country's population. He perceived the melting pot nature of American society as providing America a unique mediatorial ability. By virtue of its citizens, only the United States could fully understand the viewpoints of all the sides in the conflict, and hence promote a truly neutral peace.⁶⁰

As the 1916 U.S. election neared, Wilson changed his perspective. He suggested with German U-boats sinking passenger and freight ships, a rationale for breaking diplomatic relations existed. Wilson compared the European conflict to America's

⁶⁰ Appeal to the American People, August 18, 1914, PWW, 30:394; Proclamation, September 8, 1914, PWW, 31:10-11; Remarks to the Associated Press in New York, April 20, 1915, PWW, 33:39. For a sample of the vast secondary literature on Wilson's foreign policy and events surrounding World War I, see Ambrosius, Wilsonian Statecraft; Devlin, Too Proud to Fight; Robert H. Ferrell, Woodrow Wilson and World War I, 1917-1921, (New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), and Ernest R. May, The World War and American Isolationism, 1914-1917, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959).

Revolutionary War, describing both as wars of competing political systems. At the same time, he was convinced the people wanted him to make peace in Europe. This could only happen if America remained neutral. Wilson sought neutrality for three reasons. First, neutrality was the traditional U.S. policy in European conflicts. Second, the United States ostensibly had no stake in European developments. In fact, the origins of the war had nothing to do with America. Third, neutrality helped prevent the spread of hate while providing a foundation on which to build peace. Wilson admitted in an October 1916 interview that he attempted to look at the war from the viewpoint of a historian as well as a participant. He was acutely aware of the historian's judgment that the actor should have known available information. This awareness prompted him "... to let nothing hasten me, nothing tempt me to override principles."⁶¹ Wilson pursued a long view, of the war in Europe, rather than reacting to details. This policy reflected his preference for reason over passion, and slow resolutions based on consideration of choices, rather than crude, hasty, or reactionary action.⁶²

While Wilson's European policies did not completely favor one side over the other, his neutrality was clearly biased. Ernest May has described a general American belief at the time: "It was thought possible to be sympathetic yet completely neutral." Wilson's policies tended to benefit the Allies instead of the Germans. Not only were many of Wilson's closest advisors pro-British, but some, such as Colonel Edward M. House, were

⁶¹ Interview by Ida Minerva Tarbell, October 3, 1916, PWW, 38:327.

⁶² Address in Charlotte, NC, May 20, 1916, PWW, 37:81; Address to a Joint Session of Congress, April 19, 1916, PWW, 36:509-510; Nomination Acceptance Speech in Long Branch, NJ, September 2, 1916, PWW, 38:132; Address in Washington to the League to Enforce Peace, May 27, 1916, PWW, 37:116; Interview by Ida Minerva Tarbell, October 3, 1916, PWW, 38:327; Address in Omaha, October 5, 1916, PWW, 38:347. For evaluations of how truly neutral U.S. policy was see Knock, To End All Wars, 34, 64-65; May, War and American Isolationism, 34-53; and Arthur S. Link, Wilson: The Struggle for Neutrality, 1914-1915, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 57-73 and 682-693.

convinced that a German victory threatened the United States. Patrick Devlin has chronicled Wilson's numerous recreational trips to Britain, his affection for British authors and his preference for British spelling before his entry into politics. Experiences and preferences of this nature no doubt also influenced Wilson's foreign policy decisions.⁶³

One specific area in which Wilson's thoughts concerning Europe shifted clearly was preparedness. In 1914, Wilson first broached the subject and judged the current level of U.S. military power sufficient. In early 1915, he suggested people should begin to think of America first. By late 1915, Wilson requested increases in military spending to ensure that America remained prepared. Wilson's 1916 definition of preparedness fit a defensive model that envisioned neither war nor peace, but focused on access or impact on items of interest. He spent a significant amount of time giving preparedness lectures in 1916.⁶⁴ This effort correlated with Wilson's understanding that the minority used gradual persuasion to gain the confidence of the masses. Hence, his preparedness efforts reflected his pattern of giving many speeches over an extended period to change the public mind.

Conclusion

Exposed to religious instruction from earliest childhood, Woodrow Wilson incorporated protestant Christian concepts into all aspects of his ideological thought. He used ideas gathered from his father's teaching and his own adult experience in

⁶³ May, War and American Isolationism 36, 45, 77; Devlin, Too Proud to Fight, 26-29.

⁶⁴ Annual Message to Congress, December 8, 1914, PWW, 31:421; Remarks to the Associated Press in New York, April 20, 1915, PWW, 33:38; Annual Message on the State of the Union, December 7, 1915, PWW, 35:298-299; Address in New York on Preparedness, January 27, 1916, PWW, 36:12; Address in Chicago on Preparedness, January 31, 1916, PWW, 36:64.

Presbyterianism, along with much of the Christianity common to late nineteenth century America, to express his beliefs about the role of the United States in the world and the principles used to guide foreign policy. Wilson recognized his religious inconsistencies without permitting them to hinder his exercise of his religion or hamper the impact on his ideology. Viewing action as the natural outcome of religion, and service as the highest form of action, he linked Christianity to the destiny and role of America. Patriotic service to the country and religious service to God assumed virtually synonymous status in his mind as he drew strong parallels between religion and patriotism.

Wilson considered religion to be a necessary foundation within leaders. As bold visionaries, these men pursued their own vision rigorously. A good leader possessed oratorical skills, since self-governance functioned via reasonable persuasion in a democracy. As Wilson learned from his father, oratory needed to communicate simply and directly to the masses. When he examined the presidency historically, he found the president functioned as the leader of the country, and the primary actor in foreign relations. The Senate, as the only other branch of government involved in foreign policy, merely voted on treaties the president negotiated. The president's input came from the masses, not special interests or other small groups.

His understanding of the destiny and role of the nation reflected Wilson's ideology as much as his thoughts on leadership and the presidency. America had a religious duty to spread democracy, aiding those countries that sought to move toward the ideal form of self-government found in American democracy. Development of democracy required freedom of public opinion and liberty to shape self-government. The duty of the United

States was to provide guidance to other countries in this process. When America acted, its deeds restrained aggression rather than pursuing it.

As he analyzed U.S. foreign policy, Wilson argued a major shift occurred in 1898 with the Spanish-Cuban-American War. Embracing Turner's frontier thesis, Wilson claimed direct involvement in the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Latin America demonstrated U.S. desire to foster democracy. His Mexican policy reflected the importance he placed on promoting what he viewed as legitimate, constitutional government, along with America's providential role as a mediator of peace and instances where he found force a necessary tool of diplomacy. Wilson's European policy, emphasizing neutrality and peace, exhibited the same ideological priorities even as he embraced preparedness in light of submarine warfare and the increasing prospect of U.S. involvement in the war in Europe.

CHAPTER 2

PRINCIPLES EXPRESSED IN PUBLIC SPEECHES

Through his presidential speeches before U.S. entry into World War I, Wilson voiced his ideological assumptions on foreign policy. He communicated what he considered the important concepts influencing foreign relations that the public should know. Wilson explained in his speeches what he was doing and how the audience should respond. He presented information concerning the presidency in the abstract, and specific data about his performance of the office, as well as thoughts about the function of the U.S. government, the Constitution, and political parties. He often used specific religious language to convey his meanings. Wilson focused on principles that shaped the decisions and legislation he supported, and broad methods for implementing these ideals. By insuring that his audience knew the principles shaping his policies, Wilson laid the foundations to address specific diplomatic issues, and explain the thoughts and actions U.S. foreign policy required from him and the country.

Public Speaking

Wilson expressed several ideas about his public speaking. Addressing the Gridiron Club of Washington, he analogized the function of public speakers to that of shining a spotlight to find out if the individual highlighted would attempt to hide or not. This

description shared the idea of examination for the sake of public education with Wilson's view of his public speaking. Instructional oratory was not solely Wilson's professed understanding of what he did when speaking. Because of his distrust of newspaper opinions, Wilson portrayed giving a speech as a way to get to know someone. He once informed his audience that giving talks invigorated his spirit. He also described his speaking as preaching in a luncheon address to a group of women:

What I want, therefore, to preach from this time on, in office or out of office, because even out of office I can retain my powers of elocution – what I intend to preach from this time on is that America must show that, as a member of the family of nations, she has the same attitude toward the other nations that she wishes her people to have toward each other;...⁶⁵

To refer to his speaking as preaching presents an interesting perspective, considering both the influence of his father on his writing and speaking, as well as the commonality of preaching and his view of speaking both seeking persuasive change.⁶⁶

Often when speaking, Wilson described his function as interpreting the spirit of the occasion or subject. This perspective illustrates Wilson's use of multiple meanings for a single word. In other instances, use of the word "spirit" could refer to the opinion or belief of a group, or the assumptions of the country. When he used spirit in the "assumption" context, Wilson generalized the sentiments expressed, often attempting to summarize the principles articulated. The acceptance speech for the 1916 Democratic presidential nomination illustrated this use of spirit. He referred to his speech as an

⁶⁵ Luncheon Address to Women in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, *PWW*, 38:530.

⁶⁶ Remarks to the Gridiron Club of Washington, April 12, 1913, *PWW*, 27:296; Address in Philadelphia to Newly Naturalized Citizens, May 10, 1915, *PWW*, 33:150; Address to the American Electric Railway Association, January 29, 1915, *PWW*, 32:149; John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Breaking the Heart of the World: Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the League of Nations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 431-2. The papers (mostly sermons) of Joseph R. Wilson occupy 0.25 cubic feet at the archives of the Presbyterian Historical Society in Montreat, NC. It would be interesting to compare the structure of the elder Wilson's sermons with the younger's speeches to evaluate some of Cooper's conclusions .

attempt to interpret the meaning and the spirit of the Democratic Party platform, without listing or addressing any platform planks.⁶⁷

Performance of Duties

Wilson stressed his impartiality in the exercise of his duties. As chief executive, he claimed to express the opinion of American citizens, rather than his own. He clarified that he did not confuse the opinion of newspaper editorials and the popular view. “With all due respect to editors of great newspapers, I have to say to them that I never take my opinions of the American people from their editorials.”⁶⁸ Wilson’s education of his audience on this point was one of his most common emphases in his speeches. In his attempts to claim his opinions were not his own, he explained his unique personal circumstances. Being president denied him expression of his opinion, as his job required he focus exclusively on the country’s interests and not his own. By emphasizing this point, Wilson not only claimed he spoke for the majority of Americans, he suggested those opposing him did not.⁶⁹

Wilson’s stress on national opinion reflected his need to interact with the people beyond the confines of Washington, D.C. As he stated during a Flag Day celebration: “I felt caught up and buoyed along by the great stream of human purpose which seemed to

⁶⁷ Memorial Day Address, May 30, 1916, PWW, 37: 123; After Dinner Talk, December 9, 1916, PWW, 40:193; Speech in Long Branch, New Jersey, Accepting the Presidential Nomination, September 2, 1916, PWW 38:127.

⁶⁸ Jackson Day Address in Indianapolis, January 8, 1915, PWW, 32:29.

⁶⁹ Jackson Day Address in Indianapolis, January 8, 1915, PWW, 32:39; Remarks to the Associated Press in New York, April 20, 1915, PWW, 33:37; Remarks to the National Press Club, May 15, 1916, PWW, 37: 49; Remarks at a Reception in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38: 52; Remarks, to the Gridiron Club, December 11, 1915, PWW, 35: 340. Although beyond the scope of this thesis, Wilson’s refusal to change during the League fight could be considered an example of his willingness to pursue his perception of national opinion at great personal cost, or of Wilson’s personal opinion at odds with the nations. Such arguments would need to be tempered by the impact of his physical condition at the time and associated issues.

flow there in front of me by the stand at the White House, and I shall go away from this meeting, as I came away from that parade, with all the deepest purposes of my heart renewed.”⁷⁰ His desire to have the affection of his fellow man made Wilson willing to endure any physical hardship. He considered the people more inspiring than Congress, and the people’s confidence sustained him. Contact with people away from Washington, D.C. gave him the enthusiasm he needed to continue his work.⁷¹

Wilson’s expressions of his desire for contact with non-politicians and government functionaries served not only to justify his need to make speeches, but also reinforced the image he cultivated of a common man elected to serve the people. He regularly described himself as an average man, despite a Ph.D., a brief period as a lawyer, and years spent as a college professor and president. As a common man, Wilson operated as an associate, servant, or helper. He explained the function of both Congress and the President as servants of the people. The American mind held no ambiguities for Wilson because he served the force of human, righteous, and patriotic purpose that had originated in the national consciousness. He claimed his service made him a counsel for the country in a legal sense. Both Wilson’s benefit from interaction with the public and his presentation of his role as a common servant with counsel to share served to strengthen his justification for the one who governed to meet with citizens. By arguing that public officials needed to confer with their people for both personal and national reasons, especially to accurately assess public opinion, Wilson told his audiences why he was

⁷⁰ Flag Day Address, June 14, 1916, PWW, 37: 224.

⁷¹ Address to the Daughters of the American Revolution, October 11, 1915, PWW, 35: 51; Jackson Day Address in Indianapolis, January 8, 1915, PWW, 32: 30; Remarks to the Associated Advertising Club, June 29, 1916, PWW, 37:328; Address to the Annual Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, March 25, 1915, PWW, 32: 431.

speaking, created commonalities with them, and prepared the way for a favorable reception of his ideas.⁷²

Wilson explained that he had the support of the majority of people. This group, a silent majority was not vocal about the issues. He reminded his listeners that the vocal minority did not represent the views of the nation. His job as president was to interpret the sympathies of the silent portion of the people and speak for them. Wilson claimed he represented not only Americans, but also the silent mass of the world's humanity. He had no difficulties with his duty in this regard:

I would fain believe that I am speaking for the silent mass of mankind everywhere who have as yet had not place or opportunity to speak their real hearts out concerning the death and ruin they see to have come already upon the person and the homes they hold most dear.⁷³

The reasons behind the creation of the country, and his belief that the public would not act inconsistently with its nature of loving liberty and desiring to promote peace and democracy, provided Wilson with his information. He attributed his confidence concerning their response to a sympathetic connection of impulse. This link left questions in Wilson's mind as to whether or not he had judged one instance or another correctly, or if he had as the country's spokesman functioned wisely. Still, he remained instinctively confident that others had reached the same conclusions about the same situations.⁷⁴

⁷² Luncheon Address to the Chamber of Commerce of Columbus, Ohio, December 10, 1915, PWW, 35:324; Remarks on Signing the Tariff Bill, October 3, 1913, PWW, 28:352; Jackson Day Address in Indianapolis, January 8, 1915, PWW, 32:30; Address for Wilson Day as Enclosure in WW to Vance Criswell McCormick, October 15, 1916, PWW, 38: 462; Address in Indianapolis, October 12, 1916, PWW, 38: 412; Address to the American Electric Railway Association, January 29, 1915, PWW, 32: 149; Address at Congress Hall in Philadelphia, October 25, 1913, PWW, 28: 435.

⁷³ Address to the Senate, January 22, 1917; PWW, 40: 538.

⁷⁴ Remarks to the Associated Press in New York, April 20, 1915, PWW, 33: 39; Flag Day Address, June 14, 1915, PWW, 33: 393; After-Dinner Remarks to the City Club of Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38: 534; Address on Latin American Policy in Mobile, Alabama, October 27, 1913, PWW 28: 451;

While urging the majority to express their views, Wilson tried to stimulate the people to do their duty by explaining what he was interpreting. He claimed that he occasionally felt a strain when interpreting the country's spirit, due to the unpredictability of foreign nations:

But when the fortunes of your own country are, so to say, subject to the incalculable winds of passion that are blowing through other parts of the world, why, then the strain is of a singular and unprecedented kind, because you do not know by what turn of the wheel of fortune the control of things is going to be taken out of you hand.⁷⁵

Wilson saw his duty in speaking as one of interpretation. With some decisions, such as the timing of necessary entry into the European war, his burden of choosing made him sleepless over his interpretational duties since he was unsure he had the information to interpret truly. To one audience Wilson explained this type of interpretation by recounting a speech by the Japanese ambassador. Admitting that he had inferred his point from the ambassador's comments, Wilson claimed that the foundation of peace was diplomats interpreting the spirits of nations to one another. The world needed such a vision that could see beneath surface issues to the real needs, motives and sympathies of mankind.⁷⁶

Decision Making

In several of his speeches, Wilson explained how he made decisions. For the audience, understanding presidential decision-making was as important to supporting his

Remarks to the Belgian Commissioners, September 16, 1914, PWW 31: 34; Final Campaign Address, November 4, 1916, PWW, 38: 615.

⁷⁵ Remarks to the National Press Club, May 15, 1916, PWW, 37: 47-48.

⁷⁶ Remarks to the National Press Club, May 15, 1916, PWW, 37: 47-49; Address in Charlotte, North Carolina, May 26, 1916, PWW, 37: 79; After-Dinner Talk to the Gridiron Club, December 9, 1916, PWW, 40: 194.

judgments as the principles that informed those choices. Wilson attempted to view the country as a whole in his heart. He looked at the past and envisioned the ideal future, shaping policy based on whatever guiding principles applied. As he told one audience, one of those principles was to ask himself what would the man on the street, mindful of the country's destiny, want as policy.⁷⁷

Often Wilson's information sources in Washington consisted of the half-hour statements of several men, presumably knowledgeable individuals, who filed through his office to provide information on a subject. As he explained to the Daughters of the American Revolution, whatever all those men agreed on was the truth, and the rest was false. While advisors were fundamental to Wilson's decision-making process, he preferred to have the best information available with which to make choices. To the Associated Press he explained: "The world is held stable by the man who waits for the next day to find out whether the report was true or not."⁷⁸ This desire to wait on the facts to determine the truth represents part of an explanation for time lags between events and Wilson's responses, such as the time between the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare by Germany and his call for war, a period of two months.⁷⁹

The decision making process was not the only consideration that generated complexities. Political differences created difficulties. Agitation by proponents of

⁷⁷ Address to the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, February 10, 1916, PWW, 36: 159; Address in Omaha, October 5, 1916, PWW, 38: 349.

⁷⁸ Remarks to the Associated Press in New York, April 20, 1915, PWW, 33: 41.

⁷⁹ Address to the Daughters of the American Revolution, October 11, 1915, PWW, 35: 51; Remarks to the National Press Club, May 15, 1916, PWW, 37: 49. On Wilson's tendency to postpone a response to a crisis, see May, War and American Isolationism, 429; for additional factors on Wilson's hesitation, see John Milton Cooper, Jr., The Vanity of Power: American Isolationism and the First World War, 1914-1917, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1969), 192-193, and Kendrick A. Clements, The Presidency of Woodrow Wilson, (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1992), 138-140. See also May, War and American Isolationism, 162, 169-170.

European intervention prompted confusion of national allegiance by reminding many citizens of their loyalty to their native country. Wilson described the solution:

So, the United States has again to work out by spiritual process a new union, when men shall not think of what divides them, but shall recall what unites them, when men shall not allow old loves to take the place of present allegiances; where men must, on the contrary, translate that very ardor of love of country of their birth into the ardor of love for the country of their adoption and the principles it represents.⁸⁰

Wilson ran in 1916 for re-election, and worried that a Republican victory would result in intervention in Europe. He characterized the loss of power by the Republicans in the 1912 elections as a practical and moral failure. The 1916 contest meant he could not get any work done until after the election. Other countries' reluctance to make decisions until after the election made the handling of foreign relations almost impossible.⁸¹

U.S. Government, Laws, and Parties

Wilson extended the basic information he shared with his audiences to other aspects of how the U.S. government and laws functioned. He defined the ideal government as one at the service of the modern world with no thought of profit for itself. According to Wilson, government was the expression of the group conscience. On this basis, the concept of self-determination in government logically formed the best government. He thought that the president and the people of the United States both embraced this notion, which distinguished the nation from all others. Believing the ability to engage in this kind of government had a basis in eschatological thought, Wilson asserted that the U.S.

⁸⁰ Memorial Day Address, May 30, 1916, PWW, 37: 125. Wilson viewed the Civil War as a prior working out of a new union.

⁸¹ Campaign Speech to Young Democrats at Shadow Lawn, September 30, 1916, PWW 38: 306-307; Campaign Address to Farmers at Shadow Lawn, October 21, 1916, PWW, 38: 506-507; Campaign Address at Shadow Lawn, October 7, 1916, PWW 38: 364; Campaign Address at Shadow Lawn, October 14, 1916, PWW, 38: 436.

government functioned primarily as a servant of the people. Extending this idea, he spoke of the U.S. government as the guarantor of human rights around the world. He described as servant-government as based on principled public opinion and articulated by implementation rather than expression of that opinion. Congress was the agent of this action. He reminded Congress that he did not advocate his personal opinion on issues. When asking Congress to repeal a section of the Panama Canal Act of August 24, 1912, he told the body, "I ask this [the repeal] of you in support of the foreign policy of the administration. I shall not know how to deal with other matters of even greater delicacy and nearer consequence if you do not grant it to me in ungrudging measure."⁸² Wilson made the situation clear to Congress; he set foreign policy, and they approved whatever he needed to accomplish his goal. This argument reinforced the idea that the agent of action, in this case Congress, needed to listen to him since he had access to the opinion of the people and with it the basis of national actions.⁸³

For Wilson, the Constitution gave form to the type of government required by popular opinion. He portrayed the United States as the champion of constitutional government. The sacred interests of such champions formed the basis of American duties. When Wilson spoke, he emphasized the nature of the relationship between the law as embodied in the U.S. Constitution and human nature and society. The focus of the nation was not its founding document, but human nature and the makeup of society. Based on this reasoning, when conflict between the two ensued, the U.S. Constitution changed, not

⁸² Address to Congress on Panama Canal Tolls, March 5, 1914, PWW, 29: 313.

⁸³ Remarks at a Dinner Honoring George Washington Goethals, March 3, 1914, PWW, 29, 307; Address to the American Electric Railway Association, January 29, 1915, PWW, 32: 156; Jackson Day Address in Indianapolis, January 8, 1915, PWW, 32: 39; Talk at Swarthmore College, October 25, 1913, PWW, 28: 441; Fourth of July Address, July 4, 1914, PWW, 30: 254; Address to a Joint Session of Congress, April, 19, 1916, PWW, 36: 510; Annual Message to Congress, December 8, 1914, PWW, 31: 420; Campaign Address in Buffalo, November 1, 1916, PWW, 38:585; Address to Congress on Panama Canal Tolls, March 5, 1914, PWW, 29: 312.

human nature or society. Wilson argued that law was subservient to life and not the reverse. Law did not exist in a vacuum, but interacted with society. He linked law and religious concepts with the relationship of the individual to the masses concerning moral issues. Moral judgment did not conform to the law, but law conformed to moral judgment. Wilson viewed this as consistent with his ideas about principles shaping beliefs that were to be transformed into actions. He suggested that lawyers, as agents of transformation, were guardians of the spirit of righteousness. Law could then guide society toward the divine in true Social Gospel fashion.⁸⁴

While the U.S. Constitution and law provided the guidelines for the functioning of the U.S. government, Wilson harbored reservations about the effect of parties on the smooth operation of the government. He acknowledged that the nation used political parties to accomplish its business of expressing national opinions. Political parties, not individuals, served as the mechanism for national accomplishments. Wilson portrayed himself as a party leader, who acted on party and not personal commands. However, Wilson thought that the collective aspects of human nature bound the nation together, not parties or interests. When evaluating the practical impact of political parties on the nation's foreign relations, Wilson generally reached a negative conclusion, as his comments a few days before the election of 1916 illustrate:

You will see, of course, that I am merely illustrating the future of the nation by mentioning some of the practical things that we have got to do and expressing to you my impatience for the talk that has got to last until next Tuesday to be over. I want all this irrelevant talk to end so that we can really begin again to accomplish something.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Annual Message to Congress, December 2, 1913, PWW, 29: 4; Draft of an Address to Congress, c. October 31, 1913, PWW, 28: 480; After-Dinner Talk at the Gridiron Club, December 9, 1916, PWW, 40:196; Remarks to the American Bar Association, October 20, 1914, PWW, 31: 186.

⁸⁵ Campaign Address in Buffalo, November 1, 1916, PWW, 38: 581, 587; Inaugural Address, March 4, 1913, PWW, 27: 148; News Report, January 10, 1917, PWW, 40: 427.

Religious Content

Wilson's religious beliefs shaped the content of his speeches. His own religious upbringing and adult practice, along with the Protestant Christian consensus of American culture at the time, provided common religious knowledge he drew upon to make various points.⁸⁶ He made extensive use of the Bible and references to God, along with specific links to foreign policy. Even the way in which he shaped the conclusion of his speeches reflected religious impact.

Wilson frequently mentioned Bible passages to illustrate a point, and to support his linking of Christian concepts and national beliefs and duties. In an address to the Pittsburgh YMCA in 1914, he alluded to an uncited scriptural reference to strengthen his argument of earthly actions of a positive moral character benefiting the eternal state of the individual. He argued to farmers that the first petition of the Lord's Prayer showed the national need for food for performance of the spiritual duties of the nation. Wilson did not limit his specific Biblical references to general principles. When speaking about policy foundations, he referred to a parable about sound and unsound foundations, with the clear implication that his policies had solid underpinnings and others did not. During the 1916 campaign, Wilson used the imagery of deception found in the account of the Old Testament patriarch Jacob as an illustration of the contrast of Republican and Democratic methods in regulation. He did not limit the use of the Bible in speeches to particular references; the Bible itself had specific influence on the country and world. The audience at Wilson's address to the celebration of the centennial of the American Bible Society heard him ascribe the unique status of the United States to the widespread

⁸⁶ For an example of this phenomena, see John Milton Cooper, Jr., Pivotal Decades: The United States, 1900-1920, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1990), 265-266.

illumination the Bible provided the people, and to the prevalence of the Bible in American society. He further identified the Bible as the common basis of ideals for mankind, and as the source of peace and understanding. Missionaries, whose job it was to spread the Bible around the world, seemed "...like the shuttles in a great loom that is weaving the spirits of men together."⁸⁷

Wilson also referred to God in his speeches. Addressing the Daughters of the American Revolution, he spoke of the creation of America based on principles previously confined to Great Britain, but now destined to spread to all humanity, the purpose for which God created the United States. Wilson used expressions such as "the bread of life," a phrase normally used in reference to Christian sacraments and as a deity reference, when speaking of that unique aspect of America of which the people partook and immigrants desired. He also used God as an example of nearly impossible action, as when he questioned the possibility of God transforming human nature overnight in reference to changing the opinions of those opposed to preparedness. Wilson informed his listeners of his belief that service to the country equaled service to God, and at the beginning of his first term he described the reforming spirit of the nation as similar to air coming out of the presence of God, a good, cleansing, moral spirit possibly of divine origin. His most common reference to God came through his multiple uses of the term "Providence." He attributed various forms of prosperity to Providence including the general outcome of the year of 1913, cited the role of the United States in the world as

⁸⁷ Address to the Pittsburgh YMCA, October 24, 1914, PWW, 31: 227; Campaign Address to Farmers at Shadow Lane, October 21, 1916, PWW, 38: 508 (Bible passage Matthew 6:11); Inaugural Address, March 4, 1913, PWW, 27: 149 (Bible passage Lamentations 4:1-6); Talk to the Gridiron Club, February 26, 1916, PWW, 36: 219 (Bible passage Matthew 7:24-27); Campaign Address to Young Democrats at Shadow Lawn, September 30, 1916, PWW, 38:308 (Bible passage Genesis 27); Remarks Celebrating the Centennial of the American Bible Society, May 7, 1916, PWW, 36:629-631.

one assigned by Providence, credited Providence with business reforms, and appealed to Providence as the primary factor in a possible Democratic victory in the 1916 Presidential election.⁸⁸

Although Wilson used the Bible and references to God to describe many aspects of his understanding of the nation and its affairs, his application of religious language to foreign policy in his speeches increased as the possibility of U.S. participation in the war in Europe grew larger. He claimed that the principles of Christianity constituted the heart and soul of the great bodies of opinion that sustained world affairs. He shaped his expressions of neutrality and peace with religious language and concepts. When he spoke of the healing of the nations, Wilson explained that the only way to find peace was in this healing, and the supreme plan of peace derived from one's relation to Jesus Christ. He told his listeners that liberty could not live in an atmosphere of war. The country should pursue peace out of both a desire for liberty and the recognition, "...that the whole destiny of mankind is moving along that path which that lonely figure of the Prince of Peace once tried to point out and which he once trod himself with bleeding feet."⁸⁹ The route to peace required the nation to make a contract, or covenant, with other nations after the war in Europe ended, because neutrality would be impossible given changes in the nature of war and international relations. If the country were to carry out the duty

⁸⁸ Address to the Daughters of the American Revolution, October 11, 1916, PWW, 35: 48; Address to the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, February 10, 1916, PWW, 36: 156; Remarks Upon Signing the Tariff Bill, October 3, 1913, PWW, 28: 352; Inaugural Address, March 4, 1913, PWW, 27: 151; Thanksgiving Proclamation, October 21, 1915, PWW, 35: 90; Thanksgiving Proclamation October 23, 1913, PWW 28: 424; Annual Message to Congress, December 7, 1915, PWW 35: 306; Luncheon Address to the Chamber of Commerce of Columbus, Ohio, December 10, 1915, PWW 35: 321; Campaign Address at Shadow Lawn, October 14, 1916, PWW 38: 438.

⁸⁹ Nonpartisan Address in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38: 542.

given it by God, then service required a covenant. His covenant idea, based on Presbyterian theology, found ultimate expression in the League of Nations.⁹⁰

Wilson portrayed the task of Christianity as serving the world by spreading the Gospel. As part of his function as the country's leader, he was leading the country in the direction of God. He claimed Christians were evangelizing to unite the world: "We are trying in the spread of the Gospel to make all the nations of the world of one mind, of one enlightenment, of one motive, driven through every effort of their lives by one devotion and one allegiance. Can you conceive of a greater enterprise than that?"⁹¹ Evil was present in much of the world, and Wilson and those who shared his views were purging the evil so that good could transform the world unhindered. Evil and sinister influences tinged all forces derived from the world. Only the church was pure, and Wilson envisioned Christian principles destroying the evil in the world. He cited as an illustration of progress in eliminating evil the existence of treaties that required a time interval to pass before troubled nations took action.⁹²

Foundational Principles

To gain support for the foreign policy ideology and actions, Wilson also attempted to identify and elucidate the underlying principles his audiences needed to hear. The ways and means by which countries put their guiding beliefs into action could change and foster dispute, Wilson asserted, but principles were not debatable. Given the immutable

⁹⁰ Address to the Annual Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, March 25, 1915, PWW, 32: 430; Remarks to Potomac Presbytery, April 21, 1915, PWW, 33: 49; Nonpartisan Address in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38: 541-542; Address to the Federal Council of Churches in Columbus, December 10, 1915, PWW, 35: 334-335; Address on Latin American Policy in Mobile, Alabama, October 27, 1913; PWW 28: 452.

⁹¹ Remarks Celebrating the Centennial of the American Bible Society, May 7, 1916, PWW, 36: 630.

⁹² Address to the Pittsburgh YMCA, October 24, 1914, PWW, 31: 226; After-Dinner Remarks, December 2, 1916, PWW, 40: 120.

nature of these concepts, Wilson believed that in complex situations following principles was the safest course. This method provided a solid foundation from which all decision-making flowed. Due to this perspective, he expressed the need for national affairs and policy to always rest on principle, not on the expediency of the moment.⁹³

Since principles formed the basis for U.S. policy and action, Wilson set out several fundamental concepts that shaped the ideals upon which he based administration positions. The core of U.S. beliefs included the importance of national sovereignty in choosing rulers. As he explained, this meant the governed chose the rulers without outside coercion. This independence extended to territorial integrity as well. Those who chose their own government also had the right to freedom from aggression, freedom from the abuse of personal liberties, and freedom from other nations disturbing the peace.⁹⁴

Continuing to define fundamental principles for his listeners, Wilson described Americans as dedicated and devoted to the love of justice, righteousness, and human liberty. He applied this understanding to the country and defined the national perspective as Americanism, which was a dedication to the ideas of drawing other country's interests into line with American interests and pursuing common good will. This unique national viewpoint also embodied a devotion to justice and to liberty of all men. The government that fostered such principles ruled by democracy, which Wilson considered antithetical to holding to class interests. He described those promoting class differences as the enemies of mankind. Democracy also held a deep spiritual meaning for Wilson: "Democracy isn't a form of government...It is an insight into the essential relationship of men to each

⁹³ Remarks to the Gridiron Club, December 11, 1915, PWW, 35: 341; Flag Day Address, June 14, 1915, PWW, 33: 393; Talk to the Gridiron Club, February 26, 1916, PWW, 36: 219.

⁹⁴ Address in Washington to the League to Enforce Peace, May 27, 1916, PWW, 37: 115.

other.”⁹⁵ Wilson identified three key principles. First, every American’s duty was to exalt the national conscience by purifying their individual motives and exhibiting devotion to the country. Second, the country should be ready to vindicate its principles at any cost. Third, a central principle of American life held that small bodies of persons should not be trusted to determine the policy and development of the nation. Upon initial examination, this third principle appeared to contradict Wilson’s methods of conducting government. He regularly made most decisions for the nation by himself or based on input from a small select group of advisors. The resolution to this inconsistency lay in Wilson’s belief that he knew and acted on the opinion of the country, thereby avoiding governance by small group with its own agenda and no interest in the national opinion.⁹⁶

Wilson promoted additional important principles: patriotism, loyalty, and American duty. He portrayed patriotism as a willingness to pursue the right things to the point of self-sacrifice if needed, even if the world opposed the effort. These ideals had guided the American Revolution, which had not been the completion of a break with Great Britain, but a beginning of a change in the world. Wilson’s generation had the opportunity to bring to completion the sharing of this active principle of conduct with the world. Patriotism could redeem a nation and regenerate the world.⁹⁷

Loyalty, especially loyalty to the flag, was the first test of acceptance in evaluating a person. Wilson suggested the basis for loyalty was spiritual, not material. “It [the loyal

⁹⁵ After-Dinner Talk to the Gridiron Club, December 9, 1916, PWW, 40: 195.

⁹⁶ Remarks to the Associated Press in New York, April 20, 1915, PWW, 33: 41; Nonpartisan Address in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38: 542; Remarks to the Associated Advertising Clubs, June 29, 1916, PWW, 37: 326.

⁹⁷ Fourth of July Address, July, 4, 1914, PWW, 30: 253; Address to the Daughters of the American Revolution, October 11, 1915, PWW, 35: 47; Address to the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, February 10, 1916, PWW, 36: 159.

act of honoring a flag] is to be achieved as we think, as we purpose, as we believe.”⁹⁸ At the heart of such loyalty lay self-sacrifice. He presented this perspective as an absolute principle. Willingness to sacrifice all self-interest, and life itself if necessary, upon the call of the country constituted true loyalty.⁹⁹

Wilson defined the duty of a nation as expressing its own principles in the international realm from the start and rejecting all rival ideals. “It is our duty and our privilege to be like the country we represent and speaking no word of malice, no word of criticism, even, stand shoulder to shoulder to lift the burden of mankind in the future and show the paths of freedom to all the world.”¹⁰⁰ On other occasions he declared that America’s duty to the world depended on how it performed its duty to itself. If a nation were regularly true to its principles of action, then it would know how to proceed when the time for action arrived. Wilson pleaded with people to be willing to sacrifice all for peace. The only exception was the sense of humanity and justice that defined America. As the war loomed larger, he encouraged the masses that their duty to America required the presentation of a unified front to the foreign nations of the world.¹⁰¹

Wilson spoke of the country’s duty to the world in part because he believed American principles were the world’s principles. In his “Peace Without Victory” speech on January 22, 1917, he argued that American principles and policies belonged to mankind, and therefore must prevail. This was not the first time Wilson had professed this idea publicly. In his 1913 annual message to Congress, he described the interests of the

⁹⁸ Flag Day Address, June 14, 1916, *PWW*, 37: 224.

⁹⁹ Address on the American Spirit, July 13, 1916, *PWW*, 37: 417.

¹⁰⁰ Memorial Address, June 4, 1914, *PWW*, 30: 142.

¹⁰¹ Address to the Daughters of the American Revolution, October 11, 1915, *PWW*, 35: 49; Remarks from a Rear Platform in Richmond, Indiana, January 8, 1915, *PWW*, 32: 29; Talk to the Gridiron Club, February 26, 1916, *PWW*, 36: 220; Campaign Address in Buffalo, November 1, 1916, *PWW*, 38: 582.

country and the world as co-incident. As he told one audience, the United States stood for concepts that the entire world sought:

We want no nation's property. We wish to question no nation's honor. We wish to stand selfishly in the way of the development of no nation. We want nothing that we cannot get by our own legitimate enterprise and by the inspiration of our own example. And, standing for these things, it is not pretension on our part to say that we are privileged to stand for what every nation would wish to stand for, and speak for those things which all humanity must desire.¹⁰²

He believed that such principles would easily cross national boundaries because at the deepest levels all the world's people had an instinctive friendship for one another.

Because the principles of men who articulated public opinion dominated the world at the time of his presidency, he hoped for a great rush of Christian principles into strongholds of evil. Fighting evil with light made possible raising up the world up to American ideals for the first time.¹⁰³

Wilson emphasized the importance of passing on American principles because he believed that only America could save the world. He told an audience on July 4, 1914, of his dream of the United States serving as a source of worldwide moral uplift. He explained that America intended from the first to be the servant of mankind. The world needed a country to show the way to justice, freedom, and liberty, and the United States had come in to existence for just that reason. Wilson claimed America's unique ethnic makeup made the nation a prophetic sample of mankind that had never before existed. America's unique makeup contributed to the exceptional nature of the country and its endeavors, led to universal acceptance of U.S. moral judgments of mankind, and increased U.S. credibility with international community. At a dinner to honor engineer

¹⁰² Remarks at a Luncheon in New York, May 17, 1915, PWW, 33: 210.

¹⁰³ Address to the Senate, January 22, 1917, PWW, 40: 539; Annual Message to Congress, December 2, 1913, PWW, 29: 4; Address to the Business Men's League of St. Louis, February 3, 1916, PWW, 36: 111; Address to the Pittsburgh YMCA, October 24, 1914, PWW, 31:225.

George W. Goethals, Wilson remarked, “The United States has made the world very uncomfortable, but it has at least done so by the exercise of extraordinary dynamic qualities. It is not one of the static nations of the world.”¹⁰⁴ He thought America’s pursuit of a new path distinguished it from all other countries. In standing apart and standing for peace, the United States adopted a singular position. As he spoke to different groups, Wilson described the U.S. role as lighting the way for other countries down the path toward democracy. Nations would follow due to America’s moral authority, which grew even if Americans were unaware of any increase in their influence.¹⁰⁵

Wilson often referred to the spirit of America. He defined it for one group as an absolute disinterestedness, focused on spiritual and material results, rather than self-interest. The term “spirit” in this definition reflected the opinion or viewpoint of America, and described a focus on the non-material aspects of existence. For Wilson the expression carried Christian overtones. Based on the possession of a similar spirit, a foreign group could earn an official relationship with the U.S. government. He viewed the spirit of America as one of peace, but one that self-consciously knew its mission and desired to command the respect of the world. Elsewhere, he equated the spirit of American with a guiding moral force. He suggested to an audience of farmers that the country’s distinguishing feature was spiritual, which he described as an attitude of concern for the general welfare of all humanity, not just Americans. Wilson also

¹⁰⁴ Remarks at a Dinner Honoring George Washington Goethals, March 3, 1914; PWW, 29: 306.

¹⁰⁵ Fourth of July Address, July 4, 1914, PWW, 30: 254; Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy, June 13, 1916, PWW, 37: 216; Jackson Day Address in Indianapolis, January 8, 1915, PWW, 32: 41; Address in Philadelphia to Newly Naturalized Citizens, May 10, 1915, PWW, 33: 150; Address in Indianapolis, October 12, 1916, PWW, 38: 416; Address in Charlotte, North Carolina, May 20, 1916, PWW, 37: 82; Address on the American Spirit, July 13, 1916, PWW, 37: 415; Address to the Daughters of the American Revolution, October 11, 1915, PWW, 35: 48-49; Commencement Address, June 5, 1914, PWW, 30: 147; Remarks to the National Press Club, May 15, 1916, PWW, 37: 48.

expressed the idea of the spirit of America as a combination of strength, courage, and force of will: “We love that quiet, self-respecting, unconquerable spirit which doesn’t strike until it is necessary to strike, and then strikes to conquer.”¹⁰⁶ However he defined it, Wilson spoke frequently to his audiences of the spirit of America. He regularly assumed his audience understood what he meant and shared his assessment.¹⁰⁷

One of the most important principles Wilson addressed in his speeches was peace, particularly as it related to the war in Europe. Generally, he preferred restraint in the language he and others used in talking about peace, so that those who espoused a more moderate position between proponents of peace and proponents of war would not be alienated from the pro-peace position. True to his methodology, he proposed peace in terms of principles rather than recommending specific programs. Wilson defined peace as more than not fighting. He told his listeners that peace was the healing and elevating influence in the world. Force accomplished no permanent solutions. Only the opinion of mankind could achieve any lasting peace by focusing on the issues after any use of force had ended. According to Wilson, one reason Americans desired peace was “...they love peace and have nothing to do with the present quarrel [war in Europe].”¹⁰⁸ He suggested the reasons for the war were so obscure and hidden in foreign national agendas that Americans did not understand why the combatants fought. It seemed to the people of the United States that those in the war were so engulfed in conflict they appeared deranged. Why then, Wilson posited, would anyone want anything to do with madness? The task of

¹⁰⁶ Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy, June 13, 1916, PWW, 37: 217.

¹⁰⁷ Remarks to the American Red Cross Society, December 9, 1914, PWW, 31: 430; Campaign Address to Farmers at Shadow Lawn, October 21, 1916, PWW, 38: 508; Remarks to the Naval Consulting Board, October 6, 1915, PWW, 35: 29; Address to the Daughters of the American Revolution, October 11, 1915, PWW, 35: 51.

¹⁰⁸ Remarks to the National Press Club, May 15, 1916, PWW, 37: 48.

remaining cool and levelheaded in the midst of such difficulties fell to the United States. If no country kept the peace going during a time of war, then there would be no source of impartial judgment when the war ended.¹⁰⁹

Lasting world peace depended on several principles, according to Wilson. Other countries needed to recognize the necessity of government decided by popular choice. Without this concept, any peace would lack the support of the people and fail. By late 1914, Wilson believed that any peace settlement should involve an assessment of responsibility and consequences for wrongs. When the war ended, "...the nations of Europe will assemble to determine a settlement. Where wrongs have been committed, their consequences and the relative responsibility involved will be assessed."¹¹⁰ He told the people that the job of the United States was not to judge those involved in the war and their reasons for fighting. Americans needed to focus on assisting to reconstruct the peace once the war ended. He did not explain exactly how it was possible to assess responsibility and assign consequences without judging those involved.¹¹¹

For all his talk of principles and ideals, Wilson fully intended action to be the eventual outcome of U.S. policy. However, he articulated his expressions of the need for action in terms of principles. He explained that the rightness of America's ideals made the country too proud to fight. Past international actions demonstrated the nation's ideals to those foreign countries paying attention. According to Wilson, American involvement in the Spanish-Cuban-American War evidenced a willingness to fight for ideals. The

¹⁰⁹ Remarks to the Maryland League for National Defense, January 25, 1917, PWW, 41: 10; Memorandum of Louis Paul Lochner of an Interview with President Wilson, February 1, 1917, PWW 41: 91; Address in Philadelphia to Newly Naturalized Citizens, May 10, 1915, PWW, 33: 149; Remarks to the New York Press Club, June 30, 1916, PWW, 37: 334; Remarks to the National Press Club, May 15, 1916, PWW, 37: 48, 50.

¹¹⁰ Remarks to the Belgian Commissioners, September 16, 1914, PWW, 31: 34.

¹¹¹ Address to the Senate, January 22, 1917, PWW, 40: 537; Remarks to the Associated Press in New York, April 20, 1915, PWW, 33: 38.

United States did not want to fight unless national ideals were threatened. As involvement in the war in Europe became more likely, Wilson outlined for his audiences the criteria under which U.S. action would become necessary, criteria expressed as principles. He asserted that Americans wanted to know what it was they would be fighting for if they had to fight, because they were only willing to fight for the rights of mankind. Implicit in such a statement was the idea that if an action could be construed to violate the principle of the rights of mankind, then that action would require the American people to fight. Wilson did not deny that the United States was a powerful nation with great potential for the use of force. He proposed that the country desired to use its force for ideal objectives, eschewing self-aggrandizement. Assuming no American involvement, he suggested that when the war in Europe ended, the United States needed to stand with a single, united purpose. While the nation was powerful and could crush foreign countries, it preferred to serve the other nations. Wilson thus established that America would fight to defend its principles, but those principles drove the nation to act in service and peace. He believed that in such an environment, ideals were contagious, and America had a special duty to share those ideals.¹¹²

Wilson described one way the United States could convey to foreign nations what the country stood for, what its ideals were, at a lunch in New York in 1915. He suggested that the Navy could provide non-Americans with a small degree of vision of what America stood for, because the Navy was not a symbol of aggression. It was evidence of

¹¹² Remarks to the Associated Advertising Clubs, June 29, 1916, PWW, 37: 325; Thanksgiving Proclamation, October 21, 1915, PWW, 35: 90; Campaign Address in Buffalo, November 1, 1916, PWW, 38: 588; Campaign Address at Shadow Lawn, October 14, 1916, PWW, 38: 436; Address on the American Spirit, July 13, 1916, PWW, 37: 417; Address in Indianapolis, October 12, 1916, PWW, 38: 415; Nonpartisan Address in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38: 539; Address in Philadelphia to Newly Naturalized Citizens, May 10, 1915, PWW, 33: 149; Address to the Pittsburgh YMCA, October 24, 1914, PWW, 31: 222.

the moral principle that the country loved, a principle that was the only reason for the United States to contend with another country. Elsewhere Wilson told his audience, “America must hereafter be ready as a member of the family of nations to exert her whole force, moral and physical, to the assertion of those rights [fundamental rights of humanity] throughout the round globe.”¹¹³ The nation needed to remember that only a unified spirit would enable America to play its role and occupy its international place, and that the people of the United States did not habitually reject those who had rendered them service. Guiding principles, which America had never lost sight of, would help shape the country’s actions. These included justifying postwar property rights by making claims for damages, and holding to account any who had violated national sovereignty or killed innocent people.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

As Wilson gave various speeches, he communicated to his listeners many of the underlying principles and roles that defined the specifics of his foreign policy thought and decisions. He explained his distrust of newspaper opinions, the invigoration he received from making speeches and getting to know those to whom he spoke, so that his audience would understand why he was making a particular speech. He sought simultaneously to educate an audience and learn from them. Audiences heard of his efforts to interpret the spirit of an occasion, or to summarize or highlight the important ideas expressed. He assured the people that he valued their counsel and claimed he spoke

¹¹³ Remarks at a Luncheon in New York, May 17, 1915, PWW, 33: 209-211; Luncheon Address to Women in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38: 532.

¹¹⁴ Speech in Long Branch, New Jersey Accepting the Presidential Nomination, September 2, 1916. PWW, 38: 127, 132; Remarks at a Reception in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38: 525.

to them in order to hear their advice; in doing so they could exchange opinions, and determine what action needed to be taken.

Wilson's claims conflicted with his other statements that he knew the majority's views and desired only expression of the silent consensus. If he knew what the public thought, then why did he need their counsel? The method of learning from a group by giving that group a speech also appears questionable. How can one hear counsel if those giving it do not speak and only the one needing input talks? Issues of consistency aside, Wilson asserted that he represented the silent majority, giving voice to their desires and preferences. Wilson stressed his impartiality and efforts to represent the majority, even in the face of both domestic and foreign impediments. He described his need for public support and his sympathy with the common man, while explaining the benefits and hindrances of the functioning of the U.S. government in carrying out any action on the part of the people. He based the decisions of his presidency on the best information he could obtain, without rushing to judgment.

Frequent use of religious examples and imagery helped Wilson connect with his audience, and showed the foundations of his ideology. He used the Bible as both illustration and explanation of the nation's preferences and actions. Both God and Providence received credit for much of the benefits the country enjoyed. He incorporated religious language into discussions of foreign policy. By closely linking Christianity and America, Wilson sought to guide the world to physical and spiritual fulfillment.

Wilson identified foundational principles and explained how they defined both policy rationales and decisions. He stressed the importance of several concepts such as national sovereignty, patriotism, loyalty, duty, the spirit of America, and peace. He spoke of

America's desire for good will and peace with all nations. He explained how American principles were world principles, and how those principles could save the world, but only if instituted as he had stipulated. Wilson explained that previous U.S. foreign relations provided proof of America's good intentions. He conveyed all these concepts in his speeches for two reasons. First, he wanted his audience to benefit from what they heard, and become better citizens and servants. Second, he laid the necessary groundwork for more specific points in his speeches.

CHAPTER 3

PRINCIPLES OF FOREIGN POLICY IN PUBLIC SPEECHES

As Woodrow Wilson proceeded through his first term, and that short portion of his second term before American entry into World War I, his speeches increasingly focused on international concerns. From early in his first term he expressed principles of foreign relations that changed little as world events unfolded. Wilson addressed several key concepts concerning foreign policy in general and the situation in Europe in particular. When the war began in Europe, he stressed the necessity of American neutrality and pursuit of peace. He later spoke about the role of business and industry in U.S. foreign relations, and the need for what would become the League of Nations. His most significant speaking tour before the war dealt with the issue of preparedness, where all the underlying principles and foreign policy concepts came together in an attempt to sway the nation to his way of thinking. He engaged in three major speeches after the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare by the Central Powers, the last of which asked Congress for a declaration of war. Congress granted the request, and Wilson's prewar speeches came to an end.

Foreign Policy Principles - General

In his general description of U.S. foreign policy, Wilson identified several guiding principles. According to him, these clear and consistent principles had been theoretical

before his presidency; once in office, he practiced them. Early in his first term, he told an audience that the United States was committed to pursuing an ideal foreign policy, not governed by a pragmatic route because political and moral questions were involved. Speaking of Latin American relations, he said: “We dare not turn from the principle that morality, and not expediency, is the thing that must guide us, and that we will never condone iniquity because it is more convenient to do so.”¹¹⁵ Wilson also explained that orderly government, based on the consent of the governed, formed a basis for U.S. relations.¹¹⁶

Wilson further argued that American honor and obligations to world peace formed the basis for resolving controversies with other countries. Applying such a standard remained difficult because he found spiritual differences with other nations made predicting their responses complicated, unlike domestic issues where he dealt with the American spirit. Wilson emphasized in his speeches that deciding what to do with the power the United States possessed was much more important than merely possessing it. The reforms and actions America took for justice and humanity constituted the down payment of U.S. spirit and purpose in world affairs.¹¹⁷

Wilson argued that America’s international role was spiritual, and foreign countries recognized the superiority of U.S. methods due to their spiritual nature. His reliance on principles, even to the point of using ideals to describe policies, so governed Wilson’s

¹¹⁵ Address on Latin American Policy in Mobile, Alabama, October 27, 1913, PWW, 28: 452.

¹¹⁶ Speech in Long Branch, New Jersey Accepting the Presidential Nomination, September 2, 1916, PWW 38: 132, 134; Draft of a Circular Note to the Powers, November 7,8,10, 1913, PWW, 28: 503; Statement on Relations with Latin America, March 12, 1913, PWW 27: 172. As much as historian Arthur S. Link attempted to portray Wilson as a “higher realist,” Wilson’s own words show him to be an idealist, not a realist in any form. See Link, The Higher Realism, 127-139.

¹¹⁷ Annual Message to Congress, December 2, 1913, PWW, 29: 4; Remarks to the National Press Club, May 15, 1916, PWW, 37: 47; Address in Charlotte, North Carolina, May 20, 1916, PWW, 37: 80; WW to Vance Criswell McCormick Enclosure Address for Wilson Day, October 17, 1916, PWW, 38: 465.

methods that as late as October 1916 he told an audience that America had not yet decided or formulated foreign policy regarding the country's world role. Service, not contention with men, had to characterize any mission the country embarked on, according to Wilson. This approach governed U.S. policy until other countries no longer permitted such action. The key to the formation of true constitutional liberty in other countries was for the United States to help other nations without regard for U.S. national interests. Once established, such governments would seek closer, stronger ties with America. He assumed that the American public supported such a development because the founders had created the nation to realize a true constitutional government.¹¹⁸

Wilson informed his audience that America's role in the world had changed. The war in Europe transformed the world so as to make neutrality and lack of involvement after the war impossible. The changing times required the United States to be involved in international politics because America had become a world power. The United States as a major international player could no longer hold to a small, cautious, narrow view of itself or its involvement in foreign affairs. Wilson suggested that Americans needed to think of the use of the U.S. military as a service to the world: "...that you have the point of view of America with regard to her navy and her army; that she is using them as the instruments of civilization, not as the instruments of aggression."¹¹⁹ Using American power and influence harshly was not an option. While the country desired to avoid the use of oppressive means, he argued that circumstances could occur which required the use of violence to force a country to listen to America. Without force, the moral

¹¹⁸ Luncheon Address to the Chamber of Commerce of Columbus, Ohio, December 10, 1915, PWW, 35: 327; Address in Omaha, October 5, 1916, PWW, 38: 347; Remarks at Union Station in Toledo, Ohio, July 10, 1916, PWW, 37: 396; Address on Latin American Policy in Mobile, Alabama, October 27, 1913, PWW, 28: 450-451.

¹¹⁹ Commencement Address, June 5, 1914, PWW, 30: 146.

influence of the United States could be lost, along with any ability to exercise that influence to aid foreign nations.¹²⁰

Part of America's role lay in its uniqueness. Wilson often told audiences of the melting pot that made up the U.S. population. America's blending of racial stocks created a unique status for the nation, and gave it unmatched authority to work for peace with multiple countries. Furthermore, unlike European nations, the United States had no national momentum, or historical inertia, that drove the country down one particular direction or path. Wilson claimed that these two characteristics, along with the absence of U.S. ambition for power or colonies, put America in a unique position to serve the nations of the world. When Wilson gave his final campaign address in the 1916 presidential campaign, he suggested that his goal for America, the idea of a country pursuing unselfish service in foreign relations, was unprecedented in history, and within the nation's grasp.¹²¹

Wilson used principles and examples from non-European U.S. foreign relations to clarify some general concepts about U.S. foreign policy. He referred to U.S. relations with the Western Hemisphere, informing his audience that cultivating good relations with that area was one of his chief foreign policy goals. Central and South America were just beginning to trust and believe in the United States, and he presented true Pan-Americanism as a cooperative effort of nations united in purpose and spirit. Wilson

¹²⁰ WW to Vance Criswell McCormick Enclosure Address for Wilson Day, October 17, 1916, PWW, 38: 463; Campaign Address in Buffalo, November 1, 1916, PWW, 38: 589; Campaign Address to Farmers at Shadow Lawn, October 21, 1916, PWW, 38: 509; Speech in Long Branch, New Jersey Accepting the Presidential Nomination, September 2, 1916, PWW, 38: 138; Remarks to the National Press Club, May 15, 1916, PWW, 37: 48; Fourth of July Address, July 4, 1914, PWW, 30: 251.

¹²¹ Remarks to the Associated Press in New York, April 20, 1915, PWW, 33: 39; Address in Charlotte, North Carolina, May 20, 1916, PWW, 37: 81; Nonpartisan Address in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38: 537; Address in Philadelphia to Newly Naturalized Citizens, May 10, 1915, PWW, 33: 147; Final Campaign Address, November 4, 1916, PWW 38: 614.

proposed several elements to keep hemispheric peace. These included guarantees of territorial integrity and resolution of disputes by impartial investigation and arbitration. Early in his presidency, he asserted the need for a western hemisphere devoted to the concept of governments shaped by the consent of the governed.¹²²

Wilson used the Monroe Doctrine to link the foreign policy concepts and principles of the western hemisphere to the European situation. American authority was the basis for the Doctrine and the protection of the western hemisphere from European encroachments. Wilson explained that application of this policy made the United States spiritual partners with other hemisphere nations. He informed the Senate on January 22, 1917 how he wanted to apply the Monroe Doctrine:

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 no nation should seek to extend its polity over any other nation or people, but that every people should be left free to determine its own polity, its own way of development, unhindered, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful.¹²³

Wilson argued that every forward-looking person worldwide agreed with these principles. He described these ideals as the desire of nations. Only America possessed these values; therefore, only America could bring them to the world.¹²⁴

Despite espousing what some at the time, and many since, called imperialistic principles for American foreign policy, Wilson denied such labels. He contended that U.S. policies and possessions differed in significant ways from European empires. One of the fundamental differences, according to Wilson, derived from God's providential

¹²² Statement on Relations with Latin America, March 12, 1913, PWW, 27: 172; Address in Baltimore to the Grain Dealers' National Association, September 25, 1916, PWW, 38: 268; Annual Message on the State of the Union, December 7, 1915, PWW, 35: 296; Address to the Pan American Scientific Congress, January 6, 1916, PWW, 35: 445; Talk at Swarthmore College, October 25, 1913, PWW, 28: 441.

¹²³ Address to the Senate, January 22, 1917, PWW, 40: 539.

¹²⁴ Annual Message on the State of the Union, December 7, 1915, PWW, 35: 295; Address to the Pan American Scientific Congress, January 6, 1916, PWW, 35: 444; Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy, June 13, 1916, PWW, 37: 316.

care for America. North America had been kept unused and free from civilization, reserved for a peaceful people who loved liberty and the rights of men above all else. Following fellow Johns Hopkins alumnus Frederick Jackson Turner, Wilson explained that the continental frontier had ended, and the Spanish-Cuban-American War had expanded the American frontier, thrusting the United States into the international arena. He reminded audiences that the United States desired no further possessions, conquests, or territories. By contrast, the European powers wanted to expand their holdings, which provided one more example of the difference between American and European imperialism. The unique feature of American imperialism was one of willingness to help and not harm; he found it inconceivable that America could take away anything from another country. In short, U.S. control sprang from benign motives and produced beneficial results¹²⁵

For Wilson, America's territorial possessions served to exhibit the earnest desire of the United States to serve others and extend the benefits of American principles and ideals. As trustees of foreign lands such as Puerto Rico and the Philippines, he thought that America could not act without regard for the indigenous population. The United States was to serve Puerto Rico, with the idea of one day withdrawing from the territory entirely. The Filipinos may have doubted U.S. sincerity, but Wilson believed bills he had signed concerning the Philippines showed clearly the intent of the United States to support eventual self-rule. Wilson suggested that the single biggest obstacle to peaceful

¹²⁵ Address in Omaha, October 5, 1916, *PWW*, 38: 345; Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy, June 13, 1916, *PWW*, 37: 214; Remarks at a Reception in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, *PWW*, 38: 525; A Luncheon Address to the Chamber of Commerce of Columbus, Ohio, December 10, 1915, *PWW*, 35:327; Memorial Day Address, May 30, 1916, *PWW*, 37: 126; Nonpartisan Address in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, *PWW*, 38: 538; Mulder, *Preparation*, 121,135. For a fascinating examination of U.S.-Indian relations under a foreign relations rubric, along with a comparison of American and British imperial methods, see James O. Gump, *The Dust Rose Like Smoke: The Subjugation of the Zulu and the Sioux*, (Lincoln, NE: The University of Nebraska Press, 1994, First Bison Books printing, 1996).

relations with other countries was their incredulity at American statements of sincere unselfishness in matters pertaining to territorial possessions. "But, my friends, the world does not understand that yet. It has got to have a few more demonstrations, like the demonstration in Cuba. It has got to have a few more vindications of the American name."¹²⁶

Neutrality

With the initiation of the war in Europe, Wilson appealed to Americans to remain rigorously neutral. He suggested that only Americans could determine the response of Americans to the war, but all who loved America would embrace neutrality. The people needed to be neutral in thought and deed, lest the opportunity for the United States to mediate a peace be lost. Wilson described neutrality as sympathy for mankind, a fairness, good will, and impartiality of spirit and judgment. Therefore, supporting one side or the other violated America's duty. Calling the war a disaster the country should desire to avoid, he stressed the idea that the United States had no part or interest in policies that appeared to have prompted the war.¹²⁷

While Wilson portrayed neutrality as sympathy for mankind, he acknowledged the presence of a self-serving element. In addition to altruistic motives, he supported neutrality for how it could profit the country:

But I am interested in neutrality because there is something so much greater to do than fight: there is a distinction waiting for this nation that no nation has ever yet got. That is the distinction of absolute self-control and self-mastery...the self-mastered man who watches you with calm eye

¹²⁶ Address on Preparedness in Topeka, February 2, 1916, PWW, 36: 95.

¹²⁷ Appeal to the American People, August 18, 1914, PWW, 30: 293-294; Remarks to the Associated Press in New York, April 20, 1915, PWW, 33: 38; Annual Message on the State of the Union, December 7, 1915, PWW, 35: 294.

and comes in only when you have carried the thing so far that you must be disposed of...that is the man you respect...Now, I covet for America this splendid courage of reserve moral force.¹²⁸

He presented neutrality as enabling the United States to achieve a moral level of respect. This respect empowered the country to serve other nations by forging peace, which allowed the formation of constitutional, republican governments that moved nations and the world closer to God. He emphasized the special role America had to play, thinking knowledge of this role prompted support for neutrality. Speaking of neutrality as a general policy, Wilson stressed the impartiality of any U.S. action. The country had no part in the war, and routinely avoided such conflicts. According to Wilson, the United States had a duty to prevent the expansion of conflict and needed to save its strength, "...for the anxious and difficult days of restoration and healing which must follow, when peace will have to build its house anew."¹²⁹ He proposed that the solution to the war was a peace based on a society of nations where only the violation of the rights of man deserved violent response. He claimed that Europe was beginning to understand that America was saving itself to participate in an organization for peace.¹³⁰

When he focused on specific policy efforts, such as relief services or arms sales, audiences heard that neutrality governed all relations. Arms sales were an appropriate and even necessary action for a neutral country to take. According to Wilson, if neutrals did not sell arms, then one side could use stockpiled weapons or peacetime munitions manufacturing gains to achieve an advantage. This situation could lead to the spread of

¹²⁸ Remarks to the Associated Press in New York, April 20, 1915, PWW, 33: 40.

¹²⁹ Speech in Long Branch, New Jersey Accepting the Presidential Nomination, September 2, 1916, PWW, 38: 132

¹³⁰ Campaign Address at Shadow Lawn, October 14, 1916, PWW, 38: 437; Address in Omaha, October 5, 1916, PWW, 38: 347; Luncheon Address to Women in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38: 531.

militarism, which he opposed. Wilson argued that the circumstances forced him to approve the sales of arms to both sides.¹³¹

Foreign Policy Principles – Europe

Shortly after the war began, Wilson started outlining a general foreign policy for Europe. When he spoke to Congress in 1914, he pointed out that Europe would soon need the assistance of the United States, in a manufacturing and commercial sense. America was not ready to mobilize its resources to aid Europe; therefore, the solution was to focus on America first, so that Europe could be aided when the need arose.¹³²

Assistance for either side of the European conflict required principles and ideals to guide decision-making. Wilson explained to audiences that the roots of the war were obscure. He claimed America had to know why it was fighting, or the country would not fight. Only the rights of mankind, not territory or national ambition, satisfied American principles. No one knew what had started the war, according to Wilson, which complicated the situation. Part of the problem was that Europeans carried out foreign relations in secret, while Americans worked in the open. Both the Europeans in war and the Americans in peace were grappling with different national standards, traditions, and political systems. Wilson told his listeners that the war in Europe was a process by which national elements were moving from conflict to cooperation by God's Providence, and implied that this war was the final one in the process.¹³³

¹³¹ Address on Latin American Policy in Mobile, AL, October 27, 1913, PWW, 28: 452; To the American People, May 28, 1915, PWW, 33: 275; WW to Robert Lansing Enclosure, August 5, 1915, PWW, 34: 96;

¹³² Annual Message to Congress, December 8, 1914, PWW, 31: 415-416; Remarks to the Associated Press in New York, April 20, 1915, PWW 33: 38.

¹³³ Address in Omaha, October 5, 1916, PWW, 38: 347; Luncheon Address to Women in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38: 531; Nonpartisan Address in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38: 538; Address in Charlotte, North Carolina, May 20, 1916, PWW, 37: 81-82.

Peace and the League of Nations

Before the beginning of war in Europe, Wilson presented America as a nation on the front lines of the pursuit of peace through negotiations. Once the war began, he told the country in a Thanksgiving proclamation that the nation had enjoyed an honorable peace with those at war, and understood more deeply the benefits of peace. The United States was at peace with all because the country was the champion of peace. He was a persistent friend of peace, and only unmistakable necessity would lead him to change his position. Wilson spoke of peace as more of a test of whether a nation knew how to conduct its foreign relations than a test of patience.¹³⁴

Wilson made a major effort for a peaceful resolution of the war before American involvement through his peace note of December 18, 1916. When he explained what prompted this measure, he revealed that he feared civilization would suffer permanent damage if he failed to act. In order to pursue peace, the neutral nations needed specific information from the combatants concerning acceptable conditions to end the war. Wilson claimed he was not offering to mediate again as he had before the war in 1913 and 1914, and after the war began in 1914. "Let me say, in order that there may be no danger of any misunderstanding, that I am not renewing or seeking to press my offer of mediation made at the outset of the war."¹³⁵ His note's goal was to assist the warring parties by asking for definite criteria for peace, and an agreement to form a league of nations after the war. As he related to one audience, he thought the American people wanted the U.S. government to determine the immediate interests of the belligerents and support the formation of an association to guarantee free trade, territory, and political

¹³⁴ Annual Message to Congress, December 2, 1913, PWW, 29: 3; Thanksgiving Proclamation, October 28, 1914, PWW, 31: 241; Remarks at Union Station in Toledo, Ohio, July, 10, 1916, PWW, 37: 396.

¹³⁵ Draft of a Peace Note, November 25, 1916, PWW, 40: 73.

rights. In his famous “Peace Without Victory” speech on January 22, 1917, he defined peace as a peace between equals, in which neither side dominated the other, and the victor did not impose peace terms on the vanquished. Only a peace between equals would last. Although he admitted he inferred that the warring nations wanted such a peace, he felt confident that peace discussions were more likely than ever before, due to the peace note and the subsequent responses.¹³⁶

Part of Wilson’s peace plan involved the creation of a league of nations. After the war, neutrality would be impossible; the answer was to covenant with other nations to prevent wars of aggression. In a 1916 campaign address in Indianapolis, he argued that America’s duty when the war ended was to join some kind of league for ensuring a just basis for peace, liberty, and merit based competition. As much as he desired both the creation of such an organization and American participation in it, Wilson reminded his audience that individual sentiment, and not national policy, best ensured world peace: “The peace of the world is not going to be assured by the compact of nations, but by the sympathies of men.”¹³⁷ Wilson thought the league concept was an important part of what the American people wanted in a lasting peace settlement. The United States performing its God-given duty would result in the creation of the league. Once foreign individuals embraced the ideals he promoted, the governments formed by the consent of the governed would create a peaceful, democratic international community. Wilson claimed

¹³⁶ Draft of a Peace Note, November 25, 1916, PWW, 40: 70, 74; Address in Washington to the League to Enforce Peace, May 27, 1916, PWW, 37: 116; Address to the Senate, January 22, 1917, PWW, 40: 534, 536.

¹³⁷ After-Dinner Remarks, December 2, 1916, PWW, 40: 120.

a community of power could create what a balance of power could not - a lasting peace.¹³⁸

Wilson asserted that the United States would participate in any feasible association to secure fundamental rights. Because of the changes in international relations brought about by the war, a new diplomacy was required, based on the impartial justice of nations banded together. He thought that America had always believed in this ideal for justice, even though the country had not always followed such a model. Wilson claimed that the United States stood ready once the war ended to lend the support of its full moral and physical force to a league of nations to ensure world peace. He wanted the entire world to know the United States was willing to use its force to preserve peace in the interests of mankind. After describing the league concept in Indianapolis, he said:

We have seen to it that America kept her poise when all the rest of the world seemed to have lost its poise. Only upon the terms of retaining that poise and using the splendid force, which always comes with poise, can we hope to play the beneficent part in the history of the world which I have just now intimated.¹³⁹

By adding their authority and power to that of other nations, the people of the United States could guarantee peace and justice. Wilson asserted that America should support the organization fully without regard for U.S. interests.¹⁴⁰

Business and Industry

Wilson viewed the role of business and industry as an important part of U.S. foreign policy for Europe. The war convinced him that the way business functioned had changed

¹³⁸ Address in Indianapolis, October 12, 1916, PWW, 38: 418; Nonpartisan Address in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW, 38: 541; Address to the Senate, January 22, 1917, PWW, 40: 536.

¹³⁹ Address in Indianapolis, October 12, 1916, PWW, 38: 418-419.

¹⁴⁰ Address in Washington to the League to Enforce Peace, May 27, 1916, PWW, 37: 114-116; Address in Omaha, October 5, 1916, PWW, 38: 348; Address to the Senate, January 22, 1917, PWW, 40: 534-535; Speech in Long Branch, New Jersey Accepting the Presidential Nomination, September 2, 1916, PWW, 38: 136.

forever. The U.S. business community needed wider, more international horizons. He thought the war gave one great lesson to American business. The importance of economic cooperation and coordination equaled the importance of military cooperation and coordination. Since Wilson believed that after the war, Europe would need the economic assistance of America, he justified maintaining the nation's neutrality to keep non-military industry alive during the war.¹⁴¹

Wilson's principles compelled him to accept the idea that war problems and peace problems were really the same economically. He proclaimed to an audience that free, constant, unthreatened trade was essential to a lasting peace. The key to peace and prosperity in his mind was service. Keeping the United States at peace gave an infinite prospect for prosperity, not from profiting on suffering, but from opportunities to serve the world. Wilson stressed that America had to support service in trade and industry. He insisted the U.S. government must require fair and even-handed commercial dealings around the world, because the peace and ordered life of the world ultimately depended on those trade conditions.¹⁴²

When Wilson was describing the task of peace for a neutral nation, he used the term "conquest" to explain the business atmosphere of that nation. He told an audience that the country should have, "...a business that looks out upon all the world to make peaceful conquest of every field of legitimate endeavor."¹⁴³ He portrayed the conquest of foreign

¹⁴¹ Address to the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, February 10, 1916, PWW, 36: 153, 158; Campaign Address to Farmers at Shadow Lawn, October 21, 1916, PWW, 38: 506; Luncheon Address to Women at Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, PWW 38: 528.

¹⁴² Campaign Address to Farmers at Shadow Lawn, October 21, 1916, PWW, 38: 507; Address to the Senate, January 22, 1917, PWW, 40: 537; Address in Detroit to Businessmen, July 10, 1916, PWW, 37: 385; Address to the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, February 10, 1916, PWW, 36: 158; Speech in Long Branch, New Jersey Accepting the Presidential Nomination, September 2, 1916, PWW 38: 137.

¹⁴³ Address to the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, February 10, 1916, PWW, 36: 160.

markets in a peaceful and honorable way as a reasonable ambition for American business. Elsewhere, Wilson referred to business as the conquest of the world. Given the qualifiers he attached to business conquest, such as peaceful and honorable, a more militant or oppressive interpretation of Wilson's business views appears strained.¹⁴⁴

Wilson predicted that after the war financial and industrial advances would provide the United States with a new role in world affairs. The scale of that role exceeded anything known before, and U.S. markets were to serve mankind. Despite rapid changes in the world making the nature of business unpredictable, America clearly had unprecedented opportunities and greatly increased responsibilities. To subject the world to America's peaceful service, the nation needed to understand the world, comprehending that domestic business problems were actually international business problems. Wilson explained that the country's duty of financial mediation obligated the nation to support only open and fair business that advanced the interests of mankind. To fail to do so might result in a trade war, which he claimed was far more dangerous to the peace than armed war. Whether or not the country wanted to become involved in the affairs of other countries politically, U. S. business had a great part to play in the world. He claimed that cool judgment would put the nation in a position to use its financial resources to move into an even more desirable position. In an address to the Grain Dealers' National Association in 1916, Wilson summed up his views on business when he told the group

¹⁴⁴ Address to the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, February 10, 1916, PWW, 36: 155, 160; Address in Baltimore to the Grain Dealers' National Association, September 25, 1916, PWW, 38: 269; Address in Detroit to Businessmen, July 10, 1916, PWW, 37: 384.

that mutual confidence and understanding formed the real wealth of foreign relationships, and connections of this type created a spiritual nexus that was the essence of trade.¹⁴⁵

Preparedness

Although Wilson focused on peace and the formation of a league of nations as goals for U.S. foreign policy, as the war continued he recognized the necessity of preparing the nation for possible involvement. Preparedness became the domestic foreign policy focus. The preparedness debate started shortly after the war began in 1914, and Wilson initially opposed preparedness, thinking it aggressive and unnecessary. Theodore Roosevelt and several professional military men disagreed with the pacifist direction in which Wilson led the country. These men advocated immediate increases in the U.S. military. Wilson condemned the disturbance caused by preparedness advocates in his Annual Message to Congress in December, 1914. Despite efforts by Representative Augustus Gardner and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, the administration effectively quashed the initial preparedness movement. Two organizations, the National Security League and the American Legion, attempted to keep preparedness before the public eye, without much success until the Lusitania crisis. As Arthur S. Link described it, “Almost overnight a faltering movement became a crusade.”¹⁴⁶

Some historians have suggested Wilson publicly began supporting his own version of preparedness at this point to prevent jingoes from controlling the movement. However,

¹⁴⁵ Nonpartisan Address in Cincinnati, October 26, 1916, *PWW*, 38: 539, 541; Address in Baltimore to the Grain Dealers' National Association, September 25, 1916, *PWW*, 38: 263-264, 269; Address in Detroit to Businessmen, July 10, 1916, *PWW*, 37: 383-384; Campaign Speech at Shadow Lawn, September 23, 1916, *PWW*, 38: 213; Address to the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, February 10, 1916, *PWW*, 36: 153.

¹⁴⁶ Link, *Struggle*, 590. John Milton Cooper, Jr., *The Warrior and Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983), 276-277 and 288-302; See also Link, *Struggle*, 588 – 593.

Wilson claimed he followed the desires of the majority, and the shift in his policy reflected the public shift on preparedness. Link, Thomas J. Knock, and Kendrick A. Clements agree that Wilson opposed preparedness until the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May of 1915. However, in his Annual Message to Congress on December 8, 1914, Wilson referred to training the citizenry, apart from the U.S. Army. Knock in particular assigns this reference to the National Guard, but the context suggests another possibility. After pointing out the wisdom of a system to train citizens in the use of modern arms, the basics of drilling and maneuvering, and maintaining a clean camp, Wilson recommended such training as beneficial, even if only for the health benefits. In the same paragraph he observed:

Every means by which such things can be stimulated is legitimate, and such a method smacks of true American ideals. It is right, too, that the National Guard of the States should be developed and strengthened by every means which is not inconsistent with our obligations to our own people or with the established policy of our Government.¹⁴⁷

Wilson referred to the National Guard for the first time as an additional thought after he completed his suggestion of a non-army force. His description of the trained citizenry was virtually identical to the plan he espoused during his preparedness speaking tour in January and February of 1916. By laying this option as a course of action before Congress, Wilson seems to have considered preparedness in something other than a negative light before his annual address in 1914.¹⁴⁸

By autumn of 1915 Wilson was publicly speaking in favor of preparedness. He defined preparedness to one group as preparing for defense and not war. Moderation was

¹⁴⁷ An Annual Message to Congress, December 8, 1914, *PWW*, 31:423.

¹⁴⁸ See Clements, *Presidency*, 128; Knock, *To End All Wars*, 59; Link, *Wilson: Neutrality*, 137-143. Ironically, both Link and Knock quote around the relevant paragraph to show Wilson's opposition to preparedness in his speech.

the key. Too much and the country ran toward militarism; too little and the country would be defenseless. According to Wilson, the way to prepare for war was to prepare for peace. The danger in preparedness lay in not knowing what to do with the force raised.¹⁴⁹

Not all of America agreed with Wilson's decision to support preparedness. Several anti-preparedness leaders met with him on May 8, 1916, after his preparedness tour. They adopted arguments Wilson had used, such as appealing to the spirit of America to justify their position and suggesting the nations' moral force suffered. According to these leaders, his preparedness policy threatened to move the country down the road toward militarism. In answering the anti-preparedness leaders, he used many elements from his tour speeches. He disagreed with their conclusions, describing their fears as unreasonable. He claimed that his policy was based on his correct understanding of America. Wilson declared he proposed only reasonable preparation and not militarism. "So, I don't need to tell you that I am just as much opposed to militarism as any man living. I think it is a deadly thing to get it into the spirit of a nation. And I don't think there is the slightest danger of its getting into the spirit of this nation..."¹⁵⁰ To another audience, he later distinguished between a military spirit, in which one recognized the need for a controlled military, and a militaristic spirit or militarism, in which one attempted to have the military dominate national life. Wilson suggested that those with a militaristic spirit were not truly American.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Press Release, October 6, 1915, PWW, 35: 29; Remarks to the Gridiron Club, December 11, 1915, PWW, 35: 340; Press Release, October 10, 1916, PWW, 38: 387; Memorial Day Address, May 30, 1916, PWW, 37: 127; Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy, June 13, 1916, PWW, 37: 213.

¹⁵⁰ Colloquy with a Group of Antipreparedness Leaders, May 8, 1916, PWW, 36: 643.

¹⁵¹ Colloquy with a Group of Antipreparedness Leaders, May 8, 1916, PWW, 36: 641, 643-645; Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy, June 13, 1916, PWW, 37: 214-215. As

The Preparedness Tour

Given Wilson's views on public speaking, the more he spoke on a topic, the more important that topic was to him and the country. In his two terms as president, he only went on speaking tours twice: for preparedness and for the League fight. Since the League tour covered more cities and he spoke more times, it could be argued that the League tour constituted his most important speeches. Many historians view his speeches on the tour as the best he delivered. Several factors militate against considering that effort Wilson's finest speeches. He was exhausted from the Paris Conference, and he plunged without rest into the League fight. As the League speaking tour went on, his health declined to the point that his physician cut the tour short. Before the end of the tour, several speeches showed the effects of his declining health as he left out lines and repeated himself. To see Wilson at his best on a speaking tour, unaffected by the drains of war, the peace conference, and treaty negotiation, one must examine the preparedness tour.¹⁵²

All Wilson's preparedness speeches contained a common core. He explained why he was speaking at the particular venue; the bases, methods and timing of preparedness; the three major principles that served as the foundation of his plan; the elements of his plan; the role of business; the role of the country, partisanship, and world circumstances.

Wilson spoke formally in nine cities, and in some cities to overflow meetings. He made

Knock has noted, many of the group were socialists. Knock suggested that Wilson first revealed his "family of nations" idea outside his immediate circle to this group, May 8, 1916. Knock, *To End All Wars*, 66-67. The essence of the idea had been hinted at by Wilson twice before: January 6, 1916, "An Address to the Pan-American Scientific Congress", *PWW*, 35: 445, and February 1, 1916 "An Address in Des Moines on Preparedness", *PWW*, 36: 80.

¹⁵² Cooper, *Breaking*, 120, 159, 160, 172, 179, 185, 187, 190.

comments on some train platforms along the way, and gave a talk to a business group in St. Louis.

When Wilson toured the country speaking on preparedness, he often referred to his task as conferring with the people. He said that his supreme duty was to speak to them; otherwise, he would have remained in Washington. Compelled by conscience, he had come to confer with the people and report to them concerning the chief issues. People were interested in candid discussions of preparedness and he had come to speak about crucial issues concerning the national welfare. Wilson informed his listeners, "I didn't come out to find out how you felt or what you thought, but to tell you what was going on."¹⁵³ He was not there to find out opinions but to clarify events for them. He claimed, "...I want you to know the motives of what is proposed and the character of what is proposed, in order that we should have only one attitude and counsel with regard to this great matter."¹⁵⁴

Wilson had specific expectations for the outcome of his speeches, and informed his audiences what they were to do. He wanted his listeners to become active advocates of the plan he outlined. Although Wilson did not specifically address readers of the newspaper accounts of his speeches, he likely expected the same outcome. He warned the people to distrust newspaper and editorial opinions, as he did, because the opinions reflected the thoughts of a small group, not the majority. One of the reasons for the speaking tour was to connect with the people directly and explain his views clearly and simply, independent of newspaper interpretation.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Address in St. Louis on Preparedness, February 3, 1916. PWW, 36: 115.

¹⁵⁴ Address in Milwaukee on Preparedness, January 31, 1916, PWW, 36: 59.

¹⁵⁵ NOTE: All preparedness address references in footnotes 153 to 176 after an initial reference will be abbreviated to the city and page number. All of the addresses are in PWW, 36. All other references will be

Early in the tour, Wilson admitted he had changed his mind about preparedness, which was now a subject of deep emotion for him. He claimed he could not express his own opinion, but remained constrained to neutrality in spirit, thought and deed in order to express the nation's views rather than his own. Wilson reminded listeners of his constant efforts to hear the voice of the country, or govern according to the wishes of the silent majority. He spoke not to excite, but to stimulate the sense of responsibility in his hearers. The spirit of the people concerning this matter, their support of preparedness as a concept, was not in question. Wilson knew the spirit before he began the tour.

...[The people at the speech] only express the spirit of the nation. They do not express the organized force of the nation. And, while I know, and knew before I left Washington, what the spirit of the people was, I have come out to ask them what their organization is and what they intend to make it.¹⁵⁶

By "organization", Wilson referred to the people's willingness to support a specific type of preparedness, preferably his version. Wilson claimed he appealed to the people not out of any sense of doubt concerning his own conclusions about the nation's opinion, but to give the country the satisfaction of unified utterance. The large turnout reflected the great interest of the nation in the question of preparedness. According to Wilson, the audience sizes also showed the people's support for what he was saying, since they came to support his cause and not merely to see a president.¹⁵⁷

made in full. Address on Preparedness in Topeka, February 2, 1916, PWW, 36: 87, 92; Address to an Overflow Meeting in Topeka, February 2, 1916, PWW, 36: 100; Address on Preparedness in Kansas City, February 2, 1916, PWW, 36: 101; Address in Milwaukee on Preparedness, January 31, 1916, PWW, 36: 55, 59; Address in Chicago on Preparedness, January 31, 1916, PWW, 36: 63; Address in Des Moines on Preparedness, February 1, 1916, PWW, 36: 77; Address in St. Louis on Preparedness, February 3, 1916, PWW, 36: 115; Address in Cleveland on Preparedness, January 29, 1916, PWW, 36: 44; Address in Pittsburgh on preparedness, January 29, 1916, PWW, 36: 33-35.

¹⁵⁶ Kansas City, 103. Wilson distinguished between what he wanted to do on the tour and the purpose of the tour.

¹⁵⁷ Address in New York on Preparedness, January 27, 1916, PWW, 36: 8-9, 11; Topeka, 87, 100; Des Moines, 70; St. Louis, 121; Remarks from a Rear Platform in Waukegan, Illinois, January 31, 1916, PWW, 36: 53; Kansas City, 102-103.

Wilson told his audience he was driven by a desire for peace, which could be assured by having right and honor as guiding principles for American thought and action. He explained his preparedness efforts were not an attempt to stir up a military spirit in the nation. Instead, he sought efficiency: "Therefore, I, for my part, have a great enthusiasm for rendering America spiritually efficient, and that conception lies at the basis of what seems very far removed from it, namely the plans that have been proposed for the military efficiency of this nation."¹⁵⁸ Wilson talked about the intangible and invisible as he spoke about preparation for national defense. He reported that he had tried to make war impossible for the United States, but he did not know if war would be coming. According to Wilson, people did not make war; governments did. His job was to make sure that everyone respected American rights. Preparedness gave him the means to ensure this respect.¹⁵⁹

Wilson explained the bases of preparedness. He did not base the need for preparedness on war or peace, or a sudden change in national circumstances. He was merely interpreting the spirit of America. The country believed greater measures for national defense were necessary. Additionally, he argued that the nature of war had changed. Armies fought wars scientifically, and the scope of war led to cataclysmic upheaval. If inaction left the country unprotected and thereby endangered from potential threats, then the national life would be worthless. Wilson cited two reasons the nation needed to be prepared to use force: first, to vindicate the right of Americans to the

¹⁵⁸ Address in Pittsburgh on Preparedness, January 29, 1916, PWW, 36: 29.

¹⁵⁹ Pittsburgh, 27; Remarks from a Rear Platform in Davenport, Iowa, February 1, 1916, PWW, 36: 75; Cleveland, 47; Topeka, 95; Address to an Overflow Meeting in Topeka, February 2, 1916, PWW, 36: 96, 98; Chicago, 71-72; Des Moines, 84; Kansas City, 101; New York, 8; Address in Pittsburgh to an Overflow Meeting, January 29, 1916; PWW, 36: 38.

protection of international law, and second, to safeguard the right to sell in open, neutral markets.¹⁶⁰

The timing and means of preparedness were as important as the bases. Wilson suggested moving in stages rather than attempting any sudden changes. He also did not wish to hurry Congress. At the same time, the nation could not afford to postpone action, because any future needs and dangers were unknown. Only work in stages consistent with national principles met with Wilson's approval. The work required peace as its purpose, not profits. Undoubtedly some people and companies would make money from preparedness, but he stressed many times that national defense should not be an excuse for munition manufacturers to make money. If privately made munitions proved too expensive, he promised the government would manufacture its own.¹⁶¹

Wilson emphasized three major foreign policy principles that preparedness better equipped the United States to defend and preserve. The first was national sovereignty, which he described as freedom from external military control and influence. The second was the right and ability of a country's people to determine the government of their nation free from outside interference. The third was the need to stand as strong brothers with like-minded countries of the Western Hemisphere. In virtually every speech, Wilson gave his listeners heard some variation of these three principles as the foundational ideas of preparedness. He stressed that these principles contained the spirit of the United States, which America was obligated to keep and enforce. With the Monroe Doctrine as the country's pledge to the world of these ideas, Wilson sought to

¹⁶⁰ New York, 9; Milwaukee, 60-61; Kansas City, 103, 109; Des Moines, 81, 83; Topeka, 92-93.

¹⁶¹ New York, 12-13; Cleveland, 46; Milwaukee, 60; Remarks from a Rear Platform in Iowa City, February 1, 1916, PWW, 36: 76; Des Moines, 82.

apply these ideas to the entire world, describing them as the higher rights of mankind, and sentiments of the heart that desired peace.¹⁶²

Wilson had a particular plan that he proposed at each stop on the tour. He demonstrated why the country needed his plan when he reviewed the status of standing U.S. forces. The navy was actually in sound condition, but it needed expanding to keep up with changes in naval technology. Improvements also would help the navy better represent the United States and ensure the country could maintain its various responsibilities. The Coast Guard's situation corresponded to that of the navy. American land forces were another story altogether, since the army's small numbers prevented the performance of its functions. If called on to do more, such as fight in Europe, the army could not meet the need. America's lack of imperialistic ambition and peaceful relations with the world made a large standing army unnecessary, and such an army might create a danger of militarism. The only other option in addition to Wilson's plan was the National Guard. He cited three specific reasons why the Guard would not meet the needs of preparedness. First, the function of the Guard, to respond to invasion, was different from that of the regular army. Second, the National Guard was state related, not federal, so only governors, not presidents could call them into action. Third, the Guard was too small to be of significant use. Wilson's reasoning left only one option, his plan.¹⁶³

As he had told Congress in his December 1914 annual address, the plan involved training a group of citizens apart from the U.S. Army and the National Guard, to supplement the army when needed. The training also was to involve the use of arms and

¹⁶² New York, 10; Pittsburgh, 28; Address in Pittsburgh to an Overflow Meeting, January 29, 1916, PWW, 36: 37; Cleveland, 43; Milwaukee, 62; Chicago, 71; Topeka, 94; St. Louis, 115.

¹⁶³ New York, 14-15; Topeka, 90-92; Cleveland, 44; Milwaukee, 58-61; Chicago, 68-69, 71; St. Louis, 118-120; Pittsburgh, 30, 35; Address in Pittsburgh to an Overflow Meeting, January 29, 1916, PWW, 36: 39; Kansas City, 104.

drilling maneuvers. He expanded on his original idea when he spoke on the tour, and added the idea of training members of industry and business as well. Wilson told his listeners that he had advised Congress to approve his plan:

...I am counseling the Congress of the United States not to take the advice of those who recommend that we should have, and have very soon, a great standing army, but, on the contrary, to see to it that the citizens of this country are so trained, and that the military equipment is so sufficiently provided for them, that, when they choose, they can take up arms and defend themselves.¹⁶⁴

His focus was on using young volunteers and training them as a reserve force. By making the training short-term, the men could work and live about three quarters of the time in their normal lives, and retain all the ideals of citizens. This meant a large number of men could be trained and made ready, without creating a large standing army or a spirit of militarism like that found in Europe. Wilson suggested only a short period of training would be needed, because American men already knew how to fight. They just needed training in modern weapons, tactics, and other aspects of scientific war fought according to army procedures. He told audiences his plan put men in a position to care for the country if the need arose. His plan demonstrated the difference between operating the nation on a military basis, and preparing men to vindicate the national honor as required.¹⁶⁵

Wilson also addressed economics and business as they related to preparedness. America was the source of ideals-based economic guidance for the rest of the world. As such, the country had the opportunity to assume a new, international business position. During the war, the United States had been practicing peaceful commerce with nations on

¹⁶⁴ Milwaukee, 58.

¹⁶⁵ Kansas City, 105-106; St. Louis, 118-120; New York, 13; Pittsburgh, 30-31; Address in Pittsburgh to an Overflow Meeting, January 29, 1916, PWW, 36: 40; Chicago, 79; Des Moines, 81; Topeka, 90; Address to an Overflow Meeting in Topeka, February 2, 1916, PWW 36: 96-97.

both sides. Wilson asserted that America could better serve the warring nations by staying out of the conflict and giving economic aid. He argued the country had a moral obligation to stay out of the war, but also had a moral obligation to ensure the free course of commerce and finance, which were rights America stood ready to vindicate. Wilson also pointed out that business needed to mobilize for national defense. The equipment and other needs of his plan meant business and industry had a preparedness duties to perform in support of America's role.¹⁶⁶

Wilson described U.S. principles and responsibilities that governed the nation's task during the preparedness tour. He told his listeners that although the nation was pro-peace, it loved principles more than peace. America was unique in its desire to serve justice, righteousness, and peace. In Topeka he declared: "This is the final test of the validity, the strength, the irresistible force of the American ideal."¹⁶⁷ He described the United States as champions of freedom, noting other nations often called on the country to exert moral influence. According to Wilson, the destiny of America was an ideal destiny to declare and stand for the rights of men.¹⁶⁸

Wilson believed that America's ability to fulfill its destiny lay in part in its nature. The country honored self-sacrifice, and was unafraid of adversaries. Critical to the nation's achievement of its destiny was the composite nature of the people. Most immigrants had a love of liberty as strong as that of the native born. He told his audiences that peace was at the heart of the agricultural and industrial populations. Wilson made a special point to note that despite reports to the contrary, Kansas and the

¹⁶⁶ New York, 9; Cleveland, 43; 557, Kansas City, 109; Topeka, 93; Address to the Business Men's League of St. Louis, February 3, 1916, *PWW*, 36: 111; Milwaukee, 59.

¹⁶⁷ Topeka, 95.

¹⁶⁸ New York, 9-10; Cleveland, 42-43; Milwaukee, 62; Chicago, 71-72.

Midwest in general were not indifferent to national defense. He approved of this situation, as the people there and all across the nation needed to support preparedness and be preparing.¹⁶⁹

Despite the peace-loving nature and principles of the country, Wilson told his audiences there were limits on peace. Some proponents of peace were willing to have peace at any cost. Unlike those people, Wilson argued that peace was not worth the loss of a people's self-respect. Because peace was dependent on other countries, he could not guarantee that war would never come. The United States had to be prepared for any situation. "America can't afford to be weak, and she can't afford to use her strength for anything which does not honor the Stars and Stripes."¹⁷⁰ Wilson explained that America was not isolated from the world, which made ignoring the rest of the world impossible. He suggested isolationists needed to answer the question, "Can you control events outside the country?" Keeping the peace required more than favorable opinion to stop warfare. It required preparedness.¹⁷¹

Wilson did not leave his audience without any sense of a role, duty, or task for the nation. America needed to assert principles in a world where those principles had broken down. Because of the war, the world was in chaos. The United States could keep order while the world burned, and better serve the combatants by remaining at peace and preserving the foundations of life. He feared that if the country became involved in the insanity of the war, then America would lose its perspective and thereby its chance to redeem the world. According to Wilson, the United States had a desire to maintain its

¹⁶⁹ Pittsburgh, 29; Chicago, 70; Topeka 87-89; Cleveland, 46; Milwaukee, 62; Remarks from a Rear Platform in Iowa City, February 1, 1916, PWW, 36: 76; Des Moines, 77; St. Louis, 114; Kansas City, 108.

¹⁷⁰ Pittsburgh, 34.

¹⁷¹ Des Moines, 78-79; St. Louis, 118; Address to an Overflow Meeting in Topeka, February 2, 1916, PWW, 36: 98; Chicago, 67.

status as the trustee of moral judgment for the world, and that desire was the only sense in which the country's actions should be considered based on self-interest.¹⁷²

Although Wilson's preparedness tour speeches focused on principles and generalized plans, he did make occasional specific reference to other foreign relations of the United States. He pointed out that the country's history had no precedent for involvement in European wars. Traditionally the nation avoided such entangling alliances, and in the early twentieth century, America was more interested in peace rather than in European involvement. Wilson cited American involvement in Cuba and the Spanish-Cuban-America War as evidence to foreign nations that the United States loved liberty.¹⁷³

Although America loved liberty, Wilson thought that too many people became caught up in partisan or prejudiced enthusiasm. This emotional response led to rash action that the country wanted to avoid. The United States needed to be guided by self-possessed thought. According to Wilson, the silent majority was cool and collected, not ruled by passion. The silent citizens needed to speak up and make their voices heard, since guiding national policy by passion was unwise. Those passions made the United States a generous nation, but Wilson argued that it was necessary to be on guard for flare-ups:

What you have to realize is that everywhere throughout America there is combustible material – combustible in our breasts...We have got to be on our guard, and it has been our hourly and daily anxiety in Washington to see that the exposed tinder was covered up and the sparks prevented from falling where there were magazines.¹⁷⁴

He emphasized that those advocating division along national lines and prompting war were not representative of the majority. Often the loudest voices in the preparedness controversy were the irresponsible ones. Wilson stressed that preparedness was not a

¹⁷² Chicago, 65, 67; Des Moines, 80; Kansas City, 109-110; Cleveland, 43.

¹⁷³ Milwaukee, 56; Des Moines, 78; New York, 10; Kansas City 104.

¹⁷⁴ Topeka, 89.

partisan issue, and regretted that the preparedness debate had taken place during an election year. He suggested that all party differences should fall away and Americans stand united.¹⁷⁵

Wilson referred to world circumstances as he spoke about the need for preparedness. He said the entire world, except South America, was involved in the war. As a result, the rest of the world was undergoing significant changes. He described the events as something that would transform the history of the world in unprecedented ways. Wilson pointed out the need for the United States to increase its rate of military and industrial improvements to keep pace with changing world events. America needed to begin immediately, because it was possible that there was not enough time to prepare: “All the world outside of America is on fire.”¹⁷⁶ Wilson assured his audiences that he was trying to preserve the peace and honor of the United States, but circumstances could render the preservation of both impossible. No one wanted peace on this basis. He explained that the United States might have to use force to maintain its honor. The country’s willingness to fight only for its honor helped other nations believe that America was a champion of humanity and the rights of men. According to Wilson, this belief prompted other nations to turn to the United States as a source of moral judgment. The country earnestly desired this role, and by virtue of its peaceful stance, the United States was more indispensable than ever before.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ New York, 8; Cleveland, 42, 44; Des Moines, 79; Kansas City, 107; Address to the Senate, January 22, 1917, *PWW*, 40: 539; Topeka, 95; Milwaukee, 56; Pittsburgh, 28; St. Louis, 120.

¹⁷⁶ Cleveland, 42.

¹⁷⁷ Des Moines, 78, 80; Milwaukee, 57, 61; Address in Pittsburgh to an Overflow Meeting, January 29, 1916, *PWW*, 36: 37; Cleveland, 47-48; Pittsburgh, 31; Kansas City, 108-109; Remarks from a Rear Platform in Davenport, Iowa, February 1, 1916, *PWW*, 36: 75; Address to an Overflow Meeting in Topeka, February 2, 1916, *PWW*, 36: 99; Chicago, 64-65; Topeka 93. Presumably, Canada’s participation meant North America was involved.

Final Speeches

Having examined Wilson's speeches from his first term inauguration in March of 1913 to the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare by Germany on January 31, 1917, only a few addresses remain before U.S. entry into World War I. In February, he spoke to a joint session of Congress about the severing of diplomatic ties with Germany. In March, he released a brief statement to the press about the Senate filibuster, and gave his second inaugural speech. On April 2, he called for war in an address to a joint session of Congress.

After Germany changed its submarine warfare strategy, Wilson suspended diplomatic relations. He addressed a joint session of Congress, giving the "Peace Without Victory" speech. Once he had related the background information concerning prior conflicts and agreements, the violation by Germany, and the response of the United States, he explained his anticipated outcome to Congress. Wilson was convinced that even though the United States had severed diplomatic relations, Germany would not actually go so far as to practice unrestricted submarine warfare: "Only actual overt acts on their part can make me believe it even now."¹⁷⁸ He explained that he would not consider Germany hostile until it proved otherwise. What the United States required of Germany was not unreasonable. America had no selfish ends, and desired only the reasonable defense of its citizen's rights. After this address, he expected the support of Congress for his plans, but eleven members of the Senate filibustered until the end of the session and blocked

¹⁷⁸ Address to a Joint Session of Congress, February 3, 1917, PWW, 41: 111. "It" referred to German use of unrestricted submarine warfare.

Wilson's legislative requests. In a statement released to the press, he charged that the Senate had hindered the progress of U.S foreign relations.¹⁷⁹

The day after the press statement, the country inaugurated Wilson as president for a second term. He informed the audience that the United States had been drawn into international affairs despite the country's desire to remain unencumbered. He mentioned three points that specifically related to the crisis at hand. Armed neutrality was the only option open to the United States other than war, and to remain true to the nation's principles such an option had to be tried before declaring war. He emphasized that all U.S. actions were rooted in principles too dear and fundamental to be altered, and that America had no desire for conquest or advantage. Wilson also acknowledged that the United States had been violated: "We have been deeply wronged upon the seas, but we have not wished to wrong or injure in return; have retained throughout the consciousness of standing in some sort apart, intent upon an interest that transcended the immediate issues of the war itself."¹⁸⁰ He relied on the hope that in God's Providence the country and world could be purged of factions and divisions, and stand together on behalf of the dignity of mankind. Stressing his perception of his job as that of the people's servant, Wilson asserted that only the confidence and counsel of the people could sustain and guide him.¹⁸¹

Little less than a month later, Wilson gave his final pre-war speech on April 2, 1917, to a joint session of Congress. While calling for war, he expressed amazement at the willingness of Germany to use unrestricted submarine warfare. Denouncing this tactic as

¹⁷⁹ Address to a Joint Session of Congress, February 3, 1917, PWW, 41: 111-112; Statement, March 4, 1917, PWW, 41: 319.

¹⁸⁰ Second Inaugural Address, March 5, 1917, PWW, 41: 333.

¹⁸¹ Second Inaugural Address, March 5, 1917, PWW, 41: 333-335.

war against mankind and all the nations, he stipulated the principles that governed the necessary U.S. response. He had thought that defending neutral rights with arms was sufficient to protect U.S. citizens, but that method had proved ineffectual. Wilson expressed to his audience the conviction that neutrality was now impossible. The only remaining options were submission or defense of U.S. principles through war. The former was clearly not acceptable. To clarify American intentions, he asserted that in going to war against Germany, “Our motive will not be revenge or the victorious assertion of the physical might of the nation, but only the vindication of right, of human right, of which we are only a single champion.”¹⁸² Peace after the war could only be realized by a partnership of democratic nations, and only free nations could form such a partnership. Wilson reminded Congress that in going to war the United States had no desire for conquest, gain, or dominion, but wanted to make the world safe for democracy by planting peace on the foundation of political liberty.¹⁸³

Conclusion

Wilson shared many aspects of foreign policy principles and decisions with his audiences. He explained the decision making process and the types of information he needed to make decisions. He also addressed the largely negative impact of politics and elections on foreign relations.

The principles of foreign policy that Wilson discussed included the critical importance of government established by the free consent of the governed. America’s duty to serve other nations by advancing peace, democracy, and free trade was rooted in

¹⁸² Address to a Joint Session of Congress, April 2, 1917, PWW, 41: 520.

¹⁸³ Address to a Joint Session of Congress, April 2, 1917, PWW, 41: 519-527.

its unique spiritual relationship with the world. He told audiences that the Monroe Doctrine provided the cooperative understanding necessary for the United States to selflessly aid other nations. U.S. imperialism differed from the Europeans, since U.S. actions were neither aggressive nor oppressive, but entirely benevolent.

Wilson explained the necessity of neutrality in the face of war in Europe. By remaining neutral, he hoped to mediate a peace based in part on the nation's unique ability to see both sides by virtue of a melting pot population. Neutrality also enabled America to retain moral influence with foreign nations, something Wilson greatly desired. He spoke of the need to engage in military trade with both sides as the duty of a neutral nation.

The primary principle of U.S. foreign relations with war-torn Europe was peace. Wilson reminded his listeners that the reasons for the war were obscure, and America had a record of non-involvement with European affairs. His goal with Europe was peace. He portrayed America as a champion of peace, and suggested the need for a formal organization to ensure peace after the war. He was convinced that future neutrality was impossible for the United States due to changes in the nation's international role and involvement. Further changes in the nature of war prompted him to suggest the only means of guaranteeing peace lay in an international body that upheld American principles. To Wilson, those principles also were the world's.

As the war dragged on and the likelihood of the United States becoming involved grew, Wilson publicly endorsed preparation for national defense. He stressed that the country preferred peace, but not at the cost of national honor. He proposed a plan to create a large group of trained men while avoiding the risk of militarism with a huge

standing army. He went on one of two speaking tours during his presidency to promote his preparedness plan. Given his views of public speaking, this tour marked the most significant foreign policy issue of his first term.

After Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare in February of 1917, Wilson's few speeches focused on his efforts to avoid war. He explained that he did not believe Germany would use such tactics. However, in his final speech calling for war, he conceded that every possible step to prevent war had failed. He called for the United States to use force and go to war for the restoration of human rights.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The primary source of Wilson's ideology was his religion. From his earliest childhood, Christian concepts dominated his worldview, and shaped the principles he applied to the presidency and foreign relations. Although his Presbyterianism shaped much of his expression of religion, his father's overall influence reigned supreme. The importance of oratory in Woodrow's life also can be traced to his father. To underestimate the impact of Wilson's father on his ideology results in a major misreading of the most significant shaping influence on Wilson's thoughts and values.

As an adult, Wilson held strongly to the religion of his youth. While he admitted to contradictory elements in his personal theology, his overall religious viewpoint fit well with the northern Presbyterian church in which he was a ruling elder. His viewpoint required action as the logical conclusion to religious beliefs. He understood patriotism and support for one's country as similar to religious duty, blurring the lines separating religion and patriotism. By linking these concepts, Wilson made service to the country a religious obligation.

Wilson described a new role for the United States in international affairs, based on ideals and principles. This study shows that many of the principles he espoused had religious roots. When he explained the character and function of good leaders, those men

needed biblical faith, and worked to bring the country, or world, closer to God. Political leadership fundamentally meant conduct that glorified God. Oratory, critical for a leader, was persuasive, much like preaching. When Wilson defined America's duty, he depicted carrying out the plan of Divine Providence to spread the blessings of American-style democracy to the world. Because it rested on religious grounds, American policy and actions by definition benefited mankind, even if others did not agree.

When Wilson focused on foreign policy examples, his ideology dictated how he understood U.S. actions. Imperial actions on the part of the nation became efforts to uplift people and foster democratic government. He cited Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico as products of this motivation. He justified much of his Mexico policy by relating U.S. action, or the lack thereof, to varying expressions of constitutional government. Through supporting what to his mind was legitimate government in Mexico, he hoped to encourage the Mexican people to form an American style democratic government and further God's plans.

Wilson was not reticent about expressing his principles. He pursued his vision of a good leader and engaged in oratory frequently. In his speeches, he explained U.S. policy and actions in terms of principles. The influence of his religion extended beyond principles to use as religious concepts and references to further his agenda. His language blurred the line between the sacred and secular. References to "interpreting the spirit" took on multiple meanings, and he used "spirit" in both religious and non-religious contexts. He often used Bible references to illustrate principles he was discussing. The culture at the time possessed a significant amount of popular religious knowledge, making references an easy tool to clarify meanings.

The governing principles Wilson described in specific foreign policies also reflected religious influences. When he explained the need for U.S. neutrality at the beginning of war in Europe, his objective was to allow America to mediate the peace. He described peace as exerting a healing and elevating influence in the world. The ultimate goal was to raise the nations up to God, and peace was the means to that goal. Wilson's principle idea to perpetuate peace was an organization of nations. He thought changes in warfare and in America's higher international profile made neutrality after the war's end impossible. The United States needed to join an organization that would protect the rights of men to self-government and unhindered trade.

Wilson's regular use of oratory, both before and during his presidency, reflected his father's high regard for public speaking and its relation to leadership. In Wilson's view of public speaking, the more important the issue, the greater the need to address it. The best example of this concept is his speaking tour to support the Paris peace treaty and League of Nations. If the League fight were the most important series of speeches Wilson gave, then in the Wilson scale of importance, the preparedness speaking tour addressed the most important issue in his first term as president.

In the preparedness tour, Wilson used all the elements common to his speeches to describe a critical foreign policy need. He explained his plan and how it avoided the militarism antagonistic to American principles. Business and industry were encouraged to serve the nation by supporting preparedness. He urged the nation to embrace its Providential duty of spreading democracy and free trade. He claimed his reasons for pursuing his course of action derived from his sense of the American spirit, of which he was merely a servant. Promoting the United States as a champion of peace, he presented

preparedness as the logical policy for a country concerned with living up to its ideals and principles.

Wilson's final prewar speeches in February and March of 1917 further revealed his dependence on his ideals and their religious basis. When faced with Germany's resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, Wilson refused to ask Congress to declare war. His religious view of the essential goodness of man led him to conclude Germany would not use the submarine tactic. After several attacks on neutral shipping, he relented and called for war on April 2, 1917. The strength of his principles compelled him to ask for a war to end all wars. Such a war would usher in a new age of peace, and America could fulfill its duty of elevating mankind. Thus, Wilson's religious beliefs informed the principles he used to explain U.S. foreign relations to the people of America, and shaped his policies throughout the period of American neutrality before World War I and after.

Historians have arrived at different conclusions when analyzing Wilson's foreign policy motives and actions. Some members of the realist school of American foreign relations, emphasizing pragmatic concerns and balance of power issues, dismiss Wilson as an idealistic fool who had no understanding of the real world. Others attempt to attribute realist motives to Wilson's actions. Tony Smith argued that the United States supported democracies for national security reasons, not pietistic ones. Wilson cited religious reasons to protect national security: to preserve America's ability to support democracy. Understanding the basis of Wilson's principles places his emphasis on national security in an idealistic, not a realistic, context.¹⁸⁴

New Left revisionists, basing their analysis on a perception of the United States as imperialistic and acting from self-interest, viewed Wilson as an interventionist

¹⁸⁴ Smith, America's Mission, 329.

suppressing radicalism. While clearly active and intervening frequently, Wilson's motives were based in his religious conviction of the supremacy of American style democracy, and the attendant blessings of God to that form of government. His anti-radicalism stemmed more from his desire to uplift other nations rather than from American self-interest, and he understood his imperialistic activities as conveying Christian benefits, desired by all humanity. Later revisionists presented Wilson as a virtual radical, appealing to the far left. If this were the case, then Wilson's claims of rigorously acting for the silent majority while ignoring minority groups constitute outright lies of which the majority of the nation remained unaware. While his ideas may have appealed to the far left, without the support of the majority none of Wilson's proposals would have been successful.¹⁸⁵

Recent research has identified weakness in both the realist and revisionist approaches to Wilson, and sought to place him at the beginning of the modern presidency's struggle to maintain a balance between the unifying effect of nationalism and the disconnecting result of a global economy and various racial, ethnic, and religious divisions. Some using this method have ignored or dismissed references to Wilson's religious beliefs. Any desire on Wilson's part to engage in such a balancing act derived from his application of his principles in accordance with his religious views. Appreciating Wilson's religious motivation aids in explaining his efforts to maintain stability against the backdrop of nationalism and a global economy. His beliefs enabled him to weave in and out of the contradictions of his ideals and deeds while preserving, to him, consistency in thought and action. Thus, understanding the religious foundations of Wilson's principles and his

¹⁸⁵ David Steigerwald, "The Reclamation of Woodrow Wilson?" in *Paths to Power: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations to 1941*, Michael J. Hogan, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 154, 159.

application of them explains how many of the conclusions of realist, revisionist, and subsequent historians concerning Wilson are both contradictory and accurate.¹⁸⁶

Finally, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 brought issues of religion to the forefront of American consciousness, particularly the power of religion to motivate acts of profound significance in international relations. This study demonstrates that religion has previously affected U.S. foreign relations and justified American actions. Religion shapes U.S. policy today, and while George W. Bush may not express his beliefs as Woodrow Wilson did, Bush's religion affects his decisions. Every president has professed some religious belief; until the nation elects an atheist, religion will continue to influence U.S. foreign policy. As Woodrow Wilson's presidency demonstrates, that impact can be significant.

¹⁸⁶ Steigerwald, "Reclamation", 159, 163.

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VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Roger E. Carey

Home Address:

1621 Amalfi Ct.
Las Vegas, NV 89117

Degrees:

Bachelor of Arts, Biology, 1989
Earlham College

Special Honors and Awards:

Phi Alpha Theta, Psi Sigma Chapter, 2001

Thesis Title:

Woodrow Wilson's Principled Preaching on Foreign Policy, 1913-1917

Thesis Examination Committee

Chairperson, Dr. Joseph A. Fry, Ph.D
Committee Member, Dr. Eugene P. Moehring, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Dr. Andrew Kirk, Ph.D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. John Swetnam, Ph.D.