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Woodrow Wilson and International Statecraft: A Modern Assessment

by
David F. Trask

No twentieth-century President quite compares with Woodrow Wilson as an innovative international statesman. He championed a whole new mode of American participation in world politics; although he fell short of his goals, he set the pattern for most of his successors.

The magnitude of Wilson's accomplishment becomes apparent if we compare the nation's national security policies as they were before his incumbency and after his service.

- In terms of foreign policy the nation abandoned a posture of general abstention from world affairs and turned to wholesale engagement.
- In terms of defense policy the nation transformed its security forces, converting the Army and the Navy from small, barely professional formations concerned primarily with peacetime missions such as policing the western territories and protecting overseas commerce into huge professional military forces that emphasized wartime missions such as assaults on enemy forces and seizure of enemy territory.

The best historian of this fundamental transition, Colonel James L. Abrahamson, correctly notes that this overall pattern of change spans the years from the 1880s to the 1920s, but the most striking departures stemmed from the Wilson years with the First World War as the essential motivation.[1]

The most important external development that influenced the statecraft of Woodrow Wilson was the general destabilization of political relationships that occurred in western Eurasia during the generation or so before 1914, a breakdown that led ultimately to general warfare. The battle of the Marne signaled the end of a remarkable hundred years' peace and heralded perhaps the most desperate era in the history of mankind. That "concert of Europe" established after the fall of Napoleon, so durable, eventually collapsed—a victim of massive historical trends, among them nationalism, industrialism, urbanization, militarism, and imperialism.

Burgeoning perceptions of insecurity affected all the great powers located in western Eurasia as the balance of power fell apart.

Plenary fear developed in the interior of Europe, especially in Germany, because of the belief that its neighbors would not permit future growth, and in the case of Austria-Hungary because of the fear of national revolutions against the monarchy.

Elsewhere, notably in France, Russia, and Great Britain, equal and opposite trepidation proliferated—the deep feeling that Germany's real goal was not a place in the sun but the hegemony of western Eurasia.

The several concerned nations sought security in alliances. Governments do not enter lightly into alliances; such entanglements limit that most treasured of political conditions—freedom of action. Only deep-seated insecurity accounts for the increasingly comprehensive and inflexible alliances that materialized during the generation before 1914. The July crisis of 1914 that followed the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince and his consort constituted an unstoppable reaction. Massive prior destabilization had created an unmanageable political situation.

The First World War was from its outset a struggle over whether the Central Powers would establish a dominating position in western Eurasia or whether the antihegemonic coalition would succeed in restoring stability. In other words, the conflict of 1914, so often depicted as "escalating" from a limited war to a total war, was an all-out struggle from the beginning in that the highest stakes were on the table from day number one, even if this truth became evident only gradually as the fighting endured into 1915, passed into 1916, and continued beyond.

All the belligerents realized that the war would be an exceedingly destructive encounter, one that would spawn unparalleled violence, given the killing power inherent in applications of modern technology, but they also presumed that it would be brief. Those who measured such things doubted that either the armed forces or the peoples behind them could withstand the terrible trials of modern warfare for an extended period. It would be "over by Christmas" because the participants, military and civilian, would exhaust themselves in the earliest campaigns.

As it happened the war lasted a long, long time. Neither side proved capable of striking a decisive blow, especially along the crucial western front, so the war turned into a protracted conflict. When a stalemate materialized, the contending coalitions manifested enhanced resolve rather than a turn toward negotiations intended to bring the war to a close. The expansion of the coalition during 1914-1917 revealed the true meaning of the Armageddon. Japan, Italy, Rumania, Greece, and the United States eventually joined the Allies while Turkey and Bulgaria adhered to the Central Powers.

Hindsight, that most uncomfortable aspect of historical imagination, confirms that the costs of the war far outstripped its value to both the victors and the losers. What benefits accrue from a passage at arms that endangers

civilians as much as soldiers and that may be as debilitating to the winners as to the defeated? The First World War posed the question, even before the armistice of 1918, whether general war on the modern scale was any longer acceptable as a rational and ethical means of resolving international disputes of the first magnitude—disputes over such imposing questions as the hegemony of western Eurasia.

This observation brings us to Woodrow Wilson, whose responses to the war reflected his deepening belief that statecraft could no longer condone warfare as a form of politics by other means. What personal attributes did he bring to the task of dealing with the awful tragedy that unfolded across the sea? Wilson was, above all, a quintessential American democrat, thoroughly committed to both the virtue and the expediency of the national ideology. He believed that America had been designated savior of the western tradition, gone sour in Europe but fortunately transplanted to a final, triumphal seat in the new world. Wilson's attitude toward the outside world reflected the general American faith in the moral and intellectual superiority of the Great Republic of Virtue risen in the wilderness. America's resounding accomplishments across the nineteenth century gave incontrovertible proof of this virtue—all the more imposing by comparison with Europe's decadence. The diseases of the old world, especially imperialism and militarism, simply confirmed the historic validity of the forefathers' decision to depart the ancient seat of power for the healing confines of the New Jerusalem.

And yet Wilson was not simply an American ideologue; he was also a pragmatic politician whose behavior manifested full awareness of the range of capabilities available to those in authority along with a willingness to use them. Although strongly committed to peaceful resolution of political questions, a central tenet of the democratic faith, he was prepared in certain circumstances to use the sword. Indeed he was! Wilson had recourse to armed intervention in the affairs of other nations much more frequently than any other American President, a reality that no student of his statecraft can safely ignore—but all too many do.[2]

For Wilson's justification of armed intervention when necessary, historians need look no further than a striking pronouncement of 1911. "There is nothing noble or admirable in war itself," he said. "But there is something very noble and very admirable occasionally in the causes in which war is undertaken. There are times in the history of nations in which they must take up the crude instruments of bloodshed in order to vindicate spiritual conceptions." Why was this the case? "Liberty is a spiritual conception, and when men take up arms to set other men free, there is something sacred and holy in the warfare. I will not cry 'peace' so long as there is sin and wrong in the world." Wilson kept this pledge. Wilson the idealist was surely prepared, when other lesser measures failed, to use force in the service of goodness, but

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all his instincts cried out against war to accomplish political ends except as a last, desperate measure—especially warfare in its modern destructive forms. Wilson's abhorrence of violence is why so many mistakenly describe him as a pacifist.

Wilson was, after all, hardly the first to conclude that modern warfare could no longer be condoned in its general form, given the destructive power of modern weaponry. A noted expression of this view came in 1898, when Ivan S. Bloch, a Polish banker, published a work entitled *The Future of War.* Given the combination of enhanced capabilities for the defense and modern firepower, Bloch concluded: "War has become impossible, except at the price of suicide." This insight certainly influenced the peace conferences at The Hague and other peace movements of the early twentieth century. It had its counterpart in the thought of Woodrow Wilson.

When the war began in August 1914, Wilson's first reaction was to proclaim strict neutrality, almost an inevitable course for a nation so long separated both physically and spiritually from the seat of the conflict. If decadent Europe chose to bloody itself in a paroxysm of imperialism and militarism, let the pristine Republic ride out the condign but transient storm, safe behind the huge Atlantic moat. These feelings found an outlet in Wilson's statement to the Congress on 19 August 1914: "every man who truly loves America will act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality . . . . The United States must be neutral in fact as well as in name during these days that are to try men's souls. We must be impartial in thought as well as in action."

But what if the war should become protracted and continue indefinitely, leading to unexampled violence and consequent political shocks that might rock America? As early as 3 August, the day that Germany declared war on France, Wilson told reporters: "I want to have the pride of feeling that America, if nobody else, has her self-possession and stands ready with calmness of thought and steadiness of purpose to help the rest of the world. And we can do it and reap a permanent glory out of doing it, provided we all cooperate to see that nobody loses his head." For all his early reiteration of isolationist dogmas, Wilson was an activist—he desperately hoped to do great things as President, although his initial interest centered on domestic affairs. That quality of activism in him soon became manifest, especially when, earlier than almost anyone else, he sensed the terrible price of an extended conflict and the import of the threats that might then affect the future of the United States.

Wilson rapidly came to the conclusion that the war was not simply iniquitous because violent; it also posed a challenge to the vital national interests of the country. A devastating war in western Eurasia could easily alter the decided advantages that had undergirded national progress during the nineteenth century. Of these fortunate circumstances the most important was the enduring balance of power in western Eurasia. It vastly limited

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Europe's potential for interference in the affairs of the Americas; at the same time it minimized the necessity for American participation in Europe's contentions.

Already, well before 1914, the destabilization of political relationships in Europe had prompted an increasing proclivity to alterations in traditional associations with western Eurasia. Most important were improved dealings with the ancient enemy, Great Britain, and controversies with an ancient friend, Germany. This tilt reflected the obviously adverse consequences of a united political authority in western Eurasia for the United States; any destabilization automatically inclined the nation toward the side of those who opposed any possible hegemonic enterprise—and certainly Great Britain was in that camp.

As long as western Eurasia was divided among numerous sovereigns, as during the nineteenth century, the United States could make use of the sea to engage in commerce and other desired forms of intercourse with Eurasian areas without fear that a Eurasian enemy could mobilize enough power to transcend the great oceanic distances and undertake successful military operations in the new world. If, however, one power came to dominate in western Eurasia, the situation would surely deteriorate. Trade might well be interdicted, and an aggressive naval action in great strength might well span the protective moat.

Did Wilson grasp these elementary realities of what is now called geopolitics? The answer has to be deduced from his behavior or inferred from pronouncements that do not deal directly with this question. Certainly he was responsive to geopolitical considerations, although other influences were also operative. Just as surely he did not see in European events an immediately dangerous potential for an extracontinental armed attack on American territory. Any such outcome was assuredly far down the road. Nevertheless, he realized that early action to preclude plenary instability in Europe and consequently great dangers down the road was an obvious requirement.

It is impossible to measure the relative percentages of idealism and realism that affected the President's thought and action during the First World War, but it is easily demonstrable that there was a mix. Wilson's revulsion against war as a form of politics and his inveterate commitment to democracy suggested action. Hardheaded geopolitical calculations led in the same direction. The earlier the response, the easier the task.

The mix of principle and expediency is apparent in Wilson's early decision, reached long before the United States joined the Entente in 1917, that the present war must be the last war. Modern warfare constituted not only a moral catastrophe but a political threat of enormous significance. What other interpretation can be placed on Wilson's statement of May 1916, anticipated earlier and spelled out fully later, commenting on the ongoing

conflict and others that might occur? "The longer the war lasts, the more deeply do we become concerned that it should be brought to an end and the world be permitted to resume its normal life and course again. And when it does come to an end we shall be as much concerned as the nations at war to see peace assume an aspect of permanence, give promise of days from which the anxiety of uncertainty will be lifted, bring some assurance that peace and war shall always hereafter be reckoned part of the common interest of mankind."

Wilson's complex spirit also brought him to the conclusion that the world had to be made safe for democracy. In the same speech in which he revealed his desire for a lasting peace and concerted action to achieve that end he took his stand for the basic democratic principle of self-determination—"that every people has a right to choose the sovereignty under which they shall live." After observing that the small and the weak had the same rights as the "great and powerful nations," he spoke against any subversion of self-determination: "the world has a right to be free from any disturbance of its peace that has its origin in aggression and disregard of the rights of peoples and nations."

All this betokened political activism. As Wilson spoke against war and for self-determination he called for action. "We are participants, whether we would or not, in the life of the world. The interests of all nations are our own also. We are partners with the rest." In speaking thus, he was simply describing a process already well underway, however much it departed from the abstentionist dictum in Washington's Farewell Address. Later on he enunciated his early ideas ever more clearly and specifically, but views elaborated in 1917 or 1919 were already well-defined throughout most of the period of neutrality. What happened to Wilson across the experience of the First World War was that he subscribed ever more consciously and emotionally to his initial insights and developed with increasing precision a national policy intended to establish a new order of world politics.[3]

Wilson's quick recognition of the requirements thrust upon the United States by the First World War led to early abandonment of the traditional abstention manifest in the proclamation of neutrality. After he realized that the war would not end soon, he launched an extraordinary diplomatic endeavor—nothing less than an attempt to mediate the European war.

The President's decision to intervene diplomatically was the most important development in American foreign policy during the period of neutrality. To this enterprise Wilson devoted intense concern for more than two years. He would, he may have imagined, far outdo his rival Theodore Roosevelt, who had successfully mediated the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. The effort to mediate reflected Wilson in all his guises: Wilson the Moralist, Wilson the Guardian of the National Interest, Wilson the Activist.

Mediation, it must be stressed, was simply a means to an end, a strategy to accomplish a policy—the end being a uniquely American peace settlement.

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Wilson never had any intention of serving merely as an honest broker. More important, he sought the honor of *arbiter mundi*—the role of determining the peace. His emerging conception of the peace settlement was morally elevated in that it promised equity to all peoples, but it was politically motivated in that it claimed a role for the United States in world politics commensurate with the nation's status as a great power.

Wilson's conception of the peace settlement turned on two primal aims—short-run restabilization of political relationships in western Eurasia and long-run reorientation of world politics.

His immediate purpose was to arrange a territorial settlement based on the principle of self-determination rather than military conquest. If properly applied, this healing policy would alleviate historic tensions over boundaries and thereby minimize occasions for future wars.

But what was to be done to ensure perpetual peace, through which democracy would come to guide the political behavior of the entire world? The long-term enterprise was to create a whole new set of international institutions that would ultimately constitute a new world order. By January 1917 he was able to express himself most clearly on this question. "In every discussion of the peace that must end this war it is taken for granted that peace must be followed by some definite concert of power which will make it virtually impossible that any such catastrophe should overwhelm us again. Every lover of mankind, any sane and thoughtful man must take that for granted." The older order, a product of traditional balance-of-power statecraft, was unworkable because it had failed to produce either a lasting peace or a just peace.

Wilson's plan for a league of nations—what he called "some definite concert of power" to distinguish it from tradition—was built on two grand conceptions. One was peacekeeping, which would come out of the workings of a universal and permanent alliance based on the principle of collective security. The other was gradual but substantive international reform to guarantee liberty and justice for frustrated or downtrodden peoples everywhere.

The Wilsonian conception of a new international order stressed peaceful reform rather than militant violence—purification rather than purgation. This middle ground—equidistant from both reaction and revolution—represented an extraordinary departure from the deep-seated isolationist traditions of American statecraft, but it was entirely consistent with equally potent commitments to a special American mission in the world. In January 1917 Wilson said overtly what he later repeated tirelessly: "It is clear to any man who can think that there is in this promise no breach in either our traditions or our policy as a nation, but a fulfillment, rather, of all that we have professed or striven for."

What, then, happened to Wilson's effort to mediate the war and thereafter to mastermind the peace settlement? Despite sustained diplomatic activity, including the dispatch of Edward M. House on two occasions to Europe in

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order to feel out the belligerents privately and the climactic public effort in December 1916-January 1917 to bring about "peace without victory," Wilson never came close to establishing himself as a disinterested mediator and peacemaker. For this sad outcome there were two reasons:

One was that neither of the contending coalitions ever became reconciled to less than maximal political goals, a logical consequence of waging general war over a stupendous issue, the hegemony of western Eurasia.

The other was that the United States lacked the international leverage to force a moderate solution upon the recalcitrant combatants. Wilson soon realized that unpreparedness weakened his international bargaining power, the main reason why he opted for a remarkable program of military and naval expansion in 1915-1916. He sought military capabilities to back up diplomatic initiatives. Those who divine in Wilson's version of preparedness mere domestic partisan expediency in order to win the election of 1916 entirely misread his motivation, underestimating the importance of external influences on presidential decisions, even if domestic politics also entered into the outcome.

As Wilson pursued the quixotic goal of mediation—he should never have done so because the goal could not be reached—he became more and more entangled in a controversy with both European camps over the rights of neutrals on the high seas. This controversy ultimately alienated him from both Germany and Great Britain, neither of whom were prepared to accept his views. This experience deepened Wilson's desire to accomplish his peace plans. Germany's decision to resume unrestricted submarine warfare against neutral commerce, which took effect on 1 February 1917, represented a definitive German rejection of the American approach; at the same time it automatically allowed the Allies to evade overt rejection of Wilsonian mediation.

As of February 1917, then, Wilson found himself bereft of his most desired strategic option, and he could no longer avoid recognizing the bankruptcy of his earlier efforts. If he could not pursue mediation, what other possibilities were open to him?

He could revert to a policy of strict isolation, but this course meant that the United States must remain idle while others decided the future.

He could adopt armed neutrality, thus countering Germany's resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare without having to go to war, but that would still leave the great decisions concerning the future to others.

He could launch an armed intervention on behalf of the Allies, a course that would force him to accept a war that he desperately wished to avoid but that would allow him further opportunity to exercise a predominating influence on peacemaking.

Desire to dominate the peace settlement ultimately led Wilson, with the deepest reluctance, to decide in favor of armed intervention. It was the only

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means he could identify that would allow him to continue pursuit of his grand design. In the war message of 2 April 1917 the President spoke starkly of the consequences. "It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance." Why had he decided for war? "The right is more precious than peace."

It was a fearful choice indeed, one that ever after haunted Woodrow Wilson. This concern became more manifest in later references to the deadly consequences of his decision for many young men called to the colors and for the families who endured losses. After the war, in September 1919 at Pueblo, Colorado, Wilson noted that mothers whose sons had perished in France often said to him, "God bless you, Mr. President." Why should those who had suffered the most grievous losses bless him? "Because they believe that their boys died for something that vastly transcends any of the immediate and palpable objects of the war. They believe, and they rightly believe, that their sons saved the liberty of the world. They believe that wrapped up with the liberty of the world is the protection of that liberty by the concerted powers of all civilized peoples."

Once in the war Wilson's chief preoccupation was to ensure victory for the Allies, while at the same time preserving and enlarging his ability to dictate peace as readily to London and Paris as to Berlin and Vienna. To do so, he decided that the United States must provide a reinforcement sufficient to overwhelm the Central Powers and at the same time avoid political concessions to the Allies that would minimize freedom of action at war's end. After all, the war aims and peace plans of the Allies differed markedly from those of the United States, even if America shared the Allies' fear of German hegemony in western Eurasia.

Wilson eventually achieved his purposes; during 1917-1918 the American reinforcement turned the tide in favor of the Allies. Certainly the United States made an unprecedented effort to support the western coalition, but the reinforcement was by no means all out in nature. Although American sacrifices did not compare with those of Europe, they were sufficient to encompass the destruction of the central coalition. Meanwhile, Wilson made known his ideas about the peace settlement in considerable detail. In January 1918 he described to the Congress his basic program in the Fourteen Points. Other public pronouncements, all of them made unilaterally without consultation with the Allies, added considerable detail. This loquacious enterprise convinced Germany that an American peace, however undesirable, was greatly preferable to any other scheme. Allied statesmen, also resistant to Wilson's ideas, had become so dependent upon the United States that they could not resist American domination of the pre-armistice conference that took place in Paris late in October and early in November 1918, after the German army had collapsed along the western

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front. The pre-armistice agreement of 4 November 1918, which specified the political basis for the military armistice that followed a week later, compromised the Fourteen Points and associated pronouncements only in a proviso for reference of two issues to the peace conference, indemnification and freedom of the seas.[4]

The pre-armistice agreement set the pattern for the peacemaking of 1919 in Paris. President Wilson proved capable of imposing a peace settlement on the Allies that in its broad outlines achieved the goals underlying his specific unilateral pronouncements of 1918. Those who dwell on the shortcomings of the peace settlement fail to weigh Wilsonian successes against Wilsonian failures. The negotiators at Paris agreed to a territorial settlement based largely on self-determination, and the covenant of the League of Nations was firmly imbedded in the agreements for each of the Central Powers, beginning with the Treaty of Versailles. Wilson recognized imperfections, such as the Shantung agreement and the economic provisions, but he planned to correct these flaws as the healing influence of the new world order created opportunities in the future.

Whatever the animadversions of carping scholars later, the peacemakers of 1919 never doubted the preeminence of Wilson and Wilsonism. The President's own characterization of the settlement, however Olympian, is worth remembering: "It is not merely a settlement with Germany; it is a readjustment of those great injustices which underlie the whole structure of European and Asiatic society." He went further. "It is a people's treaty that accomplishes by a great sweep of practical justice the liberation of men who never could have liberated themselves, and the power of the most powerful nations has been devoted not to their aggrandizement but to the liberation of people whom they could have put under their control if they had chosen to do so." Wilson's final clause is all that is in question about this judgment. The other great powers had not chosen freely; he imposed his peace settlement on unwilling allies who, if given a free choice, would have chosen a much more onerous settlement.

The irony of 1919 and after was that those who perforce were compelled to swallow the Wilsonian settlement later joined in a determined if futile attempt to make it succeed despite the defalcation of the United States. Americans proved willing to follow Woodrow Wilson in war but not in peace. His new order was neither fully understood nor accepted at home; it never gained sufficient popularity to ensure continuing domestic support deep into the postwar era, even if the Senate had acted differently.

What evaluation can be made of Woodrow Wilson's statecraft—his use of the various forms of national power to accomplish fundamental purposes? The verdict is mixed.

Wilson early demonstrated unusual insight into the true meaning of the First World War. He made a prescient estimate of the situation, recognizing

the massive threat that it posed to American ideals and American interests. He came to understand, much ahead of most others, that general warfare, always of dubious moral standing, had become obsolescent as a practical act of state, given the extraordinarily destructive potential inherent in modern arms. This conclusion led directly to the view that the war must be a war to end wars. As a convinced American democrat, the next step was almost instinctual. For a peace to endure it must be equitable—a lasting peace must be a just peace. The key to justice was international adherence to the central democratic principle of self-determination. This is what Wilson meant when he called his program a Monroe Doctrine for the entire world. Viewed in this light Wilson's statecraft appears ingenious, enlightened, moderate, and reasonable.

But what of the President's plans and operations as against his estimate of the situation? Here judgment must be negative.

Wilson presumed greater and more enduring public support at home than actually existed and for this reason suffered domestic repudiation at the moment of his greatest international achievement. No President can succeed in accomplishing massive projects of international statecraft without the sustained support of the American people. However sound Wilson's analysis of the world's ills, however ingenious his prescription for those ills, he never succeeded in gaining sufficient political support for it among his fellow countrypeople.

Moreover, Wilson's commitment to a permanent and universal alliance based on collective security stemmed from presumptions that seem seriously flawed in the light of later developments. If a global alliance is to remain universal and to endure indefinitely, there must emerge a truly durable consensus among the great powers on the most important questions of world politics. Such a consensus did not exist in 1919, and despite encouraging indications during the immediate postwar decade, it never materialized. Perhaps a wiser formula for dealing with the manifold problems that beset the world of 1919 would have been a more traditional exercise in balance-of-power statecraft, provided that the goal was not merely to adjust power relationships but to achieve equity for suppressed or dissatisfied peoples.

Historians all too often seem to derive great satisfaction from berating Woodrow Wilson—something about him quickly arouses widespread annoyance—but his critics might profit from considering his insights as well as his errors. It is always easier to make a sound estimate of the situation than to draft sound plans for dealing with the situation and to execute those plans efficiently through field operations. This truism applies in 1919. Europe lay in ruins; a reconstituted international polity was in those desperate circumstances most difficult to arrange. Unlike the proponents of reaction or revolution, Wilson, as he had intended, succeeded in dominating the world settlement of 1919, an accomplishment that by itself places him in the first

rank of world statesmen, ahead of all other Americans. Should historians deny Wilson his place in the national pantheon, given his international standing? Perhaps the views of his successors in the White House, who have so often followed Wilsonian premises, should weigh more heavily than the minions of Clio in deciding the historical reputation of Woodrow Wilson.[5]

NOTES

1. For Abrahamson's views see his most important study entitled *America Arms for a New Century* (New York; Macmillan, 1981).

2. See the forthcoming dissertation by Fred Calhoun on Wilson and the uses of power, to be submitted to the University of Chicago. Among Wilson's interventions were two in Mexico, two more in Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic), the First World War, northern Russia, and eastern Siberia.

3. A considerable controversy rages over the extent to which Wilson's physical and emotional infirmities influenced his political behavior. The views of William Bullitt and Sigmund Freud, of Alexander George and Juliette George, and of Edwin Weinstein all argue an important influence, although they differ on the nature of these defects and on their effects. In general all these interpretations support the notion that Woodrow Wilson was imbued with a desire to accomplish great things, something that required activism and singleminded devotion. For a convenient treatment of this literature see Dorothy Ross, "Woodrow Wilson and the Case for Psychohistory," *Journal of American History*, December 1982, pp. 659-668.

4. For a more detailed account of Wilson's course during the years of belligerency see David F. Trask, "Woodrow Wilson and the Reconciliation of Force and Diplomacy: 1917-1918," *Naval War College Review*, January-February 1975, pp. 23-31.

5. This article builds on David F. Trask, "Woodrow Wilson and World War I," *Forums in History*, (St. Charles, Mo.: Forum Press) 16pp., which has a broader concern. This commentary follows its predecessor in adopting a respectful but nevertheless mixed or equivocal view of its subject. This view on its face is easily distinguishable from the anti-Wilsonian interpretations of the "realist" school and the "new left" school, the first denying to Wilson any political realism and the second attributing to him extensive Machiavellian intent—many versions are paramarxist in nature. Wilson as an imperialist, as a stalking horse for reaction, requires a more cavalier regard for overwhelming evidence to the contrary than seems possible.

This commentary should also be distinguished from that of Arthur Link, perhaps the last and greatest of those who defend Wilson on all important counts. Link's multivolume biography of Wilson did not venture into the period after April 1917, although he covers the subject in *Wilson the Diplomatist* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957), considerably revised as *Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War, and Peace* (Arlington Heights, Il.: AHM Publishing Corp., 1979). Link's analysis of Wilson's domestic leadership strikes this reader as much sounder than his treatment of Wilson's international statecraft, possibly because his scholarly interests and expertise do not include military and diplomatic history.

The student of statecraft must perforce deal in both diplomatic and military history, simply because war is a political instrument, waged to achieve political ends, but he or she must also treat domestic political, social, and economic history given the profound influence of domestic developments on the conduct of international statecraft.

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